

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 30th July, 1940.

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

QUESTION—UNIVERSITY.

Reports of Prof. Wallace and Mr. McLaren.

Mr. THORN asked the Premier: Will he obtain and have laid on the Table of the House the recent reports upon the University by Professor Wallace and Mr. McLaren?

The PREMIER replied: Yes. I have the reports here and will place them on the Table of the House.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the Premier ordered: That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier ordered: That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all motions and orders of the day.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, Sessional Committees were appointed as follows:—

Library.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Tonkin, and Mr. Patrick.

Standing Orders.—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Doney, Mr. Withers, and Mr. North.

House.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lambert, Mr. McLarty, Mr. Stubbs, and Mr. Wilson.

Printing.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sampson, and Mr. Styants.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,500,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Premier resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.47]: I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1941, a sum not exceeding £2,500,000.

This is the ordinary Supply Bill that is passed at the beginning of each session and its passage is necessary in order to finance the operations of the State until the Estimates are passed. The Estimates are now being prepared and will be presented to Parliament at, I hope, a very early date, which, however, will depend largely upon the deliberations of the Loan Council that will take place next week. At the conclusion of that meeting we shall be in a much better position to know the position regarding finance and to prepare our Estimates accordingly. Every effort has been made to keep down expenditure wherever possible, and accounts have been closely scrutinised with that object in view. The amount provided for in the Bill is £2,500,000 which is similar to that covered by Supply Bill (No. 1) of last year. The money will provide for the first three months of the financial year and is allocated as follows:—From Consolidated Revenue Fund, £1,750,000; from the General Loan Fund, £450,000; and from the Treasurer's Advance, £300,000. The expenditure for the first three months of the last financial year was slightly above the amount then provided, and totalled

£1,745,511. Of course that does not include the expenditure under special Acts such as that for interest, sinking fund contributions and other statutory charges. The provision from the General Loan Fund will be for use in carrying on several loan projects on which work is proceeding at present. This will enable us to provide as much employment as possible and, of course, the provision from the Treasurer's Advance is to meet expenditure that cannot be charged to specific Votes.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

The House resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [4.53]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1941, a sum not exceeding £1,750,000 be granted out of Consolidated Revenue, £450,000 from the General Loan Fund, and £300,000 from the Public Accounts for the purpose of temporary advances to be made by the Treasurer.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

Bill Introduced.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading.

On motion by the Premier, Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Issue and application of £2,500,000:

Mr. McDONALD: I remember that last year the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. C. G. Latham), who is no doubt reserving himself for an effort later in the session, raised the question of the expenditure of this money. It seems a strange thing to me that the House should advance £2,500,000 apparently each year without any discussion. The interjection of surprise by the member

for Perth (Mr. Needham) during the second reading was quite justified. We are granting supply of £2,500,000, which approaches about a quarter of the total outlay of the State in the course of the year. I observe that the figures mentioned in the Bill are identical with those that appeared in a similar Bill brought down at this stage last year. We can thus be assured that the State will not spend any more than was spent last year. In 1939 a discussion occurred as to the propriety—and I might perhaps say the duty—of the Treasurer and the Government giving the House some idea of how the money was being spent. My recollection is that the Minister for Works, as acting Premier, was asked to furnish the House with a list of some of the loan works on which the money was being spent and would be spent. I think the least that is due to this House is that there should be some statement of how the money is to be expended. I know that a budget is presented later in the year, but we do not know which works have been completed and which are being continued. If the operations of the House in Committee are to be anything more than a mere farce or of a rubber stamp character, the least we can expect is to have some statement, even though it be a short one, of how the money is to be disbursed.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Year after year the question has been raised as to what this expenditure is for, and I have become tired of pointing out that the House has very little control of the finances of the State. By Act of Parliament we have handed over that control not only to Ministers, but also to departmental heads, to the Public Service Commissioner and to the Arbitration Court. That is where most of the money is going. On this occasion, the sum needed from loan funds, £450,000, is quite small in comparison with that required in certain years. I have closely followed the accounts that have been submitted to the public during the year. This money is already in hand, because I presume that the Treasurer received a share from the last allocation. We know that many public works are still proceeding and others are to be undertaken. There is also some road work proceeding and this necessitates the expenditure of money. I have always hoped—though the hope has been in vain—that we would have the Estimates before passing this Supply Bill. Through the ages, however, the necessity appears to have arisen for Par-

liament to pass the Bill without having seen the Estimates, in order that the Government might be able to carry on after the 30th June. As a matter of fact a considerable part of this money has already been spent without any authorisation by Parliament. For instance, the payments falling due in July have been made to civil servants and wages men. I was glad to hear the Premier's announcement that the Estimates will be brought down early. We ought to have something more than a mere Bill of this kind thrown on the table. The Premier is really asking for very little new money; much of it has been authorised under statutes for the payment for interest or for other disbursements. As I have previously remarked, we have reached the stage of having handed over control of the finances to other bodies, and very little control is left in the hands of Parliament. For that reason I did not desire to delay the passing of the Bill. We ought, as the Premier said, to curtail expenditure as much as possible, but that point I propose to deal with when speaking on the Address-in-reply.

The PREMIER: The usual procedure has been followed on this occasion. The business of the country could not be carried on any better if we had a full dress debate on the Supply Bill covering the first month or six weeks of the financial year, seeing that the Estimates for the whole year will be introduced in the course of a few weeks and details of all departments, as well as Loan Estimates, will be submitted. Members will then have the fullest opportunity to discuss matters of policy. Each Minister, in introducing his Estimates, will give an outline of the work proposed to be carried out by his department, and members will be able to express their views on any phase of departmental activity that calls for comment. To have a debate of that kind now and immediately follow with another debate on the Estimates would be a waste of time. I have told members that the Estimates will be presented at the earliest possible date. The Loan Council will meet again a fortnight hence and its deliberations will probably be completed in a couple of days. Then the Government will be able to formulate its programme and the Estimates will be introduced almost immediately afterwards. I do not say that the present practice is the right one, but it is convenient and it allows of full discussion by every member when the Esti-

mates are introduced. To have a preliminary discussion at this stage, and later a full discussion dealing with the same subjects, would be futile.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not wish to labour the point, but this is an occasion when some short statement of public works and the way in which the money is to be expended should be submitted. Although in the seven or eight years I have occupied a seat in this Chamber there has been little discussion on the Supply Bill, I think that members should be given some details as to how the £2,500,000 is to be spent. I have been told that that view was strongly held by the Premier's party when in Opposition, and that the Supply Bill was sometimes debated for hours on end. I recall that when he was Leader of the Opposition he considered that the least the Government should do was to give such information. Apparently we are to sit here deaf and dumb while the Government says it proposes to spend £2,500,000 without even putting down half a sheet of foolscap to show how the money is to be expended.

