

turing goods needed by the civilian population instead of allowing the machines to stand idle. It looks as if our planners are still trying to learn their job, but unfortunately they are learning it at the expense of the general public, and after all the talk and after all the expenditure incurred on research and planning, it causes me considerable concern to find such gaps exhibited in putting into operation a scheme which we were led to believe would bring happiness and prosperity to everybody after the war.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It seems to be a case of enduring the war and suffering the peace.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Planning has been shown in practice to be dreaming. The people are being bounced and harassed into granting greater and greater powers to the Federal authorities. The authorities, before receiving those powers, should have demonstrated their capability of exercising them for the benefit of the people, but what demonstration they have given us has been rather the reverse, and we can only hope that the people of this country will act very cautiously and study the record of the Government before investing it with powers that it will be impossible for them ever to get back again. I support the second reading, but I hope there will be greater evidence than we have at present of the preparation for peace production of the things people need and are unable to get.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 2nd August, 1944.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "B," 1943.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of section "B" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1943. This will be laid on the Table of the House.

CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that I have appointed Mr. Mann, Mr. W. Hegney and Mr. Fox to be temporary Chairmen of Committees for the session.

QUESTIONS (6).

KATANNING SCHOOL RENOVATIONS.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will he give details of the works and renovations authorised at Katanning Government School for which a contract has been let?

(2) What is the contract price?

THE MINISTER replied:

(1) Two contracts have been let for work at the Katanning school.

One is for repairs and renovations. This includes: new fireplace in the science room; overhaul and repair of the main school, pavilion, classrooms, manual training room, shelter sheds and quarters; repair of gravelled areas; the painting of all buildings externally; the painting of the school pavilion, classrooms and domestic science centre internally, and one bedroom in the quarters.

Contractors: Williams & Stonestreet of Katanning.

The second contract is for drainage system. This covers foul water and storm water drainage.

The foul water consists of the collection of all wastes from basins, sinks and urinals and the conveyance of this to the Road Board drain.

The storm water drainage consists of picking up all overflows from tanks and roof gutters in connection with the main building and conveying this to the street water table.

Contractors: Williams & Stonestreet of Katanning.

(2) First contract—Price £731 10s. 6d.; second contract—Price £398 17s. 6d.

GOLDMINING.

(A) *As to Maintenance and Rehabilitation.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) What amount of the £100,000 assistance for the maintenance of goldmines in W.A., provided by the Commonwealth, has already been spent?

(2) Has any definite sum been allocated by the Commonwealth to W.A. for the rehabilitation of the goldmining industry in the post-war period?

(3) Has the State Government any set plan for gearing up production when hostilities cease?

(4) Will the goldmining industry in W.A. be given early priority where releases of material and equipment are concerned?

(5) Has a competent mining committee been selected, entrusted with ample power to deal with matters of urgency, and to facilitate speedy decisions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £53,424 to 30/6/44.

(2) No.

(3) State Government has this matter constantly before it.

(4) State Government has already taken up the matter of release of mining material, stores and equipment with the Commonwealth Government and it is under consideration by the latter.

(5) It is understood that the Commonwealth Government is setting up a committee representative of all States to facilitate rehabilitation of mining in Australia. In this State the Mines Department is constantly dealing with urgent matters of supply, etc., and negotiating same with the necessary Commonwealth authorities.

(B) *As to Disposal and Price of Gold.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has the total gold produced in W.A. during the past 12 months been sold and shipped overseas?

(2) If not, what amount has been shipped?

(3) To what country or countries?

(4) What was the average price per fine ounce received?

(5) Is W.A. committed to sell its gold on any fixed market?

(6) If so, to whom?

THE MINISTER replied:

(1), (2), (3), (5), (6) Gold produced in Western Australia has been disposed of to the Commonwealth Bank, as provided in National Security Regulations.

(4) The average price of gold during 1943 per fine ounce was £A10 9s.

FISH CANNING FACTORIES.

As to Output of Perth Herring.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for the North-West:

What was the output of Perth herring from canning factories in this State for the years ending 30th June, 1942, 30th June, 1943, and 30th June, 1944, respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

January, 1942 (first return) to 30th June, 1942 (1 lb. cans)—Perth, 33,996; Mandurah, 4,786. 1st July, 1942, to 30th June, 1943 (1 lb. cans)—Perth, 161,028; Mandurah, 9,320. 1st July, 1943, to 30th June, 1944 (1 lb. cans)—Perth, 111,192; Mandurah, 2,889.

TROLLEY-BUSES.

As to Extension to Cottesloe.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is there a quantity of electric tram or trolley-bus wires and gear lying along Broome-street, Cottesloe, the property of the Government?

(2) Does this represent a move to extend the trolley-buses to Cottesloe?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. This is second-hand trolley bus overhead wire being used for electricity supply purposes to save using new wire under present conditions.

(2) No.

COMMONWEALTH HOUSING SCHEME.

As to Plans and Costs.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Premier:

(1) Will he consider laying upon the Table of the House copies of the plans and specifications of each type of house that it is proposed to erect under the housing scheme recently adopted by the Commonwealth Government, together with the cost of each type of house?

(2) If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) There will be many types of houses built, because variations in design will arise as a result of experience as the scheme progresses, and as material and manpower become more freely available. In addition, different types of houses will be built in different centres. It would be impracticable, therefore, to lay on the Table of the House copies of all the plans and specifications of each type of house proposed to be erected. Plans of one representative house to be erected in the metropolitan area and one in the country will be laid on the Table.

(2) Answered by (1).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day—Amendment.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, to which Mr. Watts had moved an amendment as follows—

That the following words be added to the Address-in-reply: "But this House regrets that His Excellency has not been advised to exercise the power conferred on him by Section 18 (2) of the Referendum (Constitution Alteration) Act, 1906-28, for the appointment of scrutineers at places where referendum votes are being scrutinised as this House is of opinion that such procedure is highly desirable in the interests of ensuring a proper count of the votes taken."

MR. McDONALD (West Perth—on amendment) [4.38]: I hope the Premier will be prepared to reconsider the Government's attitude in relation to the scrutiny of the votes cast at the forthcoming referendum. By the Commonwealth legislation regulating the taking of referenda the Governor is empowered to appoint a scrutineer for the purpose of checking the scrutiny; that is, the Governor of the State may appoint a scrutineer. As I understand the matter, such a scrutineer may be appointed

not only for counting places but for each polling place. In our State, I believe, there will at all events be a counting place for each of the 50 Assembly electoral divisions.

The Premier: More than that.

