

# Legislative Council.

Thursday, 28th August, 1947.

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

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. G. Bennetts, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. C. B. Williams (South) on the ground of urgent private business.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Tenth Day—Conclusion.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [4.34]: Like other members, I desire to make some reference to the death of Hon. J. M. Drew, who was a man of great integrity and knowledge, one who always was the essence of kindness, particularly to those who entered the House for the first time. This Chamber and the State itself is the poorer for his passing. Next I desire to welcome the four new members who have taken their seats here. It is something quite new for us to have so many new faces in the Chamber at the one time. Formerly we considered the average of newcomers would be about two. When I look round and see that 15 new members have come here since I was first elected to this Chamber, I commence to regard myself as one of the old hands. Until a year ago I was more inclined to consider myself a new chum. However, it makes us realise how short is the parliamentary life of many when we see that 15 of our former colleagues have passed away, mostly by death, in the short period of 11 years.

It is my intention, as far as I can, to reply to as many of the questions and to comply with requests for information that have been submitted by members during the course of the Address-in-reply debate. Be-

fore I do so, there are one or two burning questions that have been exercising the minds of those associated with the Agricultural Department and, incidentally, have called for close attention on my part during the last five months. For instance, there has been a controversy with regard to the milk problem, not only with respect to the consolidation of the depots, but also with regard to the testing of dairy herds with respect to tuberculosis and the slaughtering of affected animals. Both the Milk Board and myself as the Minister concerned have been criticised for the attitude we have adopted. One of the most amazing pieces of criticism emanated from the former Minister for Agriculture, who has been submitting questions in another place implying that the Milk Board is out to set up a complete monopoly in the treatment of milk. A most extraordinary attitude! He seems to spend a lot of his time—sometimes twice a week and always once a week—in formulating what he considers are embarrassing questions.

Perhaps it is a matter for regret that I am not a member of another place, seeing that I am officially interested in the matter, and, in the circumstances, I shall have to submit an answer in this Chamber. I want to outline as clearly as I can the attitude of the previous Government and particularly that of the former Minister for Agriculture, regarding the consolidation of depots, which it was then thought, and is still considered, to be desirable in the interests of a safe and clean milk supply for the metropolitan area. I propose to read some of the former Minister's remarks as reported in "Hansard". On the 14th August, 1946, he stated—

We want a limited number of properly-placed treatment plants so that the least amount of supervision will be necessary in order to ensure an absolutely clean and high quality product.

Now, because another Minister, in an assisting capacity, is administering the Act, he does the best he possibly can to embarrass him! This was the policy of the board, which was approved by Parliament last year. The ex-Chief Secretary (Hon. W. H. Kitson), speaking in this House on the 29th October, 1946, is reported in "Hansard", page 1554, as follows:—

Any scheme for the improvement of the treatment of milk must provide for the con-

centration of treatment in a limited number of depots. The present widespread location of the treatment plants in the metropolitan area—many of which are relatively small—militates against strict supervision. Obviously, it is impossible to exercise close and frequent supervision over the milk entering the depots and over the processes, especially where there is a multiplicity of plants.

I entirely agree with that. But why this change of attitude on the part of the ex-Minister for Agriculture? The whole purpose is to try to embarrass this Government. There is no other reason for it. Mr. Davies informed us about the way certain people in Fremantle have been treated. I do not think he understands the position.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I am concerned about certain people who have established themselves in business and want to carry on.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That business has not been taken from them. The bulk of their income is derived from the retailing of milk. I do not know whether the hon. member has inspected those places.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Yes.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have, and I say unhesitatingly they are a disgrace to Fremantle.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is because those people are compelled to occupy unsuitable premises.

The HONORARY MINISTER: They were not compelled to do anything. They were allowed to treat milk on sufferance, a very small quantity, too. The hon. member said that large companies are buying these places out. That is not so. I will tell the House what has happened. These people, realising that the game of treating milk in more or less unhygienic premises was up, combined. They included Messrs. Famlonga, Newman, and Powell. There is no big company about those people.

Hon. E. M. Davies: What about Pascomi?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Pascomi has not done anything at Fremantle. It might have a distributing centre there, but has not a treatment depot. I am now dealing with treatment depots. There are three other people whose names I have forgotten, making six in all, of small depots treating on an average about 150 gallons of milk a day. These people have done the right thing; they have done what the board desired and what every right-thinking person

would want them to do—combined to put up a decent depot to treat all the milk in one place.

We cannot have, say, 40 depots in the metropolitan area treating on an average 200 gallons of milk a day. Talk about monopolies! There is no such thing as a monopoly in this business. Just fancy these advocates talking of having 42 depots in the metropolitan area, with a capitalisation each of, say, £10,000, treating 20,000 gallons of milk! Sydney, which I believe has one of the best plants in the southern hemisphere, treats 220,000 gallons in two depots. A very fine set-up those treatment depots have, too. Those places have distributing centres all over Sydney. Yet these advocates here talk about having 42 depots for 20,000 gallons of milk.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You get a better standardised milk in the way you mention.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Very much better. I have visited the depots in the Eastern States and, while I do not expect that Western Australia can aim at such a high standard, I think we should go as far in that direction as is possible. I maintain that the ex-Minister for Agriculture approved, or certainly did not disapprove, of 10 depots. The first proposition was to have 10 depots, and the present Government decided to allow 20, provided they conformed to a decent standard. I believe that number will gradually be brought down, perhaps to 10 or even fewer. I feel quite sure of that, and personally I should like to see the number reduced to four or five. Nobody is going to force that decision, but it may happen. This elimination of depots is nothing new. Let me quote briefly from the 1945 report of the Milk Board. In those days we did not hear any objection when another Party was in power.

Hon. G. Fraser: But you have fallen down on the job.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We have not. The previous Government approved of fewer depots than we have. This is what the board said before the new Act came into operation—

Generally speaking, the facilities for brine cooling and storage are inadequate for the requirements of the trade, but a number of plants cannot be regarded as suitable and complying with modern standards and requirements, not only structurally but also in regard to their equipment, machinery and facilities . .

The board is not satisfied with the conditions existing at a number of milk depots. It is considered that all depots receiving and treating milk should employ at least one person qualified to test milk—

Imagine all those small depots employing somebody to test milk! What an absurd position it would be! In Sydney, there is a laboratory half the size of this Chamber where three or four persons are employed and the place is equipped with all sorts of testing apparatus. This testing can be done only when there is a large depot. That is the proper way to do it. The report continued—

—and capable also of effectively supervising all processes relating to the treatment of milk and sterilising of equipment.

The places at Fremantle did not have such equipment, and neither did at least 12 other places that I inspected around the metropolitan area. Some of them were clean, though one could not swing the proverbial cat in them. Their equipment was sufficient only partially to treat the milk as it should have been treated. I want all the assistance Parliament can give me in the stand I am making on this matter of assisting the Milk Board in what it is striving to do. I want to make it quite clear that the people concerned are not being deprived of their living. They were first of all milk retailers, and they gradually built up a small subsidiary business in the treatment of milk, which the board allowed them to do on sufferance pending the passing of the new Milk Act. That is the whole story.

One gentleman who had quite a lot to say came to my office at least half-a-dozen times with the secretary of the Milk Retailers' Association, who is also secretary of one of the milk producers' associations, and a few other things. They attempted to make my life miserable. This man has been told that he may not treat milk, but may merely retail it, and now he is happier than ever he was in his life. He got 80 new customers and does not want to treat any more milk. He now has it delivered to him at 1 a.m. and sells it at a big margin of profit. That is what will happen to other people who have combined as the milk vendors have in Fremantle.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Will some of the persons who retail milk now be deprived of their opportunity to do so?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know how the hon. member got that idea. All the people who had a license to retail milk have had their licenses renewed.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is what I want to know.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The man to whom I refer has not to go out to get his milk; it is supplied to him from a big treatment depot to his own premises. He does not even have to wash the bottles. I found a similar state of affairs prevailing in Sydney. The producer-retailers there went out of the business of producing milk because there was more money in the retail business. The League of Nations set up a committee to deal with this subject. It is such an important and burning question that I propose to read one or two extracts from the report of that committee in order to demonstrate to members my honest belief that the Milk Board is on the right track. The committee comprised the following:—

Professor H. C. Bendixen, Royal Veterinary and Agricultural College, Copenhagen.