The PREMIER: That is not quite the position. The programme of works, particularly loan works, is considered generally in November and relates to works to be undertaken in the ensuing twelve months. It has been the custom for each State to have a carry-over of £300,000, £400,000 or £500,000 at the end of the financial year to continue the works in progress pending further authorisations by Parliament. Doubtless the Minister for Works could indicate offhand many ways in which this money is being spent. Some of it is required for the completion of the Canning Dam, some for the Samson's Brook Dam, and some for the Stirling Dam, while money is also needed for railways and water supply requirements. Some of this expenditure is debited to loan and some to revenue, but it is all expenditure for continuing the provision of services. When any new work is proposed it is submitted for discussion under the Loan Estimates. This £2,500,000 is required to continue works that Parliament has discussed—works that were started in the last financial year—pending the preparation of the programme for the ensuing year.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Second Day.*

Debate resumed from the 25th July.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [5.3]: Members have had an opportunity to read the Lieut.-Governor's opening Speech, and I have no doubt that, like myself, they were somewhat disappointed with it. One would have expected the Speech to supply the public with some statement of policy as to the work for the session, and some details of the legislation likely to be introduced. There was a time when legislation that was not mentioned in the Address-in-reply was not dealt with by the House. That was the practice not many years ago, but we are drifting away from that principle and are experiencing much more despotic control than we had in the past. If I might offer an excuse for the Government, perhaps the belief is that this is not a time for long-winded speeches but is a time when the public expects action rather than talk. On that ground I might excuse the Government for the barrenness of the Speech.

We are all in agreement that the desperate situation in which the nation finds itself demands the very best from the Government and the citizens of this State, and that we with other sections of the British community throughout the world have to share the responsibility for bringing the struggle in which we are engaged to a successful issue. Seemingly there never was a time when the public was so anxious to render assistance. The people have been waiting for a lead, but they have waited for a very long time with very poor results. That was my reason for suggesting the calling of Parliament together a little earlier than usual. I was anxious to ascertain whether the deliberations of Parliament could result in giving the people a lead as to how they could assist to the fullest possible extent in bringing the war to a successful issue. Probably it will be a very long struggle; but that struggle can be shortened if we have thrown into it all sections of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Some may well, like myself, be dissatisfied; but the dis-

satisfaction may in part have been caused by their keenness to do something helpful. It is impossible to maintain that our job is not a big one. It is big. We have to face the fact that our enemies have all the resources of their own manpower and of their countries, and in addition have available to them considerable proportions of the manpower in those countries which they have succeeded in conquering or over-running, as well as the resources of those unfortunate countries. Those factors have given a strong impetus to the attempt of our enemies to obtain world domination. Some parts of the British Empire have shown tardiness in helping; but I am pleased to note that during the past few weeks, and more especially since the capitulation of France, there has been much more activity in those portions of the British Dominions by way of assisting the Mother country and the Empire as a whole. With that further assistance I feel no doubt as to what the ultimate result will be. However, the probabilities are that the struggle will be long and that many more sacrifices will have to be borne before we reach the goal we desire.

I trust that any remarks I may make in this connection will not be regarded as carping criticism. My view is that it helps to criticise in a manner that is justified. I have no desire to make a long speech this afternoon; but I feel impelled to bring to the attention of Ministers certain things that have been brought under my notice, things that must be remedied in order that we may adequately assist the Federal Government in its great task. From the aspect of enlistment we know that in this State, and indeed throughout Australia, many thousands of men are offering their services. Those men are well aware of the hazards that lie before them, and they are facing those hazards as Australians did during the last war. While they are prepared to encounter those dangers, we have a great responsibility to them—a responsibility to see that everything possible is done to ensure their being properly fitted for the service they will have to render. For that reason I consider that a heavy responsibility is thrown not only on the Federal Government but on the State Governments as well. It is our bounden duty to ensure that Australians going oversea are properly trained, and every aid we can render to that end

must be rendered. Further, we have a responsibility to see that our soldiers are fully supplied with all requirements of warfare, with armaments, munitions, food and clothing. That is the responsibility of us who remain behind. I wish to be certain that we are doing our very utmost in that respect. I do not wish to see Australia placed in a position like that of France in the middle of the short struggle that she waged—finding her men short of munitions and of such supplies as would have enabled France to oppose the invaders at any rate a little longer. Some men even in our midst—thank Heaven there are not many of them!—do not yet realise the difference between a democratic country and countries controlled by despots, countries such as the totalitarian States.

Because of the anxiety of many of our young men to render service, I regret to say, numbers of them have, immediately after being passed in the country as medically fit, left their employment to come to the city. That is a great pity, because up to the present the Federal Government has been unable to avail itself of their services, owing to lack of camp and other equipment. Everything ought to be done to convince the young men I refer to that they will render a far better service by remaining in their employment until called upon, rather than coming to the city precipitately. No doubt Ministers meet these men, just as I have met them. Many of them say, "We are offering our services; we have come down here, but we find it will be another month or six weeks before we can go into camp." Let me point out to those young men that the same position arose during the last war, though towards its end we experienced difficulty in securing sufficient men for reinforcements. It is unlikely that as large a number of men will be required for overseas service this time as was the case in 1914 to 1918. The matter is one which will determine itself as the struggle proceeds. Undoubtedly Australia is entitled to retain sufficient men here for the defence of this country. However, if defence can be made more effectively overseas, I have no doubt that our young men of the present day will do exactly the same as was done by the young men of 25 years ago, and will proceed overseas. Still, they should not be impatient, but should remain in their employ-

ment until called up. I say unhesitatingly that this is good advice to tender to them. I shall not criticise the authorities, not being in their confidence. However, I question whether the tours of military officers through the country are not a little premature. It is no use to tour the country unsettling people whom we desire to help.

