

are transported is 240 miles. Train schedules should be overhauled; timetables should show almost passenger-express running time. I have only mentioned what is happening on the main line. When branch lines are reviewed the position is much worse and, in addition, there are excessive delays at junctions. Our pig transport mortalities in the summertime are due to delays. Just as the Railway Department should enter into road passenger service to link with its rail system, so should Government-controlled road trucks be a connecting link with the railway stock transport. That is being done in England, America and South Africa, so why not here? The stock trucks of the Railway Department need re-constructing. They should all be of the CXA pattern with suitable roofs. Bogey sheep trucks are death traps for sheep unless suitably divided.

I hope that the whole matter of live-stock transport, slaughtering and marketing will be thoroughly considered and re-organised, and that steps will be taken to stabilise the market. The farmer today is receiving a reasonable price for his meat, and now is the time to create a stable market. In the days gone by I have seen farmers sell prime stock for 1d. a lb. I hope that at the end of five years such will not recur. But we may rest assured that immediately national security regulations cease the exploiters will once more be active to batten on the producer. I hope I will not again hear their song of the law of supply and demand. The organisation of markets is the only thing that will stop the exploiter, and the Government is the only body that can create the necessary machinery to stop exploitation. In closing, may I say that some of the objectives I have mentioned necessarily require Commonwealth assistance, but with that assistance they can be gained and justice be given to our country people. That will be a big step to that most worthy, desirable and essential goal—full employment.

We must ever bear in mind that one major factor is vitally essential, and that is that the Commonwealth and State banks must have complete and sovereign power to control and administer scientifically our currency for internal development, and to control employment and the marketing of our products. Currency must be available at interest rates, nominal or otherwise, in har-

mony with the ability of industry to pay. It is the instrument of the Devil, having to depend on the vagaries of the Associated Banks and financial institutions or private lenders for finance. It would be a libel to say of Sir Denison Miller or any of his successors that they created a state of inflation, and so it would be equally wrong to say that properly controlled currency would be detrimental to the average citizen. The reverse would be the case, and the only sufferer under controlled currency would be the financial exploiter. Most people are beginning to understand that the present way in which finance functions is obsolete. In fact, it is many times more obsolete than our present railway system and, just as our railways and transport can and will be modernised, so must our method of currency be modernised, to fit our needs and to tune in with the excellent progress that our scientists have made in their many fields of activity. As the scientist must necessarily work for service to the community and mankind, and not for the selfishness of the individual, so must our currency system function with the same objective, for the benefit of the people. Then and only then will slum housing in town and country be forced to disappear; then and only then will Governments be able to make available decent quarters and housing for their employees.

On motion by the Acting Premier, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.3 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1945.

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

QUESTION.

TRAM LIGHTING.

As to Improving.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: Seeing that the metropolitan trams are so badly illuminated that they are a

menace to other traffic and pedestrians, will the Government take steps to follow the lead of the Fremantle tram service and provide the necessary illumination on them?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: During his visit to England in connection with the purchase of plant and equipment for the proposed power scheme at South Fremantle, the general manager of the tramway system (Mr. Taylor) has closely investigated the most modern method of lighting tramcars. On his return to Perth in the near future, his recommendations will be submitted and the necessary decisions made.

MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT.

To Disallow Bagged-wheat Charges Regulation—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter:—

That new regulation No. 148, made under the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act, 1902, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 20th April, 1945, and laid on the Table of the House on the 31st July, 1945, be and is hereby disallowed.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [4.35]: The imposing of a handling charge of one-tenth of a penny per bushel on bagged-wheat may not seem to represent very much, but it is the total sum of such small amounts that make the burden of the task of growing wheat almost unbearable. The rehabilitation of the rural areas forms part of our post-war reconstruction programme and if we are to get anywhere with it we must get down to hard facts. I shall quote some figures regarding the importations of agricultural machinery. It will be recognised that that plant plays a decisive part in the task of wheatgrowing. On the machinery imported in cases or in bundles the following charges were levied at the port of Fremantle:—

Handling, 3s. 6d. per ton measurement plus 35 per cent.

Wharfage, 5s. per ton measurement plus 20 per cent.

Harbour improvement rate 6d. per ton by measurement plus 20 per cent.

With respect to machinery set up for movement—that is where they were on wheels or so constructed that they could be moved about

for handling purposes—the charges were as follows:—

Handling, 4s. per machine plus 35 per cent.

Wharfage, 5s. per ton measurement plus 20 per cent.

Harbour improvement rate 6d. per ton measurement plus 20 per cent.

I think members will agree that those charges more than outweigh the small increase proposed in connection with the handling of bagged-wheat. I shall next give some figures regarding the quantity of wheat consigned from country districts to ports during the year 1944-45. The consignments represented 37,000 bags railed to the ports of Fremantle, Geraldton and Bunbury. The quantity of wheat bagged for the convenience of the Commonwealth Government for shipments to ports where there were no conveniences for the handling of bulk wheat or for the stabilising of bulk cargo, was 697,927 bags from the 1st December, 1944, to the 18th August, 1945. Of that total, 360,685 bags were shipped from Fremantle. If we are to consider the imposing of an additional handling charge of one-tenth of a penny per bushel, it is scarcely fair to ask the farmers of the State to share in what is really a Commonwealth responsibility.

Hon. L. Craig: Farmers in the other States share it; it is not a Western Australian charge only.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I am referring to the farmers as a whole and suggest that they should not bear that cost. The charge for loading that wheat at Fremantle is .625d. per bag by gantry or .75d. per bag by gear. At Bunbury the loading charge is the actual cost plus a small commission and at Geraldton it is the actual cost plus 25 per cent. As the Auditor General's report shows that the Fremantle Harbour Trust allowed the Commonwealth Government £148,000 in the form of rebates and allowances, I certainly do not think the proposed increased handling charge is warranted. I take the view that as this House on two former occasions has disallowed this regulation, there is no justification for bringing it up a third time. I consider the whole procedure is wrong and I support Mr. Baxter's motion.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [4.39]: I have one comment only to make on the motion. The right of the Legislative Council to disallow a regulation is something that is valuable not only to this House but to the public.

Hon. A. Thomson: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is a right that we must maintain. To my mind, one of the ways of ensuring that we shall never lose that right is to use it economically.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I am not altogether inclined to use it from the point of view of asking, "Is this regulation exactly what it ought to be?" I do not like that idea. We should ask ourselves, "Is some very grave injustice being imposed by this regulation?" Or, "Is it a matter of first-class importance?" Unless it answers either of those two questions, we should hesitate to disallow the regulation. As to whether this regulation is inflicting a grave injustice or is of first-class importance, I shall reserve my judgment until I hear what Mr. Baxter has to say in reply.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [4.41]: I feel that the Chief Secretary has put up a reasonable review of the situation concerning the regulation for bagged-wheat charges. We have already made a protest against the Fremantle Harbour Trust being used as a taxing machine. That was one of the main reasons why I supported the disallowance of a similar regulation on a previous occasion. But the argument now put forward is that this regulation has nothing whatever to do with the other charges. I agree that the surcharge which was mentioned by Mr. Thomson yesterday should be reviewed. The trust has undoubtedly been using its powers to act as a taxing machine. That is confirmed by the figures quoted by Mr. Loton. The 35 per cent. surcharge which was imposed after the last war, as was mentioned by Mr. Thomson, was made at a time when the primary producers were in power. They did not take steps to have the charges made by the Harbour Trust lightened for the primary producer. They had the opportunity, when in power, to review the charges, and I take it that it is a Government's duty to review charges made by the trust if those charges are excessive. This Government has acted on the same lines as did previous Gov-

ernments. The present Government, like other Governments, does not like giving up any form of revenue which it can secure. I certainly think some steps should be taken to reduce the surcharge which was imposed after the last war, as such a reduction would be of more benefit to the farming community than would be the disallowance of the present regulation. I hope the Minister will see that those charges are investigated and adjusted.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You are an optimist!

Hon. G. W. MILES: I may be an optimist, but the point is that the trust must make some charge for handling the wheat. As has been said, the charge at Bunbury is the cost price plus some amount in addition. Unless the Minister's statements can be refuted, the trust is charging the actual cost price.

The Chief Secretary: Less.

Hon. G. W. MILES: That is, the actual cost price for this particular item. The Minister also indicated that if this regulation were disallowed, the trust would have to charge wharfage rates of a higher amount.

The Chief Secretary: Ordinary cargo rates.

Hon. G. W. MILES: Yes, that is what the Chief Secretary said. Personally, I think that as we have entered our protest and the matter has been debated, the mover has done his duty in bringing the matter before the House, and we would be well advised not to press the motion.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East—in reply) [4.47]: I appreciate the references that have been made to my motion by Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Loton. Mr. Loton is himself a farmer and represents a farming district. He has analysed the position clearly.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You have to convince Sir Hal Colebatch.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is all right; he feels the matter is of importance. Regulations are now anathema; they have now come to the stage when they are as far-reaching as Acts of Parliament. Unfortunately, Parliament is only too prone to give power in Acts of Parliament for the framing of regulations of a very wide range. Mr. Miles said that we had gone far enough by making our protest, but I did not make a protest. I say the regulation is wrong and that it is a matter of disallowing it altogether, so that it will not inflict an injustice on any section

of the community. Mr. Miles mentioned the charges that are being made by the trust today and said they were under cost. Is it the fault of the people that they have to pay an increased charge? Of course not! I shall recur to that point later, when I shall clearly show that the cost of handling goods at Fremantle is excessive when compared with the charges made at Bunbury and Geraldton. The additional charges at Fremantle may, of course, be owing to war conditions, shortage of labour and so on. The point, however, is: Is this the time to increase charges to producers, especially when a change is about to occur? I say this is the wrong time and we should wait a little longer. The Chief Secretary's reply to my speech was very eloquent and he made out a good case on behalf of the Government.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He represents the taxpayer, who has to pay at the finish.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: He is a poor representative of the taxpayer. When a tax is once imposed, it is never removed. But his case was put all from one angle, and that was for the benefit of the Government and the Harbour Trust, not the producers. As a matter of fact, during the course of years that the Labour Government has been in power it has never extended any consideration to those producing the wealth of the State, except immediately before an election. It is the primary producers who export produce that provides the wherewithal to establish oversea credits. The Government is too much under the thumb of the trade unions to do otherwise; I have plenty of evidence of that, too. The Government is getting from the Fremantle Harbour Trust a large surplus which is paid into Consolidated Revenue. It amounts to, roughly, £100,000 per annum. Naturally, the Chief Secretary is defending the action of the Government, because it is responsible for this regulation. It may have been framed by the trust, but it has to receive the sanction of the Government before it can take effect. As members know, that has been the position in the case of this regulation which has operated since last April. That is the unjust part of it. The session can be closed and immediately afterwards a regulation can be imposed which may inflict an injustice on the people, and it can continue until the next session of Parliament. The

Chief Secretary challenged my attitude when I said that I was stressing the position of the wheatgrowers. Well, whose position would I stress? They are the people who have to pay the increased charges. It is natural that I, or any other member, whether directly or indirectly associated with the primary producers, would desire to protect an industry of such importance to the State. It is one of our main exporting industries and provides revenue for Western Australia by establishing funds abroad which are very necessary.