Mr. McDONALD: There may be some extra, and I will assume that the total comes to 70 or 80, or perhaps 100. A hundred will certainly include the full number of counting places. That provision in the legislation of the Commonwealth Parliament dealing with the scrutiny of referenda polls has been in force since 1906, and has been continued throughout the various amendments of that legislation which have been made between 1906 and the present time. The reason for this provision is not far to seek. Any alteration of the Commonwealth Constitution is a matter of very great concern to the people of Australia. I think all members will agree that since we first voted to enter the Federation, no referendum to alter the Constitution has assumed anything approaching the importance of the vote which is to be taken on the 19th of this month. The chances may be against it, but the experience of members shows that in an extraordinary number of cases the electoral counts are very close, and it may well be that the poll of the 19th August will show a small difference between the votes cast for the "Yes" side and those cast for the "No" side.

In this particular case, more than in a normal case of scrutiny of polls cast for referenda, there is a difficulty in ascertaining the votes cast. This is a wartime referendum. Voting may be by soldiers or other members of the Defence Forces in certain instances between the ages of 18 and 21, as well as by those who have reached adult age. That privilege is given to soldiers or defence personnel. It is not given to some others, such as merchant sailors. In addition, a resident of Western Australia who is in the Armed Forces and may be in Queensland or any other part of Australia or on the high seas or in some operational area completely outside the Commonwealth is, by existing legislation, given the right to vote. We have had experience in this State quite recently, through the courts of law, that the determination of the right to vote in these circumstances is not easy, and has been attended by substantial errors in the admission of votes. It would be something of, I

might almost say, a national tragedy if the votes for and against in this referendum were so near that it became a matter of controversy as to which side really gained the majority of votes; and if it became a matter of suggestion that votes had been admitted which should not have been admitted, and that one side had been returned as having a majority whereas possibly the other side should have been returned as having that majority.

It is of the utmost importance that it should be determined beyond any doubt that the will of the Australian people has been accurately assessed on a vote of such immense national importance. That is the reason the Commonwealth Parliament put that provision in the legislation governing the conduct of referenda, and it is hard to imagine, if that provision were valid and sensible at all, any occasion when it could become more apt to be applied than in the conduct of a referendum taken in time of war and with all the complications and technicalities involved in securing votes from members of the Armed Forces distributed all over Australia, on the high seas, and in operational areas. I have heard that the referendum is to cost the Commonwealth Government £150,000. If to that is added the outlay of those who are supporting and those who are opposing the referendum proposals, the figure will be much larger still. The cost of this scrutiny, under the exercise of powers conferred on the State Government, should not exceed £100, £150 or £200. Even if it reached £250, it would be a small price for each State to pay to ensure the accuracy of the votes cast on a matter of such great importance. The provision was inserted in the Act by the National Parliament of Australia to be used and not to be ignored, and it has been retained for that purpose.

If ever there was a time when it could and should be used, it is in connection with a vote taken on the Constitution in time of war. I am not in a position to say what action is being taken by other States, and that is not necessarily a guide to us at all, because we have to determine our own responsibility, particularly when we know that from this State a larger proportion of our voters has been taken, through the Armed Forces, outside the State than would be the case in any other part of Australia. Information, completely reliable, has been received here this

afternoon that the Governor of Victoria, in exercise of the power conferred by the Commonwealth legislation, is appointing scrutineers for that State, not only for each counting place but for every polling place. I am not going to suggest, and I do not think the Leader of the Opposition suggests, that we should have a scrutineer for every polling place. His modest suggestion is that we might at all events have a scrutineer appointed by the State for the 70 or 80 places in this State at which counting will be conducted.

I suggest that in the appointment of scrutineers the Leader of the Opposition should be consulted by the Premier in connection with any recommendation made to the Lieut.-Governor. There is a difference of opinion in this State, as there is in many other States, between the Opposition and the Government as to the best decision to be made on this question of increased powers, and it would be a wise procedure if the recommendation as to scrutineers were made after consultation between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. It is of the utmost importance that the people of Australia should have complete confidence in the accuracy of the return of the voting at the referendum, and in view of the special difficulties involved in voting during a period of war and where the votes are to a certain extent artificial in that they will come from all over Australia and from parts beyond the seas, the recommendation or suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition to exercise the power conferred on the Government to appoint a scrutineer for each counting place would be welcomed by the public of this State, as evidence of the responsible view taken by this Parliament and of Parliament's determination to ensure that the public may have complete confidence in the accuracy of the return, whichever way it may ultimately be decided.

THE PREMIER (on amendment): I have no objection to the principle outlined in the amendment which purports to give an opportunity to people who so desire to be present as scrutineers at the counting of votes in connection with the forthcoming referendum. At the same time I do not agree with the latter portion of the amendment which says—

This House is of the opinion that such procedure is highly desirable in the interests of ensuring a proper count of the votes taken.

I do not think the appointment of scrutineers will make much difference, if any, with respect to the proper counting of the votes taken.

Mr. Doney: For what other purpose are scrutineers appointed at all?

The PREMIER: I do not think such appointments necessary. In most instances the officials who carry out the counting are far better circumstanced to say what vote is informal or formal than would be any scrutineer appointed to represent some particular section of the community.

Mr. Doney: Scrutineers are appointed for that and for no other purpose.

The PREMIER: Perhaps before we have concluded the discussion on the amendment, we may be able to arrive at some arrangement. I have already indicated that I have no objection to the amendment in principle, but object to the suggestion that the appointment of scrutineers is highly desirable to ensure a proper count of the votes taken. A proper count of the votes will be obtained whether scrutineers are or are not appointed. Certainly I would have no objection to such appointments if, in the interests of the people, it is desired to have the appointments made. But from whom will the Government appoint the scrutineers? Is the Government to appoint scrutineers itself or is it to appoint scrutineers to represent all parties concerned so that all interested may be satisfied, as a result of the personal observation by scrutineers, that the count is carried on in a proper manner?

Mr. Watts: If all you desire is the deletion of the words to which you have referred, I may not offer very serious objection to that course.

The PREMIER: Perhaps the amendment will be withdrawn altogether in view of the assurance I may be able to give the hon. member.

Mr. Watts: We had better wait for your assurance.

