

modity that will be taken in certain foreign countries, which will provide us with goods in exchange. I refer to gold. I think those countries are mad to do so. Although gorged with gold, America will still give goods in exchange for our gold.

Mr. Marshall: It is the best means of exchange.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so. We are so badly in need of foreign credits that we are told we must accept petrol rationing in order to conserve what foreign credits we have. We could intensify gold production in Western Australia and thereby furnish ourselves with as much additional credit overseas as we need, without the necessity for petrol restrictions at all.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But surely you do not suggest we have power to do that?

Mr. HUGHES: No, but I suggest we have power to make representations to the Federal Parliament, which possesses that power.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is different.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, and we could make representations accordingly. The only manner in which we can intensify gold production is to raise the price of gold in terms of our internal currency. Therefore, the Federal Government could go on buying gold at the increased price so as to bring into production many mines that are not producing at present. That could be done by internal means, for we could adjust, as between citizen and citizen, the economic consequences of raising the price of gold. We would increase the supply of gold, which would provide us with the means of securing credits overseas. Therefore if we desire foreign credits, we should exploit to the full our capacity to produce gold at the present time. Lloyd George, in his book on war debts and reparations—he knew as much about that subject as the best informed member of this House, because of his experiences at the conclusion of the 1914-18 war—pointed out regarding the extraordinary demand for German reparations, that, so far as internal adjustments were concerned, such matters could be arranged between themselves by legislation and so on. We are in much the same position to-day. At that time foreign credits were required, and the internal economy was adjusted to meet the circumstances that arose. We can achieve the same end by

raising the price of gold and engaging upon the intense production of gold. Thus we will be able to secure credits overseas, without the necessity to indulge in the rationing of petrol.

On motion by Mr. Leahy, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.14 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 8th August, 1940.*

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

### QUESTION—ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

#### *Commonwealth Bank and National Credit.*

Mr. BERRY asked the Deputy Premier: 1, Will he telegraph the Premier, at present in Canberra, to bring again before the Prime Minister and the Loan Council, the motion unanimously passed in this Assembly last session, as moved by the member for Murchison, that the Commonwealth Bank be instructed to issue debt free money without inflation or any financial charge through taxation for the efficient financing of the war? 2, Will the Premier also ask that the Trading Banks co-operate in detail with the Commonwealth Bank to achieve this desired end? 3, Will the State Government also inform other Australian State Parliaments of any action taken in this important matter?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied: The motion was transmitted to the Commonwealth Government, and its import is before the Premier at the present time.

## QUESTION—NATIVE ADMINISTRATION ACT.

### *Carrolup Settlement.*

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for the North-West: 1, Is £2,000 being spent on the kitchen and dining room of the Carrolup Native Settlement? 2, What material is being used in their construction? 3, Is native labour being employed? 4, If not, why not? 5, Is £675 being spent on the erection of stables, chaffhouse, saddlery room and machinery shed? 6, How many horses are to be housed in the stables? 7, How is the £625 for renovations being spent? 8, How many natives and half-castes is it proposed to accommodate at the settlement?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied: 1, No. A contract has been let for £2,019 and includes the following:— (a) Kitchen block, comprising kitchen, servery, food preparation, three stores, and partial lining repairs and renovations to existing dining rooms; (b) Provision of new fly-proof meat house; (c) New bakehouse; (d) Additions, alterations, repairs and renovations to existing store and cell block, including the provision of a new office, new store, and extensions to existing store. (e) Erection of new laundry and E.C. to one set of quarters; (f) New latrines for male natives. 2, Timber framing covered externally with jarrah weatherboards and iron roof. Lined and ceiled with locally manufactured asbestos cement sheeting. 3, No. 4, Practically no unskilled labourers could be employed. Even builders' labourers are skilled. 5, No. A contract has been let for £647 for the erection of stables, chaff house, implement shed and harness room. It includes the provision of 10,000 gallons rain-water storage. 6, Provision is made for stabling seven horses. 7, The contract for £625 is for reconditioning, altering, repairing, and renovation of ten existing buildings, most of which were in a very bad state of repair. 8, Five hundred.

## QUESTION—WAR WITH GERMANY.

### *Enlistment of Government Employees.*

Mr. ABBOTT asked the Deputy Premier: 1, Has the Government made any announcement to Government employees whether, in the event of their volunteering for active service, their employment will be assured to

them on their return to civil life? 2, If so, does such assurance also cover a promise that their seniority in the public service will be preserved?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, to permanent officers. 2, Yes.

