

in the Bill, the Committee will place the worker in a most unfavourable position. I ask members to look at the Bill from a conciliatory point of view. What the devil else do we want to talk about except conciliation?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: While there is expressed a desire to employ methods of conciliation, and the Government seeks to pass the Bill in a form that will enable the arbitration system better to control industry and maintain peaceful relationships between employer and employee, unless the definition of the term "lock-out" is on a comparable basis with that relating to the definition of the term "strike", the effect will be to the contrary and the law will apply in one way only. The present provision will enable the court to direct the employee in every way, and will prevent his consulting even with members of his own family.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Surely you do not want provision made to lock-out the wife!

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: As it stands, the Bill makes the court the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all things industrial. I sincerely hope that when the Bill leaves this Chamber its provisions will be such that we shall be able to assure the workers that they need have no fears regarding the measure and that their position under the arbitration system will be more secure than formerly.

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

| | |
|------|----|
| Ayes | 9 |
| Noes | 15 |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Majority against | 6 |
|------------------|---|

Ayes.

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Hon. C. W. D. Barker | Hon. E. M. Heenan |
| Hon. R. J. Boylen | Hon. F. R. H. Lavery |
| Hon. E. M. Davies | Hon. H. C. Strickland |
| Hon. G. Fraser | Hon. G. Bennetts |
| Hon. W. R. Hall | (Teller.) |

Noes.

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Hon. N. F. Baxter | Hon. A. L. Loton |
| Hon. L. Craig | Hon. J. Murray |
| Hon. J. Cunningham | Hon. H. S. W. Parker |
| Hon. L. C. Diver | Hon. C. H. Simpson |
| Hon. Sir Frank Gibson | Hon. H. K. Watson |
| Hon. H. Hearn | Hon. F. R. Welsh |
| Hon. C. H. Henning | Hon. J. McI. Thomson |
| Hon. Sir Chas. Latham | (Teller.) |

Amendment thus negatived.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 8.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 3rd September, 1952.

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

QUESTIONS.

POTATOES.

As to Port of Shipment.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that during the past few years potatoes from the Marybrook district have been railed to Fremantle and Bunbury for shipment to the Eastern States, whilst this cargo could be expeditiously loaded at the port of Busselton?

(2) That long distance rail and/or road haulage of potatoes to far distant ports results in considerable financial loss to growers, which would be overcome if shipments were arranged from the port nearest the source of production?

(3) In view of possible further transport difficulties owing to adverse effect on this State's transport system due to recent metal trades strike, will he use every endeavour to see that the coming season's crop of potatoes from Marybrook for shipment to the Eastern States will be loaded at the port of Busselton?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) Yes, but no vessels could be made available at Busselton at the time and for the required destination when these potatoes were available for shipping.

(2) I am aware that some monetary loss may occur if potatoes have to be shipped from other than the nearest point where they are produced.

(3) Every endeavour has been made in the past and will continue to be made in the future to ship all potatoes possible from the nearest port of production, if shipping space can be procured at the time and for the destination required when the potatoes and the market are available.

TRAFFIC.

As to Convictions for Drunken Driving.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Police:

How many people have been convicted of drunken driving in each of the financial years from 1946 to 1952, inclusive?

The MINISTER replied:

1946-1947—116.

1947-1948—125.

1948-1949—189.

1949-1950—249.

1950-1951—315.

1951-1952—408.

ESPERANCE RESEARCH STATION.

As to Quality and Quantity of Water Supplies.

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has good domestic and stock water been located at Esperance Research Station, and is the Government Geologist, after his locations, satisfied with the qualities and quantities of supplies of water?

(2) If so, when is it proposed to equip the supplies?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) One bore is now being equipped.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Purchase of Delicensed Hotel, Midland Junction.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Did the Railway Department recently purchase the delicensed Victoria Hotel in Midland Junction?

(2) Did he advise the Railway Welfare Committee that these premises were to be made available for accommodation to single men and apprentices employed in the railways?

(3) Is it a fact that tenders have now been called for sale of the premises referred to?