The PREMIER: Yes, I think so. I do not regard this matter as of very great importance. From the standpoint of the Government, it was first raised by the State Chief Electoral Officer who desired to be informed as to whether steps should be taken to appoint scrutineers. Naturally that officer thought that officials of the State Electoral Department would be required for

that duty. Upon inquiry it was found that whenever referenda had been taken in this State previously it had not been regarded as necessary to appoint scrutineers. Of course the appointment of scrutineers is contemplated in the Act, but no steps had been taken along that line on previous occasions. I may say that the matter was considered by the Government quite perfunctorily. Ministers arrived at the conclusion that whatever had been done on previous occasions, without any objection being raised by anyone, should apply in connection with the forthcoming referendum.

The next phase was the receipt of an application from the secretary of the National Party requesting the Government to have scrutineers appointed for each polling place throughout the State. There are perhaps a thousand polling places scattered throughout Western Australia and the Government considered that to make such appointments would be unnecessary and unwarranted. The Government decided therefore not to accede to the request. The Leader of the Opposition had put forward a request that the appointment of scrutineers should be made at each place where the counting of votes was to take place and it thereupon became necessary for a decision to be reached regarding the question. It will be seen that up to that stage three parties had already made an application to the Government along these lines. I am taking it, of course, that there is an implied request in the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. First, the National Party wrote to the Government, and then the Leader of the Opposition made a further application. The Labour Party has also made a verbal application for the appointment of scrutineers.

No doubt the S.O.S. League and the Constitutional League may consider that representation of those bodies should also be provided in the appointment of scrutineers. They might ask for the appointment of representatives at the counting of the votes. No doubt some of these bodies will regard their representation as most important. I do not wish to be placed in the position of having to make representations to the Lieut.-Governor for the appointment of all Labour Party scrutineers. It must be remembered that the Act provides for the ap-

pointment of only one scrutineer. The Commonwealth Act in regard to this matter—I am leaving aside the question of appointments at polling places and considering only those applying to centres where the counting will take place—reads as follows:—

The Governor-General or any person authorised by him may appoint one scrutineer at each place where the scrutiny is conducted in each electoral division and the Governor of a State or any person thereto authorised by him may appoint one scrutineer to be present at such place where the scrutiny is conducted in each electoral division for the State.

However much we might desire to give different organisations representation at the counting of the votes, the Commonwealth Act is specific in its provision and says that only one scrutineer can be appointed.

Mr. Watts: And the Governor-General can make the other appointment.

The PREMIER: But is this provision necessary on behalf of the people who vote for the rejection of the application by the Commonwealth Government? Is every party interested in the question to ask for the appointment of scrutineers? Who are the responsible people from whom I should seek advice as to whether individuals should be appointed on one side or the other?

Mr. Watts: It appears that the Governor-General would be on the affirmative side as representing the Commonwealth Government and the Lieut.-Governor on the negative side as representing the State Government.

The PREMIER: But in this instance the State Government is not at variance with the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Watts: It is not a question of Governments but a question of rights to be handed over.

The PREMIER: No, it is a question of appointing someone as a scrutineer to witness the counting of votes, and it is not a question of the Governor-General appointing someone on the affirmative side and the State Government looking after the negative side.

Mr. Watts: That is what the Act intended.

The PREMIER: The State Government does not desire the appointment of anyone to look after the negative side on its behalf. We are content that everyone on the affirmative side should be given every

opportunity desired, while at the same time not objecting to those on the negative side having their opportunity.

Mr. Watts: The Commonwealth can look after the affirmative side and we want you to look after the negative side.

The PREMIER: That is not so because there is only one scrutineer to be appointed, as Subsection (2) of Section 18 of the Referendum (Constitution Alteration) Act provides. While the Governor-General may appoint a scrutineer, there is no intention of that being done—according to my information.

Mr. Doney: Have you specific information on that point?

The PREMIER: Yes. I asked the Chief Electoral Officer for the Commonwealth in Western Australia if he had any knowledge of the intention of the Governor-General to appoint anyone as scrutineer, and he replied in the negative. He said that he did not think there would be any such appointment. It may be that the Governor-General will not make any such appointment. The fact remains that there are several sections of the community taking one or other side on the issue to be decided at the referendum, and who are the Government to recognise as persons from whom it should accept nominations for appointments as scrutineers?

Mr. McDonald: I think the Leader of the Opposition would be one such person.

The PREMIER: Then the Leader of the Opposition is to be regarded as of far more importance than others. The hon. member surely would not suggest that!

Mr. McDonald: No.

The PREMIER: I thought not.

Mr. Thorn: But you have declared yourself.

The PREMIER: I do not know that the Leader of the Opposition has quite declared himself yet. However, that is where we find ourselves in regard to this matter.

Mr. Doney: It is plain that just one would not be fair; therefore we must have none or two.

The PREMIER: We must get down to the statutory provisions of the Act and, in view of them, the Government cannot do anything about it. The appropriate legislation is Commonwealth and it permits the Governor—that means the Lieut.-Governor

at this time—to appoint one scrutineer, and one only. With regard to the appointment of scrutineers, we do not desire to adopt a partisan attitude. If we should act as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested, we would have to say who would be the Government nominees and we could say that the first one should be so-and-so. The Country Party would require its nominee to be appointed. Then the member for West Perth says that the National Party's representative should be the next one. Perhaps the next should represent the S.O.S. League, the next the Constitutional League. Then others who might consider they should have representation would have to receive consideration. I think we are somewhat in a dilemma as to how the proposal could be carried out. I have no objection at all to persons being appointed to be present at the scrutiny. The Act states that the scrutiny shall be conducted in accordance with the following provisions:—

19. (a) It shall commence as soon as practicable after the closing of the poll;
- (b) such scrutineers as have been duly appointed pursuant to the preceding section and any persons approved by the officer conducting the scrutiny may be present.

The preceding section refers to appointments made by the Governor General or the Governor of a State. That provision will enable us to get over the difficulty. The presiding officer may allow any person he thinks fit to be present at the scrutiny. I asked the Commonwealth Chief Electoral Officer what attitude would be likely to be taken by a presiding officer who was requested by a person to be present at the scrutiny, and he replied that provided the applicant was a reputable person he did not think there would be any objection. I also asked him whether there would be any objection to application being made for a person to be present at some time prior to the scrutiny taking place, and he replied that there would be no objection to that. Therefore I think that, in view of the political complexion and the different attitudes taken by different organisations and people, the better way out might be for each organisation to depute someone to be present at whatever counts they desire to have representation. That seems to be the remedy provided in the Act and that is what I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Watts: Would that involve particular organisations appointing scrutineers at some of the counting places?