The Premier: We cannot estimate what the response will be.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit that the response is far greater than had been anticipated. The quota allowed for certain districts was far exceeded because of the number offering for enlistment. I hold that our Government has been slow in providing the facilities required by the Federal Government. A little while ago my attention was drawn to an article which appeared in a newspaper, and the representations contained in which were followed up by certain individuals who saw me and pointed out that the Federal Government had asked for a piece of land on the Esplanade in close proximity to the Technical School and that the matter had been held up because an agreement could not be arrived at between the Federal and State Governments. I hold that if the Federal Government requires for defence purposes anything at all within reason, no delay should occur, and that no State Government should incur the onus of having declared—

Mr. Hughes: Beautiful word that, "reasonable"!

The Premier: It is now just a question of what will be paid afterwards for the land.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I did not get a very satisfactory answer from a Minister who represented the Premier at the time. He left doubt in the public mind as to whether the Western Australian Government was doing what it ought to do. When a Minister speaks on behalf of the Premier he should have either the courtesy to say that he does not desire to divulge Government business—

The Minister for Labour: You tried to create that doubt.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Nothing of the sort! That statement had been made in the Press previously. I could excuse the Minister if he had said that he knew nothing at all about the matter. What he did, however,

was to rush into print and try to make me appear ridiculous. He only succeeded in making himself so.

The Minister for Labour: You did not get away with that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: When the Premier returned, the matter was rectified, because the huts are now in existence. Hon. members are aware that today war is being carried on chiefly with mechanised forces—the air force, the navy, and even the mechanised army—instead of the old army with horse-drawn artillery and infantry moving about on foot. Nowadays there is little movement of troops on foot. Therefore I consider that there should be made available to those who desire to pay for such education the Technical School to its fullest capacity. There were nights of the week when the school was idle, and when men were desirous of paying for tuition in certain classes. I refer more particularly to the motor section and that section which deals with fitting and turning. That matter, too, has been rectified. The Technical School, I believe, is now being used on every night of the week. But there were nights when certain sections were closed, whereas use could have been made of them. That position was not fair to young men desirous of studying for the purpose of enlistment.

The Premier: When the term starts, the facilities to be made available are determined by the number of applicants.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit that I am not well versed in what has been done at the Technical School but I believe that, generally speaking, the arrangements made are equivalent to one night per week.

The Premier: Intending students must apply.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Plenty of young men have told me that, after having applied, they could not be admitted at the Technical School because the classes were already filled.

The Premier: They must have applied in the middle of the term.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: There were Mondays and Fridays during which certain rooms were not being used at all. Classes could have been started on those Mondays and Fridays in such rooms. I understand that numerous students attend at the school on only one night per week.

The Premier: There must be a settled curriculum.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: New classes could have been started on those Mondays and Fridays.

The Premier: There are terms for various subjects.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I venture to assert that the Premier is not as well acquainted with the position at the Technical School as I am. I understand that a young fellow can enter at any time.

The Premier: But it is not possible to give him the lectures that have been already delivered.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: At all events, new classes could have been started on the Monday and Friday nights. Classes are now being held on those nights, and I believe there is an intention to extend the hours. I shall be glad if the intention is carried into effect, because we owe it to the young men volunteering for service to ensure that they shall be adequately qualified. We owe it to them to furnish them with all the qualifications it is possible to provide. The contemplated extension of hours of tuition represents a step in the right direction.

From the issue of the "West Australian" of the 13th July, I learnt that sums of money had been allocated to the States for the purpose of providing training at technical schools. The "West Australian" mentioned £15,000 as being available for technical school equipment here. I hope the Premier will be able to inform the House whether any part of that amount has yet been used.

The Premier: It has not come to hand yet.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It has not arrived?

The Premier: No. The decision of the Federal Government to grant those amounts was arrived at a fortnight ago. We do not expect to get the money straightaway.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What does the Government propose to do with that money? My object is to speed up Ministers wherever I can in the matter of training. That may call for some effort, but with the support of hon. members on this side of the Chamber, results will be achieved—provided the Minister for Labour does not deal with the matter. If it is entrusted to that hon. gentleman, we shall probably see a slowing-down. However, I am indeed glad to know that the Government anticipates receipt of Federal funds for the purpose. Another aspect of training to which I should allude is that sev-

eral principals of motor firms and of engineering establishments have approached me with offers of free use of their premises, together with free services of their foremen, for the training of these young men. I wonder whether the Premier has been approached with regard to the matter.

The Premier: Not directly; perhaps the Minister for Education has.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know whether or not the Minister for Education has been approached. I have taken up the matter with the Federal authorities, but Western Australia's isolation places us in a very unfortunate position. On account of that isolation the people here must look to the State Government a great deal more than do the people of the Eastern States look to their State Governments. I hope when the Premier visits the Eastern States he will ascertain from the Federal authorities whether these generous offers are being accepted. No doubt the Minister for Industrial Development knows something about them, because I was told by one of the principals that they had already approached him. These principals, as I say, propose to make available their workshops at night, with the services of their foremen, to give elementary training to young people who wish to attend. A man enlisting in the infantry, the artillery, or in any other section of the army, will be much more useful if he has a knowledge of the mechanism of a motor car. He will find that knowledge extremely useful whether he goes oversea or stays in Australia. I should like the assurance of the Government that it will render all the assistance it can in this respect. I desire the Government to explain why differential treatment is meted out to wages men and salaried men offering themselves for enlistment. When they go to the recruiting depot, the wages men have their wages stopped to the extent of the time lost by them.

The Premier: That is not so.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I got the information from men in the service, who definitely told me that that is so. A salaried man, however, receives his wages in full. That is differential treatment and I am sure the Premier will find out that what I say is true. Men in the Government service, more particularly those in the departments controlled by the Commissioner of Railways, have had

their wages stopped for the time they spent in offering their services to fight for the country.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The wages men are employed by the hour, whereas the salaried men are employed by the week.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If that is so, why should there be differential treatment? When I hear the member for Guildford-Midland advance an excuse of that sort it makes me very much afraid that the Government's case is weak. If a man is generous enough to offer his services to the country, do not let us have differential treatment. Some members of the public already deduct such lost time from their workers' wages. That is bad enough, without the Government giving them a lead. I hope the Government will look into the matter.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: You will have to change the industrial awards.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What an excuse! I wish the hon. member would not interject, because he is only making the case worse for the Government.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Change the award and you can do what you are trying to make the Government do.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Awards have nothing to do with the matter. An award makes provision for minimum pay and maximum hours; but an employer, if he so desires, can pay his workman a larger wage and permit him to work fewer hours. There is nothing in the award to stop such a procedure.