(4) Is it the intention to abandon the accommodation project? If so, why?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Probably. That was the intended purpose of the premises.

(3) Yes.

(4) (a) Yes, for the present.

(b) Lack of loan funds.

(b) As to Septic Tank Installation, Kellerberrin Station.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the Railways Commission recently approached the Kellerberrin Road Board and requested it to install septic systems at the Doodlakine railway station and staff residences, the cost of same to be met by the local authority and repaid by the Commission over a period of ten years?

(2) As the Doodlakine school is also to be sewerred, is there any likelihood of the road board being asked to finance this work on similar repayment terms?

(3) In view of this novel approach to the question of financing Governmental expenditure, will the Treasurer give consideration to asking each local authority in the State whether they would care to subscribe so as to share the cost of their respective Parliamentary representatives?

The PREMIER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) I do not know anything in regard to the questions asked. The Railway Department has certainly not made any representations to me on the matter.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

As to Allocation of Farms.

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Lands:

Is it the policy of the War Service Land Settlement Board to let it be known to whom farms are to be allotted before the allocation of such farms?

The MINISTER replied:

No.

MEAT.

As to Fixed Prices.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

What is the present fixed price per lb. of the following:—

Beef (Fresh)—

Sirloin (roast), bone in;

Sirloin (roast), without bone;

Prime rib (roast), including bone;

Steak, rump;

Steak, chuck (stewing);

Sausages;

Beef (corned);

Beef, silverside;

Beef, brisket, rolled;

Mutton (Fresh)—

Leg;
Forequarter;
Loin, without flap;
Chops, loin;
Chops, leg?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

| | Perth Metro- politan Area. | s. | d. |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|----|
| Beef (Fresh)— | | | |
| Sirloin (Roast), bone in | 2 | 10 | |
| Sirloin (Roast), without bone (Sirloin Steak) | 3 | 8 | |
| Prime Rib (Roast), including bone | 2 | 2 | |
| Steak, Rump | 3 | 8 | |
| Steak, Chuck (Stewing) | 2 | 8 | |
| Sausages—Beef or Mixed | 1 | 8 | |
| Sausages—Pork | 2 | 1½ | |
| Beef (Corned)— | | | |
| Silverside | 2 | 9 | |
| Brisket, Rolled | 2 | 5 | |
| Mutton (Fresh)— | | | |
| Leg—Full | 1 | 7½ | |
| Leg—Short | 1 | 8½ | |
| Forequarter | 1 | 1 | |
| Loin, without flap—not specifically fixed. | | | |
| Chops, Loin | 1 | 8 | |
| Chops, Leg (Chump) | 1 | 7½ | |

BUTTER.

As to Meeting State's Requirements.

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he read in this morning's "The West Australian" a reported statement by the chairman of the State's Dairy Products Marketing Board (Dr. G. L. Sutton) that it will be necessary to import 50,000 boxes of butter to meet the State's requirements for the next 12 months?

(2) That Dr. Sutton is also reported to have stated that it was not expected that there would be any difficulty in obtaining enough butter to meet needs, but that the major problem would be shipping space between Eastern States and Fremantle?

(3) In view of these statements, will he take action to see that necessary shipping space is available for this State's butter requirements?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1), (2) and (3) Yes, I will take the necessary steps.

KWINANA OIL REFINERY.

As to Delay in Starting Work.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Can he inform the House what the delay or hitch is regarding the Commonwealth and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's project at Kwinana?

(2) If there is no hitch when are they likely to go ahead with the proposed new work at Kwinana?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) Some difficulty has arisen in regard to the Commonwealth holdings in the Commonwealth Oil Refineries, but the Government expects that it will soon be overcome, and a start made with the work at Kwinana.

FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

As to Harvest-rd. Jetty.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware that a communication regarding the Harvest-rd. Jetty at North Fremantle, sent from the Public Works Department to the Harbour and Light Department some weeks ago, has not yet reached the Harbour and Light Department?