While the Chief Secretary's speech was high-sounding it contained many weaknesses to which I shall refer. First of all he stated that he found it very hard to follow me when I was explaining the different rates. I quite agree. I realised at the outset that even had I taken the most exacting care, and occupied a lot of the time of this House, members could not be expected to assimilate the many applications spread over the original rates, the three subsequent rates—two of which were disallowed—and a further column with the 35 per cent. added and, in addition, the percentage increases on the whole. Therefore I set out to compile the figures in such a way that the "Hansard" record would present them to members concisely, and so that a glance at "Hansard" would confirm that the attitude I adopted was right. The Minister also said that my figures were hard to reconcile, but he did not say in what way. Naturally that made me look around and, as a consequence, I say this: When a statement like that is made it is not of much value if it is not backed up with some reason. The Chief Secretary did not back it up.

The Chief Secretary: The figures I quoted support my contention.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No. My figures were carefully checked and clearly state the position. My figures appear in "Hansard" in the form of a concise table whereas members would need a pencil and paper to deal with those submitted by the Chief Secretary. As regards the set of rates to which the motion applies, as members know, in addition to increases on five of the services, a 35 per cent. increase is applied in an unusual manner. It is a pro-

cedure to which I have a decided objection. The increases on the different charges without the application are—

Item C. An increase of 14 per cent. and, with the 35 per cent. added, 49 per cent. increase on this service, above the original charge.

Item D. An increase of 44 per cent. with 35 per cent. added making 79 per cent. increase.

Item E. An increase of 25 per cent. with 35 per cent. added making 60 per cent. increase.

Item F. An increase of 25 per cent. with 35 per cent. making a 60 per cent. increase.

Item G. One service 20 per cent., total 55 per cent.; the other service remains at the old charge.

In his statement dealing with bagged-wheat charges, the Chief Secretary said that it is fairly difficult to follow in detail the various operations that are necessary in the handling of bagged-wheat at Fremantle, more so because there have been so many different rates in operation during recent years. With this I agree, but if I confine my attention to the position as it was before May, 1943—when the first alterations were made—and when the latest handling charges were enforced, the picture will be much clearer. The Minister said that the new schedule of charges is an effort on the part of the Harbour Trust to recoup itself for the actual expenditure upon services rendered in the handling of bagged-wheat. It will be gathered from his remarks, when speaking to the motion for the disallowance of this regulation, that the handling charges on bagged-wheat have never been high enough to prevent the loss of money to the Fremantle Harbour Trust in this avenue of its activities, and that the commissioners have for years been aware of and are resigned to this loss. Incredible as it seems, if this is so, why should the Fremantle Harbour Trust decide to bring into force a schedule of charges sufficiently high to prevent its losing money on the handling of bagged-wheat when costs are at their very peak?

Why should not the matter be delayed even when the first regulation was applied, when charges were the highest they could possibly be at Fremantle? Another point is this: Even if the trust lost on handling bagged-wheat, it is reaping a golden harvest by the charges for wheat storage, which returns a very substantial amount. As a matter of fact, the Fremantle Harbour Trust charges for storage are double

those made at Geraldton and Bunbury. We do not hear the Government say that it is making a big profit out of that particular portion of the trust's activities, which it is. But it talks about losing money on the bagged-wheat handling which is only a small matter compared with the profit it is making on the storage. The Fremantle storage charges are one-sixth of a penny per bag per week while at Geraldton and Bunbury the charges are one-twelfth of a penny per bag per week. It will be seen that the Fremantle Harbour Trust wants it both ways.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It is a rook.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am not going to be as drastic as to say that. As the future will present many changes, why set out to impose a further increase, no matter how small, at this juncture, more especially seeing that on other services to wheatgrowers a very substantial profit is being made? The Chief Secretary said that, in the main, the charges represent labour costs. These labour costs are so high at present with the manpower position as it is that it would be unfair to base any permanent charges on them. Army releases of many thousands of men have already been announced besides which, with the cessation of hostilities—thank God for it—many more younger men will be released. It is well known that the deterioration in the rate of handling cargo at Fremantle is largely due to the fact that the average age of the workers engaged there has risen steeply during the past few years. That could not be avoided. Other men were not available. With these Army releases the rate of handling will commence to improve almost immediately. These labour costs, therefore, which are the prime factor, will be decreasing.

I ask whether there is any justification for increasing the rate at present. The fact, mentioned by the Chief Secretary, that all the wheat in Australia is handled by the Australian Wheat Board, should not be taken into consideration as that body was set up as a war-time expedient and will probably be wound up in the near future. So far as I am concerned even though the charge is a small one spread over all the wheatgrowers, it nevertheless is a charge against them. The future for wheatgrowing does not hold out much promise, not sufficient to enable it to pay all the excessive charges that are imposed upon it:

Some of these were referred to by Mr. Wood yesterday. The future of the industry is not very bright.

Hon. T. Moore: Why? The world wants wheat owing to the present shortage.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, at a price! As a wheatgrower himself, the hon. member should realise that the charges against wheatgrowers are mounting up so much that a good deal of the present acreage will go out of wheat-production. No-one with foresight will deny that. We do not want acreage to go out of wheatgrowing; we want to increase the acreage so that we can get back to our 52,000,000 bushels yield. The regulations made by the Fremantle Harbour Trust may endure for all time, not only during the transitory period. Experience has shown that once an imposition is applied by the Government upon the community it remains practically for ever. Very rarely is any reduction effected.

The Chief Secretary: For many years the Fremantle Harbour Trust gave a rebate on the handling of bagged-wheat.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so.

The Chief Secretary: That does not coincide with your statement now.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That does not concern the regulation; it was something done by the Harbour Trust. I say it is the Government that does not make any reduction when an imposition is once placed upon a section of the community, although the Harbour Trust, as a body, might do so. At that time we were fortunate in having a representative of the primary producers as a member of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. He was there for some years. During my term as Minister in charge of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, Mr. McCarthy, the representative of the lumpers, was retiring from that body. Very strong pressure was brought to bear on me to appoint a representative of other interests in lieu of Mr. McCarthy. That would have been most unfair, and I declined to carry out the suggestion, with the result that Mr. McCarthy was re-appointed. I could see no justification for disfranchising the lumpers. I think Sir Hal Colebatch was in the Ministry at the time. Unfortunately, through the untimely death of the farmers' representative on the Fremantle Harbour Trust, we found ourselves without any representative, as the Labour Government did not follow my example.

Hon. A. Thomson: No, it did not.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It appointed one of its own Trades Hall officials as a member of the trust. We can expect very little consideration in the future as to any rebates. The rate of handling at Fremantle has deteriorated considerably, whereas at Geraldton and Bunbury such is not the case, for the work generally is up to pre-war standard there. That, I think, is due to the roster system of engagement, instituted by the Stevedoring Industries Commission at Fremantle with the object of directing men to jobs in the order of priority decided by the Port Priority Committee. That was very necessary under wartime conditions, and had the effect of reducing the rate of handling for all cargoes at Fremantle.

Hon. A. Thomson: You mean the quantity?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes. The reasons for the institution of that system were—

(a) Men who previously were able to decide what job they would offer for, were, under the roster system, directed to work which on occasions they did not like, with the result that they would not do their best and handling rates dropped considerably.

(b) For some years now the port of Fremantle has been working at full pressure and there has been more work available than could possibly be handled expeditiously by the manpower available, the obvious result being a poorer standard of work as the men knew there would always be work available.

As we return to normal conditions there will not be such pressure of work as has been evident during the past two or three years, and it is hoped that the free selection method of engaging labour will be reverted to when, in the opinion of competent judges, a much better rate of handling will be obtained. I contend we should wait to see whether there will be any necessity for an increase in this direction. Some increase might be made, but not to the extent asked for in this regulation. That is something which the wheat industry, when other charges are taken into consideration, will not be able to carry, small though it is. I do not think I would object if the regulation were withdrawn and another brought down providing for the imposition of the 35 per cent., which has been charged to the industry, but to apply for 12 months only. I would accept an assurance from the Government that it would carry out this suggestion, and submit the whole question again at a later date. I am not prepared

to allow the existing regulation to stand, because it is unfair from every standpoint, and there is no necessity for it. Were the Fremantle Harbour Trust not making a profit and paying considerable sums into Consolidated Revenue, there might be some legitimate excuse for the imposition.

The profits of the trust come directly from goods and other things of that description. There is only one source from which those profits are derived, namely, the primary industries. Very few secondary industries in this State export anything. I hope the House will do as it has done on previous occasions, agree to the disallowance of this regulation. This is not the time in which to increase costs, when everything is at its highest and on the verge of a change. It will be time enough in, say, two years, to survey the position when, if necessary, Parliament may be prepared to allow the Harbour Trust to impose an increase in the charges. The present regulation is not justified, and I hope the motion will be agreed to.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. A. L. Loton

Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. B. Wood.
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray

Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. W. H. Kilaon
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. T. Moore.
(Teller.)

PAIR.

AYE.
Hon. H. Tuckey

No.
Hon. E. M. Heenan.

Question thus negatived.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. L. B. Bolton and Prisoner-of-War Labour.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) I desire to make a personal explanation. During the speech by Mr. Wood on the Address-in-reply debate yesterday, he mentioned the rate of wages he was paying for prisoners-of-war. He said the amount was £2 per week plus keep. I interjected that he was wrong and that the amount was £1 per week. Mr. Wood contended that it was £2, and I further argued

the point with him, stating that I was paying only £1. Of this I produced evidence. After the House adjourned, we conferred on the matter and I found that Mr. Wood's statement, as well as mine, was correct. The difference was that Mr. Wood's employees were experienced men—they had had six months' experience—and that was why he had to pay £2 a week. My employees were inexperienced and I paid only £1 per week. It has been suggested that his were not better than mine. However, I make this explanation in fairness to Mr. Wood. I have no desire to convey that his statement was incorrect when, in the circumstances, we were both right.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Neither of you should be employing those men at those rates.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Then get us some other men.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That would only make it worse.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Tenth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [5.19]: I would like to join with other members in tendering congratulations to the new Premier, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, and to Hon. W. M. Marshall on his elevation to the high office he now holds. I trust that both of them will be blest with good health and good fortune to enable them to discharge the important duties to which they have been called, although I am not necessarily wishing that they will continue to occupy those positions indefinitely.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Our party has been in office for a good many years.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: When speaking on the Address-in-reply last year, I referred to the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission and its recommendations as they applied to proposals for soldier settlement after the then current war. It has been a matter of surprise to me that ever since the Commission's recommendations to the Commonwealth Government were made public, the Returned Soldiers' League, particularly in this State, has so passively accepted the proposals for the regimentation and control of any poor souls who may elect and can qualify to become

soldier settlers. No scheme of settlement will be a success unless the maximum amount of freedom is allowed to the individual to display his initiative and enterprise, within, of course, definite financial limits.