The PREMIER: I would not deny anyone representing a body of responsible public opinion from making application and allowing the returning officer to deal with the matter. I do not think that any objection would be raised or that there would be an avalanche of applications. I believe that any application that appeared to the presiding officer to be bona fide would be granted. I have been present at many counts and have seen as many as 15 or 20 people in the polling booth while the counting has been in progress. Usually there are two presiding officers, two ballot officers and a postal vote officer, and every half hour or hour somebody arrives with a box from an outlying district. Under proper supervision each candidate has a scrutineer, and candidates themselves are generally present at the count. With proper supervision most of the people present at the counting centre assist to get the counting done as expeditiously as possible. Therefore I suggest that each organisation desirous of being represented should make application to the presiding officer. I do not want to have the selecting of people from the many organisations. Anyone who wishes to be represented can secure representation by making application.

I give the Leader of the Opposition this assurance, too. Perhaps the Chief Electoral Officer might not be able to get in touch with some of the divisional returning officers and they might object. If any objection is raised by a presiding officer at any counting centre and the matter is brought under the notice of the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the National Party, I will undertake to exercise the power conferred on the State Governor through the Government of the day in regard to the appointment of a scrutineer at that place, but I am positive that this will not be necessary. However, I am prepared to give that assurance. I do not disagree at all with the principle contained in the amendment. I do not propose to make any wild prophecy as to the result of the referendum, but I do not think the result will be so close as to be affected by one, two or three votes which the presiding officer may allow or disallow. It is not like an election of members where four or five votes may make all the difference to the Government through some individual being

returned by a narrow margin. It is hard to imagine that the voting on the referendum will be so close. With that assurance and the information I have given from the Chief Electoral Officer of the Commonwealth, I think the amendment might well be withdrawn. Sufficient avenues are provided in the Act to give effect to what the Leader of the Opposition desires, namely, that it shall be beyond doubt that the vote is taken and counted in a manner to give satisfaction to everybody.

Mr. Watts: Do you suggest that we should nominate scrutineers as early as possible so that the Commonwealth Electoral Department may know who they are?

The PREMIER: No. Somebody might say, "I would like Mr. Smith to be present at the count," and the presiding officer might say, "No, I will not have Mr. Smith." It might then be too late for effect to be given to the assurance I have conveyed to the Leader of the Opposition. If an organisation made application a week beforehand and a satisfactory reply was not received, we could, at that stage, confer and get an appointment made for that counting centre which would be satisfactory to the Leader of the Opposition. It should not be necessary to bring the Governor of the State into the matter by way of an amendment to the Address-in-reply, and so I suggest that the amendment be withdrawn.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly—on amendment): I hope the Leader of the Opposition will not withdraw his amendment; in fact, I would rather see it broadened. I consider that scrutineers should be appointed for every place where there is a polling booth. This, I believe, is an absolute necessity. Let me quote something that happened in one town during an election. I was in the booth and it was most noticeable how completely the demeanour of the presiding officer changed when an elector entered the booth who he believed held political views the opposite of his own. He was blind to everyone else. Subsequently I happened to be in the street and a man came along who was very annoyed because he said he could not get a vote. I told him that it was a Federal election and that if his name was not on the roll, he could get a vote by signing a declaration. I took him back into the booth and said to the presiding officer, "This man can vote," and he was allowed to

do so after he had signed a declaration. Yet previously there was no intention of allowing the man to vote. Therefore it is necessary to have scrutineers to ensure that all matters are carried out in a proper manner.

If members look at the pamphlet issued by the Commonwealth Government for and against the referendum, they will find on the back an instruction to the voter to the effect that he must put a numeral in the square opposite "No" and a numeral in the square opposite "Yes." This instruction is not in accordance with the Act. The Act states that if a voter puts a numeral in one square and not in the other, his vote is not to be deemed informal. Yet this instruction says that the voter must put a numeral in both squares. At all meetings I have addressed, I have quoted this instruction in order that there may be no confusion. We are not to know whether presiding officers are aware of the fact that, if there is a numeral in only one square, the vote will not be invalid.

The Premier: Every presiding officer is supplied with papers giving him full information.

Mr. SEWARD: But I am pointing out that the instruction issued to electors is not in accordance with the terms of the Act. According to the instruction, the paper will be invalid if the voter does not put a numeral in each of the two squares. For this reason I consider it necessary to have a scrutineer at each counting centre.

The Premier: If the voter did not put a numeral in each of the squares, the paper would not be informal.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so, according to the Act, but the instruction states that the voter must put a numeral in each square, and we have no proof that the presiding officers will be told the terms of the Act as distinct from the instruction in this book. If we had an assurance that the presiding officers were properly informed, we would know that they would not be likely to make that mistake.

The Premier: The Act provides that a numeral shall be placed in each square but that, if it is put in only one, the paper shall not be informal.

Mr. SEWARD: That is what I have been pointing out. The State Act provides that the polling shall be from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and we know that many of the booths were closed at 7 p.m. owing to instructions having

been issued giving 7 p.m. as the closing time. I know what is in the Act and I know what instructions have been issued. The trouble is that the instructions issued sometimes conflict with the Act, and we do not know that the terms of the Act will be brought before the presiding officers when they come to count the votes.

The Minister for Mines: How will the scrutiny make sure of that?

MR. SEWARD: If there is a scrutiny those who are sufficiently interested can be sure that they are aware of that fact.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That would not be a scrutiny; that would be voting.

MR. SEWARD: What is the use of the hon. member saying that it would not be a scrutiny?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The presiding officer will have his instructions.

MR. SEWARD: That is all I wish to say on that point. The Premier took up the attitude that the Commonwealth Government had not appointed anyone—so far as he knew—to perform this duty on behalf of the Commonwealth and that we as a State should not do anything until the Commonwealth made a move. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, the Act gives the State Governor power to appoint scrutineers. I think we should take the matter up from the State point of view.

The Premier: What is the State point of view?

MR. SEWARD: The Act makes provision for the appointment of scrutineers to act for both sides. There are only two sides on these occasions and consequently I think the Government should arrange for the appointment of scrutineers. How that is to be done I leave to the Government and the Leaders of the Opposition and National Party. As regards the question of finance, it is rather late to bring the matter up. The Commonwealth Government, in its wisdom, has decided upon the referendum and whatever the cost to the country is, large or small, the Commonwealth will have to stand by it. All we have to do is to see that the voting is carried out in an impartial manner. I am not half so impressed with the strict impartiality of many presiding officers as some members seem to be.

The Premier: There are tremendous penalties provided if the officers do any-

thing wrong. They occupy responsible positions and would not like to get the sack.