Mr. G. J. Blink, Union for Dairy Industry and Milk Hygiene, The Hague.

Professor J. C. Drummond, University College, London.

Professor A. M. Leroy, National Institute of Agronomy, Paris, and Professor G. S. Wilson, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London.

I do not know any of these gentlemen, but I should imagine from what I have just read that they constitute a highly qualified committee. They reported—

Careful consideration has been given to the minimum hygienic requirements for milk destined for human consumption. There are two main questions involved. On the one hand, it is desirable to provide the public with the maximum quantity of milk at the lowest possible cost. On the other hand, it is essential to take the strictest hygienic precautions in the production and distribution of milk if milk-borne disease is to be avoided. It might be thought at first that there is a sharp antagonism between these two proposals, but this is more apparent than real. Experience in many countries has shown that a well-organised company can collect, pasteurise, bottle and distribute milk of a high standard of cleanliness and safety at a cost only slightly in excess of that demanded by the small producer who sells his own milk unbottled and in a potentially dangerous condition.

I maintain that this is what was happening at Fremantle and other places. The report continues—

Though bottling undoubtedly increases the cost of milk to a slight extent, it has very great compensating advantages. Not only does it conduce to greater cleanliness and safety, but it tends to reduce the number of milk distributors in any town or district, and thus to eliminate the wasteful overlapping that at present so frequently occurs. We are of the opinion that the right course to pursue is to concentrate on the production and sale of milk under good hygienic conditions. This will involve a demand for clean milk production, pasteurisation and bottling. Such a policy will, we believe, be successful in increasing the quantity of milk consumed by the public, since the guarantee of security that it will afford will more than counterbalance the slightly lower price at which dirty and often unsafe milk is sold in many cities. Loose, unbottled milk, besides being unhygienic, opens the way to fraudulent practice, and the loss suffered in this way by the small consumer may be greater than the slightly increased price that he will have to pay for properly bottled milk.

That is what has occurred in Sydney. So great is the confidence of the people there in the milk supplied to them that the producers cannot produce enough; for many months Sydney has had a rationed milk supply. Perth consumes far less milk than it should. If the policy of the Milk Board is allowed to be carried out, I am convinced that the production and consumption of milk here will rise. There is one other paragraph in the committee's report which has a big bearing on this subject. It reads—

We believe that the future of the dairy industry lies in the gradual elimination of the small and often inefficient distributor, and its concentration into the hands of large, well-organised firms which are making use of every aid that science can offer them to improve the technical efficiency of their business and the high quality of their products. Just as, during the past century, the water supply of our large towns has passed out of the hands of multiple small producer-retailers into the hands of large concerns, controlled by the municipality, a public utility company, or some similar body, so, in the future, we believe that milk for human consumption in the liquid state will come to be regarded more and more as an article of food over which such care has to be exercised that none but large and efficient organisations will be allowed to handle it.

I am entirely in agreement with that. I think I shall now leave the subject of milk. I hope I have made myself quite clear on it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We decided on Monday morning at Kalgoorlie to put in a treatment plant at a cost of £12,000.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I believe the milk supply in Kalgoorlie is not what

it ought to be, and I am very glad to hear what Mr. Bennetts has said. It is a step in the right direction. I shall reply to some of Mr. Baxter's remarks. I am sorry he is not present. He said there were too many Ministers and too many members of Parliament. I do not think we have too many Ministers in this State.

Hon. G. Bennetts: He might mean ministers of religion!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I well know that the Ministers of the present Government have plenty to do, as did the Ministers of the previous Government. Mr. Baxter spoke about Ministers running about the country. I consider it most desirable that Ministers should do so. My colleague has gathered much useful information in his journeyings about the State which will be of considerable benefit to him. I myself have, through my journeyings in the country, gained an insight into matters about which I did not know much before. Let me quote an instance. I used to go to Fremantle quite a lot to inspect the bulk-wheat installations and I found that the set-up of those installations was not at all desirable. Consequently, I made representations to the Government which resulted in a saving to the State of £270,000 which it was proposed should be spent on a scheme then under consideration.

Wheat today is being handled with the existing facilities by the new regime in a very satisfactory manner. When the present Government assumed office there were three bodies controlling wheat at Fremantle. Co-operative Bulk Handling had control of wheat up to what is known as the Commonwealth silo. From that silo the wheat went on to a conveyor and came under the control of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. Then the Stevedoring Commission took control of the loading of the wheat into the ship. The wheat today is handled far more expeditiously than it was before, and I consider some praise for that is due to the present Government. I have figures to prove what I say, but I shall not quote all of them. I shall, however, quote some figures relating to the s.s. "Cressington Court," which was loaded in May under the old regime, with treble control. It was also loaded in July under the single control. In 29 hours under the old control wheat was loaded at the rate of 302 tons per hour; under the new con-

trol it was loaded at the rate of 389 tons per hour. That is a huge quantity of wheat. In the case of four ships, the loading was speeded up to the extent of 25.5 per cent. I started off by answering Mr. Baxter's comment about Ministers running around the country and I got on to this subject. However, there is a connection because it was through my running down to Fremantle that I discovered what was going on.

Hon. A. Thomson: You saved £270,000?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. There was a scheme in operation which Co-operative Bulk Handling experts and engineers said was not necessary; and I do not believe it was either. I am watching this matter closely. I said to Co-operative Bulk Handling, "Do not let me down. Do what you said you would do"; and they are doing it. They have stepped up the loading of wheat by 25 per cent. I do not want to cast any reflection on the board. I believe the trouble lay in the system under which it was working. It had nothing to do with the board that the handling of wheat was so slow. But I have seen an improvement myself. I saw what could be done. The wheat was being run off one belt on to two belts and 80 per cent. of it was on one of those two belts and 20 per cent. on the other.

As soon as Co-operative Bulk Handling obtained control, for an expenditure of £50 they installed something that equalises the quantity of wheat on each belt. What was the reason for sticking to the old system? It was simply that the engineers who constructed it did not know anything about wheat handling; and that is no reflection on them, either. They simply hadn't the experience. But the bulk handling engineer, who had done nothing else since 1935, knew all about it, and that is what he did. I believe the company recovered that £50 in the handling of wheat in one day under the new system. Previously the wheat was sometimes choked up from the chute to the ship, thus causing delay. Mr. Baxter also said that Ministers were doing things they should not do.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What did he mean by that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know. Perhaps we are doing what other Ministers had not undertaken. If we are