The only man who can farm his property successfully is the farmer himself, and in the clamour for supervision in matters of this kind, well-meaning people often overlook the fact that supervision and control, as the report to my mind pre-supposes, will largely result in defeating its own object. They overlook the fact that the inevitable interference with the settler by those in authority tends to develop an attitude of mind amongst the more enterprising men that results in their eventual discouragement. Other types of settlers gradually come to lean more and more upon those in authority; more and more they tend to place the blame or responsibility for their non-success or failure in any of their enterprises upon the shoulders of those in authority. This has occurred in the past. It has occurred with private institutions; it has occurred very often with the Agricultural Bank and in connection with soldier settlement after the first world war. The interference by officialdom and the authority vested in it destroys the enterprise and initiative of many men, and discourages the man who might otherwise, if left to himself, though within definite financial limits, make a success of his undertaking.

This war has ended after a duration of nearly six years. It has been fairly obvious to many of us for a considerable time that there would be a great demand in Australia, and particularly in Western Australia, where so many of the enlistments came from the country areas, for soldier land settlement. Over 12 months have elapsed since the Rural Reconstruction Commission furnished its report and recommendations to the Federal authorities. Before it did so, this appeared from Press reports to be the excuse why the Federal authorities had not put into operation the plans of which we have heard so much and from which nothing has eventuated. Although over 12 months have passed, there seems to be no concrete evidence that we have got any further in the direction of instituting soldier settlement, beyond plans and plans and still more

plans. We do not seem able to ascertain anything concrete whatsoever. Seemingly in this country at the moment, we have got things somewhat the wrong way round. Under a sane administration, we would have the technicians, the theorists, the economists and the professors advising practical administrators or practical men on their decisions, whereas we have placed the planners, plotters, theorists and schemers in a position to control all these matters, and it seems difficult to get anything out of their plans that will be practicable and will be in time to come as effective as it should be.

For some time I have held the view that this type of person, which the present Canberra Administration seems to be so dependent upon, has not looked with favour upon any idea of soldier settlement after this war, and every week that passes strengthens me in the belief that a lot of the procrastination is indulged in simply to delay the institution of any worth-while soldier settlement scheme or the providing of an opportunity to get a scheme tried out in a small way before there is a big rush of men demanding settlement on the land. Now, of course, we are faced with the position that within a few months we shall have probably thousands of men in Western Australia seeking repatriation on farms, and our planners and plotters apparently have not very much to offer them.

While I was somewhat critical of the recommendations of the Rural Reconstruction Commission for soldier settlement as contained in the second report, I would like to congratulate the Commission upon the recommendations in its fourth report, a copy of which I have only recently been able to obtain, for the financial and economic reconstruction of the farming industry, particularly its recommendation for the writing down of secured debts and its proposals that the valuation of the security should be based on the productive value of the farm. To me those proposals are not new; they have been urged by country representatives in this Parliament for years, but to me at all events it is a matter for congratulation that the Commission, after taking evidence and I trust after acquiring experience, has made those recommendations and has made them as clearly and as lacking in equivocation as it has done. I concur in and support and rein-

force, if necessary—though I do not think it is needed in respect of that gentleman—the plea made by Mr. Williams for more practical men to be placed in authoritative administrative positions in the mining industry. I can assure the hon. member and this House that, much as the mining industry may need that very necessary departure from the procedure of the past, it does not need it—judging from my observations—nearly as much as does the farming industry.

Hon. L. Craig: Do you agree with the leasehold proposals?

Hon. H. J. ROCHE: I certainly do not. I suppose it is inevitable—due largely, I think, to the absence of any practical farmer on the Rural Reconstruction Commission—that even in its fourth report, which on the whole is reasonably good, it should still indicate that it sees salvation for many of the farmers of this country in the management and control of their affairs by officialdom. In that regard, I have already made my attitude quite plain, and I dare say I shall do so again in the future. It is inevitable that, no matter how efficient an authority may be, unless it can evolve a system which will leave to the settler the responsibility of managing his own affairs and farming his own farm, any scheme will fail to a considerable degree, if not entirely. In fairness to the Commission, I would say that the proposals for administrative organisation and the recommendations in respect of personnel for the control contemplated would—if it were possible to carry them out—go a long way towards offsetting the dangers I perceive. Possibly I am somewhat hard to convince, but to me the millennium is not yet and officials possessing the qualifications which the Commission thinks necessary have not yet been born in sufficient numbers. Were it otherwise, I think the proposals might succeed.

The developments in Australia of recent years have been such that there is now, or there has been, quite a changed relationship between life in the country and life in the cities. I know people, many of them living in the glories of the past, who bemoan the passing of what they are pleased to call the pioneering spirit. I suppose most of us have an idea of what is meant by that. I think it will be found that there is still courage and capacity,

possibly through all the community, certainly—I would say—amongst the country people. But I think that the pioneering spirit, as we have known it in the past, and the faith in the country that impelled people to undertake pioneering, are as dead as the dodo and they have been killed by the developments in our social as well as in our economic life. Today probably the first question a man who might contemplate going out to the back of beyond and pioneering there would ask himself would be, "What is the use?" People are not going out to live under the conditions prevailing today, just for the sake of a living. They are not going to put up with dust, heat, flies, lack of amenities and a sub-standard of education for their children when they realise that as a result of a growing social consciousness in the community it is possible in the cities to obtain a living wage governed by an Arbitration Court award, reasonable housing conditions and amenities, and, above all, opportunities for a decent education for their children.

As I think I have said in this House before, the general community must have a new conception of conditions in the country and of what the future is likely to be. That attitude of mind to which I have referred applies fairly generally throughout Western Australia. I think it applies in the North-West. Some greater reward must be the lot of those people than has been offering for some time past. I think that perhaps we have been a little too intent in some respects on a levelling down in Australia. We have reached a position where I think Governments and the community as a whole will have to give serious thought to the need for helping up the rural and pastoral industries. I was very impressed a month or two ago by a letter that appeared in the Press from a Mr. Frank Thompson, of Port Hedland. He made what appeared to me to be a powerful plea for an alteration of conditions in the North to enable men with initiative and capacity, particularly younger men, to attain to a position where they would have something more than a living which would justify their carrying on industries in the North. He did not make his appeal on behalf of pastoralists alone but for employers and employees in the North as well. Although I do not suppose the Government ever sees anything in letters like that, or ever

takes much notice of what is said in the debate on the Address-in-reply, I think it is something to hope for, that it might at least take some heed of that feeling and see whether it is not possible to institute some steps or prevail on the Federal authorities to assist to such a degree that there will be a favourable response to appeals such as that to which I have referred. The same condition prevails, though not as acutely at the moment, in the rural areas. When it develops further in the rural areas, I think its effects will become even more manifest than they are in the North.

I wish to say a few words in respect of the wool industry, because I think a certain amount of publicity with regard to it might do something to offset some of the despondency which appears to be growing in certain quarters. It is generally recognised that the industry is of tremendous importance to the whole of Australia. I think that most people feel that way, even if they have not given the matter much serious thought. I have always felt that way but have never had the position brought home to me more thoroughly than when considering the report of the Secondary Industries Commission appointed by the Commonwealth Government. At page 8 of that report appears a graph illustrating very clearly what the industry means to Australia. It is extraordinary that the line of the graph representing the number of people gainfully employed in Australia follows, not exactly, of course—graphs rarely do—but substantially and consistently, the amount received year by year in the Australian wool cheque. I would like to have seen that given more publicity. I would like to see the graph in "Hansard," but I do not suppose that is possible. It would bring home to people just what the wool industry means to this country.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Can you not quote it, and then it would appear?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I cannot very well quote a graph. The effect of good prices for wool is shown in the graph, as well as the effect of any recession in values. We recognise the importance of the wool industry, but information such as that demonstrates it even more. The value of the Australian wool industry to the textile trade of the world can be gathered from the fact that, roughly speaking, the percentage cost of the raw wool in the finished article is somewhere

about 10 per cent. The actual figure, I think, is between $8\frac{1}{4}$ and 8.3; so if one multiplies the Australian wool clip of £70,000,000 by ten, one gets an idea of the value of our wool to the textile trade of the world. Members will appreciate the interest shown in the Australian wool clip by certain people not necessarily concerned with the welfare of Australia or the wool industry. These are tremendous figures, and I think the people of Australia should realise what the Australian wool clip means, not only to them, but to the rest of the world, because a threat of substitutes and artificial fibres such as rayon has grown up in recent years. This threat has been accentuated by the indifference and apathy of the wool-growers, and particularly the manufacturers, for a considerable time.

I am speaking at the moment more particularly of the manufacturer oversea, who with an old-established business and connection, has been content to go on making the same old cloths, certainly very fine cloths, with the same old machines which were probably very good in their day but which are now old, and with the same old processes of manufacture. This is a condition of affairs which the wool industry must strive to have altered. The wool-growers of this country are waking up and in 1936 they agreed to a 6d. per bale levy for publicity and research. That levy has since been increased to 2s. per bale and already there have been such remarkable results that I think those intimately connected with the industry should feel sober optimism regarding the future, provided developments in research, publicity manufacture and marketing continue as I am given to understand, under the latest proposals of the Commonwealth Government, they will. Research has now reached a stage where Prof. Speakman of the Leeds University has stated definitely that science can now give to wool any property that industry desires. I hope I will not bore members if I read a few lines of the report of the Secondary Industries Commission. The report reads as follows:—

By using different resins it is now possible to modify wool properties in any manner the manufacturer might desire. Composite fibre is just as much a new textile as is any new rayon. It is no longer necessary to accept wool in the state in which nature provided it. Wool instead can be used to form the basis of a new range of fibres and fibrous products.

These are sweeping claims, but are not made, I imagine, without some justification, so that the prospect that is opened up for the wool industry is very considerable. I have obtained samples of some of the lightweight materials which, if any members are interested, I will be only too pleased to show to them afterwards. I am given to understand that these samples do not represent the latest or lightest of the materials which have been made from wool, though they are a marked advance on anything—both in style and lightness—that I have seen before. I am told that manufacturers are now turning out—though not yet on a commercial basis—wool fabric of almost gossamer lightness, which can compete with any of the rayon or other substitutes that have been developed in different parts of the world. The necessity for the Australian people, as well as the woolgrowers, to interest themselves in the wool industry is demonstrated, I think, by its importance, which shows how necessary it was for something to be done in this country and for the woolgrower to contribute his 2s. per bale, which is supplemented by the Commonwealth Government to a like extent. In 1937 one of the rayon manufacturers in the Old Country, spent £2,000,000 on research and publicity alone, and the United States rayon interests are said to be spending as much as £6,000,000 per year for the same purpose.