MR. SEWARD: I know that. Some of these officers do things which are quite irregular, although they do not do so intentionally.

MR. Cross: There are both presiding and returning officers.

MR. SEWARD: Yes. I know of many instances where grave irregularities have occurred. People are appointed to the position of presiding officer in some centres and we normally expect them to perform their duties impartially. However, on many occasions I say they have not. I would go further than the Leader of the Opposition and would suggest that scrutineers be appointed at every polling place. I regard that as essential when we have so much at stake. I support the Leader of the Opposition and hope the matter will be taken to a division.

MR. THORN (Toodyay—on amendment): Relying on the assurance of the Premier that he will do his best to allow us to appoint our representatives, we are prepared to withdraw the amendment.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): This is to my mind the most strange occasion on which I have had to speak on the Address-in-reply, because we may be on the eve of a very great change in the constitutional position of Australia and the States. I feel that members would prefer to speak after the 19th August rather than before.

The Minister for Mines: What about adjourning until the 19th?

MR. McDONALD: As far as ordinary elections are concerned, the day may be lost but it may be recovered again a few years afterwards. In the case of a constitutional alteration, however, the change may endure for all time or for a very long time. I think, therefore, most members would feel more sure in dealing with the future of our State if they were to speak after the 19th August. Some no doubt will do so but, without entering upon the merits or demerits of the proposed changes of the Constitution, we are bound at the present time to face the fact when we contemplate the future of our State, that if the referendum is car-

ried the role of the State Parliaments in future will be a very small one. I think it inevitable that we shall assume something of the status of the South African Provincial Councils. If the Commonwealth Government gets the increased powers which it seeks, it will be enabled to take over legislation and administration which will cover the greater part of the field now reserved to the State Parliaments. If the Commonwealth gets these extra powers it will be legitimately entitled to accept the verdict of the people as an authority to exercise them and I have no doubt it will proceed to exercise them.

Mr. North: Our status will be only equal to those of the Canadian Provinces.

Mr. McDONALD: Less than that; it will be, as I said, similar to the status of the South African Provincial Councils. Those councils consist of only one chamber—the Council itself—and the affairs of the Province are regulated by an administrator and by an executive committee appointed by the Council. The role which is played by the individual councillor in South Africa is sufficiently shown by the fact that his remuneration is £120 a year, less £2 a day for every day on which he is not present at a meeting of the Council. So it is obviously contemplated that a member of a provincial council in South Africa will be a man who regards his duties as a councillor as merely a part-time affair, because he could not live on £120 a year and would need to earn the greater part of his living in some other occupation. Even the members of the executive committee, which corresponds to our Cabinet, receive only an allowance of £500 per annum, including the £120 per annum, so that apparently in some cases they also would be part-time workers.

I consider I would be unwise were I to proceed to speak about the future of our State on the basis of the continuation of the status quo without saying in the first place that if the referendum proposals are carried the future of our State will not lie very much in the hands of the State Parliament. When the uniform taxation law was enacted two years ago the Premier showed far more prescience than I did, because he saw clearly that it was part of the process—to use his own words—by which the Commonwealth Parliament was subjugating the self-governing rights of the State. The Premier was quite right. I thought the uni-

form taxation law was an isolated piece of legislation which would end automatically six months after the war finished, but now I feel that I had not much foresight at that time. I should have regarded it, as it undoubtedly is, as part of a plan to transfer State powers to the Commonwealth Government, powers which are now being finally sought through the present referendum. As the Premier said in 1942, when dealing with the uniform taxation law, what are described as temporary powers tend to become permanent, and he was quite right.

Whatever limits may be put to the uniform taxation law or to the proposals in the referendum in the way of a period to their operation, I do not think the powers will ever return to the States in the way in which they are now exercised. I do not see how after a period of some years of exercise by the Commonwealth Parliament of such powers we can undo the economic conditions which will then obtain and revert to the status quo. If the proposals are carried for good or for ill—and I quite agree that that is a matter of opinion—then it is hardly worth while for members to speak on the future of our State, because we shall be in the position of the South African Provincial Councils. We shall be at the most agents to whom will be delegated some measure of execution of a policy and a financial programme laid down by a central government.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Of course, that cannot be done by a mere vote at the referendum.

Mr. McDONALD: If the powers are given to the Commonwealth, in my opinion that Government would be guilty of a dereliction of duty if it did not exercise them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But that can only be done by subsequent legislation.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, but if the people of Australia by a majority confer those powers upon the Commonwealth Government, they will expect that Government to exercise them.

Mr. Seward: The Commonwealth will not get them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I feel bound to commence my remarks on that basis. If the powers were granted I would not be speaking on the Address-in-reply.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The 1928 agreement made a vital alteration, but nothing followed on it.

Mr. McDONALD: That agreement was a mere fragment.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It gave the Commonwealth control of the purse.

Mr. McDONALD: What remarks I make this evening are on the basis that the State will continue to have control over its future and over the policies to be put into force for the progress of the State.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the 1928 agreement gave the Commonwealth control of the purse.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not think that matters very much. That agreement has many good points and some bad points, but it is not going to affect the progress of the State if the powers remain in the hands of the State Parliament. Assuming that we continue to be responsible for the progress of this State, and on that assumption only, we have to recognise that the impact of war has been felt by the economy of our State more severely than by that of any other State. We must realise that because it will be an essential factor to be taken into account in the post-war period. Although I speak on the subject of the post-war period, as I must and should do, it is with this reservation, that while we hope that the war will end at a comparatively early date, nothing that could be said here, and no preparation that could be made to meet the period after the war should be allowed to diminish to the slightest extent the exertions of the people directed to carrying the war to a victorious conclusion. Nothing could be more fatal than that we should feel that the time has come when all we have to do is to sit down and determine on better times for the future.

Mr. Churchill many years ago said that nothing is more unpredictable than in war. Although today, in all the arenas of the war throughout the world, the future looks favourable to us, yet it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that something unforeseen may yet confront us with a very long period of strife and sacrifice before we finally attain a successful end to the war. Our State has, I think, suffered more than any other State. For example, compared to the last pre-war year our gold production has fallen by 50 per cent. In view of the dependence of this State upon the goldmining industry that

represents a very severe blow to our economy. Those employed in the industry have fallen from nearly 15,000 to about 5,000, or a drop of two-thirds since the war began. In the case of our wheat industry, we have also suffered compared with any other State. Our acreage under wheat, compared with the last pre-war year, has fallen by 50 per cent., as against reductions in South Australia of 33 per cent., in New South Wales 30 per cent., and in Victoria 22 per cent. These figures are based on a comparison made between 1938-39 and 1942-43, the last year for which I could get completed figures.