doing what, in his eyes, we should not be, it is only those things that we feel we should do and not leave to departmental officers to carry out. I think that is the answer to Mr. Baxter. Perhaps, as a result, we have made ourselves busier than we would have been had we deputed our work to others. However, we took matters in hand ourselves and I think it is for the benefit of this country. I welcome the remarks of Mr. Bolton, and thank him for his kind references to me. I also welcome the remarks of Mr. Tuckey who said something about T.B. testing of cattle. We want all the support we can obtain in that connection; because it is a very unpleasant job to have to slaughter these cattle. It has been undertaken for a purpose, however, and must be continued. I believe that in two years' time or less, these troubles and disabilities will have disappeared. Nevertheless, I think there is a trying time ahead for a lot of people who are administering this provision and for the people who will lose cattle. Those folk have my greatest sympathy. I was at a meeting at Pinjarra attended by 78 people. I talked to many of them and none objected to what is being done. The only objections appear to come from people who think they may be short of milk next March. I am not worried about them very much.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I hope you will give some consideration to Kalgoorlie when you receive a request from there.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Kalgoorlie will be attended to in due course. I think that before that occurs provision will be made to supply Kalgoorlie with milk from down here. I have discussed the matter with one of the big so-called monopolists who is spending £25,000 on his depot—and I am not referring to Westralian Farmers either! He suggested it would be desirable to have tankers on the railways, as distributors have in Sydney, to supply Kalgoorlie, perhaps not only when there is a shortage through T.B. testing but at other times as well so that there will be continuity of supply.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That does not mean he will cut out the local dairies, does it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think that will happen, nor do I think he will attempt to do that. He said it would be a very good idea in the slack time when milk cannot be produced so readily in Kalgoorlie.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We are spending £12,000 on a plant and we would not like that to come into operation.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The milk will have to be treated there. That would work in conjunction with the other treatment plant very well indeed. I can tell the hon. member that he need have no fear that when T.B. testing is carried out at Kalgoorlie there will be any shortage. He has my assurance that the work will be undertaken in his district as soon as possible. We have not sufficient veterinary surgeons to go all over the place at once, and this work must be done gradually. The metropolitan area has been selected for attention first because it is supposed to be the most badly affected at the moment. I would like the House to know that the Agricultural Department has tested 1,672 cows and 726 reacted adversely, which means that they have to be destroyed. That is a percentage of 43. Most of the cows have been slaughtered, but not all. It is a tremendous problem, but it has to be faced, as it has been in other parts of Australia, England and America.

I was very glad to hear the remarks of Sir Hal Colebatch in regard to the ownership of wheat. I believe that is another big question that will have to be faced in this country. One or two gentlemen at Canberra appear to think that they own the wheat and can sell it to New Zealand for practically 10s. a bushel less than we should obtain for it. I commend Sir Hal for mentioning the matter and hope that other people will realise what is occurring; that they will understand that the people at Canberra are taking charge of our products—our wheat and other things—and telling us we cannot send sheep and other commodities to Singapore—products that we do not want in Western Australia. I do not desire to dwell on that because one could talk for quite a long time about it. I want to keep off the subject of wheat because the matter is in the air at the moment.

Sir Hal also referred to the transport of perishable goods by road. That is a question to which consideration must be given. We know that the railways cannot handle such goods at all, let alone adequately. The position with regard to the transport of wheat is appalling. I am very glad that members are alive to these difficulties, which are of great importance to Western Australia. Our economy is wrapped up in agriculture and

primary production and it is very nice to know that some interest is being displayed in them. Mr. Bolton made reference to the carriage of super and said he hoped the farmers would be allowed to transport this commodity on their trucks. As a matter of fact, farmers can cart their own super today provided they do not cart for somebody else and that they do it as bareback loading. I do not think this matter is even policed; how could it be?

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is policed all right.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Let me finish. I wish to quote from the First Schedule of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, as follows:—

The carriage of livestock, poultry, fruit, vegetables, dairy produce or other perishable commodities or wheat or oats from the place where they are produced to any other place in a vehicle owned by the producer thereof, and on the return journey the carriage of requisites for the domestic use of such producer or for use by him in the production of the commodities herein named.

The last part of that paragraph would cover super. The point is that because of the inclusion of the carriage of livestock and so on, a man can easily put a bag of wheat or oats on his truck and take it to Perth, and who is to say that he did not cart that produce to Perth?

Hon. C. G. Latham: He has to supply proof at the other end to satisfy the inspector.

The HONORARY MINISTER: On when he gets back.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I know of instances.

Hon. L. Craig: Are you suggesting that a farmer should break the law?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No. If a farmer wishes to, he can bring a sheep to Midland, or two or three bags of oats to a racehorse owner, and he is eligible to take back his own super.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: He cannot take lambs down.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, he can, on his own truck. This refers to the carriage of livestock. Would that not include lambs?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: They are prevented from doing that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Not a farmer with his own truck. Mr. Logan

made an apt remark yesterday when he said that farmers did not know that they could do these things. Even Mr. Bolton does not know. Last year I told many farmers that they could do this. A bag of wheat, or even one fowl—but no-one would bring just one fowl—can be carted to Perth and super taken back again. Surely it is worth while to do that. Members should tell their farmer friends of this, and it will make them happy. But they cannot take super back for their neighbours. Perhaps they do, but they should not. Mr. Gray brought up the question of the grading of wheat. There is a lot in what he says, from the point of view of the baker. It seems to me that the only person who wants the grading of wheat, instead of the f.a.q. standard, is the baker. He is about the only one who would benefit.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The farmers would benefit.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member did not say how this could be done in a bulk-handling country like Western Australia. If we sent graded wheat to England, how could it be separated at the country siding?

Hon. E. H. Gray: It is done in Canada.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There must be different facilities there from what we have here. The wheat would have to be separated at the sidings and on the ship, and I do not think it is feasible to do so. The matter was brought up at the Agricultural Council at Canberra, recently, and a committee is going into the question. At the moment I still have to be convinced that it is desirable. I believe that with grading of wheat the baker could add more water and get more loaves from a bag of flour.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It means more than that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The other State Ministers for Agriculture and I had a long discussion, and the only person, as far as I could ascertain, who wanted this, was Dr. Kent-Jones, a scientist from England.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You have your own authority Dr. Sutton, advocating it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I know that Dr. Sutton knows a lot about wheat, but there are many authorities who do not

want this. He is the only authority in Perth who wants it. The others are against it.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is not Mr. Gray an authority? He wants it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I mean an expert wheat authority. He is the baking authority. An interesting question was raised by Mr. Bennetts in regard to farmers making their own dams. I am 100 per cent. behind that proposition. If a farmer makes a good dam he can get his water much cheaper than is possible from many of the large schemes, although I do know that in some places it is not possible to build a dam. We have a team with dam sinking machinery, and that sort of thing, and it is on the job now. It is building dams for individual farmers.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I was speaking of a dam at Newdegate to be a stand-by for the town.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is a matter for the local authority or the Public Works Department. I thought the hon. member was speaking of dams for individual farmers. Mr. Loton brought up the question of sheep trucks, and temporary arrangements to keep the sheep clean. I will go into that matter. He also mentioned the research station at Kojonup. I can assure him that a research station will be established at Kojonup if the difference as to price can be adjusted between the Sub-Treasury, and the buyer and seller. The buyer is prepared to give what the seller wants, but the Sub-Treasury says, "No." That gap has to be bridged.

Hon. L. Craig: It is just too stupid for words!

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so. I discussed the matter with Dr. Dickson in Canberra, two weeks ago, and he told me that was the position. Whether any agreement has been arrived at since, I do not know. The property is a very desirable one. It used to be owned by a Mr. Ross. I expect Mr. Thomson knows it. Its geographical position is good. The price question is the only hitch at the moment. Mr. Loton also mentioned the matter of inspectors at the local sheep sales—for lice and tick. I will be submitting a proposal to Cabinet to make provision for three more inspectors. At present we have only one and he works from Geraldton to Albany. I hope that in the near future another three will

be appointed. Mr. Simpson mentioned the tomato industry at Geraldton. We are very interested in that industry, and recently appointed an adviser who has done very good work there. I hope to visit the growers in the near future. That is something that Mr. Baxter does not approve of, but I think it is a good thing. I know the tomato growers want to see me there, and I am going.

Hon. A. Thomson: If you are as successful in improving that industry as you have been with wheat, go by all means.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not sure whether any improvement can be effected, except in the matter of inspection.