(2) If not, will he make inquiries to see where it has been pigeon-holed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) and (2) I have no information on the matter, but if the hon. member will again let me know the departments involved, I will make the necessary inquiries.

COAL INDUSTRY TRIBUNAL.

As to Appeal Against Decision.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Have any representations been made to him on behalf of the Employers' Federation, or other employers, in connection with the projected appeal against the decision of the Coal Industry Tribunal?

(2) If so, what form did the representations take; who made them; what was their nature; and what was the Premier's attitude to them?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) No representations have been made to me.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [4.40]: I rise this evening to reply to some of the criticism, fair and otherwise, that has been levelled against certain departments, one of which I administer. In the course of my remarks I intend to give the House the reasons underlying the decision to import Austrian houses, to make a change in the system of housing evicted people, and finally to answer the smear campaign that seems to be part and parcel of the speeches of the member for Melville.

During the year 1946-47, 1,792 houses were completed and during the last year this figure rose to 6,577, of which no less

than 1,872 were built during the last quarter of the year. The latter figure shows that a greater number of houses was built in the last quarter of the year 1951-52 than was the case for the full year 1946-47. Other figures that have been made available by the Government Statistician in the past two or three days have not yet been published but they make interesting reading. A total of 3,509 was completed in 1949-50, in 1950-51, 5,160, and in the year just completed, 1951-52, 6,577 houses were built, which was in effect just over 500 houses more than were shown in the figures as at the 31st March. On the 30th June, 1951, there were 5,764 houses under construction, but on the 30th June this year that figure had risen to 6,971—that means that almost 7,000 houses are in the course of construction.

One or two speakers, including the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader, wanted to know how the Government could build as many houses this year owing to the alleged reduction in our loan programme for housing. I want to make this statement to the House: The State Housing Commission, working under the Acts it controls, will build more houses this year than were built last year. While the Commission may have a few pounds less at its disposal than it had last year, it was fortunate because at the commencement of the year it had 900 imported houses available and those houses were included in last year's loan programme. The houses had been paid for, but were still in stock so in effect the Commission started off this financial year with a credit balance of approximately £1,000,000.

Reference was made to the change in policy in regard to evictees and I want to let members know exactly what the State Housing Commission has done during the last 12 months. Resulting from 1,022 cases heard at the various courts in the metropolitan area, orders for possession were given to 710 owners, and although all the evictees did not require assistance the Commission found homes for 547 evicted families.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you know the districts concerned?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I could not say from memory, but if the hon. member wishes the information I could probably get it for him within the course of a day or two. We would have to look through the records to obtain the figures. Some 12 months ago, supported by the Chief Secretary, I made a statement, when speaking to the rents and tenancies emergency legislation, to the effect that we would be able to house all the people who were being evicted and who required assistance. That was done for the first 12 months, but as Minister for Housing I felt it my responsibility, some two or three months ago, to have

a look at several of the files to see the type of people who were being evicted.

I called for the last 40 files of the people who were under threat of eviction and who were calling upon the Commission to provide houses for them. I perused the files closely and as a result I thought it was time we called a halt and altered the system so as to give somebody an opportunity to scrutinise closely the people calling on the Commission to provide houses for them. I did this in the interests of the many people in more difficult circumstances who have been waiting a considerable time for houses.

It is most interesting to note what that survey indicated to me and I want to cite one or two cases that came to my notice from the 40 files I perused. I do not intend to mention the names, but there is one applicant who had to house himself, his wife and three children, boys of 22 and 23 and a girl 19. These people have been living in the house for seven years and have been paying 12s. 6d. a week rent. The total of the incomes being received each week into that house is £43 and the applicant has made no effort to do anything for himself. That was one case that came to my notice. There was another, a man with two children, a girl of five and a boy of two. This man, working for a Perth company, is in receipt of an income of £50 a week—£2,500 a year. This man came to the Housing Commission and demanded that he be looked after.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Surely the Minister does not say that those are typical cases.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If the hon. member had been here a few moments ago he would have heard me say that I looked at 40 files in an endeavour to get an idea of the general picture. These files were taken at random and were not picked out, and I maintain that they justify the attitude and action we took. It was time we had a look at the cases to see the type of people we were being called upon to house and I think the cases I have cited amply justify our action.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But you have swung right over.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is another family and five of its members are working, the total income being £35 a week. Another case shows that there were five people working and the total income was £37 a week, while still another was receiving £33 a week from three people working. There are five cases out of the 40 I have looked at. So I realised it was time that the State Housing Commission had a good look at the file of every applicant before these people were given the opportunity to take