Mr. Cross: Does the farmer deduct the time lost by his employee when offering his services for the country?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I would like to meet the farmer who would make such a deduction from one of his men who goes to the recruiting station!

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Some opposition is coming from the Government crossbenches, where I least expected it. If I may be permitted to continue, I understand many men have resigned from the Railway Department, rather than return to that department when their war service is concluded and be loaded with arrears of superannuation which they were told they would have to provide.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes.

The Premier: Oh no.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then I have been wrongly informed. I have followed the matter up with the railway authorities, who told me they were attempting to find a way out; but they said that if a man enlisted and returned to the department after his war service was over, he would be charged the arrears due to the superannuation fund. I am telling Ministers something they do not know.

The Premier: You do not know that that is right.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The officials of the Railway Department who deal with the matter have so informed me.

The Premier: I know what the Government's policy is.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not. I will interview the chairman of the Superannuation Board and ascertain what he knows.

The Premier: Do not go to officials. Come to me and I will give you all the information you want. I have told you so repeatedly.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Can I be continually running down to the Premier and asking him about all the tittle-tattle I hear?

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I telephone the departmental officer. I tried to get in touch with the Premier on one occasion because I desired to interview Mr. Lynch of the Technical College. I waited for an hour but had no chance of interviewing the Premier, so took the responsibility of telephoning Mr. Lynch to ask him if I could discuss the matter with him.

The Premier: The hon. member in common with most people, knows that Cabinet meets every Monday afternoon and cannot be disturbed by telephone calls; although, had I known the hon. member was making the inquiry, I would have tried to do something about it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: As a matter of fact, the Premier knew all about it.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know whether it was on a Monday or a Tuesday; but the Premier does not expect members to be continually running down to him. When he is away, to whom shall we turn? I am not going to the Minister for Labour for any information.

The Minister for Labour: All your confreres are glad to come down to interview me.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Perhaps they get better results than I do. I think the Premier will find that what I say is perfectly right.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The railway officials know the case. I wrote to the man asking him not to tender his resignation, because I felt the Government would do the right thing. Unfortunately, he had already resigned before receiving my letter. Had he not resigned, I would have taken the case up with the Minister to ascertain what was being done. The man subsequently got a refund of the money he paid in to the superannuation fund.

The Premier: The Government's policy was stated before Christmas.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The railway officials were not aware of it.

The Premier: I know there was some little misunderstanding.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Mr. Bromfield did not know; or, if he did, he was not advising me. We all ought to do something to ensure that the men who enlist and who desire to resume their work on their return are not loaded with a big superannuation debt.

The Premier: The Government is paying the superannuation charge for all Government workers on active service.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: All of them, including the wages men?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: As well as the salaried men?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am glad to know that, and I hope the Press will give publicity to it. I am sure many employees of the Government are not aware of the fact. The Federal Government has been criticised because Western Australia is not obtaining as many contracts for supplies to the Defence Department as the other States are getting. We need not go far to seek the reason. Local manufacturers experience difficulty in tendering a price that is competitive with the prices tendered in the Eastern States. That is due in many instances to our Arbitration Court awards.

Mr. Styants: To obsolete machinery.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, to Arbitration Court awards, awards which fix hours of

labour, wages and the number of junior workers that may be employed. Another reason is the higher premiums charged in Western Australia for workers' compensation insurance. I shall not say we have given a lead in that respect, but the other States certainly have not followed our example. Consequently, manufacturers in the other States can quote lower prices and so get the work. The Government may not know the story I am about to relate, but a contract for a considerable number of articles came to this State a little while ago. The work necessitated the punching of four holes in a piece of iron. Two junior workers were detailed to do this part of the work. The secretary of the union then interviewed the employers and informed them that they could not employ junior workers for that work, so the employers had to put on two adult workers at £6 per week extra. As a result, the employers will probably lose on the contract and work of that class will not again be undertaken in this State. We cannot expect Government contracts to come to this State while such conditions prevail. But what is happening is that our workers are now leaving this State to do the self-same work in the Eastern States. We are losing our population. That statement can be borne out by reference to statistics, which show the terrific fall in our population due to migration. The people leaving are not going overseas, but to the Eastern States.

The Premier: You do not mean to say that those men are going to the Eastern States to work under worse conditions?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know whether they are. We still have 6,000 unemployed men, while workers are leaving for the Eastern States to find employment. That is the trouble. The Premier knows that our population is not increasing; he knows that last year 1,245 more people left the State than came into it.

Mr. Holman: Put on junior workers and more men will leave the State.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Does not the hon. member understand that unless we employ junior workers we cannot compete with the Eastern States and consequently our young men will have to go there to learn trades? The policy of the Labour Party is unification. When that comes about—perhaps it will—there will be a levelling up and this

State will not be at such a great disadvantage.

The Minister for Mines: Where did you dig up that old horse?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I got a copy of the constitution the other day.

The Minister for Lands: You have been reading Mr. Teasdale's speech.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not. What I say is common sense. A little while ago I was placarded from one end of the State to the other about what was said to be my desire to reduce wages. I have no desire to reduce wages, and I will make the same statement as I made on that occasion, that until there is an Australian basic wage, having regard to the difference in the cost of living in the various States and parts of the States, we shall not get a fair deal in this State, so far as manufactures are concerned. Therefore, we must face the fact that it is no use complaining because the Federal Government does not let war contracts in Western Australia, for the reason that we cannot deliver the goods at the same price as they can be delivered in the Eastern States. Every year the position becomes worse as manufacturing centres are being built up in the Eastern States, where the commodities can be turned out cheaper with up-to-date machinery. The result is that our population is declining.

The Premier: I think you will find that those manufacturers are engaged in mass production.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That may be the cause of it. I think the Premier will agree it is common sense, that if it is merely a question of punching four holes in a piece of iron that that could be left to junior workers. The countries that are up against us are employing all classes of labour—women and everyone else. During the last war even Great Britain turned out some wonderful work where women were largely employed. My desire is that we should be able to provide employment for all and that we should try wherever possible to improve the existing state of affairs. I admit that the Government can take in contracts at the Midland Junction workshops and if there is a loss there, it will be a charge against the community. A private individual, however, cannot carry on in that way. There are many places in Western Australia where work is being carried out for the Defence.