Hon. L. A. Logan: And water!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. I want to say something about the export of tomatoes, because it is interesting to the people of the State. Last month, 989 cases were exported in one ship, and 8,360 cases went in another. That was quite a record, as the largest previous shipment was 4,039 cases. The total for the month was 9,439 cases of tomatoes which went to Singapore. The export of tomatoes is something we want to foster. We shall advise these people to grow the best tomatoes and to deal adequately with all the pests they get. A number of cases of tomatoes were rejected. The rejections were as follows: through spot, 254 cases, weathered cases, 136, and for other reasons 10 cases, giving a total of 400. I believe that work by our research officers will overcome the trouble due to spot.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The figures of cases going to the Eastern States would be interesting.

The HONORARY MINISTER: They are.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I have checked them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: They would be greater than these. I am interested in the trade with the islands. People come to me saying that they want restrictions placed on the poultry industry and other industries, but I think we should first find new markets. One firm arranged to ship poultry, bulls, pigs, and donkeys to Burma. When they went to get the donkeys—in Mr. Simpson's province—they could not catch them, and the boat had to leave without them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They had a donkey behind them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We want to encourage this industry as far as possible, and it is aggravating to think of the restrictions imposed on us from Canberra.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have you the permission of the wharf lumpers to ship these goods?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The goods seem to be going away when permission is granted. The Vice-Consul for America rang me this morning and said that there was difficulty now in getting canned rabbits shipped to America, and that the shipments had been stopped in Sydney. I have inquired the reason for that from Canberra. Had it been said that the rabbits were wanted for England, we could understand that.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They must be seeing that we are well fed in this country before allowing the rabbits to be exported.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If there is a valid reason it should be given to us.

Hon. A. Thomson: I would have thought they would encourage the sending of rabbits to America under the present dollar situation.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Simpson advocated the establishment of two or three research stations between Yankep and Dongara. It is fantastic to expect the establishment of those stations.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I do not think it is.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I am afraid it is. I am keen to have a pilot farm established there on the worst land that can be found on the sandplain. Members would be amazed if they knew the number of requests received for the establishment of research stations. Requests are received from all over the State, and the Government could not afford to accede to all of them. As soon as possible some sort of pilot farm, which is a modified research station for experimental work, will be established in the area referred to by Mr. Simpson. The matter was raised in another place by the member for Irwin-Moore and, "The West Australian" took it up. I am hopeful that something will be done next year.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: This district is well worth exploiting.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Government will see what can be done. It is not wheat country, but it may grow sub-



terranean clover, and after that it might grow cereals, but we cannot establish two or three research stations there. I now come to some remarks by Mr. Latham, with which I do not agree, concerning the farm school at Harvey. That farm school was first established in conjunction with other schools throughout Australia in consequence of a report put up by Dr. Currie and other people. They were asked to go into the question of the desirability of establishing a training school in Western Australia.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Who asked them to do it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Commonwealth Government in conjunction with the State Government. They were asked to conduct this inquiry and, when making the survey, to decide first whether training of any kind was desirable. The Rural Reconstruction Committee had stated emphatically that it was. The question was asked frequently of practical farmers, Ministers of State Governments, technical advisers and officers and others, and not one expressed the opinion that training was completely unnecessary. All agreed that some training of a thoroughly practical nature would benefit all who aspired to success on the land. There was a general recognition that farming was a business and a science as well as a practical art, and it was upon that recognition that this report was drawn up.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I agree with that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Let me finish what I have to say about the farm school. I owe it to the departmental officers who have gone to so much trouble over this farm school to devote some time to it, as they were very hurt on hearing of remarks made both here and in another place. Under the heading "Training for Farm Ownership," the report says—

There are some who will be eligible under the ordinary terms of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for farm training. They may be judged "suitable" by the Co-ordinator of Rural Training and if so judged will be given training as follows:—

(a) Two years practical training on approved farms if no previous experience.

(b) One year's training on approved farms if practical experience one year but less than two.

For both those categories there is recommended an intensive course in schools on principles of farming, so that no farmer

goes to Harvey without practical experience. In spite of that, to hear Mr Latham speaking, one would think that was all the training given to them. Let us see what they do down there. The report says that practical training is given on farms selected and recommended by the local Rural Training Committees, about 50 of which have been appointed. The members of each committee were proposed by the respective road boards. I might add that I am on such a committee myself. There are five members on each committee, which is composed of sound and successful farmers. When it is necessary to place a trainee in practical training in the Merredin area, for instance, the local Rural Training Committee is asked to recommend a suitable farm, with suitable living accommodation and the necessary stock, machinery and so on.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I agreed with that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But Mr. Latham did not agree with the Harvey school, and practically said it was useless.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Tell us what they do at Harvey.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the hon. member will bear with me I think I can explain it to his satisfaction. The Harvey scheme goes hand in hand with practical farming. A trainee there must have had at least 12 months' experience—Mr. Latham suggested six months—before he went there or, if he went there without it, he must have the practical training afterwards. With regard to the intensive course at the Harvey rural training centre, a statement I have on the work sets out—

The course given here is intended to bring the men up to date in the developments in agriculture since the war started as well as to give the latest advances in agriculture, its principles of pasture production and management and animal husbandry, the operation and maintenance of machinery and elementary instruction in farm crafts such as blacksmithing, carpentry, plumbing, cement work and oxy-welding.

I remember very well that when I first went to the North-West, I had three months' notice about the move, and during that period I took a course in blacksmithing, plumbing and carpentry. The knowledge I gained in consequence has been of tremendous assistance to me throughout my life, just as the tuition the trainees receive at Harvey will be to them. I say that any

farmer, irrespective of whether he has been on the land for 11 years, or 20 years or for only one year, would benefit appreciably if he had the advantage of such tuition.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not have to go to Harvey to learn blacksmithing! I had to do that on the farm, because we were 50 miles from the nearest blacksmith.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have been to Harvey and know what is done there. If I had two clear months to spare, I would put that period in at Harvey tomorrow. I wish the hon. member would go down and see for himself what is done there. To proceed—

The opening of the Harvey rural training centre marks a very definite advance in rural education.

I believe that whole-heartedly.

Only those who are already capable of carrying out the practical work of a farm will be accepted for the course. During the instruction, reference is often made to matters which require the trainee to understand and appreciate the practical significance of this.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Mr. Latham would have been a more successful farmer if he had had the benefit of that training.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, possibly so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: As a matter of fact, I have been so successful that I have succeeded in both directions.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member does not approve of agricultural colleges.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, I did not say that; nothing of the sort.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The effect of the hon. member's comments was that he did not believe in agricultural colleges or experts or agricultural research stations.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Would the Honorary Minister suggest that if they cannot go to the University children should not go to school? That is the effect of his contention.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I did not have the advantage of tuition such as one obtains at the agricultural colleges and such as the trainees are securing. I have checked up on some of those who went there. I know of one man at Nungarin who is a wheat farmer. He stayed for two full months at the training school, and he said

that what he learnt was so much wonderful education to him. He claimed that he had learnt things that he had never dreamt of in relation to farming before.

Hon. L. Craig: He had to go to the South-West to learn them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I suggest that members should visit the Harvey school to see what is actually in progress. To continue the statement—

Many farmers, good men, have been handicapped by not having sufficient understanding of the principles behind their work. No matter how sound a man may be at practical work, unless he understands fairly well what he is doing or wants to do, he cannot get the best results. This course is designed to do this.

Then again, I assure the House that the trainees are not herded into huts. Each has a separate hut that is adequately furnished.

Hon. H. Tuckey: They have very fine accommodation down there.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so.