## QUESTION—STATUTES CONSOLIDATION.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Is any action being taken to consolidate our statutes? 2, If so, what stage has been reached? 3, Is anything being done to remove ambiguities of language in the statutes, particularly in regard to more glaring cases, as for instance that of section 22a of the Dog Act?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, Yes. 2, Each sessional volume of statutes contains a list of Acts which have been consolidated and which appear in the appendices to various volumes between 1912 and the year of the latest volume. A number of consolidated Acts have also been published in separate volumes. A Bill has been prepared to consolidate the Police Act, 1892, and amendments. In addition, twelve Acts have been reprinted with amendments under the Amendments Incorporation Act, 1938, and these have been published in Volume I. of the Reprinted Acts of the Parliament of Western Australia which contains Acts as reprinted up to the 30th November, 1939. 3, Yes, as and when such ambiguities are disclosed by judicial decisions.

## QUESTION—BAGS, STATE MANUFACTURE.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: 1, In view of the difficulty of obtaining suitable bags for charcoal, grain and grain products, super. and other commodities, has consideration been given to the local manufacture of bags? 2, Is he aware that the manufacture of bags from jute is carried on by prisoners in the San Quentin (California) gaol? 3, As no work of this description is carried out in Australia, will he, in view of the importance and value of work for the reformation of all long-term prisoners, give consideration to the establishment of jute weaving and bag-making in the Fremantle gaol?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied: 1, Yes, but as there is no duty on such bags, and as the jute has to be imported, local manufacture up to date has not been found practicable. 2, No. 3, Yes, I will be glad to make inquiries.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. P. Collier (Boulder), on the ground of ill-health.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Seventh Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**MR. LEAHY** (Hannans) [4.36]: I have listened attentively to the able speeches delivered by members during this session, and am of opinion that the country has been combed almost from Darwin in the north to Albany in the south; because the woes, worries and disabilities of the people of the State have been paraded at some length. Each member who has spoken so far has done his utmost to place before the House the disabilities under which the people of his electorate labour. The member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) made an excellent speech. He dealt with our primary producers, particularly the farmers. Of course, many of us are inclined to believe that farmers are chronic squealers. They have often been so termed. Personally, I do not agree. During one period in this State, when farmers were doing very well, they did not seem to worry about giving credit to anybody for assistance given to them; it seemed as though they could not possibly help it, but they became chronic growlers. Growling became part of the farming industry. To-day, however, the whole picture has changed and we realise only too well the disabilities under which farmers now labour. We are also aware that if the primary producers of this State, or of any country, go to the wall, it will be a bad day for the nation.

We in this State are of course in a somewhat different position. We have our gold-mining industry, which has been the backbone of the State. Not only has it helped us and provided our wherewithal for a

number of years, but on several occasions it has been of considerable assistance to the whole Commonwealth. I remember Mr. Collier telling me about nine years ago in Boulder that, had it not been for this industry, the shutters would have gone up in Western Australia many years before. Gold, however, is not reproductive; every ounce of gold dug out of the ground takes an ounce of gold from us. There is a limit to the life of all mines. The possibility no doubt exists that other fields will be discovered; we may find new and extensive lodes of reasonable values. Who knows? But we do know definitely that the life of each mine is limited; it cannot go on indefinitely. We also know that our State cannot exist for all time on gold. Therefore we must endeavour to help every other industry and particularly the primary industries of this State to carry on their good work. If anything can be done in the interests of the farmers it should be done as quickly as possible, though I know the problem is a difficult one.

The member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) referred to some of the transactions of the Agricultural Bank. I remember that a few years ago a splendid effort was made by the Government to do something for dusted miners on the eastern goldfields. I happened to be one of them. The Government launched out on a programme of land settlement in an honest endeavour to prolong the lives of those miners who were affected. An attempt was made to take them out of the industry before they became too seriously affected and so give them an opportunity to live for at least the greater part of the allotted span of life. After a thorough investigation had been made and experts had inspected the localities where the proposed settlements were to be established, the opinion was that the proposition was a really good one, and the Government was satisfied it was about to do something in the interests of the men it was seeking to help. An immense programme of work was put in hand. Houses were built for the men who were taken away from the eastern goldfields. Unfortunately, soon after their transfer there was a period of bad seasons and very low prices for wheat and those were obstacles that could not be overcome. The men were victims of circumstances. In many respects they were treated rather well; in other respects they were not treated too

well at all, and I propose now to refer to some of the actions associated with the administration of the Agricultural Bank.

Firstly the bank appointed inspectors and, from a study of the men appointed, it seemed to me that the essential qualifications for an expert inspector of farming in those areas was that he should be a man who had failed to make a success of the job of farming at least once. As a matter of fact, I think some of the inspectors failed on two or three occasions. That was the type of man who was sent along to instruct people like myself, a digger. That was the type of man who was sent to tell me how to grow wheat, how to prepare my land, and how to use an axe though the people to whom I am referring were not themselves capable of using axes. But that was not the worst feature of the whole business. There was favouritism, the most awful fault that could creep into the community. One man was able to obtain implements and everything else he desired in order to work his land; others could get nothing. I was one of the latter. I had to let my land on contract. When I found that I could not obtain implements to work with, I went back to the mines. I spent no more than three months on the land, returning to work as a miner so as to make a home for myself and my family. In order to save the Agricultural Bank and the department the expense of keeping my family I worked to keep them myself.