We have to bear in mind that the overseas manufacturer is not particularly interested in the Australian woolgrower or the Australian nation. He is interested in supplying fabrics to the public, but he can—I understand, without great difficulty—convert his machinery, most if not all of it, to use the artificial fibre products. That is one thing we have to bear in mind and one reason why the obligation has to be taken up by the woolgrower and by Australia to develop and further research, because the manufacturer does not mind very much whether he manufactures wool or some other product such as one of the artificial fibres. We are in the position of having to build up the publicity for woolen cloths and the products of wool manufacture, and also to finance and encourage research into the manufacturing processes and into those phases of manufacture which, it is conceivable—and which I understand in some quarters it is believed—

will simplify manufacturing processes to the extent of cheapening them very considerably.

I think that in Australia we should—the field is pretty wide—encourage the further processing of as much of the Australian wool clip as possible before it goes overseas. Especially might we start with scouring and top-making, the more elementary of those processes, setting as our ultimate object the manufacture of the major portion of the clip into cloth before export. Of course, it is taking a very long range view, when we talk of manufacturing any great proportion of the Australian clip into cloth, but I think it is as well for Australia and for the industry and the people of this country to consider the approach to this matter along those lines. Certainly there is plenty of room for us to develop the first process, scouring, and the second, converting into tops, though even there there are limitations. Certain of the present overseas manufacturers would wish to continue purchasing our raw wool as they have secret blends which are used in the top-making process and they would still require scoured wool, in order to do their own blending. But I think it would not be any large proportion of the clip that would be so blended.

Hon. L. Craig: Top-making is done here now, to some extent.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: In this country it is, but as yet it is only a percentage, not a substantial percentage, of the Australian clip. I do not believe I am over-optimistic—

Hon. C. B. Williams: No farmer that I know ever was.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Having regard to the developments—

Hon. C. B. Williams: It has yet to rain in September, to keep the crops going.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Having regard to the developments and prospects for the immediate future, I do not believe I am over-optimistic when I say I think we can still retain all our confidence in the Australian wool industry, given progressive research, an enlightened manufacturing industry, and a firmly-controlled system of marketing, all of which I have some reason to believe we are within measureable distance of obtaining. I was very disap-

pointed, in view of the faith I have in that national industry which means so much to everyone—

Hon. C. B. Williams: Is that mining?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I was very disappointed to read, a little while ago, a reported statement of the then Premier, which I took to be meant as a justification for his Government giving consideration and support to a proposal to establish a rayon industry in Western Australia, and I can only think, seeing how important is our wool industry, that when the ex-Premier made that statement he was not aware of the more recent developments in regard to research, manufacturing improvements and the handling of raw wool and the wide range of products which are now being turned out purely from wool and which can compete with practically any of the rayon products on the market today.

Hon. L. Craig: The rayon suggested by our then Premier was to be a by-product of our forests.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I have not forgotten that, but I say that any properties—we have the Secondary Industry Commission and Professor Speakman as authorities—that industry desires can be given to wool and woollen materials, so that they can compete. In addition, I am informed—though this is not authoritative; it comes from a man who has a far wider knowledge of the industry than I have on the manufacturing side—that it is only in respect of the inferior and cheapest forms of rayon that we cannot match it with wool. Despite the fact that the rayon industry might be developed in Western Australia, out of the waste material of our forests, so important is the wool industry and such is the threat that has been developed by the rayon interests against wool, that, having regard to the certainty that if the nations of the world are to trade with each other in future we will have to be prepared to buy things from them as well as sell them things, we might at least leave such rayon as is necessary in this country to be listed among our imports.

We have sufficient scope in Australia to develop the processing of wool—both through the primary and final stages—to find far more employment than we could possibly hope to provide through the rayon industry, with this difference, that the wool

industry means so much to every man, woman and child in Australia—whether employed directly or indirectly in the wool industry—that I think we should concentrate on that industry rather than that, under Government patronage or Government support, anything should be done to establish the rayon industry which has set out to compete, and which would compete if allowed to continue without strong competition and research on our part, and would eventually probably destroy the wool industry, though it has not yet been able to match the quality, warmth and wear contained in woollen materials. I hope the Government will not look further into the rayon project but rather into the possibilities of developing wool processes, and that it will employ such zeal as it possesses by concentrating its textile activities upon that industry. I trust we will not hear any more about the establishment of a rayon industry for which there is no possible justification.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Rayon is very nice to wear if you suffer from prickly heat; much better than wool.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: A few weeks ago reference appeared in the Press to a mission entrusted to Australian delegates who were going to Ceylon and India apparently for the purpose of pushing the sale of dehydrated mutton. I certainly wish the delegation every success and if they should achieve that result I trust that the reports that we will get back from India will be much more to the credit of that article than those we have received from our troops who have referred to the virtues of the dehydrated meat they had to eat when stationed on the Islands and elsewhere.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And that applies to Perth as well.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: We have an opportunity to develop the trade with India and Ceylon immediately after the war ceases, but it will involve a certain amount of preparation on our part. I had an opportunity to discuss matters concerning wool and meat with the members of the Indian delegation when they visited Australia some time ago. One of the Indian delegates, giving a rough estimate, suggested that of the meat-eating races in India there would be about 30,000,000 industrial workers who could afford to buy our mutton at 6d. lb. on the basis of Australian currency. That

would certainly be a help, but not in a period of scarcity in this country. Allowing for reasonable refrigeration and transport costs, it should prove a big help within the next few years by helping us to place a considerable quantity of mutton during glut periods.

I certainly do not think we will have any such gluts for two or three years because of the contract with the British Government to take our surplus meat until 1948. It will nevertheless give us an opportunity if we are sufficiently wide enough awake to explore the possibilities of establishing and fostering this trade. A certain amount of exploratory work is needed with regard to cool storage and distribution arrangements at the other end. There is one other matter to which I shall allude. I refer to something that is perhaps little more than a pious hope.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I trust you have not in mind any chance of the Country Party being returned to power.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: What I have in mind is that the Government should approach the Commonwealth authorities to urge a reconsideration of the effects of the present system of taxation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Hear, Hear!

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: While I am, quite as much as anyone else, of the opinion that people who have the money should be prepared to pay, I think we must all recognise that taxation has reached a stage at which people are not endeavouring to earn additional income or to develop industries. The present conditions present a very acute problem to the farming community. Most of the farmers have a considerable mortgage or overdraft to contend with and with prices on a reasonably good basis, taxation consumes too great a portion of their income. There are very few farms and pastoral properties that are not deteriorating due to manpower difficulties. The average farmer today can only seek to set aside something so that when materials and labour are available he will be in a position to put his property into proper working order again. There may not be good times ahead, and I am afraid that many farmers even if they are in a position to effect improvements on their properties will only then find themselves back in the position they were in when the war started. They are not so situated as to be able to reduce their indebted-

ness to any extent, and the best they can do is to put their properties back into the same productive state as when the war commenced. That, particularly in Western Australia, will have an adverse effect on the rural industries because many of our farms are still in the developmental stage. After six years of war the properties are six years behind from the standpoint of development, and I certainly trust something can be done in that regard.

HON. C. R. CORNISH (North) [6.7]: In common with other members who have participated in the current debate, I would like to express my regret that Hon. J. C. Willecock had to retire from the Premiership owing to the state of his health. He held his high position for a long time during periods of great difficulty, and he did a good job. I trust he will be spared to enjoy the comparative ease of the cross-benches so that we shall have the benefit still of his experience and knowledge. I congratulate the member for Gascoyne (Hon. F. J. S. Wise) upon his being elected to the Premiership. He is a man full of energy and of great ability. His electors have great confidence in him and feel assured that he will give a good account of himself in his present high office. I trust that his health will enable him to carry out his arduous duties. I am also glad that the member for Murchison (Hon. W. M. Marshall) has been elevated to ministerial rank. He is certainly a man of energy and as he represents a mining constituency I feel that he will be sympathetically inclined towards the mining industry and its interests in the North Province. We shall look to him for help and sympathy in connection with our mining problems there, of which I shall have something to say later on.

Recently I made a trip through portion of my province. I travelled for 2,500 miles and even then only traversed one corner of it. Members will agree that my province is fairly extensive. As I was passing close to Wiluna and had not previously visited that centre, I decided to have a look at the town. I am indeed pleased that I did so. Wiluna is certainly an eye-opener to anyone seeing it for the first time. In pre-war days it had a population of 6,000. Its streets are wide and bitumen-surfaced and there is a bitumen road right out to the mines. There is

an electric light supply and water is reticulated throughout the town. It has a swimming pool and ice is supplied during the summer months. In fact Wiluna has all the conveniences of a town in the south. Now I understand all that is to go by the board because the mine will be closed down.

Hon. T. Moore: No fear!

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: That is what the mine manager, Mr. Carroll, told me.

Hon. T. Moore: He has been saying that for years.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: If that is so and the mine is to be closed down, I think the State Government or the Commonwealth Government should extend help so as to avoid that tragedy.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You got in before me. There will be over 1,000 workers put off at the end of this year.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: Every attempt should be made to keep the mine going and I trust that the Government will do something about it. Mr. Carroll seemed to think that there was something in the mind of the Government that it could do, but it either would not or could not take the action required. The population of Wiluna is now about 2,000. What has been done there shows what money can do. The whole town and the local activities are electrically controlled, and a man merely manipulates a switch and the town is lighted, the mining machinery operates, the water is pumped into a huge storage tank, and people have their water supplies. There is one man there who is by no means a hefty individual, but he is able to supply the local people with fresh vegetables. He has a very fine garden indeed.

Hon. T. Moore: And some of the people in the town have gardens as well.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: That is so. There are beautiful trees growing there and all because the people have the water.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The town should be kept going.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: That is so. I also visited the Blue Spec mine which produces gold and antimony, the latter being used in the processing of steel. That mine has been subsidised by the Commonwealth Government. The manager told me that there are 1,000,000 tons of ore in sight. Some little difficulty is experienced with water, but that

trouble will be overcome. I feel convinced that the Blue Spec mine will prove helpful to the North and to the State generally. The management provide huts for the men and they are made very comfortable. As a matter of fact, the mining companies in the North have done their best to provide decent living conditions for their employees, with the result that they get good men to whom they pay good wages. I did not go into the wages question particularly, but everyone seemed to be satisfied.