Trainees at the centre make trips to neighbouring farms to see some of the principles applied in practice. Transport is provided by two buses, each seating 25 trainees. Sound agriculture is the putting into practice of sound principles. There are many examples of really good men not doing as well as they might if they had a better knowledge and understanding of what they want to achieve.

That is very true, too.

To say that the Harvey training centre is useless is tantamount to saying that the Department of Agriculture is useless, and that the expert officers are useless, too.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is merely so much exaggeration!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member implied that all this was useless.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not say anything of the sort.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member cannot get away from that.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not say anything about the Agricultural Department being useless.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The statement the hon. member made was that it was practically useless for these men to go there. He said it was extraordinary to send men to the Harvey training school. I have a record of what he stated. Many officers who are specialists, visit the centre and participate in the instruction given to

the trainees. These have included the following, who dealt with the subjects mentioned:—

Mr. Roberts, farm economies.  
Mr. Toop, stock diseases and troubles.  
Mr. Elliott, pasture establishment and management.

Mr. Wild and officers on vermin control.

Under this heading instruction is given regarding the use of poisons for dealing with rabbits and other vermin, the setting of traps for dingoes, and so forth.

Mr. Jenkins, insect pest control.  
Mr. Cass-Smith, plant disease control.  
Mr. Meadley, weed control.  
Mr. Gardiner, trees and shrubs.  
Mr. Millington, plant breeding.  
Mr. Davenport, fat lamb production.

These officers give instruction in the subjects I have mentioned in addition to that which is forthcoming from the principal and the chief instructor at the training centre. Then again—

Instruction is also given in farm management. This includes the keeping of suitable records dealing with paddock operations, harvest and flock or herd results, and also in connection with his business transactions, so that the trainee may secure a firm understanding of his financial position.

How many farmers are in possession of that knowledge? They simply go on and on, put a crop in and take it off, have a look at their income tax—and yet know nothing about their operations from the standpoint of realising whether they are a paying or a losing proposition.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I hope they will make no mistakes after all this intensive education.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member during his speech mentioned the names of three farmers—Mr. Maisey of Dowerin, Mr. Lundy of Cunderdin, and Mr. Teasdale of Merredin—and said that the trainees would get all the practical experience and knowledge required if they were put on the farms of one or other of those gentlemen. Personally, I cannot imagine those three gentlemen devoting their evening hours to teaching trainees bookkeeping and farm economies. They could not do it; but that is done at Harvey. The training centre there is well equipped and the plant available for instruction purposes includes the following:—

Three tractors.  
Harvester and ploughs.

Disc harrow.  
Milk machine and separator.  
Grader.  
Petrol engine.  
Binder.  
Diesel engine.  
Motor.  
Shearing plant.

The trainees are taught to take a tractor to pieces and see what it is all about. In the ordinary course of events, not many farmers have such knowledge and experience. Indeed, very few would be able to do that. I believe I have convinced the House how desirable is the Harvey training centre for the education of these young men. I shall say no more. If I have omitted to furnish information that was requested by any member, he knows where I am to be found, and I shall be pleased at any time to give it to him.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I am not quite satisfied about stock transport. The promise you mentioned may have been given, but it was impossible to secure petrol. The cartage of stock was entirely stopped during the war for a long period.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Does the hon. member mean by road?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Yes. I was carting all my lambs down, but then I was stopped and threatened with prosecution.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is a matter for the Minister for Transport, and I can only inform the hon. member that I am sympathetic regarding his point. I will take the matter up with the Minister and see whether anything can be done to lift the restrictions on stock transport. I mentioned what Sir Hal Colebatch had said about farm practices, and I can assure the House that I am entirely sympathetic.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Transport Board has been stopping it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I know, and I shall do what I can to help in the matter. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.40]: May I at the outset congratulate you, Mr. Deputy President, on the position to which you have been appointed. I cannot say that I hope you will occupy it for long, but every member is pleased at the manner in which you are discharging your

duties. We hope that the President will soon be fit enough to return to our midst. May I also congratulate the new members and express the wish that their services will at all times be of great benefit to the community and that, in carrying out their duties in this House, they will forget any Party or parochial bias with a view to looking after the interests of the community at large instead of one section or district only. It is unfortunate that Mr. Forrest, as well as the President, is ill, but I trust that both will be with us again in the near future.

Many members have been very kind in extending congratulations to me on having been placed in the position of Leader of the House. I am aware of many of my own shortcomings. I am equally aware of the many difficulties that lie ahead, and I trust that members will bear with me and give me the assistance they have always extended to my predecessors. Perhaps I should ask them to give me a little more help than they gave my immediate predecessor in order that I may be enabled to discharge the business of the House with the dignity of manner that characterised him. Only by the help of members shall I be able to maintain the dignity of the House and get through the business in the same friendly way as in the past.

It is not for me to criticise the late Administration, but some members have seen fit to draw comparisons. Therefore I feel that I must briefly reply to the matters they have mentioned. I do not think we are so much concerned with the past as with the future, but we must look to the past if only to see what mistakes have been made or what benefits have accrued as a guide to what we should do in future. It has been suggested that the present Government has come into office to lie on a bed of roses. Sir Hal Colebatch aptly dealt with that, but I should like to point out that, if we are on a bed of roses, all the roses have been picked and the thorns have been left, and those thorns, from what I have seen of them, will keep us fully occupied for many years. Each month, however, we have been able to show that it is possible to remove some of those thorns.

Many members have deplored the state of the railways, the hospitals and the schools and have tried to excuse it by the

incidence of war. None of them has suggested that in 1939 all was well, although from 1933 to 1939 peace prevailed. It has been alleged that, during that period, we had the most capable men in charge of affairs. We have been told that after the 1930-33 depression, conditions were bad and could not be rectified in six years. Yet, after six years, certain displaced persons and their supporters are grieved that the present Administration has not rectified their shortcomings in a matter of five months, shortcomings on which the electors gave a definite decision.

We were told by Mr. Davies, who was quoting President Lincoln, that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but cannot fool all the people all the time. That was brought home forcibly to me last March, and I quite agree with his statement. In fact, you can fool the people for a very long time, but last March the people decided that they had been fooled long enough. Let me mention a few of the matters I have in mind. The railways are in a very bad state indeed. In order to rectify the trouble, the Government has deemed it necessary to get the best outside advice. Members will have read the reports in the newspapers that a gentleman is being brought from South Africa where the railways are of the same gauge as ours where fast trains are run, where Garratt engines hauled the Royal train throughout the country and where everything pertaining to railways, apparently, is as it should be. In one year, 1931-32, our railways hauled 1,159,948 tons of wheat, whereas in 1945-46, the quantity hauled was only 571,000 tons.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That was because of bulk trucks.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We have been told that it was because of the state of the engines—the shocking state of the railways. At present, the department does not know how it is going to move the coming harvest, because of the deplorable condition of the railways. Yet, in the middle of the depression, the railways moved the largest quantity of wheat ever hauled in this State.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes, 50,000,000 bushels.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have given the quantity in tons. I have a vivid recollection in 1934 of the then Minister for Railways, Hon. J. C. Willecock, and the Pre-

mier of the day, Hon. P. Collier, asking for £500,000 spread over four years for repairs to the railways—for rollingstock, tracks, etc.—owing to the shocking state into which they had fallen. Yet, in 1931-32, the railways moved the large tonnage of wheat I have mentioned, and now, after a lapse of many years, with six years of war intervening, they are in a mess. Who is responsible for that? The Administration somewhere!

We cannot attribute all the blame to the war because, during the war, the railways were used for defence purposes and had to be maintained. The present position is due simply to general slackness. Take the Garratt engines: We know what happened just a little while ago. Now we have quite a number of Garratts being put on the rails much more quickly than formerly. There is a demand for Garratt engines; they are desired, because a thorough investigation was made and as a result they have been improved. I am not suggesting that the present Government should take all the credit for this—a Royal Commissioner inquired into the matter—but I do say that the present Government saw that the Garratt engines were put back into running as quickly as possible.