The fact that the scheme was a failure was not the fault of the Government or of any Governmental officers. There is no better land in the whole of Australia. At Southern Cross we were in a dry area, but prices fell and that is a disability that no doubt exists to-day. There was another aspect of the Agricultural Bank administration that led to serious trouble in the end. The farmers considered that they were paying too much for their supplies and it was suggested to the bank that on a certain day an inspector should visit a property and make arrangements for a quantity of wheat on that property to be sent to Perth in exchange for necessary supplies. That privilege was denied those unfortunate diggers who had gone on the land from Kalgoorlie and who are now nearly all dead. They were compelled to deal in the dearest market in the State, namely, Southern Cross. Then the bank decided to issue bank orders.

Members of the Country Party know something about those bank orders. The bank used to issue these notes and say to the farmers, "Go to your grocer and we will give you a bank order and everything will be quite all right." Some of the settlers became desperate and stole some of the wheat they had grown. They "pinched" their own property because they wanted food. After all, the individual who sees his family go short of food when he has produced material necessary to provide that food is not much of a man. Some of those farmers took a portion of the wheat they had grown and sold it. What happened? They were prosecuted. When the court sat in Southern Cross those poor deluded miner-farmers learnt to their surprise that the bank orders that had been issued were not worth the paper they were printed on. Some have not been paid to this day. I have a great sympathy for farmers and if anything can be done in their interests it is the duty of everyone to help them now that they are in difficulties.

The member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) outlined a gas-producer proposition—I mean of a mechanical type. He dealt with the subject very well indeed. The matter is important and requires a good deal of consideration in this State today on account of the impending rationing of petrol. Incidentally he mentioned the Bunbury harbour. The people of his electorate should be extremely proud of their representative because no more gallant battler for his electorate ever existed. Then the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. F. C. L. Smith) made reference to unofficial armies and I shall have something to say about that matter in a moment. A variety of subjects has been dealt with by hon. members who have spoken during this debate. The matters dealt with ranged from the tragedy of war to a delightful touch of light comedy that was introduced last night by the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes). I am extremely sorry that he is not here this afternoon. But behold! A wizard of finance has sprung up amongst us in a night! He has solved the problem. This genius of finance came to us last night and told us the way out of our difficulties. I can see smiles on the faces of Country Party members. He absolved them from all their responsibilities. He waved a magic wand and all their disabilities disappeared. He said, "If you

take my advice and do the things I say, you need not worry. You will be out of trouble. If you fail to do those things which in my opinion are right, you can mismanage your farm, and when you have mismanaged it to such an extent that you cannot make a living from it, you go to your banker and say, 'I have worked extremely hard on that farm and have done the best I can.' Probably the man never worked at all. "My family and I are destitute. I propose to go elsewhere. Give me my fare and I will make an existence somewhere else.'" According to the member for East Perth, the reply of the banker would be, "For heaven's sake, do not do that. You have stuck to me so long; do not leave me now." Then the distressed farmer would immediately say, "What am I going to do?" And the reply would be, "Do not worry; everything will be quite all right. If you are not prepared to carry on, I am willing to pay you £8 a week to go back and mismanage the farm a little longer." This comes from one of those geniuses who spring up overnight and tell people how they can get out of their difficulties. These wizards of finance come here and talk for hours; this one annoyed the Leader of the Opposition somewhat, and introduced a little light comedy, probably at his expense. Why has not this wonderful financial genius expounded his ideas to relieve the world destitution that exists? I am sorry he is not in his seat this afternoon. Probably that is half the glory attached to the whole situation, if there is any glory in it.

Speaking quite seriously, I have been very pleased to note in this House expressions of an ardent desire to unite and carry this dreadful war to a successful conclusion. To my way of thinking, that is the one bright shining light. People must realise that today it is not a matter of fighting a war of aggression; it is not a matter of seeking territorial expansion; it is not a matter of grinding down some poor unfortunate people. A position more serious has probably never occurred in the history of the world, and certainly not in the history of the British Empire. The unity displayed by the people throughout the length and breadth of this country, and, I hope, through all British-speaking countries, convinces me that provided the unity continues, the desire to win will be realised. We must appreciate that in entering this war we are not fighting an

ordinary war. Wars have been fought throughout the ages, many of them for freedom, though unfortunately many of them were not fought for freedom. But let me ask, what form of freedom? Let us search history and ascertain just what form of freedom ever came as a result of war. The freedom that has emanated from most wars has been freedom for the very few and slavery for the very many. After the Napoleonic wars England was going to be a wonderful country. But what happened after Napoleon had been conquered at Waterloo? I suppose that campaign was followed by one the most serious periods ever experienced in British history. Slavery and suchlike evils had their origin in those times. The people who suffered those indignities represented over 90 per cent. of the whole of the people, and many lost their lives in that dreadful struggle.