Our wheat acreage has fallen—and that, again, is a very important industry to us—more severely than has been the case in any other wheatgrowing State of Australia. We have been more severely hit by the depletion of our manpower. At the beginning of 1942-43 we had 212 wage and salary earners per thousand of population in employment, excluding the rural and the private domestic workers. Whereas we have only 212 per thousand remaining in employment, all the other States show larger figures. Victoria has 283; South Australia, 280; New South Wales, 272; Queensland, 231; Tasmania, 221, and the Australian average is 265 as against our figure of 212, which means that we are depleted more in our civil avocations to meet the stress of war than is any other State. On the other hand, the other States have gained through the war conditions in some respects, notably in the case of factory employment, and that again has been much larger than in our State. Between 1939 and 1943, factory employment figures rose in New South Wales by 41 per cent.; in Victoria by 28 per cent.; in Queensland by 21 per cent.; in Tasmania by 39 per cent., and in South Australia by 63 per cent., as against our rise of 19 per cent.

Of all the States in Australia, we have profited least by the expansion of the numbers of our factory workers. So we come now to the question of what we want with regard to the State's future. It seems to me that, subject to the reservation I have mentioned, the recognition that we are still at war and every possible energy must be directed to the prosecution of the war, the time has come when we should be more specific as to what the objects of this State are in the post-war period. What do we

want in this State? I venture to think that when the war finishes Western Australia will meet a major crisis in its future. It may fall still further behind the other States. The war economy has given the other States very great advantages, but it has imposed upon our State very great disadvantages. Unless we are very vigilant and determined, and unless, above all, we know what we want for our State, the advantage of the central States created by the war is likely not only to be maintained but to be increased.

The Premier: The last point is important—to know what we really want.

Mr. McDONALD: That is the point I come to now. We want to know exactly what we are after, and, while we who sit in Opposition have not the advantage the Government has in having the advice of responsible and able public servants, and having the resources of the Statistician and all the information possessed by the Government departments, we have to endeavour to visualise in our minds what these objectives should be. But still more I think the time has come when the Government should take the House into its confidence and state specifically what are its ideas of the dangers to our State in the future, and what are the objectives which should be sought by this State. Those views should be brought before the House and be the subject of debate here so that members may express their opinions, and also so that the people of this State may be informed of what is intended and have an opportunity to make valuable contributions to meet what I believe will be a testing time for the future of our State. What, as specifically as one can state them in a short time, are the objectives of Western Australia? First of all, security from aggression. We do not want to face a time of anxiety such as the Premier knows was faced by us some two or three years ago.

With the small population in Australia, we must always be in a position of some anxiety, but in this State, in particular, security from aggression is something that we must take up with the Commonwealth authorities in order to ensure that we will not be—I will not say an abandoned part of Australia, but at all events a part of Australia bearing more than its fair share of risk from an invading enemy. We need to have the installations necessary for our

defence, and in particular those involved in air defence. I am not going to take time to consider the wide implications which this involves, although I should like to because they involve the international position, and the attitude taken towards an outlying place like Australia by countries such as Great Britain and the United States. We know the attitude that Britain will take. There they have been concerned at the international strength which England, or Britain, will be able to maintain in future. Some recent writers have said that unless the British Commonwealth of Nations will, on foreign affairs, speak with one voice and as one entity, then England will be reduced to the status of a second-class Power such as France or Belgium. Unless she is associated with the Dominions forming the British Commonwealth, thus becoming a major Power equivalent to the United States and Soviet Russia, that is what they say will happen.

I think there is much to be said for the proposition of the present Prime Minister, Mr. Curtin, for the establishment of a secretariat or some means by which the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations in the post-war period, and in the international field, could speak with one voice because by that means alone will they speak as a Power with corresponding weight to that which will be possessed by Soviet Russia and the United States. For our security and for our expansion economically we need population. We must admit that the prospects of getting that population from our own British stock are small. The British people themselves want all those people whom we want here. But if there is, and to the extent there is, migration to this country, I hope it may be so arranged with the other States and the Federal authorities that the first priority shall go to Western Australia. Victoria has 40 times the density of the population of this State. Not only for the sake of Western Australia but for the protection of the whole of Australia I think it would not be unreasonable, and would be no more than national wisdom, to say that for some time to come, with regard to all migration, except perhaps a very small percentage, Western Australia, the great sparsely-populated State, shall have first priority. That should obtain until it is in a somewhat better position from the point of view of defence and able to present

a sufficient number of people to make our protection very much easier than it has been in the past.

Mr. Doney: Will the other States agree?

Mr. McDONALD: I will come to that in a moment. I think that is a very important remark. We want, of course, a uniform railway gauge. We also want the construction and maintenance of strategic roads.

Mr. J. Hegney: For 30 years, to my knowledge, the uniform railway gauge has been talked of, but nothing has been done.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so, but now we realise it is essential, and something has been done. Queensland did it.

Mr. J. Hegney: All the States were against it previously, and I suppose they are still.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: If necessary we must do it ourselves without help from anyone else. Having dealt momentarily with our security I want now to turn to our economy. Like the Leader of the Opposition I have read with great interest and very deep appreciation the first volume—I have not seen any other as yet—of the report issued by the Commission of which the Minister for Lands is chairman. I have been impressed by the wisdom shown in the remarks which have appeared in that report, not only wisdom but that document shows a sense of the realities and appreciation of the difficulties involved as well as giving constructive ideas as to how to overcome them. It is no good painting rosy pictures regarding primary production or secondary industries in Western Australia. We must realise that there are many real difficulties to overcome, and we must overcome them.

As has been pointed out more and more we must realise that geography is the determining factor in every country. The science of geography is being even more recognised by all universities and by all countries. They say, and properly so, that whatever you may like to do by artificial means there are many things which are difficult to do and do not pay to do. You must plan your policy having regard to the inescapable factors of your geographical situation. In the case of Australia, isolated in the Seven Seas, the geographic factor is of peculiar importance and requires careful study. When we come to our economic basis

the first thing we have to recognise is that for some years to come primary production is going to be the substance of the State's existence. We are going to be more dependent upon that in this State than will be the case in any other State, even Tasmania, because Tasmania has resources of cheap power which we in Western Australia do not possess. It is of the utmost importance to us—that is why I am pleased that the Minister for Lands should be chairman of this important Commission—that our primary-producing industries shall be placed upon a sound basis not only from the point of view of returns to farmers which are essential but from the point of view of the conditions under which our rural population has to live.