Department, but the manufacturers are afraid to tender and the Federal Government does not seem very anxious to utilise the establishments that we have here. I hope that it will be possible to make closer contact with the Federal authorities. I can take members to motor establishments where quite a lot of useful work could be done. If those places were given an opportunity to tender for contracts, they would absorb many of the people who are now out of employment.

The Minister for Labour: The Commonwealth policy has given the motor trade the jitters. You might explain why New South Wales has so much unemployment. Their figures are 15 per cent.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: On the 25th inst. the following appeared in the "West Australian" showing the number of employees engaged in the factories in the different States:—

Throughout Australia factory employment 1.7 per cent. higher, and retail employment 1.5 per cent. higher, than in May, 1939. Factory employment increased in Victoria by 3.8 per cent.; Queensland, 4.2; South Australia, 6.8; and Tasmania, 12.7. Decreases were: New South Wales, 1.6 per cent, and Western Australia 3.6 per cent. Increases in retail employment were: Victoria, 2.8 per cent.; Queensland, 1.8 per cent.; Western Australia, 0.9 per cent., and Tasmania, 8.2 per cent. The position in South Australia was unchanged, and the only decrease was in New South Wales, 0.8 per cent. less.

While the New South Wales figures have gone down a little, those of Western Australia have gone down no less than 3.6 per cent., which is the highest of the lot. It seems to me that the legislation introduced by the Government, instead of being helpful in this direction, has had the reverse effect.

The Minister for Labour: The reduction you refer to has taken place in one or two industries, the motor industry and the building industry.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The building industry has never been so thriving as it is at the present time. I know that it is impossible to secure all the carpenters that are wanted. A little while ago when there was a rush job at Northam, it was quite impossible to get carpenters. Does that not prove that the building industry is active?

The Minister for Labour: You had better have a talk with the master builders.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I suppose that piece of legislation that went through last session has had something to do with it.

The Minister for Labour: Give us the unemployment figures of all the States.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Those that I have read are the latest.

The Minister for Labour: They were not unemployment figures; they dealt with factories.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not the unemployment figures. I endeavoured to get them from the Government Statistician, but he said he did not have them.

The Minister for Labour: They were published yesterday.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know that the people in Western Australia are doing their utmost in every possible way to assist in the prosecution of the war to a successful issue. With regard to finance, Western Australia has done particularly well in respect of the recently floated loan, the free-of-interest loan and the purchase of war savings certificates. Remembering the parlous state in which our people are—I am referring more particularly to those engaged in our primary industries—the contributions have been on a generous scale. An important factor that may be put in the forefront is the question of food supply. Western Australia is admirably situated for the production of food-stuffs. Last year we had a big wheat harvest, and we have also done very well with our dairying industry, but unfortunately our wool clip was down because of drought conditions. In certain parts of the North the drought still prevails, and pastoralists have not been able to re-stock. I should have liked the Government to tell us something of its policy with regard to the pastoral position; I hope the Minister for Lands will be able to give the House an idea of his intentions. We require a good deal of information from the Government to make up for all that the Speech lacks. Many parts of the State have never been in a worse position than they are in today. The Minister for Lands is carrying his particular burden very cheerfully, but there are even heavier burdens for other Ministers to shoulder. We have a surplus of wheat at the present time, but that is a commodity that I am sure we shall be able to market in the not very distant future. I feel sure that our wheat will be needed when hostilities cease.

The Premier: There is the problem of shipping the wheat.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know that every effort is being made to get it away, but I am also aware that the Old Country cannot afford to send its ships so far away for our wheat, for the reason that convoys are required for a considerable distance. Great Britain can get its wheat from other producing countries that are much nearer to British ports. However, we must do all we possibly can to assist those who are engaged in this industry. We have had a succession of bad seasons and low prices and that combination has not offered much inducement to the unfortunate people who have battled so gamely to retain possession of their holdings. The last thing we want them to do is to leave their farms, particularly the younger people whose services are and will continue to be required in the work of the production of wheat. It is very difficult, as we know, to get farm workers, and the gaps that are being created by those who are enlisting for active service are not being filled. It is too true that many farms have been abandoned by men who have enlisted. I do wish that an organisation could be set up—perhaps in the Lands Department—to watch the interests of those men who have responded to the call. Perhaps local committees could be formed to guard the properties during the period of absence of the owners. We are aware that during the previous war these abandoned properties—and many of them were abandoned only temporarily, that is to say, that the owners intended to return to them—were raided and equipment of all kinds was removed. People in the surrounding localities should be public spirited enough to look after the interests of the holders who have gone on active service. They should see to it that those men did not suffer from the depredations of whoever might like to help himself to what was on the property. Many of these farmers have enlisted for what have appeared to them to be good reasons. I know one man who left behind a wife and three children to look after his property. I asked him why he had done so and his reply was that he had every reason to fight for his country. Asked what the principal reason was he replied "my wife and three children." We should do everything to ensure that the interests of those who fight for their country are adequately protected during their absence.

There is a reference in the Speech to the question of unemployment and the figures are given as 6,000. I have had sent to me an extract from the "Kalgoorlie Miner," which I should like to read to the House. It is headed "Crops Rotting in the Ground," and states—

As a result of the recent internment of a large number of Italians from the South-West, and the shortage of man power in the district, acres of potatoes are rotting to waste in the ground. Had these potatoes been picked several weeks ago they would have yielded hundreds of pounds, but now settlers can wipe off the crops as a total loss. A number of the holdings in the district were being worked by un-naturalised Italians, and now because of their internment the crops are lying idle.

Again, in the "West Australian" there is another statement on the subject of the scarcity of potatoes that is being faced by Australia. This is from Professor Copland, who warns the people that there is a likelihood of a shortage of potatoes—

The Commonwealth Government would not hesitate to exercise its powers if the present voluntary arrangements to regulate Tasmanian shipments to the mainland broke down. There was no foundation, he said, for the suggestion being made in some quarters that large stocks were available from Ballarat, or that a substantial surplus would be left in Tasmania at the end of the season unless deliveries were increased. Victoria would be obliged to continue importing for some time and imports from Western Australia would be less than usual.

If that statement is true why cannot some organisation be created to engage the unemployed and send them down to the potato districts?