There is a road leading from Meekatharra to Marble Bar, a distance of about 450 miles. I notice that the member for Pilbara in another place has recommended that that road should be bituminised. Personally I think it should be one of the first works undertaken. It caters not only for the mail service and for general traffic, but all the requirements of the people of Marble Bar in the way of perishables and other commodities are conveyed by that route. I was interested to note that the perishables available to the people in those parts were even better than those procurable at Port Hedland, despite the fact that that town is on the coast. That is probably because of the better service further north.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: The management of the Blue Spec mine has gone to considerable trouble in looking after its men, who are certainly encouraged to remain on the mine. The next day I visited the Comet mine. This mine has the reputation of being the richest in the world; but when one gets close to it, it is difficult to find out anything about it. Nevertheless, I think it is very rich. The mine seems to have everything it requires. Water has been struck at a depth—I do not know what the depth is—and there is an ample supply to carry on the mine. The ore is rich and there seems to be a large quantity of it. I visited the quarters of some of the married men and found them to be very comfortable. Each man has a little shack, for which he is charged 6s. per week. He is supplied with light, power and water free. The men have little gardens at the front, and ice is delivered to them free during the summer. Altogether, their life is not bad.

The road from there to Marble Bar is very rough; it is six miles of the roughest road I have travelled on, but it merely

needs going over with a road machine and if the surface were bituminised it would be an excellent road. We have read much in the Press lately about the shortage of vegetables in the North, and we have also read about planes carrying vegetables to the North during the summer. At Marble Bar I saw a nice garden at the police station in which were grown vegetables of all kinds, as well as fruit, including lemon trees. The water for the garden was obtained from the town supply. There is a pump, but not too many people are supplied with water. Those obtaining the supply are the Government servants and a few townspeople. At a place about 10 miles from Marble Bar towards Port Hedland there is an ample supply of water and fertile soil. In the past, vegetables were grown there by Chinese, but the miners objected to the Chinese and the whites would not take up the work.

The shortage of water supply at Port Hedland is exceedingly acute. Mr. Williams mentioned that he could get 45,000 gallons of water for £7. In Port Hedland a resident pays 3s. 6d. for 100 gallons of water. It is carted on trucks in two tanks, and comes from a spot 70 miles along the railway towards Marble Bar. Even at that price the Railway Department is showing a loss in supplying the water. Just out of Port Hedland the R.A.F. has a camp. Its water supply comes from a place seven miles from the camp and about 14 miles from Port Hedland. The R.A.F. sank bores and at present is pumping 8,000 gallons per day of excellent drinking water and washing water. That water could be taken into Port Hedland. Port Hedland is not a bad little place, but it suffers from an absence of fresh water. Water is very scarce and consequently there are no gardens at Port Hedland. The hospital is an excellent building and can secure a plentiful supply of fish, as it is right on the coast.

Many complaints have been made to me about the State Shipping Service. The residents said the service was casual, and that when the ships came in they discharged only half their cargoes and put out to sea again. But the people did not understand the position. In my opinion, the trouble arose because the State ships had to contend with war conditions. The coast, which had to be blacked out, is one of the most dangerous

in the world, and the ships had to proceed there in daylight. There is a place called the Mary Ann Passage, between Onslow and Roebourne, through which the ships must sail, and they must go through that passage in daylight. It is also necessary for ships to take a northerly course out to sea at night instead of taking the passage between Dorrie and Bernie Islands and Dirk Hartog Island, through which they could pass in daylight.

I have travelled on the "Koolinda." The "Chungking" and the Dutch boat make only about seven knots. These were the only vessels the Government could secure. The Government did its best, but the vessels are absolutely unsuited to the work. Another vessel, I think the "Spitzbergen," has loading gear which is too short to take the cargo off at low tide. In my opinion, the State Shipping Service is doing a fairly good job. During the war, the crew of the "Koolinda," from the captain down to the cabin boy, have done excellent work and still are. They are getting a lot of abuse along the coast but I think it is undeserved. The Ashburton, Roebourne and Pilbara districts, when I saw them, were in a very bad state. They had just passed through a drought, but the drought conditions are not apparent until one arrives there and sees what has happened. All the rains those districts got was accompanied by gales. The rainfall might have been three or four inches, but the gale blew down tanks and windmills and so the country was worse off than before. Those rains, with the addition of high freights imposed during the war, lack of manpower, high taxation, and large increases in pests such as dingoes, kangaroos and foxes, have made the pastoralists' lot most unenviable.

The meeting which was held at Whim Creek in order to find a way out of the people's difficulties was not held in an antagonistic spirit. I heard that the intention was to debar politicians from attending it, but someone said to me, "You had better come along." I therefore took it that I was invited. I went, and I was not put out. The object of the meeting was to try to find a way out of the difficulties in which those people found themselves. They are up against it. Some 10 properties have been vacated, as the firms would not grant the owners any further credit. As a matter of

fact, the owners themselves did not wish to stay on the properties any longer. They had battled against all kinds of trouble, including bad seasons and the war. Now the pests are coming on to the properties and the owners cannot cope with them because of lack of manpower.

I met two pastoralists who had lived in the district for 20 years and reared families. They have left their properties. One has taken up the position of Town Clerk at Port Hedland. The other has come south, but I do not think either will return. It is up to the Government now, if other people with fresh hearts cannot be found to take up those properties, to send a couple of trappers up there to keep the pests down, so that other pastoralists may be enabled to continue to live on their properties. The meeting decided that the business people, including the pastoralists, in that part of the State should be free from taxation for the ensuing 20 years. That is the request which they intend to place before the Commonwealth Government. If granted, it would certainly be a help to them in overcoming their difficulties, but I think they will be extremely fortunate if their request is granted.

Hon. L. Craig: What about the Commonwealth Constitution?

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: The residents say, "The Constitution be blown."

Hon. L. Craig: The Commonwealth Government did it at Darwin.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: It has been done in other places and they consider it can be done in the North-West. The geographical position of the North-West has always been considered to be a disadvantage. When I first went to the North, we could import all kinds of goods direct from London, and did so. Later on, however, agencies were established in the Eastern States, and we had to buy from them. The goods had to be brought to the coast and then carted to the outback places, all of which added to the expense. Another matter I desire to refer to is petrol. Petrol passes our door, as it were, but it is taken down to the south here or to Sydney, put into drums, and then shipped back to the North. We have to pay 4s. a gallon for petrol and, considering it is the life-blood of the industry—everybody uses it—that is an additional heavy burden on industry.

The greatest crime of all, however, is that the women and children have been deprived of tropical fruits which came from the Islands to the north.

Hon. L. Craig: That was wicked.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: I have seen as many as 200 bunches of bananas, as well as paw-paws and mangoes, loaded from boats by Chinese, sold for a few shillings. They were a godsend to the people in the North, as they were the only fruits which they could get. Some say the trade was stopped in order to protect the Queensland growers: others say it was to prevent disease, while still others say it was for taxation purposes. At all events, not a bunch of bananas has been obtainable by the people in the North for the ten years preceding the war. Carnarvon growers could not supply the North with bananas, because refrigerated space would have to be provided for them; but they could be brought from Java, as they would come down through the heat. All these disasters have befallen the North and now the residents have had the last straw that broke the camel's back. One bright spot in the North is the Gascoyne district.

The Brick House Station's clip exceeded all past records. The yield was 14 lbs. of wool per sheep, a very good average. The country in the Gascoyne district and in the Murchison looks beautiful at present. The growers have been harassed by a plague of locusts, which has done a great deal of damage to the bananas, but the pest is now in hand. The Government is dealing with it, and it will be overcome. Many new growers have taken up land in the district and some of them are in a sound financial position. They have good homes and a few pounds in the bank. The industry is in a flourishing state. Recently two Perth firms sent up men to introduce sprinkler plants which have taken on very well. Some eight or nine plants have been ordered. They will make a big difference not only to the banana industry but to the growing of beans, tomatoes and other crops. We have had a wonderful season and the river is running well with water from three tributaries. The prospects are very bright.

Unofficially I have heard that the Government intends to put two little boats on the coast to operate as far as Carnarvon. They would provide a weekly service which would be a wonderful thing for Carnarvon

and for the southern portion of the State because we can grow all the out-of-season vegetables, such as beans, tomatoes, peas, potatoes, etc. We can also send to the metropolitan area all the tropical and sub-tropical fruits that are needed. A fishing plant is to be started at the old meat works, which have been nearly all pulled down. However, a small portion is still intact and some plant is to be installed there. About 40 hands will be employed in smoking, canning and otherwise processing fish. Millions of shoals of fish have been seen in the waters around Carnarvon so that the fish are there in unlimited quantities and will form the basis of a very fine industry.

I would like to see the whaling industry revived. Numbers of men will be returning from the war, and a plant at Point Cloates could be bought for a matter of hundreds of pounds and it is worth thousands. I have been told by Norwegian skippers who have been there that it is one of the best sites for whaling and sharking. All we need are a few boats and the industry could be revived. Today, all refrigerators carry 25 per cent. sales tax. Now, a refrigerator in the North is not a luxury but a necessity. It would help the people there a lot if the 25 per cent. were taken off. That would hurt nobody. No-one would be given any money; it is merely a matter of a rebate. It is not giving them assistance in any way, but simply taking some taxes off while they are in such poor circumstances. I have been in touch with Mr. Fyfe and had a very sympathetic hearing from him. I think he will place a number of returned soldiers in the North because there is any amount of land, and any number of chances for settlers to go in for tropical agriculture. There are about 40 families there now, and they all started with nothing. Today they are well established and are worth many thousands of pounds between them. Under the soldier settlement scheme, the lads could be given about 20 acres of land and properly supervised. I suggest that first of all they be given a good supply of water, and they will never look back. Another proposition I would like to mention is that one of the best stations in Western Australia—it is in the Gascoyne district—is Clifton Downs, or Bidgemia. At present it could be bought for £25,000. In its heyday it carried 60,000 sheep and was worth £100,000.

Hon. L. Craig: They got £40,000 from the clip one year!

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: Through neglect, or perhaps drought, this place today is offered at £25,000. It could be cut up into four lovely stations and made over to soldier settlement pastoralists. It contains some of the best land in Western Australia and about 60 or 70 miles of the Gascoyne River runs right through it. I am quite in accord with Mr. Thomson about honouring the Australian and the British flags—in particular the Australian flag. The school children are apt to forget what it means. They should be taught what it represents. We should have some patriotism in the nation. I think we are drifting a bit. I commend Mr. Seddon on his remarks about the machine age. The pick and shovel days are finished. If we want to make roads or do anything else, we must use machines. We must work shorter hours at higher wages. There is a road running for three miles from Carnarvon. Only old chaps were employed on it. They were honest men and were paid £1 a day for trying to shovel dust against the wind. They worked for months and built this road. I do not know what it cost the Government; the idea was to give them work.