To-day we are faced with quite a different proposition. We are fighting not only the cause of the nation but the cause of humanity, and the cause of humanity connotes the finest and highest doctrines of civilisation. We are not fighting a war of bitterness; we are fighting for our very existence, and I maintain that any person living in the British Empire who will not do his best and give of his best and bring to bear every effort within his power to retain our freedom and democracy is no less a traitor than are some of those people of whom we have had experience in other countries. This spirit of unity, I repeat, is one bright spot particularly noticeable in this House. I believe that party politics should be discarded for the time being. To do so is quite possible. I cannot see that any great bitterness exists between the several parties in this House, and I believe they will unitedly endeavour to do everything possible to help win the war.

Let me now refer to those unofficial armies, as they have been termed. I was pleased indeed to learn that the Commonwealth Government had decided that to permit their formation would be inadvisable. As a resident of the goldfields, I have a very unhappy recollection of an episode associated with one of those unofficial armies. A few years ago we had a little industrial trouble on the eastern goldfields, though it was very little. It was simply a matter of holding a stop-work meeting in the hope of inducing a

number of men not in the union to join up and pay for some of the advantages obtained through union effort. Some person in authority—a highly placed Government official—suddenly decided to launch out as a sort of dictator, clothing himself with authority and seeking for glory of a kind, I suppose. Probably he thought that he would earn a place on the scroll of fame—or perhaps ill-fame would be better. He had a brainwave and told the unfortunate returned men, who knew nothing of the circumstances, that the miners were desperate characters. These miners are the most loyal and law-abiding people in the world. I make no apology for that statement. Less trouble is experienced on the eastern goldfields than anywhere else. This official stated that the miners had made jam-tin bombs and were doing all sorts of things such as would never enter the mind even of a Hitler. To deal with the situation, he decided to form one of these unofficial armies. The result was that he got together a number of those people, supported, I suppose, to some extent by the Government. The next thing we heard was that machine guns and ammunition, and rifles with bayonets fixed had arrived. That was an unofficial army. Everything was done that could be done to intimidate the peaceful people of the goldfields; the mines were picketed for about a week. No decent and honourable working man dared walk the streets during that period. Such things should not be allowed in any decent community. The man of whom I speak was a highly paid official, whose duty was to administer the law and not to break it. Yet we find he raised that army. Many members of it did not understand the position. They had been told tales about how desperate the people on the goldfields were, and they were influenced to such an extent that they decided to take a hand in the matter. They were soon satisfied there was nothing in the tales that had been told, and that the people of the goldfields were as loyal and law-abiding as they themselves were.

Mr. Sampson: That was a long time ago.

Mr. LEAHY: It was in 1919, not so long ago. Some people are only too anxious to clothe themselves with unnecessary authority. They seem to think they can improve on the civil laws of the State, notwithstanding that those laws have been framed and passed as a result of long and serious thought. We do not want that kind of

thing to happen. We have both civil and military laws of a kind sufficient for the Government of the State, and we possess experts to deal with various situations that may arise. Individuals should not be allowed to take unto themselves such authority as they desire to assume, because it is sometimes dangerous to give them too much power.

Certain anomalies in the Workers' Compensation Act are calling for consideration. A man may meet with an accident, as a result of which one finger may have to be amputated. An adjoining finger may be seriously crushed. The doctor naturally endeavours if possible to save the injured finger, but the healing process may take some time. The amputated finger is worth £150 to the injured man. The injured finger, may, however, take from eight to ten weeks to heal. After the amputation of one finger the man might be in a position to return to work within three weeks, but because of the injury to the other finger he may not be fit to return for eight or ten weeks. The result is that the amount specified in the Act as compensation for the amputated finger is distributed over the whole period during which the injured finger is healing. That was not the intention of the Act, but I know such instances have occurred on the Eastern Goldfields. Instead of the man receiving the allotted sum of £150 for the loss of one finger, he is reduced to half-payments per week until the other finger has got well, and the amount paid weekly is deducted from the £150. That matter should receive attention. The Act also makes provision for artificial teeth being supplied. If a man's own teeth are broken he goes to the dentist, and they are replaced by an artificial set. Subsequently he may be struck in the mouth whilst at work, and the artificial teeth may be broken. The Act contains no provision for replacements. The man has, therefore, to stop chewing and is not able to eat until the broken teeth are replaced. Artificial teeth are just as necessary to eat with as is a natural set. The same sort of thing may occur with a glass eye. A man may lose the eye whilst at work, but there is no provision for its replacement.

The Mines Regulation Act also needs attention. Some time ago I had a long argument with a mine manager on this subject. I happened to visit a place in a mine and to notice that the men were working under

dangerous conditions. I, therefore, caused the men to cease work there. Of course I brought down upon my head the wrath of the manager, and many meetings and arguments ensued. It was then decided to give me the benefit of the doubt and admit that the place was dangerous, and men were not allowed to work there. I find now that inspectors have no right to take such action.