The Premier: The Federal Government interned the growers and so it should be responsible.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is what I may again call "passing the buck," if I may be permitted to use that expression. It is a bad principle. We have that responsibility and so let us put the unemployed there to dig the potatoes.

The Premier: We have no authority to do that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Let us take that authority. Does the Premier mean to tell me that although we have a valuable possession, something that is required by the people, we cannot get the authority for them?

The Minister for Lands: The Government has been advised today that the Federal

authorities are taking definite action in that regard.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am glad to receive the assurance that has just been given to me. Probably there is not the wastage of potatoes that is suggested by the article. I know when I was in the district recently I heard no complaint on that score.

The Minister for Lands: The people affected seem to be the small market gardeners.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We are told that 6,000 persons are unemployed. When the Premier interrupted me with a helpful interjection, I was going to say that when I was in New Zealand as a young man I noticed that the Government had put men on to dig potatoes and thus conserved the interests of the people. At that time potatoes were being exported from New Zealand to Australia, and the Government, which was not a Labour Government, stepped in with help. I am sure that some arrangement could speedily be made to prevent any waste of potatoes in this State. We sometimes complain that we buy so much from the Eastern States, and that they in turn buy nothing from us. Here is a chance to make some adjustment of that position. For some time past a market for potatoes has existed in the other States. It was certainly worth while to send the Minister to arrange with the Commonwealth Government so that the State Government might take control. I feel sure the Commonwealth Government would willingly delegate some of its powers to this State. I hope the unemployed will be put on to this work at once. In many other countries women dig potatoes, and if they can do it men here can do it.

Mr. Holman: The Price-Fixing Commissioner says there will not be a shortage of potatoes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is definitely stated that there will be a shortage.

The Minister for Lands: We are importing a thousand tons from New Zealand.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Commissioner said that the total of 5,000 tons to be imported from New Zealand would represent only a fraction of the deficiency. The Commissioner has the necessary knowledge of the position. I am glad to have the assurance that has been given to me.

The Premier: You are getting on well.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If only I could get results! It is not a question of having an opportunity to speak and of saying yes or no. There is far more than that in it.

The Minister for Lands: As the song says, "It is not what you do, but the way you do it."

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We try to do things as nicely as we can. If we have any difference of opinion I desire that we shall not expose that difference in the presence of the enemy. I have pointed out the difficulties being experienced by farmers. Members will realise that a little while ago the Midland Junction meat market was short supplied. The price of beef and mutton went up to a high figure, though nothing in comparison with what it has been in other times. When the position arose the Price-Fixing Commissioner decided to make an arrangement with the master butchers, and fix a price for both beef and mutton. I do not know whether he made any investigations; I do not think he could have done much in that direction.

Mr. Marshall: How do you know Professor Copland is right?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am talking about the price of meat. My complaint is not concerning what the Price-Fixing Commissioner does generally, but in this instance I think he went the wrong way about that which he did. The proper way to tackle a matter of that sort was to arrange the price between the retailers and the consumers. Members may recall a letter written by "Consumer," thanking the Commissioner for what he did. Yesterday I went into a butcher's shop and paid exactly the same price for meat as was charged during the week when the price soared to such heights in the market, namely, about £21 for a bullock and about £2 for a wether. When the price fixed for sheep is 6d. or 6½d. per lb. and for cattle 5½d. per lb., then 9d., 10d., 11d., and up to 1s. 6d. is a high price to charge consumers. The Commissioner ought to have investigated the matter and ascertained what justification there was for the prices. No charge can be laid against the producers. They send their stock to market, it is auctioned, and they have to accept the price that willing buyers will pay. That applies all the year round. Very often the producer gets only 2d. per lb. for his mutton.

Mr. Patrick: And it is still not much cheaper in the shops.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is so. The Commissioner acted hastily, and the result will probably be a shortage of supply. There is more justification for a higher price to be paid for meat in this State than in the other States. No good purpose would be served by quoting Eastern States prices. In this State we have had a long dry spell. The North-West cannot supply us with mutton, and it is not possible to get a shipload of fats brought down. Cattle, of course, do come from the Kimberleys. In the wheat-belt an extraordinarily dry season has been experienced. The sheep there are in fair store condition, but there are few fats amongst them. It is only a waste of money to send them to the fat market. When the price was high and the season continued to be extraordinarily dry, men who were afraid of overstocking rushed truckloads of their stock to market, with the result that a great deal of store mutton came into the metropolitan area, and the price rose out of all proportion to the value of the stock. Take the man who sold mutton at the price fixed by the Commissioner. A 56lb. prime wether last year cost 17s. off shears at Kataning. The farmer who bought such a wether would have to pay 3s. freight to get it to his property. He would then have to feed the sheep, and by the time it was ready for market the feeding would have cost him another 6s. It would then cost about 3s. to dispose of the sheep, so that there would be no profit in the price fixed by the Commissioner. That official ought to justify what he is doing rather than rush in as he has done. Most of these anomalies will no doubt adjust themselves in time. If the price goes up again the market will be supplied with meat of inferior quality. Many people buy that kind of meat.

The Premier: That is what happened recently. This week the market is glutted.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is so. To fix the price of meat in the way it was done is wrong in principle, unless the Commissioner can satisfy himself that the price is not unreasonable. What he should have done was to fix the retail price to the consumer. The situation would then have adjusted itself. He could have ascertained why the price was so high to the consumer compared with the price that was paid in the market. The

position would have been worth investigating. By his action he has given rise to a great deal of dissatisfaction and he is carrying a lot of odium he need not have carried. I hope before he does such a thing again he will closely investigate the whole situation.

I would like to put forward a proposal on behalf of the farmers, something I would have been loth to suggest but for the situation that has arisen. I am going to ask the Government to bring down some form of moratorium similar to that which was introduced during the last war. A general moratorium is not in my mind, but I think we should have some form of moratorium. I am not referring to that which has been brought down by the Federal Government for the benefit of the man who is on active service, but I want legislation to ensure that a person may apply to the Commissioner to have process stopped if any action is taken against him. That legislation would have to be wider in its application than the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act or the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act. Relief could be afforded by suspending all debts incurred up to a certain date, so that from then onwards a man would not have to pay his debts in arrear until he was in a position to do so. Such a system should not prevent him from obtaining credit for future transactions. People would not be likely to rush in and apply to the Commissioner for protection under such a moratorium, but legislation of that kind would deter persons from harassing individuals who were not able to pay their way. The Minister for Lands knows the position in which pastoralists find themselves, and he also knows how the agriculturists stand. We ought to do something more than we are doing for those engaged in the industries I have mentioned, and I submit this suggestion for the consideration of the Government.