If we cannot maintain our primary industries for some years to come this State is going to be in a bad way; at all events it will experience a very difficult time. It is of the first importance to us to tackle the problem of providing the machinery that will provide a suitable and fair basis to producers so as to assure for them a reasonable competence, and induce those already on the land to remain and the children that come after them, and other persons who may feel disposed to enter upon those industries.

I want now to pass to secondary industries. These are essential not only to balance our economy but to give the young people of the State the necessary opportunity to make headway in life. They will not all stay here if they have no prospect except that of being engaged in rural industries. Without disparaging rural industries I think there will be some young people who do not desire to work in them. If they find no evidence in this State of other avenues opening to them they will go to another State, and so we shall lose that section of our population. I read with great interest the monthly reports of the Minister for Industrial Development. He is certainly making some advance, but it is a very trifling one.

At the rate we are going our momentum is nowhere near that of the Eastern States, and relatively we shall drift further and further behind. I see no prospect for the extension of our secondary industries except by the development of some technique or process which would be far more drastic than that which we are following at present. I find from today's paper that the Prime

Minister has made a statement of some value regarding the post-war period, in particular relating to factories which have come into existence during wartime and which are owned or partially owned and run by the Commonwealth Government. He has made the suggestion that some of these undertakings may be turned to civil production after the war and still be owned and run by the Commonwealth. Some will be turned over to private enterprise, and in some instances the factories may be owned and run partly by the Commonwealth Government and partly by private enterprise.

If we are to receive economic justice in this State I see no reason why a number of these factories which have been established by Commonwealth money, and are now situated in the Eastern States and not here—except for the comparatively small industry at Welshpool—should not be removed to our State where they could be switched over to civil production or to some extent perhaps continue in the manufacture of munitions. This may mean considerable cost but, in view of the cost of the war, why should there not be a major transfer from the Eastern States of some of those factories which have been established with national money? Whatever the cost may be within reason why should not the machinery be sent over here and those factories established in areas of Western Australia? The buildings in the other States might be put to some other use, but the undertakings themselves transferred to this State.

Mr. North: Russia did that.

Mr. McDONALD: Russia made big transfers under the impact of war. Unless we do have such a mass migration of important industries into our State as a matter of national policy I can see the growth of secondary industries here being a very slow process. I should like to see the State Government put forward this plan at once when to my mind we have a unique opportunity with the factories which have been erected in the central States under the stress of war. Those factories do not belong to the central States and should be distributed over the whole of Australia, and in this State in particular which of all States has received so little advantage from war expenditure. Western Australia should be supplied with a very substantial quota of those factories that were built out of national money, and at present are under the control of the Com-

monwealth and perhaps before long will be at the disposal of the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I agree with the hon. member, but would that not entail the transfer of workers to follow the factories?

Mr. McDONALD: That would be one of the advantages. Many of the workers would come to this State.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They would have to come; they would be put under direction.

Mr. McDONALD: No. I do not think there need be any direction. If we had the industries here the employees who had left this State to join them would come back. It has been stated that 3,000 of our skilled tradesmen left Western Australia to work in industries in the other States. No doubt most of them would be quite happy to come back if the same opportunities were offered to them here. Let us get those industries here.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And trust to luck so far as working them is concerned.

Hon. N. Keenan: Do not let us have slave work.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No.

Mr. McDONALD: Let them trust to luck just as in the same way other industries in the past have had to trust to luck and to people coming to work in them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You are asking for a big expenditure of national money.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Guildford-Midland to keep order.

Mr. McDONALD: I am not suggesting that inside of two months factories employing 15,000, 20,000, or 50,000 workers should be transferred and set up in this State. I suggest that even if it means taking five or ten years it should be a condition that there is a gradual transfer of these factories to Western Australia, and I feel sure that if the workers are given the choice they will be glad to follow them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You cannot limit the transfer to machinery.

The Premier: Are you referring to factories only under Commonwealth control?

Mr. McDONALD: No. It is not beyond the bounds of practical politics that factories still in the hands of private enterprise could be induced to operate in Western Australia. No doubt these would have to contribute towards the cost of their transfer.

The Premier: I thought you believed in private enterprise doing anything it liked.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the member for West Perth not to notice interjections.

Mr. McDONALD: Private enterprise would still be free and could if so desired refrain from buying some of these undertakings. If something of this kind is not done the immense expansion of industries in the central States will be there for good, and our chances of getting them will be worse than they were before. Now is the opportunity to put forward the claim of our State to share in these industries when they are at the disposal of the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDONALD: I do not minimise the difficulties.

The Premier: We have had something done in that direction in the last couple of days.

Mr. McDONALD: The difficulties will be very great. For the time being it is life or death to us, to the industrial part of our economy, whether we get something for this State out of the reshaping that will take place after the war. I do not know that there can be for a long time such an opportunity for making an effort to get something like the mass transfer of suitable industries to our State as will be presented to us in the next two or three years, because of the fact that the Commonwealth Government must decide upon a policy with respect to factories built in the central States from national funds.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The policy after five years will depend upon what is done in that way during those five years.

Mr. McDONALD: I put that on one side for the time being, but this should, I think, be one of our objectives. Let us make up our minds that this is what we want. If it can be done let us go all out for it, and do so at once. Let us advance our claims now and permit the other States to know what we are after. Let us put our case forward because we have an unassailable one. This represents an opportunity for us, if it can be availed of, to make a big jump in our secondary industries, in our own economy, in our population and our prospects, that is not likely to occur again inside another generation. If we are to build up our secondary industries obviously we must try to establish industries in relation to those various commodities we now import from the Eastern States.

We have £10,000,000 worth of trade in respect of many articles, such as jams and clothing for instance, which could be manufactured here. That, of course, is an obvious development in our secondary industry policy. But how are we to accomplish that when we have had so much difficulty in the past? I think we must attempt to gain as part of our objectives some more drastic means. First of all, cannot we get back that Interstate Commission? The Commonwealth Constitution contemplates an Interstate Commission as a body which would police trade between the States. Owing to some technical difficulty—because it is supposed to have judicial powers—the Interstate Commission was held to be invalid in part, and has never been operative since; and that is something like 26 or 27 years ago. This State, of all States, stands to gain by the restoration of the Interstate Commission, which, having regard to Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution providing for freedom of trade between the States, can make recommendations by which our infant trades will not be stifled or crushed by the weight of the highly developed industries of the Eastern States.