The Minister for Mines: Which inspectors?

Mr. LEAHY: Any inspector. I have just related what occurred on that occasion. During my experience as an inspector I did not encounter much trouble. In most cases, when I decided that a place was unsafe for work, the mine management agreed with me. On other occasions I had to fight to get my way. The inspectors are very worried about the position, and claim that the Act does not provide for action of this kind being taken by them. That is also my view. Men may be sent to work in a place where it is extremely dangerous for them. Perhaps they do not know the danger of their position. An inspector has no power under the Act to declare the place dangerous and to close it. Suppose that after he leaves the mine, and makes a report to the State Mining Engineer, one of the workmen is killed, what will be the position? It has also been discovered that an inspector has no power over a surface change room. I have experienced no difficulty myself in that connection, for no one ever refused to do anything that I asked for. The matter was, however, brought to my notice on the occasion of my last visit to Kalgoorlie.

The State battery in Kalgoorlie was in a bad condition some years ago. It was the dustiest part of the Golden Mile. In an honest endeavour to have the conditions improved there I found myself at cross purposes with the manager. We had a disagreement over the whole position. We discussed the matter in the inspector's office with the State Mining Engineer, who had received the advice of the Crown Law Department; and what was the nature of the reply he gave? He said that I had no standing at all in the matter, under the Act as the battery was not a place within the meaning of the Act. Yet crushing ore is a part of mining activities. Supervision of State batteries is absolutely needed. Inspectors should have power to ensure that dust is kept down and that

everything is maintained in proper repair. I feel sure that this needs only to be brought into the light of day in order to receive attention.

Another important subject is requiring attention on the Eastern Goldfields. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) last night had the courage to attack a reputable body of men who possibly are great producers. I do not know what it is they produce; I leave members to judge of that. They are, moreover, prominent men, inasmuch as one sees their names in the columns of the "West Australian" practically every Monday and Tuesday. My reference is to the starting-price bookmakers. Grave irregularities are said to be going on, and possibly that is so. They go on all over the world. However, I wish to draw the attention of the House to something that everyone knows to be going on in the Eastern Goldfields district and is a crying shame. It is associated with illicit gold, that is, stealing gold or dealing in stolen gold. Take, for instance, a man who is working in a face, and after firing a shot, finds a piece of gold. That is extremely tempting. I do not know of anything more tempting than gold, and I have had 36 years' experience in the industry. The lump of gold belongs to nobody, and it is there for the man to pick up. The man may say to himself, "That lump of gold will make it possible for me to buy shoes for Jimmy or a dress for my wife, or something else that is needed." He takes that piece of gold, and somebody pimps on him. He is picked up by the gold-stealing staff and taken before the court. There he can be sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of £150.

Mr. Hughes: Is not the standard sentence four months now?

Mr. LEAHY: Has it been reduced? However, I am speaking of a case where a miner was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and fined £150; and he had not stolen the gold. Being out of work, he allowed himself to be induced by some syndicate to put illicit gold through the bank. There had been some changes in the staff, and he was unfortunate enough to enter the premises when the other fellows were there. As a result he got six months and was fined £150. What is his position to-day? I have been doing my best for him, and so have others. It has been a hard struggle, fighting for justice and freedom on behalf of that

man, his wife and children. In fact we are fighting for his right to live. That man has paid the penalty of imprisonment for his offence, and he has paid whatever portion of the fine he could; and now he is denied the right to live. He is refused employment. That is wrong. No matter what minor offence a man has committed, more especially this offence, surely after paying the penalty he is entitled to justice and to one more chance to show that he will not repeat the offence. On the Eastern Goldfields to-day the trouble is that the little fellow is picked up pretty regularly, whereas the big fellow is never picked up.

Mr. Hughes: Not if he sells to the ring. Then he is all right. But if he sells outside the ring—

Mr. LEAHY: This is much more serious than the starting-price business. I am deeply concerned about this particular case. I do not know exactly how the position is to be remedied. Let me ask, who amongst us has not sinned? Who amongst us can throw stones? Why should not this man be allowed the opportunity to provide for his wife and children? Does the position I have stated represent the freedom for which we are fighting to-day? I sincerely hope it does not. The mining company can say that the refusal to employ this man is not a concerted movement. The company can say, "We are within our rights; we do not need a man." Then where does that man find himself? High and dry, fairly left to starve. Outside mining there is very little work to be had in Kalgoorlie, especially by a miner. True, he may go on sustenance. For my part, I do not admit that what he has done is altogether a sin. Such cases as this demand attention and reasonable thinking. I repeat, the man is entitled to at least a chance to show that he has benefited from being imprisoned and fined. I shall not detain the House longer. To judge from the faces, I have already occupied too much time. I thank hon. members.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.18]: I did intend to have a few words to say respecting the rosy picture the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) drew last night of the farmer's finances in the future; but I feel that any comment from me now is quite unnecessary, after the humorous and excellent analysis of that picture which we have

had from the member for Hannans (Mr. Leahy). That hon. member most succinctly and emphatically destroyed the bright vision which the member for East Perth presented here yesterday evening.