With regard to education, it is well known that the buildings are in a deplorable condition and that the schools are overcrowded. The ex-Minister for Education followed a scheme of concentrating children in larger schools in order that they might receive better education. I have not the slightest doubt that he was correct in so doing. Unfortunately, he got ahead of himself; he concentrated the children before he obtained adequate accommodation for them. Hence the difficulty of overcrowded schools. He even provided buses to convey them to the central schools.

Hon. H. Tuckey: But no roads.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think there were sufficient roads to take them. There we have an instance of a desire to improve education without providing the facilities to do so. Again the present Government is asked to improve things. When we came into office we found that £35,000 had been authorised and was being spent on a school at Carnarvon attended by a comparatively few white children and a number of half-castes. That work was not stopped, but it was modified.

It is now proceeding, but at a cost of £17,000 or £18,000 instead of £35,000, because we felt it was not so much a question of money as a question of using the material for more urgent work. Further, at Carnarvon white children were being mixed with aboriginal children at the school. Personally, I see no objection to that practice provided the aboriginal children are sent to school in a clean and proper state, but from what I am informed I regret to say that at Carnarvon that is not so. Again, the teacher placed the white and the aboriginal children alternately in the class. The previous Administration was at fault in not seeing that, if the children were to be put in the same class, they sat at different desks.

The practice has been altered by the present Administration. Again, if I may say so, that was done within five months of its assuming office. Those are some of the cobwebs that have been swept away. It is the policy of the present Government to segregate the aboriginal and half-caste children if they go to school in an unclean state, so that white mothers will not be upset at their children being forced into close contact with native children who are in a dirty condition. Mr. Gray pointed out that school children were receiving money daily from their parents to buy food at tuck shops. He said it was most unsuitable food; in fact he said the city Health Department was to blame. I have never yet heard it said that that department could not be controlled by the Commissioner of Health.

The Health Act gives the Commissioner complete control over health matters. Mr. Gray has a complaint on that score, but what was done to remedy it? Why did not the previous Government do something? It seems a little late in the day to complain in this House about parents giving their children money to spend on unsuitable or improper food. It could not be a question of money; as far as I can see, Mr. Gray is complaining about the way in which parents care for their children. I am sorry that the previous Administration did not guide the parents in this matter.

May I come to the matter of the Mine Workers' Relief Fund? This was touched upon by several members. It is extremely complicated. The past Administration tried hard to arrive at a proper understanding with the Commonwealth Government. The amount paid to the unfortunate T.B. sufferer is

very meagre, but the same obstacle arose when we discussed the matter of pensions for the Collie coalminers in this Chamber. If we increase the payment, the Commonwealth will be relieved of all contributions. The Commonwealth will only permit us to pay a certain amount. The matter is still under discussion and I sincerely hope that a greater payment will be made to the T.B. sufferers.

I have visited many hospitals in the State and I assure the House that I was absolutely disgusted at the way in which the hospital buildings had been allowed to decay over a period of many years. In some cases even minor repairs were left undone. In the Geraldton Hospital a pane of glass was missing. It had been missing for years and as a consequence the floor covering and other things were ruined. With regard to the shortage of nurses, we are doing our best to improve the position and have recently appointed a tutor sister. She will attend Government hospitals in the country and will investigate the possibility of inaugurating what is known as the block system. She will help to teach trainees in the country as well as in Perth and Fremantle and it is hoped that her efforts will assist in alleviating the present position. We have sent an infant health sister to the North-West. She went as far as Wyndham and visited the coastal towns. She also went to Marble Bar and Wittenoom Gorge. That was the first time anything had been done in this way for the children and mothers in that part of the State. We hope that not only will the visit be repeated, but that we shall be able to establish a recognised service year in year out.

On the question of T.B., the previous Administration agreed to undertake a campaign to fight this disease. That campaign has been vigorously carried on by the present Administration. One of the first things we did was to buy a hall, known as Cathedral Hall, opposite the Perth Hospital, in Murray Street. Work was immediately put in hand and the hall altered for the purpose of installing an x-ray plant in order that the public could go there and be examined. Additional staff, both medical and technical, has been engaged. Clinics have already been established at the Kalgoorlie, Fremantle, Northam, Collie and Bunbury Hospitals. We hope to continue to improve the facilities to enable the

whole of the public to be examined. For the mental patients another psychiatrist, who has had great experience in the treatment of mental diseases in children, is expected to arrive in this State in the course of a day or two. Another home for old women has been opened pending the completion of the larger building at Canning.

The Royal Perth Hospital will not be ready for some time, but I would like to refer to a statement which was made in another place in connection with the propaganda at the recent election. May I give the facts which caused that statement to be made in the policy speech of the present Leader of the Opposition? I would like members to note the date, November, 1946. Early in that month information was supplied to the then Premier as follows:—

Royal Perth Hospital. The work on this hospital is proceeding rapidly, the limiting factors being the delivery of mechanical equipment from other States and abroad. It is hoped that the hospital will be opened for use shortly after Easter next year. The cost to the 28th October has been £548,000. This institution, when completed, will be one of the finest hospitals in Australia.

The statement was made by the present Leader of the Opposition in his policy speech on the 25th February that it was expected the hospital could be opened "next month," which would have been March. The terrible uncertainty of construction work at this period, coupled with the fact that later non-deliveries of material were caused by frequent industrial interruptions, involved prolonged delays. Nevertheless, the then Premier made that statement, and I regret to say that it was said in another place, by way of interjection, that the cause of the mis-statement was the Under Secretary for Health. That was not so, and I think it is only fair that that statement should be corrected. Now I would like to refer to the medical school, with which the Government is most anxious to proceed. Fortunately we were able quite recently to have several long conversations with Dr. Currie, Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Professor McCallum who was over here for the Science Congress.

One of the great difficulties we are experiencing is that the new Royal Perth Hospital was not designed to help in the establishment of a medical school, such a school not

having been thought of at the time. Furthermore the building is not in the right position, because we are told that we need at least 20 acres for an ordinary hospital; and members know the area of land that is available in the locality. So we are faced with obstacles, but we are hoping to overcome them. One would have thought the previous Government would have been aware of these various difficulties. Apparently the then Minister for Education and the Minister for Health did know, but private members did not; because last April two deputations waited on me to ask questions about the provision of hospital accommodation at Fremantle and on the Goldfields. I hardly think they would have done that had they known of the difficulties, unless they realised quite early after the change of Government that shortcomings could be rectified by a keen and able Administration.

Hon. G. Fraser: We were taking you up on your election promise that you would open the Grosvenor Hospital.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I consider that those gentlemen paid me an extremely high honour in coming to me within a fortnight and asking me to do what their Ministers had been unable to do for 14 years. It was a very great compliment.

Hon. G. Fraser: You mentioned in your election campaign that the Grosvenor Hospital would be opened.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Give it a rest!

Hon. G. Fraser: We came to ask you to wipe off some of the cobwebs.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am afraid my friend does not realise that I am making my maiden speech as a Minister.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is why I have been silent until now.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: However, I am very pleased to hear the interjections. The members comprising those deputations must have thought that an able Administration, untrammelled by outside influences, could effect improvements. I would like to think that was the reason for the deputation. I am sure members will agree with me that it was so. If it was not that they thought the present Government could do these things, why did they come to me? Was it to bluff themselves or their electors or whom? They did not bluff me.

Hon. G. Fraser: It was to call your bluff. We have, too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: By interjection the hon. member referred to the Grosvenor Hospital. I understand a photograph of that hospital was one of the pictures with cobwebs on it that went blazing through the country. Let me give the history of the hospital. It was closed in 1946, during the administration of the previous Government.