advantage of the Workers' Homes Act, which is the Act under which houses for evicted families are built.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did you strike any families who received incomes equal to a quarter of those you quoted, but who still could not get homes?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, A committee has been set up, at the Housing Commission and it meets every Monday night. It goes through the files very carefully and on Tuesday morning they are placed before me. I am able to see at a glance the particulars of the people concerned, their income, the number of family units, male and female children and also what the decision of the committee is, whether it has approved the case or not. I can assure the House it is only a pity that we did not have a look at these some few months ago, because there are many people who have been housed under the promise to provide accommodation for evicted families who should not have been so assisted.

I now want to deal with the attack made an evening or two ago by the member for Melville in connection with the Austrian pre-fabricated houses. In 1949 the then Prime Minister, the late Mr Chifley, wrote to all the State Governments and pointed out that the Commonwealth Government was about to embark upon a large migration programme. He also set out for each of the State Premiers his ideas as to what would be necessary in regard to housing in the forthcoming years. I intend to read to the House what the late Mr. Chifley had to say; copies of this letter went to all the Premiers in Australia. On the 12th October, 1949, Mr. Chifley wrote as follows:—

Dear Mr. McLarty,

In my letter to you of 21st September 1949, I stressed the importance of coal to the national economy and asked that earnest consideration be given to the special steps that might be taken in your State to promote home building in areas producing coal.

More coal, of course, means more steel and more basic materials generally, including particularly building materials. In view of the vital importance to the whole economy of stimulating production, my Government has given further consideration to ways in which it could assist. In examining this question, the Commonwealth also had in mind the additional demand for housing arising from the migration programme.

During the last financial year 60,000 dwellings were commenced in Australia and over 52,500 completed. These figures indicate that Australia is approaching the long term objective of 600,000 dwellings a year set

some time ago. With our existing resources of labour and materials it is unlikely that it will be practicable, without special measures, to get much beyond this level of housing activity. The Commonwealth Government, therefore, has in mind that in addition to action at present being taken to import building materials from abroad, efforts should be made to secure from overseas a substantial number of prefabricated dwellings, complete with fittings.

The Commonwealth is prepared to assist the States to obtain in all up to 10,000 such units and to accept them under the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement. Commonwealth assistance will take the form of meeting overseas freight and duty up to a limit of £300 per unit, provided—

- (i) the Commonwealth contribution does not reduce the cost of a unit to less than the cost of a traditionally built dwelling of similar accommodation;
- (ii) the houses are erected primarily in areas producing basic materials particularly coal and steel; and
- (iii) preference in allocation of the units is given to workers needed for the production of basic materials. Otherwise allocation is to be as agreed between the Commonwealth and the States in terms of Clause 9 of the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement.

The Commonwealth offer applies only to prefabricated houses approved by the Commonwealth and ordered by the State Housing authorities. In this connection it is proposed that a report on each type be obtained from the Commonwealth Experimental Building Station concerning structural soundness, durability, etc. (Reports already made by the Station on a number of overseas types of prefabricated dwellings indicate a general suitability for this country).

The Commonwealth Government has authorised my colleague, the Minister for Works and Housing, Mr. Lemmon, to undertake negotiations with the States on this matter. Mr. Lemmon has indicated to me that a number of questions will arise in connection with this proposal, for example, availability of sites and services in particular areas, and the needs of heavy industries, in particular coal and steel.