Mr. Hughes: Do you find humour in the farmers' distress?

Mr. WATTS: No; only in the analysis made by the member for Hannans.

Mr. Hughes: What do you know about the subject? What suggestions have you to offer?

Mr. WATTS: I have a constituent who is very keen on receiving "Hansard." What it is that induces such keenness I am not quite aware; but the fact remains that he is very keen. Another thing he likes to receive a copy of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. This year I duly supplied him, and when subsequently meeting me he said that he had read the Speech, and he asked, "Do you really think that the Government is as devoid of ideas as the Lieut.-Governor's Speech would lead one to believe?" I replied, "I really cannot tell you." He said, "For some reason or other Ministers appear to have advised His Excellency to say as little as possible about some things and nothing at all about other things." Whether that indicates a lack of ideas or not the session will probably reveal. Those words really sum up the Speech to which we are addressing ourselves now. The Speech does not tell us much about what has happened in the past, except what we can find in any daily paper; nor does it tell us much about what we may expect in the future. That, apparently, is left to our imagination. Generally speaking, it is doubtful what we are replying to. However, as usual, we take the opportunity of the Address-in-reply to express our points of view with regard to various subjects. My intention is to join with the happy party as on previous occasions.

I hope I shall be able to confine myself to those matters that should really be dealt with by the State Parliament, either wholly or partly. One of the lessons we can learn from the events of the last few months and, indeed, from the events of the past few years, is that democratic Governments, as I think was indicated by the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) a few days ago, have yet very much to learn. In this country we believe in democracy. We all intend to



do our best to make it the type of government that is worthy of our continued adherence. There are times, however, when we look around and observe how slowly that form of government can move, how inefficient it can be and how many of its actions have not come up to our expectations. We then wonder whether our adherence to that form of government is justified. I am firmly convinced that it is. Its improvement is in our own hands, and I think it is high time we did our best to ensure that it moves more quickly, reaches decisions more promptly and efficiently and, in short, does away with much of the red tape with which, unfortunately, it is surrounded. If we take action to see that those improvements are effected and at the same time ensure that the standards of our Governments and our civil services, their honour and probity, are kept as high as possible, then I believe that the democratic form of government will yet show the world that it is the only type suitable in a civilised and Christian community. At the same time, we need to refrain from drifting into a state of complacency. We want always to realise that without precedent there can be no progress, and that progress in a democratic Government, as in all other things, is one of those advances that are very much required at the present time, and towards the furthering of which each of us, according to our several abilities, should work hard and often.

I was struck by the observations of the member for West Perth regarding what I think he referred to as "post-war problems." There are those of us who are inclined to the opinion that at the present time nothing should be thought of except the conduct of the war and matters directly associated with that objective. There is much to be said for that point of view. I think it should be paramount at the present time. On the other hand, we would be quite wrong if we did not, concurrently with the consideration of those problems, take into account what the position may be and what may require to be done when the present conflict terminates. Some of us might spend a little more of our time in considering post-war questions. It always seems to me that just as in the past we were disinclined to believe that there was likely to be a time of war, and that it was then not an

appropriate period to take action regarding war matters, so at present some of us are disinclined to believe that after the war there will be difficulties of any kind that will have to be overcome, and consequently we are loth to prepare to face those difficulties until they are forced upon us.

Mr. North: That was the trouble last time.

Mr. WATTS: Exactly, and I think some of us should in our spare time, give some consideration to problems that are likely to arise. After the 1914-18 war, we certainly embarked upon a scheme of land settlement for soldiers and dealt with other legislation that to some extent could be regarded as successful. On the other hand, could anyone to-day, in the light of the information that we now have at our disposal, suggest that those who return to us from service overseas at the conclusion of the present hostilities and who commence looking around for some suitable occupation, reasonably be asked on the evidence before us, to participate in another scheme of such a nature as the earlier soldier settlement scheme. I do not think we could do that. I would not like to contemplate, in view of the present position of the farming industry and its likely condition within the next year or two, another scheme for the settlement of soldiers on the land, such as that formulated in 1919 or thereabouts. Therefore we must look around for some new line of action and we should give consideration to that question at the present time.