Mr. Hughes: Would you favour suspending the debts of creditors likewise?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, that was done during the last war.

Mr. Hughes: And it led to a lot of trouble with the banks.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The banks certainly have their share of burdens to carry.

The Minister for Lands: The difficulty is to prevent interference with current credit.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I appreciate that point. Debts incurred after the date of the order would not be protected. A moratorium of this kind was passed during the last war with good results. No doubt it would have to be followed on, as the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) has suggested.

Mr. Hughes: Creditors who could not get their debts paid would be left destitute. —

The Minister for Lands: People to whom money was owed might find themselves in a worse position than those who owed them money.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That position might arise, but something will have to be done, otherwise wholesale abandonments of properties will ensue. No inducement is offered for any pastoralist to stay on his leasehold. He is weighed down by huge debts, and his prospects for the future are anything but bright. I do not know what will be the result of the inquiry recently conducted by the Royal Commission. I expect Mr. Fyfe will have a doleful story to tell, and that a great deal of financial assistance will be required to rectify the position. I now wish to refer to another matter. When the price of superphosphate went up 40 per cent., no action was apparently taken to investigate the cause of that rise.

The Premier: Oh yes, the Commonwealth Government went into the whole matter.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That increase represents a great load upon primary industry. I have worked out how it will affect the cost of raising sheep. Only good country will carry a sheep to two acres. The increase in the cost of superphosphate will add 2s. 10d. per head to the cost of carrying sheep. I know the Government is doing something in the matter. I have been in touch with Mr. Fernie to ascertain whether we could obtain the necessary supply of sulphur locally, so that we might get the benefit of that supply and thus reduce the cost of superphosphate.

The Minister for Industrial Development reminded me that motorists were about to be placed at a disadvantage. I presume he was referring to petrol rationing. The Federal Government does not seem to have given any reason why it proposes to ration petrol, but I can suggest a reason. The air service is of the utmost importance to Australia, but would be of no use without petrol. It is therefore essential

that we should have within Australia as great a supply of petrol as possible so that the air services and air force may be supplied. Whoever is working out the rationing of petrol will have no easy task. We do not know for certain whether everyone will be told he can have only so much petrol. The man who is living alongside a siding and has to cart wheat to it will not require as much petrol as will the man who is living 20 or 30 miles away from a siding.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Farmers who have to depend upon carting supplies will need differential treatment, because some of them will adjoin sidings while others will be 20 or 30 miles away. It will not be easy for the Federal Court to decide who shall have preference. I sympathise with the board in that regard. The same argument really applies to all primary producers, more especially those in the North-West, where there will be great difficulty because those near the sea-ports will not have nearly so far to go or to make as many trips as producers situated far out.

Mr. Marshall: The rationing will not apply beyond the 26th parallel.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am aware of that. Whatever action is to be taken will not be easily decided upon. My own idea is that pleasure cars should be done away with altogether, especially in the metropolitan area, where there are facilities of conveyance for people desirous of coming to town. Again, the Government departments have a large number of motor cars. When several officers need to go into the same country district, some of them might be taken in one car at the same time, instead of using possibly three or four cars all travelling over the same route. What I suggest could be achieved by co-ordination of departments. The task might necessitate the services of an officer; but it could be accomplished, and with great advantage. The present consumption of petrol by Government officers must be very heavy indeed. I do hope that people today using motor cars will give country users the benefit of any sacrifices that can be made.

I was struck by a remark of the member for Pilbara (Mr. W. Hegney), that money can be found for the war but cannot be found to provide employment for the people.

I do not know whether the hon. member entertains the same view as many people hold, that things can be paid for by inflation. We shall have some inflation for a certainty; but I fear that if we have it to any great extent, the people who will suffer most will be the middle-class and poorer people.

Mr. W. Hegney: The poorer people mostly.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is borne out by what happened in Germany after the last war, the poorer classes being practically starved to death.

Mr. Marshall: There appear to be plenty of them there now.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is due to the system of borrowing money and paying interest on it. That system involves a certain amount of inflation. As regards our own unemployed, I think we have treated them fairly liberally. In any case, I do not know that we shall get much further by pointing out that money can be found for war. In point of fact, we have a perfect right to use every single thing we possess in order to retain our freedom and our nationality as they are today. It does not matter if, to that end, we even put our country into bankruptcy. We can build up again from that; but if we hand over Australia to a foreign power, I do not know that life here would be worth living. We are entitled to go to any extreme for the purpose of maintaining our liberty. No doubt the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) will come forward with various great ideas now that he has had time to read up other people's views.

Before closing I suggest to the Premier that consideration might be given to the position of the Yampi Sound leases. I do not know what their position is today.

The Premier: They are still held by Braserts.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What do Braserts propose to do with them? To me the deposits seem highly suitable for smelting. There should be a ready market for pig iron. If the deposits are as valuable as represented, the ore could be brought down to Fremantle or elsewhere to be smelted; and such works would serve a highly useful purpose after the war.

The Premier: I have given a great deal of consideration to that aspect, and have had interviews regarding it with people in the Eastern States.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is necessary to have the House called together in order to get that information. We go on imagining that nothing is being done whilst the Premier is in a position to inform us that a great deal is being done. There ought to be a ready market in the Old Country and also in America for our pig iron.

The Premier: The Broken Hill people exported over a million tons of pig iron to Great Britain.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This might be a suitable time for exploiting the Yampi Sound deposits. I trust there will not be much new legislation introduced, though I recognise that some Bills will be needed for the correction of anomalies in existing laws. However, I consider that we should not embark on any new phases of legislation. I am perfectly convinced that at the termination of the war there will have to be a re-orientation of the economic life of our State and of the British Nation too.

Mr. J. Hegney: What do you mean by that?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I hold that in all probability we shall find greatly improved conditions prevailing with regard to marketing. Much of our existing legislation may have to be scrapped in the near future. Therefore let us pause until the termination of the war. Meantime we may socialise quite a lot of things.