Lately the Main Roads Board came along with big trucks and tractors and formed the road with men sitting in their seats on the machines. That sort of thing gives us results. Years ago we were told that the sewing-machine would put out of work a lot of people who did hand-sewing. That contention was proved wrong, and I think the same thing is true today. I would like to ask the Chief Secretary to get his Government to send little wooden ships up the coast. Old seamen tell me that that could be done today as well as in the past when small ships came along and anchored opposite a station, landed stores on the beach and picked up wool from there instead of its being carted for miles over sand tracks. If we had another boat something like the "Koolinda," or a bit more up-to-date, so that two boats operated between here and Darwin, with half a dozen small vessels in addition, we would get some results.

I have so far mentioned only the "Comet" mine. I would like to tell members of some others. There is the "Gorge" at the Hamersley Ranges out from Roebourne. I am told there are unlimited supplies of blue asbestos

of excellent quality in sight. It is said to be worth thousands of pounds. The management of that mine is having trouble in getting the ore away and obtaining food supplies. Much of the stuff is brought by plane. In the course of the meeting at Whim Creek, to which I referred earlier, mine representatives said that they fed their men on tinned potatoes. It is pretty hard, in a country like this, where potatoes are grown as well as they are in Ireland, to have to do that. The little ships that I have mentioned could make a big difference by giving a weekly service to these places. They could pick up the ore and bring in the food. I understand that from 1,000 to 2,000 men will be employed at Yampi Sound.

If we have some stable industry in addition to the pastoral industry to help maintain the roads and shipping, it will make a big difference to the North. We have iron, asbestos, gold and antimony, and white asbestos, too, of which I have seen excellent samples. The development of these industries would help the North a lot. With the irrigation of rivers we could, without any fear of entering on schemes costing millions of pounds, make the North-West capable of carrying a population that could at least protect the country in the future. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

HON. F. E. GIBSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.55]: I would like to be associated with the tributes paid to the ex-Premier and with the congratulations offered to his successor. It has been my privilege to know Mr. Willcock for many years. I know no man who has occupied that high position who has brought greater sincerity of purpose and a greater desire to help the people of this State than he. I offer my congratulations to his successor and I think Western Australia is to be congratulated on having such a man to follow Mr. Willcock. Mr. Wise came here as a young man to a position in the Agricultural Department. He was later elected as member for Gascoyne and later still, became Minister for Lands. In these capacities he acquired a knowledge of the requirements of Western Australia that is not equalled by any man in the parliamentary life of this State. Unfortunately, his wide knowledge will not be available as Minister for Agriculture, but undoubtedly he will pass on that know-

ledge to his successor, Mr. Tonkin, who will bring to his new job that sincerity and assiduity that has characterised his work in the Education Department.

We are meeting here tonight under conditions that we have hoped and longed for during the last six years. Our enemy in Europe has been vanquished and the enemy in the Pacific has also been defeated. Our hearts are full of gratitude to those men who have made it possible for us to live under the conditions that we experienced in Australia during those six years. It is a long cry to the days of the Battle of Britain and the conditions that existed in England in the closing months of 1940. We can remember that Hitler had fixed a day on which his troops would march through Whitehall. But he counted without a full knowledge of the character of the English people or of that remarkable man who at the time was their leader. We can remember that when Goering unleashed his airmen to smash the industrial life of England and sweep the R.A.F. from the skies, he was not successful.

Most of us will recall that on the morning of the 15th September we saw in the papers that the R.A.F. had shot down 186 bombers. It was at that time that Mr. Churchill uttered those words that have been quoted so frequently since. He said that never in the history of human conflict had so much been owed by so many to so few. We cannot express our gratitude, as we should, to those men, but everything possible must be done to recompense them for the sacrifices they made at the time. While paying due tribute to the work done by our Fighting Services I would like to mention two organisations that operated in Western Australia during the six years of war. Those organisations have hardly received the recognition and commendation that they deserve. I refer to the Volunteer Defence Corps, or the Home Guard, as it was originally called, and to the A.R.P. In the dark days of 1940, just after the fall of France, one of the Fremantle City councillors, Councillor Fisher Beard, suggested that something might be done in the way of forming a volunteer body for home defence purposes. A meeting, very largely attended by returned soldiers of the last war, was held in the Fremantle Town Hall. An organisation was decided upon, but it was rather frowned on by the military autho-

rities at the time because they said there was nothing in their organisation making it possible for these men to function as they wished. We were advised that the only way we could be of any help was to join a rifle club.

I can remember well that on a Sunday morning, immediately after the fall of France when it was doubtful what would happen to the French Fleet, we had a largely attended meeting on the Fremantle oval. We arranged for seven or eight J's.P. to come down and attest the men. Mr. John Tonkin was there to address the men, and we enrolled about 300 or 400. Equipment was not available so the Fremantle City Council had a number of dummy rifles made out of wood and these were used for training purposes. I am making reference to these facts because I have, in recent months, heard a great deal of the origin and genesis of the Home Defence Corps, but no credit whatever has been given to the fact that it was Councillor Fisher Beard of the Fremantle City Council who was the originator of the scheme.

The A.R.P. organisation also had its genesis in Fremantle. Realising the need for such a body, we arranged for lectures to be delivered there in order to equip our people with sufficient knowledge to cope with civil defence. As a result about 6,000 men and women ultimately formed the civil defence organisation of the metropolitan area. I hope that now the war has ended and their services are no longer required some recognition in the shape of a medal or certificate will be given to all who served in that organisation. These men and women realised quite well that, had there been any trouble from Japanese bombing, they would have been in the first line of defence. They gave their time freely and willingly and acquired a great deal of knowledge and endeavoured to prepare for whatever would have been necessary had the occasion arisen.

The cessation of hostilities has brought to the forefront a lot of post-war problems, and I think the most important of them is that of housing. My sympathies are with any Government department whose duty it is to try to improve the existing position. A good deal of it is a legacy from the conditions that prevailed in the metropolitan area in pre-war days, but they have been aggravated considerably by the fact that so

many of the men in the Services belonged to country districts and brought their wives and families into the city and that other young people have married. In the metropolitan area at present, I do not believe there is a vacant room. Unfortunately, the condition of many of the houses is not all that could be desired. In Fremantle an investigation has been made of every house in the city area, and I am sorry to say that the conditions that have been found there are anything but creditable to those in authority. We have many under-standard houses, many houses without laundries, and hundreds without baths. I have seen conditions that have shocked me. There are no other houses to which the occupants can be transferred; they have to remain where they are until the position is relieved.

Some time ago some of my councillors and I thought that we would endeavour to get the Municipal Corporations Act amended to give local authorities the right to advance money to suitable people in order to assist them in erecting homes of their own, being of the opinion that a man who owns his own home is a good citizen. Having learnt the cost of houses being constructed, however, we realised that it was impossible for us to do much in that direction. In New South Wales a four-roomed brick house is costing £1,300 and a five-roomed brick house £1,400. In Western Australia a four-roomed brick house is costing £919 and a five-roomed brick house £977. Those figures seem to be beyond the range of an average man earning the basic wage or something just above it. I hope it will not be long before conditions are altered so as to bring the cost within the financial reach of workers.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Those costs are for brick houses?

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: Yes.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Those are the costs of wooden houses in the country.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: That makes it much worse. I have had an opportunity to see a house constructed under the workers' homes scheme and, while it is a neat home, I consider it is not of a type suitable for our climate. The rooms are too small. If the occupant were desirous of having a few friends in during the evening, I doubt whether it would be possible to put more than five or six people in the room. In one

home I saw being built, the bricks were set on the narrow edge. That was for a partition wall, and to me it seemed to be insufficiently solidly constructed. No verandahs were attached to these houses, and members will agree that in a climate like ours, if there are two considerations that are essential, they are plenty of shade and an opportunity to sleep out in the hot weather. The rents that will have to be paid will make it impossible for the occupants to become possessed of them. I hope that a scheme will be evolved under which the occupants, after having paid rent over a number of years, will be given an opportunity to acquire some equity in their homes. It is not right that a man should pay rent for a home all his life and then, when he reaches old age, not own a brick of it. We should endeavour to make it possible for every man to secure a home of his own.

The Lieut.-Governor's Speech makes reference to the fact that the Government has decided to build a power house at South Fremantle. I know that this decision caused some concern among my friends in the South-West, and I believe that a motion of protest was moved at a road boards conference, but a sensible gentleman was present—the Mayor of Bunbury—who stated that he had no desire to oppose the project because it was entirely apart from anything wanted in the South-West. With that I agree. I understand that the intention is to build a 50-cycle plant. This is to bring it into line with conditions in power houses in the Eastern States. There is likely to be some chaos during the change-over, and it is unfortunate that this change was not made when the large additions to the power house at East Perth were built. I understand that the Commonwealth Government is providing £300,000 towards the necessary cost and it is no doubt better to make the change now than at some later period.

There is a story told that I believed for a considerable time, but, on investigation, I found it to be incorrect. The story is that the power plant erected at East Perth in 1916 was palmed off on the Government of the day after South Africa had turned it down. I believe that investigation was made at the time and that the idea was to electrify the railway between Perth and Fremantle and that a 40-cycle plant was thought to be the most suitable for working

electric trains. That is why the 40-cycle plant was adopted as against 50-cycles, which is the normal standard. Unfortunately, our original power house plant at Fremantle was of the 50-cycle type, and when we decided to take our power from the East Perth station, we had to re-wire all our motors in order to take the 40-cycle current. Now, however, we have to go back to 50-cycles and do all that re-wiring over again.

The Chief Secretary: They are all worn out, are they not?

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: Not yet. It is pleasing to find that the Government has decided to adopt the recommendations of the Electricity Advisory Committee appointed to inquire into the need for power for the Great Southern. Knowing the advantages of having cheap electric power, I congratulate the Government on having taken this step and hope it will not be long before the power is provided. I suggest that this work should be given priority over the construction of the 4ft. 8½in. railway line, because it would be far better to spend the £9,000,000 required for that work on the development of our agricultural and pastoral industries. The other work can wait, but the development of the country districts cannot be postponed. I suggest to members from the country that they impress upon the Government the absolute necessity of creating boards to control the output of current from the new plants. I believe that the sale and distribution of current in those districts should belong to the local authorities in the areas in which the current is being used. It may interest them to know just what has happened with our undertaking at Fremantle. I will quote a few figures that members will find instructive. In 1903 the two municipal councils—East Fremantle and Fremantle—decided to run their own electric plant and provide for electric trams, and a sum of £100,000 was borrowed for the purpose. That money was expended, and some time later another £100,000 was borrowed, making the total £200,000.

In 1916 the Government built the power house at East Perth and made an offer to the local authorities at Fremantle under which they should take current from the Government power house. They were to receive current at .85d. per unit for 25 years with the option of continuing for a further 25 years. The offer was accepted and since

1916 we have been taking our power from the East Perth station. We started off with a debt of £200,000. In the first year of our activities, the revenue from the transport section was £20,000 and from the electricity side of the undertaking £4,150, a total of £24,150. For the year ended August, 1914, our transport activities produced £82,600. We collected 10,000,000 fares; that figure is rather astonishing for a small city. Our electricity sales totalled £134,000, making a total revenue for the year of £216,600. At present our useful assets are worth £386,000 and we have paid in profits to the two councils the sum of £109,000, showing that we have built up a total amount of £490,000. Further, the undertaking is entirely out of debt. We owe nothing, and I am right in saying that those two local authorities have no loan-indebtedness whatever.