During the last few days we have listened to discussions concerning the position of the agricultural industry in Western Australia. Numerous cases of financial hardship involving farmers have been placed before us by various members. Subsequently the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. F. C. L. Smith) appeared to hold the opinion that whatever financial difficulties confronted farmers at this juncture were the result of their inefficiency, by comparison with the success of farmers who had retired and are now resident in Nedlands and, possibly, other suburbs in the metropolitan area. I shall not for one moment enter into a discussion regarding what we should do with the Commonwealth Bank. I commenced my remarks by saying that so far as I could, I would confine myself to matters that could be dealt with by the State Par-

liament, and I propose to adhere to that resolve throughout my speech. I have a word or two to say to the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and anyone else in the State who has a point of view anything like akin to that held by the hon. member. I shall cite for him one or two experiences that have occasioned considerable financial trouble to farmers of my acquaintance, and ask him whether their position can be regarded as attributable to inefficiency. Two brothers who are farming in the Ongerup district, last year put 580 acres under crop. The return from that crop was the only one they could expect as they had no livestock. The putting in of the crop cost them approximately £550, counting all out-of-pocket expenses. Thus those two farmers were £550 out of pocket. On the 31st October I had an opportunity to look at the crop and, in common with a great many others, more knowledgeable possibly than I, then considered that it would return not less than 24 bushels to the acre. With wheat at 2s. 6d. that would have represented a return of £3 per acre, or a gross return of £1,700. I saw that crop again on the 10th December. During the intervening period unseasonable rains had fallen in the district. Between 4 and 5 inches were registered. A harvester was put through the crop, but in 100 yards it produced nothing. The total return from the area under crop was obtained in one corner where 10 bags were secured, worth £3 10s. Now those men are over £2,000 in arrears in their operations. That is one case out of a total area of 13,000 acres and within ten miles of where a similar state of affairs existed. No crop was taken off that area, and only about 3,000 bags of wheat were obtained from 3,000 acres. Those are examples where there was nothing in the nature of inefficiency; quite the reverse, and conditions outside their control placed those men in an extremely parlous position. I regret to say that though representations for relief were made on behalf of those men, to the Minister for Lands, it was not possible to get it for them. They could not receive assistance although very definitely they were necessitous wheatgrowers. I propose to read for the illumination of the members a letter I received from Cranbrook to-day. It reads—

I am writing to you for your valued advice re a soldier's wife. Her husband is serving

with the A.I.F., and left Australia at the beginning of June, leaving his wife and family of six (now seven) on his farm, which is mortgaged to the . . . bank. Two days after her arrival back with No. 7, the manager of that bank called on her and informed her that the bank was foreclosing on the property and that she would have to get out by the end of the month. Can they put her off this property whilst her husband is serving with the A.I.F.? Under agreement between her husband and the bank, she was to receive 25s. a week from the property. Recently that was stopped.

The Minister for Justice: It was not the Agricultural Bank?

Mr. WATTS: No. Possibly we may be able to have those contemplated proceedings stopped under the Federal regulations; I do not know whether we can or not. I am not in a position yet to know exactly.

Mr. Marshall: I made inquiries in a similar case and found that the mortgage could not be exercised.

Mr. WATTS: I know that the court has emergency powers, but whether it can exercise those powers in this case is another matter. It is only six weeks since the man left the State, and it is difficult to realise that his position could have gone so far to the bad in that time. Therefore if it is good enough to permit a man to go away with the A.I.F., and an agreement is entered into that the Bank should make the wife an allowance, it is only right that the allowance should be carried on. It seems to me that the attitude of the particular financial institution is not one that we should consider lightly; we should look into it seriously and determine what action we should take to ensure that no injustice shall occur either in the case of members of the forces or of any persons who act in an honest and efficient manner. We should impress upon the financial institution that undue haste in matters such as these will not be permitted. I trust the Premier, like the Premier of Victoria, will take action publicly and state what he is prepared to do in regard to any unjust or unreasonable attitude that may be adopted by a bank or any other institution. If he does that, there may be little need to legislate to prevent a repetition of anything of this kind, but if he does nothing we must have recourse to legislation. I submit to the House that the psychological effect not only on the farmers actually concerned but on those who may be neighbours and who may be associated with them in the district, must be taken into consideration. We must ask

ourselves also whether continued production of certain agricultural commodities is an essential part of our war effort. We have been told repeatedly that it is. Then if it is, the production of those essentials should be clearly determined by the Government of the country, and every effort made to see that operations associated with the production of those commodities are carried on in the most efficient manner. But persons who are producing the commodities, directly or indirectly, must know whether their tenure is secure or not. They must know, one way or the other. A person must be sure, so long as he is carrying on the work efficiently, that he will be permitted to continue without interference from those who have no right to restrict an essential work, and we have been assured that agriculture is an essential part of the war effort. I do ask the Government to impress upon those in authority at Canberra the importance of protecting this industry and, having obtained a pronouncement, it will then be possible for farmers to carry on their work intelligently and efficiently. That, however, will not be possible if while their work is being carried on they are to be harried and harassed by persons who have no right to do so.

I should like to say a few words on the subject of native affairs. On this question there is quite a new point of view being brought to bear on the management of the department; I believe that the hon. gentleman who is now in charge of that department is bringing to bear on it new ideas, and so at this stage I do not think any criticism of his work is warranted though in the past I have criticised the department as often as I have found it necessary to do so.