Mr. J. Hegney: The Federal Attorney General does not favour any alteration in the existing social order.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The world of thought is made up of differences of opinion, and that is a good thing. Were the case otherwise, there would be no Opposition. There would be no interjections from the cross-benches if members sitting there thought as I think. I have read what the Federal Attorney General said. It is a true saying that there is no new thing under the sun. The reading of history shows that many things we believe to be new existed many years ago. Again, we are all able to use wireless. Once it was discovered, everybody picked it up and began to use it. So there it is in existence; it has ceased to be new. I repeat, during the war new legislation should not be introduced with any hope of improving social conditions. However, I acknowledge that some legislation will have to be brought down.

I do not propose at this time to discuss the question that is uppermost in my mind; namely, the improvement of conditions at our University.

Some time ago I expressed the Country Party's opinion that there should be a National Government. I believe that such a proposal has been made in the Federal Parliament, but we have nothing to do with that; it is a matter for the Federal parties and for the people who elect them. Still, I feel that the Leaders of political parties in Western Australia—the Premier, the Leader of the National Party, and myself—might be acquainted with some of the problems of the Federal Government, and that we might consult with the Commonwealth authorities regarding them. We should be enabled to furnish to the Federal Government information that we have available. In stressing that, I need hardly say we do not desire to be the means of disseminating information we might receive. On the other hand, I feel sure it would have the effect of stopping much adverse criticism that is heard and would enable us correctly to inform people respecting matters in which we ourselves are in the dark equally with them. We are the representatives of the people and surely we can be trusted with important secrets. From time to time some of us have held positions such as Ministers occupy to-day. I know the Premier will say that we can always go to him and discuss matters at any time, but I would like to have that privilege as a right instead of having to beg for it. I do not know to what extent Ministers enjoy the confidence of the Federal authorities, but I have endeavoured to stress the fact that Western Australia is placed in a position totally different from that of the other States, because the latter are close to the seat of Government and the Federal Government itself. They can contact the Federal authorities much more easily than we can. I do not know that there will ever be an invasion of Australia by a hostile nation. Most decidedly I hope there will not be; but should there be such an invasion, the duty will devolve upon the State Government more than ever to safeguard the interests of the State. The task of defending the people as much as possible will certainly devolve more than ever upon the State Government, in which circumstances we ought to be acquainted with what

is in the minds of Federal Ministers, quite irrespective of politics. We are all imbued with a sincere desire to help. It was from that standpoint that we urged that Parliament should be called together so that we could pass the necessary supply and assist the Government to carry on the affairs of State. Above all we desired to ascertain if we could not do much more than we are doing to-day. With other members, I attend win-the-war rallies and tell the people why they should subscribe to various patriotic funds. Most decidedly the people are responding generously, but personally I feel we are not doing enough. In the course of a few days we hope to have a meeting of returned-soldier members to see if we cannot do more. Once a man has been actively engaged on war work and knows what is ahead of the nation, he views the position seriously, and I feel we are merely shirking our responsibilities if we are content to sit down and do nothing. There are thousands of people who feel the same way about it, and all are anxious to do something more. I am positive there is not one member of this House who would not willingly render services beyond what he is undertaking to-day. In our deliberations during this session I hope we shall be able to satisfy our own minds that we are doing all that is possible. I trust that we shall be able to give a lead to the people in assisting to bring the war to a successful conclusion. Our freedom is worth everything we can give in order to maintain that heritage, and I believe everyone is willing to make all sacrifices possible with that end in view.

During the tea suspension I had an opportunity to peruse the figures regarding unemployment throughout Australia, and I found that those for New South Wales were as the Minister for Labour indicated; but on investigating the position I ascertained that much of the unemployment arose from the coal-strike in that State, as a result of which industry has not yet readjusted itself.

The Minister for Labour: The Victorian figures are high, too.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Fortunately we have not had any strikes in Western Australia.

Mr. Patrick: But we have experienced bad times.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, we are experiencing a bad season. The fact remains that the coal strike did interfere extensively with industry in New South Wales, and the unemployment figures for that State are doubtless due in a large measure to that industrial upheaval.

The Minister for Labour: The Victorian and South Australian figures are high.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They are high everywhere, and they are not very satisfactory in Western Australia.

The Minister for Labour: Ours are the second lowest in Australia.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Queensland has the lowest figures.

The Minister for Labour: No, Tasmania.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, that is so. I do not propose to delay members any longer. We shall have an opportunity to deal with the financial position when the Estimates are before us, and for that reason I have refrained from dealing with that phase.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.45 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 31st July, 1940.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

Diesel Electric Coaches.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What was the total mileage travelled by Diesel electric coaches on each of the sections during the year ended the 30th June, 1940? 2, What was the total

number of passengers carried in each district? 3, What were the total earnings in each district? 4, What were the total coaching earnings, inwards and outwards, on the Kalgoorlie-Leonora-Laverton section during the same period? 5, What were the total coaching earnings, inwards and outwards, on the Kalgoorlie-Norseman-Esperance section during the same period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 2, and 3—

Section.	Mile- age.	Passengers.	Revenue £
Perth-Merredin (main line) ..	49,686	13,574	5,602
Perth-Merredin (via Wyalkatchem) ..	64,178	12,688	7,164
Perth-Corrigin (via Quairading) ..	64,042	10,784	5,637
Perth-Katanning ..	67,078	15,419	8,338
Perth-Bunbury ..	11,158	5,316	1,600
Bunbury-Busselton and Northcliffe	29,728	14,617	3,855
Geraldton-Mullewa and Yuna ..	44,246	8,804	1,919
	330,116	81,002	34,115

4 and 5, The sectional earnings between Kalgoorlie and Leonora branch and Kalgoorlie-Norseman-Esperance branch are not recorded separately.

QUESTION—PETROL RATIONING.

Producer Gas Plants.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is the Government aware that the harbour authorities refuse to allow trucks fitted with producer gas plants to enter the goods sheds at Fremantle? 2, Does the Government consider this is helping the proposed petrol rationing scheme being introduced by the Federal authorities? 3, Is the Government aware that the Underwriters' Association considers that no additional risk is entailed by the use of producer gas, inasmuch as no additional premium is required on vehicles so fitted? 4, If so, will the Government reconsider this decision in order to assist the drive for petrol rationing, and thus encourage further development of a local industry?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, Yes; the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners have restricted motor vehicles so equipped from entering the cargo sheds upon Victoria Quay, for the reason