Hon. E. M. Davies: In January, 1947!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I will stand corrected, but the file says 1946. The deputation waited on me in April, 1947 and the hospital was opened as a "C" class hospital in June, two months after the deputation.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It is a convalescent home, though.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is a "C" class hospital, which the deputation asked for. I feel very flattered indeed that they came to me and I trust that they will realise now that a keen, energetic Administration had it opened and the bluff they called was the bluff on themselves.

Hon. G. Fraser: You had to admit in your letter that the Government had not closed it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have the file here.

Hon. G. Fraser: Read your own letter where you told us that the Government did not close it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I did not say the Government closed it. I said it was closed in 1946.

Hon. G. Fraser: We called your bluff on the cobweb business.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Please allow the Minister to proceed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They called my bluff! I am very pleased my friends opposite say they could not wipe the cobwebs off. That is what the people of Western Australia found out.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The deputation from Kalgoorlie was arranged by the local governing bodies who asked their parliamentary representatives—who were Labour members—to call on you.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And the only people who called on me were members

of Parliament. There was not a single member of a local governing body, unless he was a member of Parliament as well.

Hon. G. Bennetts interjected.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Oh, keep quiet!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask hon. members to observe the conventions of this House. They were each given a good hearing when they spoke and I suggest —

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is highly disorderly to interject.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:—that members allow the Minister to proceed.

Hon. G. Fraser: I was calling your bluff about the cobwebs.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am keeping to the cobwebs.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Keep quiet! You are not in the Assembly now!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Davies suggested that whooping cough should be a notifiable disease. I made inquiries about that and I find it is impracticable because the dangerous time of whooping cough is before a child whoops. After the child whoops there is very little danger of infection. Further, there are few parents who, even after the child whoops, take it along to the doctor. I am assured that to make whooping cough a notifiable disease would have no practical effect. The amenities in the Railway Department were mentioned by Mr. Davies. He astounded me when he said that there were no baths for the men at the loco. sheds at Fremantle. They are the first things that should have been provided. To my mind, a Government should never be behind privately-owned industrial enterprise. Any private enterprise of any size looks first to the amenities for the men. I regret that, after 14 years of Labour administration, there are no baths at Fremantle.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I said, "warm baths."

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, warm baths.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Because plans are being prepared for re-building, I asked that provision for baths be included.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I understood that Mr. Davies brought before the notice of the House, and quite rightly, the

fact that there were no baths—and by that I am referring to hot baths; proper baths.

Hon. E. M. Davies: There is none, either.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think it is shocking that there are no baths. I feel quite sure that the Minister for Railways will see that proper amenities are supplied for the employees. I do not know whether a member in another place desired to flatter me as being related to a magistrate, or whether he desired to flatter a magistrate because he was related to me. But whichever it is, I sincerely trust that that hon. member will never be related to a magistrate. I hope he will keep his relations away from the courts. So long as I am a Minister I will not be so cowardly as to prevent a person deserving of a position from getting it, merely because he is related to me. Nor will I ever hesitate to assist members of Parliament, who are related to me, at any election. Fortunately, or unfortunately, my forebears on my mother's side and on my father's side came here in 1829. It would be very awkward if, because a person is related to me, he could not get a job in the Civil Service. If any person is deserving of an appointment, such as the one referred to, I shall do my best to see that he gets it, if he is related to me. The question of water is one of great import to the mining industry. When I was in Kalgoorlie in April—

Hon. G. Bennetts: It was the 25th April.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is wrong; it was the 24th April.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is so. You were at Norseman on the 25th.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is wrong again. I was at Norseman on the 23rd. I said then that we would do our utmost to reduce the cost. It appears that this matter requires a tremendous amount of investigation on the financial side, and I understand that these inquiries are nearly complete. I hope that in the near future some pronouncement will be made. It has been suggested that 30s. a week is not sufficient for prospectors. I agree with that in one sense, but a rather peculiar set of circumstances arises here inasmuch as the 30s. is given without any inquiries being made as to how it will be spent. It is not meant to be a living wage, but merely to be of assistance. If a greater sum were given there is the possibility of undesirables com-



ing in who would get their tucker and do nothing. Admittedly, a good man has to struggle on it, but, generally speaking, he is happy and he does work because if he does not, he has, unfortunately, only a bare existence.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I take it there are inspectors who would watch that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It would be a waste of money for inspectors to go round to watch these men and say, "Get on with your work." I do not think there is any suggestion of inspectors being appointed. A request was made for a sulphide mill. Well, plans are being prepared, so that if and when such ore is available it can be treated. The plant will be erected in Kalgoorlie. Inquiries are being made and queries have been sent to the prospectors' associations to ascertain what sulphide ore is available and will be available in the future. Members will agree with me that that is a reasonable proposition.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Is there anything regarding the Yilgarn district?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We cannot have these mills all over the place. This will be at Kalgoorlie, I think. Recently we appointed a first-class man to the position of Director of the School of Mines. Unfortunately a man who is temperamentally unfit for the job objected, and I am sorry to say that he has shown since the appointment that he undoubtedly is temperamentally unfit. He approached the Returned Soldiers' League and the Civil Service Association, and those two organisations have let the matter drop. He also asked a member of Parliament to have the papers placed on the Table of the House, and that was done quite willingly. I have heard nothing more. But unfortunately he is making allegations that there is no chance of promotion in the School of Mines.

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

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Before tea I was referring to the appointment of the Director of the School of Mines. The gentleman who is annoyed at not being appointed has now told the staff of the school that they should get behind him and force the Government to appoint him because of the principle that, unless they

do so, there will be no promotion among the staff of the School of Mines.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Is there any proof of that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. The fact is that the previous Director of the School of Mines, who died recently, was on the staff of the school at the time of his promotion. By that I mean that from the school he joined the Forces, but was recalled to take up the position of director. His immediate predecessor, Dr. Moore, was also one of the staff of the School of Mines when he was promoted. I was asked if there were any proof of that. On the file that is on the Table in another place there is a letter sent to me protesting against the appointment of Mr. Hobson. It sets out that a sub-committee of the staff had passed a resolution of protest. The letter is signed by a gentleman for the chairman, the reason for that being that the chairman was the man who complained.

Word has recently come to me from various sources that members of the staff of the school are still complaining that there is no promotion available in the School of Mines. That is quite wrong. They have every opportunity of promotion if, when the time comes, they have the necessary qualifications. Most of them are young men, and there is only one who is complaining about the present promotion. The School of Mines is renowned throughout the world and is known and respected everywhere. The position of director is one of great importance and requires a man of a certain type, with a certain type of personality. It is believed that the man who has been appointed fulfils all the requirements. He was appointed by a committee and I endorsed the recommendations of that committee without any hesitation at all. The gentleman who now occupies that position was recommended as an alternative director when Mr. Fletcher was appointed, in case Mr. Fletcher could not take the position.

I do not think anyone has suggested that the present occupant of the position is not well qualified and an excellent man for the position. I want to emphasise that the objections are being raised by a man who did not receive the appointment, and I regret to say that, to my mind, he is not a man with the necessary personality for it.

Otherwise, there is nothing against him except, perhaps, certain of his actions since the position was filled, but I do not wish or propose to go into that.

I will deal now with the goldmining industry, which is in a rather precarious position at present owing to rising costs. It is thought by some that, because mines pay dividends, they must be flourishing, but it is because some mines are dealing with richer ore than are others. We want to recover the gold from the lower-grade ore and so keep the mines running for a longer period, in order to keep the mining towns going. It was put to the Prime Minister that he should give a bonus on gold, but I fear that he did not quite grasp what was meant as to keeping the lower-grade mines in production. If we are to keep the Goldfields towns going, it is essential to have a bonus on gold or, alternatively, for the price of gold to be raised. The latter course is an international affair, which we may not be able to influence, though as to that I cannot express an opinion. However, something must be done.