Mr. Warner: A lot of changes are necessary.

Mr. WATTS: They are, and a lot of changes are going to be made. If those changes result in some good, as we hope they will, it will at least be a step in the right direction. We shall be able to feel then that something is being done, even though those results may not be quite as satisfactory as we would like them to be. If we find that the effort being made under the new management does not produce better results, we shall have the opportunity to offer criticism at a future date. The department is now in better hands than for

some considerable time past. There are new sympathies and a better understanding, and these should ultimately produce an improved state of affairs in regard to the natives and half-castes in the State. It is badly needed. The questions of the employment of natives, their sustenance and mission stations, as well as all the arguments we have heard regarding them, demand careful consideration. I ask the Minister to continue on the lines he has recently taken and have investigations made by practical persons with wide experience of our natives and their ways. When the Minister receives the recommendations of those persons, I trust he will use his best endeavours to have them put into effect for the improvement of the lot of our aborigines and half-castes.

There are some matters, which may be termed parochial, upon which I desire to touch for a moment. Grave difficulty has been experienced in the Great Southern district with regard to water supplies. It is just as well the House should know that in an area where usually we have approximately 12in. of rain by this time of the year, this year we have had only 450 points, or 4½in., since the 1st January last. That has resulted in two kinds of water supply falling very low. The agricultural water supply is exceedingly low; if we do not have a better rainfall by the end of the year then I fear that both the Government and the Agricultural Bank, as well as others, will be put to much expense in carting water from points far distant to the farming areas. Nyabing is fortunate in that it has a concrete water catchment, which was put down by the Public Works Department some two or three years ago at a cost of about £4,000. At the moment it is almost full of water, a great quantity having been left over from last year, when the rainfall was exceptionally heavy. At Ongerup, further south, the same position prevails, except that the reservoir is not nearly so full; and unless we have further rains additional expense will be incurred there. Katanning has suffered considerably for a long period in regard to its water supply, not only from the point of view of quantity but also quality. Practically speaking, we have had no rain during midwinter. I mention this fact because negotiations have been proceeding between the Minister and the Katanning Water Board with

regard to a considerable amount of work which it has been suggested should be done to the scheme, the object being to improve the catchment area and holding ground. The outlook of the local authority was that, in the hope of a spread of good seasons—last year being the first—from a rainfall point of view, it should not press the matter, as it was felt the Government had perhaps other matters on its hands requiring earlier attention during the period of the war. As I say the local authority expected to get a plentiful water supply, but was disappointed. So we are now reluctantly compelled to say to the Government, "War or no war, other jobs or no other jobs, please come and make arrangements for the work to be done to the Katanning water scheme, because if it is not done we shall have no water and the position will be even more serious than it has been in past years." I do not propose to dwell on the subject any further.

I shall conclude my remarks by expressing the hope that the Minister for Lands will soon be restored to health. We have had a number of discussions with him during the year, mostly with regard to the bulk handling of wheat in what is known as the Albany zone. The Minister has been able to arrange for considerable progress in the direction of bulk handling in the Albany zone and I trust his efforts will very shortly bear fruit. But I do think, with the member for Albany (Mr. Hill), who is on the right track, that a substantial alteration ought to be made in the boundaries of what is known as the Albany zone. On what basis, by what rule, by what yardstick, the present zone was defined I do not know. It seems to me, however, that from the point of view of railway convenience, suitability of grade and all the other factors which go to make up the area that should be the hinterland of a port, the port of Albany is deserving of a hinterland considerably larger than it now has.

Mr. Withers: You can get the wheat taken to Albany if you are prepared to pay extra freight.

Mr. WATTS: That is right.

Mr. Withers: That is what it means.

Mr. WATTS: I am not trying to steal anything from the hon. member.

Mr. Doney: It is based on mileage. If it were based on freight, it might be all right.

Mr. WATTS: It is based on mileage at present; and we are, I hope, entitled to our opinion—even if it is wrong—that there ought to be an alteration in the boundaries of the Albany zone. We are going to ask for such an alteration and if our request is granted, God bless us.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.17 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 13th August, 1910.*

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

### SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Hon. C. B. Williams (South) took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

### CONDOLENCE—CANBERRA AIR DISASTER.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.33]: It is with sincere regret that I submit the following motion:—

This House places on record its sense of the severe loss to the Commonwealth by the death of Brigadier the Hon. G. A. Street, Minister for the Army; the Hon. J. V. Fairbairn, Minister for the Air; the Hon. Sir Henry Gullett, Vice-President of the Executive Council; Lieut.-General Sir Brudenell White, Chief of the General Staff, and the other passengers and members of the crew killed in the air disaster near Canberra.

That the foregoing resolution be transmitted by the President to the Prime Minister, through the Premier's Department, with the request that the terms of the resolution be conveyed to the relatives of the deceased Ministers, and the passengers and members of the crew.