It is therefore suggested, if you agree in principle to the proposals outlined, that your Housing Authority be authorised to discuss matters of detail in the first instance with the Director of the Commonwealth Housing Division, Mr. Welch.

The Commonwealth regards this action as a particularly important measure aimed at assisting in breaking bottlenecks in production. I am sure you will agree with me that steps along these lines will also represent a major contribution to Australia's housing needs at the present time. I would be glad, therefore, to have your early comments so that discussions may commence between the Commonwealth and your Housing Authority.

A similar communication is being addressed to the Premier of each of the other States.

As members know, there was a change of Government, and on the 13th February, the present Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, followed up Mr. Chifley's correspondence and wrote to the Premier of this State, enclosing a copy of a letter he had sent to Mr. McGirr and to the Premier of Victoria, pointing out exactly the same figures and details that had been given by Mr. Chifley. Mr. Menzies, however, went a little further, and I will read one passage of his letter, which is as follows:—

In my predecessor's letter of the 12th October, 1949, the Commonwealth offered to assist the States to obtain from abroad up to 10,000 pre-fabricated dwellings, complete with fittings. My Government feels that over the next few years it will be necessary to think in terms of much more than 10,000 units.

He goes on and mentions the fact that the Government intends to send men overseas—which the Commonwealth Government did early in 1950—to see what houses could be made available, mainly from Scandinavian countries. The Western Australian Government, working in close liaison with the Commonwealth Housing Division, following upon the return to Australia of these men and the furnishing of their report to this State, decided to call tenders for houses from overseas. From memory I think there were 19 tenders, of which the one we now have here—that of the Austrian houses provided by Thermo-Insulated Units Ltd.—was successful.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What was the tender price?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I cannot say exactly but I think I am right in saying from memory that it was about £1,200. That is only from memory, however. Arrangements were also made to

supply a labour force to erect these houses in Western Australia, and after much negotiation a contract was let to Sandwell and Wood of this State to erect 750 of the 900 houses being brought to Western Australia. I want to interpose here, because I intend to mention it later, that not very long after the first ship-load of these houses arrived and the Austrian workmen were engaged in erecting them down at Willagee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in company with Senator Willesee and Mr. Kim Beazley, paid a visit to Willagee and had a conference with the Austrian workers, entirely without my knowledge, entirely without the knowledge of the Housing Commission, and without the knowledge of the directors of Sandwell and Wood.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Have I to advise you when I move around my electorate?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I will speak about that later on. The member for Melville had a lot to say the other evening about the cost of these houses. I interjected and said that he did not have much knowledge of accountancy but I understand that he was a student of accountancy. If that is so, then he has either forgotten all the accountancy he knew, or he is trying to draw a red-herring across the trail. The figures were supplied to him in answers to questions and therefore I say it is one of two things; either he does not want to understand or he has forgotten all he ever knew about accountancy. He has gone to considerable trouble to try to convince the people of this State that these houses are costing in the vicinity of £4,000, and the other evening he made all sorts of wild stabs about the suspense account.

The suspense account of the Housing Commission represents a book entry showing the landed cost of the houses, including the freight and insurance, and the hon. member might be interested to know that instead of the suspense account standing at something over £300,000, it had over £1,000,000 in it a few months ago. This account is a setup purely for the purpose of bookkeeping, in which is entered the landed cost of the houses and other minor charges. When a contract is let and a builder is going to erect the houses, that money is transferred by the accountancy section from the suspense account to a construction account.

In this instance, the Austrian houses are being erected, some at Willagee, some at Ashfield and some at Ascot Vale, and as the builders move to another area to erect possibly 20 houses, there is taken from the suspense account an amount of twenty times £1,250, and that is transferred to the construction account. Consequently, it is only by some figment of the imagination that the hon. member has been able to add together the sum of £1,250, which I gave him in answer to

a question, and the sum of £1,216, and then talk about the added expense for tiles, plumbing, painting, electrical work, etc., bringing the total cost to about £4,000.