There is a much brighter outlook in the case of our base metals. The prospects for lead in the Northampton district are extremely good, and there is increased activity in the case of tantalum, tin, vermiculite, and kyanite, which is used for fire-bricks, and silver-lead at Derby, where a syndicate is in operation and producing. The iron-ore at Cockatoo Island will be in production shortly, as the time up to the present has been occupied in installing the necessary machinery, and so on. There is the asbestos at Wittenoom Gorge, where £250,000 has been spent. That industry will necessitate the building of a townsite and considerable governmental expenditure.

It will be well worth while to develop the enormous deposit of asbestos that we hope can be sold on the world market in competition with asbestos from elsewhere. It is a blue asbestos, which is the best of all. At Blue Spec, approximately 20 miles east of Nullagine, there is a flourishing mine producing antimony and gold. It is under new management and we have great hopes of it. Bewick Moreing & Co. have taken over the management there. The pyrites mine at Norseman shows great promise and we hope to obtain a lot of valuable sulphuric acid from that source. There are believed

to be valuable deposits, in the beach sands of our south coast, of materials such as ilmenite, which is used principally for paint. There are firms and private prospectors operating there, and the Commonwealth Government is doing a lot of research.

Hon. H. Tuckey: It is easy to find. There is plenty of it there.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am glad to hear that. There is beryllium near Marble Bar, and there is a keen demand for what might be called our base minerals.

As regards coal, members have probably seen from the reports in the newspapers that developments have taken place at Eradu, which is about 25 miles east of Geraldton, at a spot within 100 yards of the railway. Two shafts were put down and coal was struck at a depth of approximately 150 feet. So far as the experts are able to judge, the seam is about 22 feet in thickness. At the present time the coal is being analysed, but we fear it will not prove equal to that obtained at Collie. It is doubtful whether it will prove suitable for locomotives but it should be of great use for ordinary heating purposes in factories and so on.

During the course of the debate several members referred to the housing situation and the high cost of dwellings. That result is brought about through rather extraordinary circumstances that apply not only to Western Australia, for the trouble may be said to be almost world-wide. The prevalent idea today seems to be, more pay and less work. A peculiar suggestion finds favour that it is invidious to do any work. To me that is strange, because I think everyone of us who is fit and able desires to be occupied, whether it be at manual or mental labour.

After a manual worker has laboured for 40 hours or 44 hours in a week, he may spend the balance of his time working either at some occupation at home or at outside employment for which he receives extra pay. That is quite all right. To my mind there can be no objection to such a procedure. Nevertheless, an idea seems to be gaining currency that a man is stupid to work. Why work? they ask. The result is that we have the movement in favour of a 40-hour week. The present Government has been blamed for opposing such a step. On the contrary, it said that, in the opinion of Ministers,

the time was not proper for such a step but that we would not oppose it nor yet support it because the question was one solely for the Arbitration Court to determine.

Hon. G. Fraser: And so you sat on the fence!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Government sat on the fence, and I sincerely hope it will always sit on the fence and that Parliament will adopt the same course when the question of the hours of employment and payment of workers has to be dealt with.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I trust that the question of labour conditions and payment will never become a matter of Party politics. If it did, that would be the stone end of things. We have an independent tribunal and, irrespective of what the Government may be, it should leave such matters to the court, and abide by its decision.

The Honorary Minister: In this matter we did the same as Mr. Cain.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We withdrew the advocate who had been appointed to act on behalf of this State in support of the 40-hour week, because we considered it was a matter for the Arbitration Court to decide on the evidence that might be presented by the various parties appearing before it. The Government did not see why it should waste public funds in employing counsel.

Hon. G. Fraser: But you did employ counsel.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think we did in conjunction with the South Australian Government, but merely to watch the interests of our two Governments and not for the purpose of presenting a case. Today we have quite high wages, but unfortunately, nothing that we can buy in consequence. Therefore, we come to the position that a man has money but he cannot procure anything with it. He cannot purchase a home or other requirements. I read somewhere the other day a rather apt query: Which is the better, to be a rich young man with a bride and no house, or to be a poor young man with only his wages, a bride and a house? Obviously there is no question about it. Money is nothing.

We want houses. How can we get them? Everything that goes into the erection of a house requires labour, whether it be a win-

dow-sash or a sink or a shower-bath. Every bit of timber that is required involves the use of labour. If all those engaged in the production of these requirements are to work only 40 hours a week, the price of goods turned out must go up. The extra money paid to builders' employees is nothing in comparison with the extra cost involved in the production of commodities used in the construction of a home, such as bricks, timber and so forth.

Hon. G. Fraser: There is no 40-hour week yet, so why the increase of 30 per cent. in Government tenders during the last few months?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am coming to that. It is that people are not working and producing as they used to in the same number of hours.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is what I tried to tell members myself.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the course of Mr. Bolton's speech, one member interjected that every time the question of reduced working hours was raised there was the same old outcry that we would go bankrupt if that course were adopted. What is the position? Have we not become bankrupt? People cannot get houses—but they can get money. With that money they cannot purchase the necessary commodities. What do we find? The stage has been reached in Great Britain where the Government has had to turn round and tell the people that they must increase the hours of labour; otherwise they could not live. That is just ordinary, plain common sense. Unless we work, we cannot produce; unless we produce, we cannot get goods to buy or sell, nor can we get food to eat. The question arises as to what is the economic minimum. England has found that the hours of labour that prevail are below the economic minimum. In Australia, we have found that the hours of labour here are also below the economic minimum.

A suggestion was made to me by someone, and I think he was on the right track. He said that what should be done now is that hours of work should be increased quite considerably until goods were available for manufacture and that when we are supplying all our requirements and the machinery was in full production then we could reduce working hours to 38, if necessary, and we would be all right. The trouble is that we

are trying to make up the lag of the six years of war and at the same time to reduce the hours of labour. As a result, we have been looking for what we are now facing—no houses and no goods, and naturally we are in difficulties.

It is my earnest hope that every one of us, irrespective of what our politics may be or what we are doing, will work harder and produce more during such time as we do work. It is my earnest hope that we can do that and induce our people to work a little harder. The question of pay does not really matter. So long as we work and produce more within the period devoted to labour, the sooner will we have houses, the sooner will we be able to add to the comfort and happiness of the people, and the sooner our standard of living will be raised still higher. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

On motion by the Minister for Mines, resolved: That the Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor by the President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

#### BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (Continuance).
- 2, Supreme Court Act Amendment.
- 3, Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment.
- 4, Unclaimed Moneys Act Amendment.
- 5, Dentists Act Amendment.  
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.
- 6, Dried Fruits Act, 1926, Re-enactment.  
Introduced by the Honorary Minister.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES.** (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 9th September.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 7.57 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28th August, 1947.

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

#### QUESTIONS.

#### SERVICEMEN'S LAND SETTLEMENT.

(a) *As to Planning—Officers, Trainees and Acquisition of Properties.*

Mr. REYNOLDS (on notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many farm-planning officers are there on the staff of the War Service Land Settlement Scheme?

(2) How many on the valuation staff?

(3) Is the number of farm-planning officers and valuation staff sufficient to implement the scheme?

(4) If not, what steps are being taken to increase the staff?

(5) What likelihood is there that returned servicemen classified as suitable will be given farms, say, within three years?

(6) How long after leaving Harvey training school can trainees expect to obtain farms?

(7) What action, if any, has been taken to speed up the purchase of large properties so as to expedite the provision of farms for these would-be settlers?

(8) Is the Government preparing legislation to amend the Closer Settlement Act, if necessary, so that these large properties may be resumed?