Hon. G. W. Miles: A pity they were not running the State.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: I am wondering what would have been the position had the Perth City Council retained control of the city tramways. Judging from its profits from the electricity supply, we might have had the most modern transport system of any city in Australia instead of that which we have.

As one who spent many years on the goldfields in the early days, I was somewhat perturbed at hearing the very doleful story that Mr. Williams had to tell of Wiluna. My first experience of Wiluna was in 1903, and I remember going to a small hotel built of corrugated iron, the boards on the verandah being a bit loose and a few goats wandering around. I had the privilege of visiting the town some years afterwards with my friend the Chief Secretary, and found the modern and flourishing place described by Mr. Cornish. It is very sad to contemplate the possibility of that place reverting to what it was when I first saw it. If there is anything that the State Government or the Commonwealth Government can do to maintain the town, it ought to be done.

I was pleased to hear Mr. Williams's story about Kalgoorlie. With what he said, I agree. Kalgoorlie has the prospect of enjoying a future perhaps more prosperous than any other city in Australia. They have enormous gold deposits which, with modern working methods, could be mined and the gold recovered. I am convinced that the price of

gold will never be lower than it is today, because I cannot imagine the three great Powers who hold most of it, permitting it to decrease in value to any extent. I am quite sure that Mr. Williams and my friends from the Goldfields will see Kalgoorlie booming in the not distant future. I think that everything possible to assist the mining and agricultural districts should be done. It is absolutely essential, because if those places are not prosperous, there is not much opportunity for the development of the metropolitan area. I think that most of those who earn a living in the city realise that our prosperity and happiness depend entirely upon what is being done on the other side of the Darling Ranges. It is quite easy for us to go home at night, and pull down a switch and get a light. It is quite easy for us to turn on a tap and obtain water, and to turn on the gas and light it.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You cannot always do that!

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: Usually we can. Compare the conditions under which we live with those affecting the people who are out doing the hard work for us in the country and the mining districts! If we do that, we can understand that people are not going back there to work long hours under hard conditions when most of us in the metropolitan area are working 40 hours a week, a lot of us having nothing to do on Saturdays and Sundays, and those that do have to work on Sundays getting as much as 10s. an hour for it. People are not going to remain in the agricultural areas unless they get amenities that measure up to the conditions of those living in the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about joining the Country and Democratic League?

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: I do not mind that at all. Recently a measure was put through Parliament to raise the school age to 16, a very desirable objective. I am just wondering how the Minister for Education is going to implement that Act. I am aware of my own knowledge that at present schools are over-crowded. The classes are far too big, and the areas surrounding the schools are not big enough for playgrounds such as the children are entitled to. Furthermore, the equipment is very inefficient. There is a great job before the Minister for Edu-

cation and his department, and money will have to be found to provide these essential needs. Every parent wants to give his youngster the best education he can obtain; it is a very good thing that he wants to do so. I was surprised the other day to discover what a short period of training school teachers are receiving at present. I understand that one year's monitorship and one year in training college are regarded as sufficient to equip the teacher with all the knowledge necessary for him to set out to educate the children. That is not right. Much more training is required than that. I know of no profession that means so much to the future welfare of any country as that of teaching.

Teachers take our children at a very early age, and to a great extent the future outlook on life of those children is dependent on the type of education they receive. Consequently, we should seek the very best type of person to enter the teaching profession and give that person the best education and training possible. I know that lack of money holds up these reforms, but they are urgently needed and should be regarded as essential. I had the opportunity of seeing some films dealing with the area schools of Tasmania; but the problems in Tasmania and Western Australia are different.

Hon. T. Moore: Very different!

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: The Education Department here operates over an area of 900,000 square miles. Tasmania could be placed between Fremantle and Bunbury. However, the idea behind the area school is good. Youngsters are taught something of the callings existing in the towns and districts in which they live. They are mostly the children of farmers, and the boys are taught the use of tools and machinery. If it were possible to establish one or two of those area schools in this State, it would be a good thing. Dr. Hislop spoke about the milk supply and stressed the need of pasteurisation. As one of the original members of the Milk Board, I want to assure him that the board also thought that very necessary. It was my privilege—not only my privilege, but my duty—to make an investigation of every dairy in the metropolitan area during the year in which the board was created. The late Prime Minister of Australia was a colleague of mine on the board for two years. The conditions I saw existing in

dairies almost filled me with despair. However, the board did a good job. It stabilised the price of milk and made it possible for the producer to get a reasonable return for his work and the commodity he was selling.

The trouble was that those people were not getting sufficient money for their product to enable them to make the improvements that were absolutely essential for the supply of good milk. I agree with Dr. Hislop that it is absolutely impossible to provide conditions in the immediate metropolitan area under which milk of good quality can be produced hygienically. It should be the job of the Milk Board to compensate people operating in the No. 1 zone and get them further out to prevent them wandering around the sandhills in the metropolitan area. When I first went out on inspection work, I saw women and children looking after cows, in muck and slush above their ankles in winter and in clouds of dust in summer. They were getting the enormous sum of 8d. per gallon for their milk—the price of half a pint of beer!

Hon. L. Craig: Conditions are better now.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: Yes; I have met many people who have said they felt like getting down on their knees every night and thanking God that the board had been created. We did improve conditions, but the conditions are still not all that they should be. Those people are not working a 40-hour week, with Saturdays and Sundays off, but they are working from morning to night every day, including Saturdays and Sundays. Their conditions should be improved, and they should obtain that recompense which all of us who live under happier conditions would desire. I think that most people who have given any thought to the future of Australia and the population problem must be interested in any migration proposals the Government may intend to introduce.

Members will recall the agreement which was entered into between the Commonwealth Government and the Imperial Government, and which was responsible for the settlement of the Peel Estate and other group settlements. It was my privilege, during the operation of the whole of that scheme, to meet almost every boat that brought immigrants from the Old Country. We used to take them to the old Immigrants'

Home and talk to them and look after them for the first four or five days of their stay here. I hope that no similar experiment will be put in operation during the post-war years. The people brought to this State were, through no fault of their own, underfed and unhealthy. They came from the factory towns of England, and probably many of them did not know which end of the axe to use in order to cut wood. They were left largely to their own resources. Some of their children have probably done well, but in the main they were unsuitable types to put to work of that sort.

I believe that the best type of immigration propaganda is to make conditions in this State such as will induce people to come to live here without their having to be helped to migrate. Another point I would mention is that I have had many people come to me at various times to ask whether there was an opportunity for them to adopt children. From the foundling homes in this State, many children of tender years have been adopted by childless couples; at one time about 200 families were looking for children. I am wondering if it would not be possible to undertake some scheme by which young orphan children from the Old Country could be placed in the homes of people in Western Australia who need them.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That plan is in operation in the Eastern States.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: There is talk of a scheme to bring 17,000 people to this country at a cost of £1,000,000. Many children could be brought here at practically no cost. There is another aspect of the population problem to which some attention should be drawn, though I do not know to which authority the matter should be referred. I allude to the indiscriminate sale of contraceptives. Something should be done to make it impossible for such articles to be sold as freely as they are; sales should be possible only at the order of a medical authority. Dealing with migration, I read last evening a passage from a pamphlet entitled "Alarming Australia," by A. E. Mander, in which he states that in 1860 the birth rate was 42.6 per thousand and in 1939, 17.6, and points out that the increase in our population lately is due only to the increased number of old people, to the fact that people are living longer. He says that our young population

has been diminishing for some years, and if the pre-war trend continues after the war our total population will become virtually stationary by 1953, quite stationary by 1960, and that after 1960 it will begin definitely to decline.

If these conditions continue, he asks, what future is there for a British Australia? If nothing can be done, or if nothing adequate is done to reverse the trend, then we shall have to face the stark prospect of our Australia as a country without a future, a nation doomed to destruction. There is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost by closing our eyes to the fact. There is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost by fancying that the position will "right itself." There is nothing to be gained, but Australia to be lost, by failing to realise that of all the urgent and enormous practical problems which will face us at the end of the war, this is the most urgent, most important, most enormous of all.

In conclusion, I desire to refer to that part of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech wherein we are informed of an extensive post-war works programme costing £13,000,000, and to the reference made further on in the Speech to the intentions of the Railway Department in the matter of overtaking deferred maintenance works, the provision of improved passenger and goods services, procurement of more Garratt engines and Diesel electric trains, and the giving of close attention to the Commonwealth Government's proposals for the standardisation of railway gauges. There is not, however, any reference to anything being undertaken in the way of providing for the erection of a new railway bridge at Fremantle, with the consequent deviation of the main line, so as to provide for a gradual extension of the Fremantle Harbour as the work of the port may necessitate. Most members will remember that in 1928, a lot of thought and discussion centred in this matter, and whilst it was generally agreed that the rail and road crossing of the river should be erected in a locality about 1,000 feet eastward of the present vehicular traffic bridge, the project had to be abandoned because of the difficulty in obtaining the necessary finance and the strong opinion that the existing harbour was sufficient to meet requirements for the ensuing ten years.

In view of this lapse of 17 years since the time when the matter was the subject of considerable interest and as, even if a commencement were made upon this particular railway work as soon as possible, it would—having regard to the length of time required for the preparation of designs and the difficulty of obtaining materials—take another ten years to carry out the construction of the bridge, deviation of the line and all other consequential work, I am strongly of the opinion that this essential project should receive immediate consideration as part and parcel of any national work to be undertaken in connection with post-war construction. I consider also that the carrying out of the work would permit of the planning of a long-term policy in progressive harbour development, and thus give all concerned in industrial and warehousing activities at the port the opportunity to visualise any such possible development in the future, and so permit of the planning of their own projects accordingly. At the same time I should like it to be clearly understood that I am not advocating an extension of the Fremantle inner harbour at the moment, but simply the means whereby such development can take place gradually and in progressive steps, as may be justified from time to time. I support the motion.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.32]: Between the closing of the last session and the opening of the current one, momentous happenings have occurred. The war in Europe collapsed much sooner than most of us dared to hope. A little while later we were shocked by the death of our Prime Minister, and soon after this session opened we were surprised and disappointed to find that our Premier was compelled to resign, owing to ill-health. Since the rising of this House last week, and before our re-assembly this week, we have all been overjoyed to find that the surrender terms of Potsdam had been accepted by the Japanese. With the passing of the Prime Minister of Australia we have lost a worthy son, but a successor has been appointed, and so the activities of the Commonwealth Parliament go on, almost undisturbed. With the retirement of Mr. Willcock from the office of Premier this Parliament has lost a valuable leader, and one who was respected by every member of both Houses. We hope that his health

will soon be restored and that he will be enabled to give the benefit of his experience to this Parliament for many years to come. At the same time, we wish his successor, Mr. Wise, well. All of these momentous happenings were of great importance at the time of their occurrence, but as they recede into history, so their importance diminishes, though their effect may be felt for some considerable time. But we, as members of Parliament, are much more concerned with history in the making, and there are tasks in plenty ahead of us.