Those houses are costing in round figures £1,250, and that amount is transferred from the suspense account to the construction account, and to it is added the cost of constructing them on the site and the cost of tiles, plumbing, electrical work and other incidentals, making in all a total £2,893. In respect of that amount, we receive from the Commonwealth a sum of £300, bringing the cost down to £2,593.

It has also been suggested that the rent of £3 2s. a week has been fixed at that figure in order to provide for losses. Let me point out to the House that the rent is arrived at under the formula laid down in the Commonwealth-State agreement. The hon. member is a keen student, and I suggest that he should look up the formula in the agreement, which is available to him here.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is it available?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Then knowing that the cost of these houses is £2,593, it will not take him long to find out that the rent should be £3 2s.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Does the Minister say that the formula with the amendments is available?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If the formula with the amendments is not available here, I have no doubt that the Housing Commission would be only too pleased to allow the hon. member to see it.

Reference was also made to the incidence of the sirex wasp, and the cost being incurred by the Housing Commission to exterminate this pest. These wasps have been coming into Australia in Baltic pines and Scandinavian timbers for many years. The Eastern States have been importing houses from England made of Scandinavian timber, and those States, too, have had their troubles in the same way. The first shipment that came to Western Australia, I understand, was not infected, but unfortunately the second one was.

Immediately the presence of the wasp was notified, we advised the quarantine authorities in Canberra, and the Chief Quarantine Officer, Mr. Harrison, left by plane the following day and issued instructions, which have been carried out to the best of our ability in the circumstances. At the moment, it is costing about £800 per week to treat this timber. We are lodging a claim in two places. The Commonwealth authorities are the people who say these regulations have to be carried out and so we are asking the Commonwealth to bear the cost. We also intend to cite a case against the companies who supplied the timber infected with the wasp.

A couple of weeks ago, the hon. member asked to be permitted to see the various files dealing with Austrian pre-fab components included in the housing programme and, in reply to his question, was told that the Crown Law Department was considering taking legal action and that the files could not be made available at the present time. No suggestion was made that the files would not be available to the hon. member at some time in future, but yesterday evening the hon. member indicated his intention to move a motion that the papers be laid on the Table of the House.

By interjection the other evening, the Attorney General, who would have had no knowledge of what we were seeing the Crown Law Department about, rightly said that he would not know everything that was under consideration by the State Housing Commission. I wish to advise the House that four actions are contemplated, not only by the State Housing Commission but also by the State Government Insurance Office. In the first place, we are contemplating taking action against the shipping company for the late arrival of the vessel, due to its having been stuck on a sandbank in the Red Sea for 14 days. As this was a chartered vessel, we had to get the co-operation of the water-side workers, which we did, and bring in men to work till midnight and over week-ends in order to get the boat away again; otherwise, we would have been liable for a considerable sum of money. Consequently, the State Government Insurance Office and the Housing Commission together are citing a case against the company for negligence by the captain in running his vessel ashore in the Red Sea and delaying her for 14 days.

Secondly, in respect of the timber infected with sirex wasp, some of the components that arrived were not up to standard and there were shortages. Hence, in the public interest, would it be right to permit these files to be made available, and thus leave the way open for some individual who may want to come here and pick an odd letter out of one or other of the 36 files, and then possibly make bald, sweeping charges that would involve great time and attention to answer? There would also be the danger of giving to the people against whom we are citing cases information about the intentions of the State Housing Commission and the State Government Insurance Office. Therefore, I assure the hon. member it is not the intention of the Government to allow these papers to be laid on the Table of the House; firstly, because it would not be in the interests of the State to do so, and, secondly, because many of these files are in action all the time. How could the Housing Commission continue to function if 36 of the files covering the whole of the contracts were lying on the Table of the House?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That was not the first request to bring them.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I fully answered the hon. member's question and I have repeated today that it would not be in the public interest to make the information available because of the action contemplated against the suppliers and the transporters of these house components.