Again I would go beyond that and revive the question of a tariff for this State, to give our infant industries a chance to develop. The member for Nedlands some time ago reminded me that the first Commonwealth Grants Commission ever appointed, which sat in 1925, by a majority report recommended that Western Australia should be enabled to raise a tariff against Eastern States importations, because the Commission saw no other way in which Western Australia could ever hope to build up local industries against the competition of the old-established industries of the Eastern States. There is nothing revolutionary about that proposal, because when we first entered Federation, as members will recollect, a specific section was inserted in the Constitution enabling Western Australia to maintain its tariff against the Eastern States for a period of, I believe, five years.

Apparently, in our innocence in those days, we thought five years would be sufficient to enable our industries to make some preparation to meet the competition of the Eastern and central States; but we have found, of course, that it has been just the opposite way. We have found that the Eastern and central States have been able

to make Western Australia more and more a market for, I will not say their exploitation—it is quite legitimate—but a market to which they send their goods while accepting nothing or little in return. I would support the Commission's recommendations that there should be some measure, if necessary by an amendment of the Constitution, enabling the infant industries of this State to gain such a position where they will not be crushed by the operation of established industries under the freedom given by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Such a proposal would not get much support on the gold-fields.

The Premier: If we are to increase our population, we must build up markets.

Mr. McDONALD: It is the old question of which comes first—population or markets. We shall increase our population when we get industries established here, but the population will not come here without industries to work in. The point is, cannot we so create conditions for the expansion of our industries that population will come here because people elsewhere will see that the chance is worth while? It is a question, I repeat, which comes first of the two. In my opinion conditions in this State must be made more promising to industry, and more protection must be given to industry, if we are to see any expansion of our secondary industries on anything like a major scale, a scale which will attract population. This, again, is a matter of great difficulty. I appreciate fully that my suggestion cannot be popular in the other States, but I would again try to seek, at this stage, something defining what we want, so that we can put up specifically new arguments in the discussions which will take place between the States and the Commonwealth in the immediate future. Unless we do have very clear-cut ideas, then, as I said before, the chances are that we may fall behind in the race.

As regards national works, these will be featured in the post-war period whether this referendum is carried or not. Now, what kind of works do we want? Of course we all want houses, but houses are not a national work in the ordinary sense of the term. National works, I take it, are those relating to water supplies, for instance, because this country's future, as has been said, and rightly said, will be written in terms of

water. Again, there is transport which will be a major factor in the development of the great spaces we have in our State. The third factor in the matter of national works is power. It has been said recently by men of world-wide experience that power is going to be the determining factor in the future, and that the countries which have power are going to be the dominant countries industrially. As our country, and our own State, are deficient in power, those national works which will overcome the handicap are particularly vital for the preservation of fair chances for our State.

I have a few more remarks to make. The first is, assuming that our future will not be controlled from Canberra, how best will it be controlled? In the many factors which undoubtedly will come up wherein a national viewpoint is required, how can we get the best co-ordination and co-operation consistent with the maintenance by each State of its legitimate governing powers? In the past we had the Loan Council, composed of the Premiers and Federal representatives. If we study the trend of political development in Australia, we find that the Loan Council is being used more and more as a co-ordinating body between the States and the Commonwealth; and I welcome that. I think it is a most admirable development. We find that the Loan Council and the Premiers meet the Commonwealth authorities to discuss problems of housing and various other factors which are not directly related to anything involved in the Financial Agreement.

I hold that in the critical days, the important days and the days of promise which are ahead of Australia and our State following the war, the Loan Council might well be developed into a co-ordinating and co-operative body of more importance and more influence even than it has at present. I think we may contemplate the Loan Council not as a Loan Council, but as a co-operating and co-ordinating body, including the Leaders of the Oppositions in the various States. That augmented body could meet frequently, and its deliberations and recommendations would carry great weight with the Parliaments of the States and the Commonwealth Parliament. By that means there could be, I think, machinery for development, not only of national ideals but also of those necessary advances in the economy of the various States which might be required to

meet their needs and their aspirations, especially in the case of a State like Western Australia.

Mr. Doney: The decisions are determined by votes, and decisions by votes might not benefit us.

The Premier: Each vote is equal at the Loan Council.

Mr. Doney: I know that.

The Premier: It is not like the Commonwealth Parliament, where the others are 27 to our six.

Mr. McDONALD: I venture to think that the Eastern and central States and the Commonwealth may be brought to recognise that our State has reached a certain stage in the race. I am not at all pessimistic. I am optimistic. But I think it may be pointed out to the other States and the Commonwealth that from any point of view, from the point of view of the defence of Australia and of our State, and from that of the development prospects of our people and prospects of population, this State is justified in putting up a fight such as it has never put up before to get its share of future development and to bring Western Australia somewhat nearer to a parity in prospects and trade to the other Australian States.

There are many things which require, in my opinion, immediate consideration. Our railways for instance, are overdue for re-consideration. Modern forms of transport cannot be held back by existing facilities. The railways must fill a new role in future. That role will be a minor one. Motor transport will take over three-quarters at least of the work now done by the railways, and will do it better and do it cheaper. The sooner we recognise that, the better. Air transport will be a great factor. Before we spend money as proposed in rehabilitating the railways—spend hundreds of thousands of pounds—let us have some inquiry and make up our minds what the work of the railways will be in the future. Otherwise we shall waste our money. Motor and air transport from every aspect will take three-quarters of the present volume of traffic controlled by our railways.

The Premier: On imported fuel?

Mr. McDONALD: On imported fuel or on some kind of fuel. I trust that the matter of housing will receive a great deal of consideration. I view with alarm the prospect of houses for workers costing nearly

£1,000. I think we should consider whether in a country like ours, and especially in a State like ours, houses cannot be built at a very low cost, comparatively, of materials that will last 50 years and be hygienic and durable, but will be one-half the cost now being incurred. Immense imagination is required in our re-housing scheme. Bricks and mortar and cement and all that kind of thing may be largely relics of the dark ages. Immense imagination, I suggest, must be used before we decide on our housing policy.

My main object in speaking tonight was to draw attention to the fact that the progress of the war and the prospect of its comparatively early termination bring us face to face now with this important period in our State's existence, when we should know what we want. I hold that the Government would be well advised to invite the co-operation of members of Parliament and of the general public, so that when the time comes our ideas may be clear-cut and that there may be no question whatever as to the objectives that we seek—objectives that we consider to be essential for the preservation and the reasonable prospects of Western Australia.

On motion by Mr. Graham, debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,700,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.