I suggest that foremost among the present needs is that of housing, which has been stressed by previous speakers, but I do not think can be overstressed. The housing of both returned and returning Servicemen is of paramount importance, and at the same time we must not overlook the housing needs of the civilian population, which are equally important though perhaps not of quite such high priority. I am sure all members must have come into personal contact with many unfortunate and some really sad cases of families living under bad conditions, conditions which are not conducive to happiness but to the reverse of happiness. I think the word "appalling" inadequately describes some of those conditions. I have had brought under my notice several cases where a wife and several children are occupying a single room, and perhaps portion of a verandah, and are sharing culinary and sanitary conveniences which are totally inadequate for the overcrowded household. Such conditions must have an adverse effect on the health of the family, and even on the morals of the children, but it goes much deeper than that. It opens up the whole question of national welfare, because conditions such as those I have described seriously affect the peace of mind and the sense of purpose of people forced to live under such conditions.

Let us consider for the moment what must be the effect on a returned soldier with war neurosis, of being compelled to live in a so-called home, among people who are comparative strangers. I am sure the result would be that his mental, as well as his physical, condition must be seriously affected and probably permanently impaired. I think we are all in agreement with the statement that homes are not being built with the speed necessary to overtake the natural shortage, without tak-

ing into consideration those extra short-ages which are being, and will be, created by our returning Servicemen.

The Lieut.-Governor's Speech informed us that the Government is going on with its own house construction activities on the day labour plan, and when I asked in this House if the Government had made any comparison between the cost of houses erected in other States under the day labour and contract systems, the Chief Secretary gave the housing figures which had been supplied relative to Victoria. However, the figures I have been able to obtain differ a good deal from those given by the Chief Secretary. The Chief Secretary did state that certain overheads were not included in the figures submitted by him. Those overheads, he stated, were architects' fees and administrative costs. I wish to quote from a statement made by Mr. J. G. Beale, a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, who said:—

Based upon the information from the most reliable sources I estimate that no less than £800,000 goes in salaries each year to senior public servants directly concerned with the control of building and building materials or attempting to re-organise the industry ostensibly to deal with the post-war housing programme. Up to the 30th June last some 5,600 homes were completed throughout the Commonwealth, which means that departmental overheads amounted to £143 per house.

I presume that that is an authoritative statement. It is made by a reputable person, and the Chief Secretary has indicated that the figures he quoted did not include architects' fees and administrative costs. Those are extras. We do not know what they are, but they are certainly something that the private contractor would have to meet—

The Chief Secretary: Did you say that is an authoritative statement?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I suggest it would be a reasonably authoritative statement, by a member of Parliament.

The Chief Secretary: Judged by what we hear in this Chamber sometimes, I would say the opposite.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Since the Chief Secretary has raised that question, I will make a comparison. He quoted one State only, Victoria, and I will quote one State only, Queensland. The Minister quoted the

figures for a two-bedroom home. In Queensland, under the contract system, such a home is erected at a cost of £918; under the day labour system it costs £1,165. The day labour system is carried out by the Queensland State Department. I imagine that there is the same possibility that all the overheads are not included in the amount of £1,165. The housing problem is such a serious one that it should be completely above party politics.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Housing is not a political issue but a national problem. I suggest that the Government might give consideration to departing from its adherence to its political policy of day labour. By all means let the Government instrumentalities build as many houses as they possibly can, but let us have every help and let the Government give every encouragement to private contractors. After all the private contractor was responsible, in the past, for somewhere near 90 per cent. of the homes erected in the metropolitan area. I should say that much the same proportion would apply in the country districts. If private enterprise had failed in the past in its vast building programme, then I would say that it should not be given any part in the housing programme of today. But it did not fail in the past; it did an excellent job.

Hon. C. R. Cornish: It built most of the workers' homes.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: It built a number of them. One of the difficulties is that with the present restrictions and the priority given to the Government instrumentalities for building materials, the private contractor has not a great opportunity to play an effective part in the building programme. The present methods used by private enterprise are not inefficient. I think the Government, under its day labour policy, cannot build as cheaply, if all the overhead costs are taken into consideration, as the private contractor, who must consider those things or face the Insolvency Court. I would say that it would be better to have all the proposed buildings tendered for in the open market and let the Government instrumentalities tender in competition with the private contractor.

If the day labour system has any advantage over the contract system, by all means let us apply it. But does the Government consider that there will be the same output

by tradesmen on a weekly wage as when they are on piecework? We must remember that most private contractors have sub-contractors doing the various tasks associated with building, and these sub-contractors are working for themselves. The result is, without any doubt, that the private contractor gets more work done per day per man than is accomplished by day labour. That being so, the day labour system represents a wastage of manpower and brings about an increase in the cost of homes. We must endeavour to build houses at the lowest possible figure so as to enable more and more people to be satisfactorily housed in homes which they will gradually acquire. The day labour system is followed in New South Wales, and in this connection may I quote a recent announcement by the Prime Minister when he said—

An inquiry will be made into the unusually high cost of building in New South Wales.

Let me also make this observation: In South Australia, where private enterprise has been responsible for a greater percentage of houses than in any other State, there has been erected approximately 70 per cent. of the quota allocated to that State. That is in excess of the quota constructed in any other State. We are all anxious to see the building of houses at the earliest possible moment. While I agree that the Government is doing all it can through its instrumentalities, I suggest that it give greater encouragement and material help to the contractors and to the builders who, for many years, have met the requirements of this State.

I was interested in listening to the remarks of Dr. Hislop in connection with the handling and distribution of food. On a recent trip to South Australia I had the opportunity of inspecting the meat distribution in that State. It is a model for Western Australia to emulate. I understand that our Health Act contains provision for enforcing the cartage of meat in covered vans. If that is so, then obviously the arrangement is not strictly adhered to. Whether that is as a result of the war, I cannot say, but I understand from Mr. Bolton that his company has constructed a number of closed, insulated, dust and fly-proof vehicles which are operating in the metropolitan area today for the carriage of meat. May I quote the regulation under the South Australian Abat-

toirs Act, which deals with this matter? It is as follows:—

No person shall:—(a) carry any meat from any railway van, ship or store, or on or for delivery to any retail buyer except in a receptacle constructed for the carriage of meat and attached to a wheeled vehicle (hereinafter and in the regulations contained in Part 3, called a receptacle) or in a wheeled vehicle which is itself specially constructed for the carriage of meat (hereinafter called a meat van) and which receptacle or meat van is so constructed that meat therein is protected from contamination by flies, insects, dust, dirt, filth or other noxious matters and things and is properly ventilated and kept at a reasonable temperature and in respect of which an inspector has given a written certificate as provided in Regulation 120.

We have all seen open or partly open motor vehicles carrying carcasses, and those same carcasses being handled on the shoulders of persons whose clothing was not particularly clean. Milk distribution has been referred to by Dr. Hislop and also, a few minutes ago, by Mr. Gibson. My personal experience, in my home, is that although we scald our milk and cool it off in the refrigerator, we find that we have to jettison the last half inch or so of milk in the jug because there is a deposit of solid matter.

Hon. L. Craig: Good soil?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes. It does not matter which of the two milkmen operating in our district supplies us; the condition of the milk is similar. Bread is another item the distribution of which requires better supervision than it is receiving today. Only last Saturday morning I had to remonstrate with a small and very unclean youth who walked into our place and, on the way—I happened to see him through a window—he was picking the soft centre out of the bread and eating it, and he had very dirty hands. I also saw a baker chain and unchain the wheel of his cart, with all its dirt and filth, and then handle the bread. This sort of thing should not happen in a civilised community. The time is more than overdue when we should have an inquiry into the distribution of food in the metropolitan area.

With regard to the rehabilitation of Service personnel, we must look to private enterprise again to take its place in the employing of those men. In the pre-war days something like 90 per cent. of those men were engaged in private industry, and private industry can do as much again for

them provided there is not too much interference from Governments with plans for socialisation. Again I make a comparison with South Australia because I feel that our Government has not been progressive enough in encouraging oversea firms to establish industries in Western Australia. The motor body-building industry in South Australia has developed into a very large employing agency.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The largest.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Holden's motor body works received encouragement to locate the industry in South Australia. The South Australian Government, by making conditions very attractive, also induced the British Tube Mills to locate their manufacturing plant in that State. I had an opportunity of seeing the plant only a few months ago and it is certainly a marvellous plant. It has been engaged in manufacturing munitions and now will do excellent work to meet civilian requirements. Those industries were established in South Australia as a result of substantial encouragement given by the Government of that State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is where the Liberal and Country Party members co-operate.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes, but we are not concerned at present with party politics. What we are concerned with are the opportunities missed by the Government of our State. Only a few days ago the executive head of a Dutch firm visited Perth. He was here for four days and I had the pleasure of having him to lunch at Parliament House. Nothing was done on behalf of the Government until such time as I brought the matter under the notice of the Premier and told him that a golden opportunity would be missed if the Government did not make some approach to the firm with a view to getting it to locate its industry here. The geographical position of Western Australia is such that it would be a very desirable place, I should think, for a Dutch firm to conduct its industry, it being the point nearest to the Dutch colonial possessions. I am pleased to say that the Premier did contact this gentleman and an appointment has been made for him to see the Premier on his return. The point I wish to make is that when the same gentleman arrived in South Australia, he was met at the aerodrome and afterwards entertained by the Premier of that State.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Probably our Premier did not know that he was coming here.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Apparently not, but the authorities in South Australia seem to find out these things for themselves. I am led to believe that, as a result of the contact made by the Premier of South Australia with this gentleman, there is a great possibility of a substantial plant—a munitions factory—being sold to the company in which it will found at least part of its Australian production plant. It was fortunate that I had known this gentleman ever since he first came to Australia two years ago and had an opportunity to introduce him to the Premier. The Premier took the opportunity offered; I give him credit for that, but so many similar opportunities occur and slip by, and that is why I have made the comparison between what is done here and the activities of the Government of South Australia, which has been so successful in inducing large manufacturers to locate industries in that State. I deplore the fact that our Government has not been so alive to the opportunities.

There is a task ahead of us which will need the combined talent of all sections of this and other Parliaments to cope with, and I trust that we shall all bend our efforts to make this world a better place for our children to live in than the world we have experienced in our lifetime. I support the motion.

On motion of Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1945.

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