Last week, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had a lot to say about the importation of asbestos sheets, and we saw him standing there with a small piece of asbestos sheeting in his hand, breaking it to pieces and saying that this was the type of material being put into the houses, and making all sorts of other statements. It would be as well for members to be informed how we came by that asbestos. I say at once that it was a bad deal, and the Government is not denying the fact, but a lot of good deals accompanied it, and I do not know of any big business organisation that does not make a mistake at times. I assure members that the officers handling this business took every precaution to ensure that the material supplied to the State was 100 per cent. perfect, but, however much one may try to close the gate, there is an odd occasion when some mistake is made.

I read to the House earlier in my remarks a letter from the late Mr. Chifley in 1949, in which he pointed out to the States that a great demand would be made on housing and building materials in the forthcoming year, due to the migration programme on which the Commonwealth was embarking. We in Western Australia received a clarion call to do something. Sir Ross McDonald who, I think I am right in saying, was then Minister for Housing, and the Cabinet, decided that it would be only fit and proper to answer the call and do everything possible to ensure that we in Western Australia had building materials to cope with this large increase in the building programme.

As a result, the Tender Board called tenders for various materials which we could place in a stockpile, and allow Government and private builders, when in need, to call upon the stockpile, and so avoid the interminable delays that were occurring in the Eastern States, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, where nothing of this nature was undertaken. Tenders for the asbestos sheets were called oversea, and two sets of tenders were accepted. It was about May, 1950, when 110,000 sheets in all were delivered to the State and put into the Government's stockpile. I feel certain, from a very close perusal of the file, that before this asbestos sheeting arrived, the officers who handled the matter did everything they possibly could to ensure that it was up to British standard specifications, and I have here one or two of the

comments which I extracted from the file and in which it is insisted that before the Government accepted this tender the asbestos sheeting should be up to those specifications. Here is the final approval by Mr. Andrews, who was then in charge of building material control at the State Housing Commission:—

In view of the telegraphic assurance that the sheets offered comply with the British standard specifications, I recommend the acceptance of the tender from H. C. Hudson subject to the provisions of a test certificate from an approved testing house.

Here we have the certificates that came with the shipments. I cannot read Italian, but the lower portion of the particular certificate I hold is in English and indicates that the certificate came through the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Sydney, and declares that the asbestos in this particular shipment conformed to the British standard specifications for top cement sheets. So what else could the officers here do?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Did the sheets conform to that?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When the asbestos arrived and the contractors commenced to put it on buildings it was, without doubt, found to be faulty. Opinions were obtained from reliable people—not only builders but men such as Mr. Clare, the Principal Architect, who indicated that all the asbestos sheeting he had examined and most of which was of the type the hon. member had in the House the other evening, was quite alright. I will read his minute from the Department of Public Works to the Secretary of the W.A. Tender Board, who queried the quality of the asbestos sheets. He says—

Since this branch commenced utilising this imported asbestos, 22,425 yards have been withdrawn from store.

He goes on to say—

Approximately 20 per cent. of the sheets were cracked or completely broken when delivered on the site. The material that has been fixed has been satisfactory. It has been necessary to make some replacements after fixing but this is below 4 per cent. There is no doubt that the material is satisfactory.

He further says—

The heavy percentage of breakages of deliveries is obviously due to damage in shipping or handling at the Fremantle store.

I want to make it clear that that applies to the "Eternu" sheets such as the hon. member had here the other evening. Mr. Clare has informed me that he did not inspect the "Silvanit" asbestos, which was the subject of some other questions, but

he considers that while that, too, is all right in parts, it is exactly the same as the "Eternu" brand and there will probably be anything up to 20 per cent. breakages.

Not being satisfied with the quality of the sheeting which had been provided, the Tender Board called upon the Crown Law Department to give an opinion whether the Government had a case against the suppliers. I will not weary the House with the opinion obtained, but the Crown Solicitor's view on the 3rd October, 1950, was that the Tender Board had a case against the suppliers. However, on the 19th December of the same year, Mr. Neville wrote a further minute to the Secretary of the Tender Board, in which he reversed his earlier decision, pointing out that he had gone further into the question and had perused the British standard specifications for slates and asbestos sheeting, and felt that it would not be possible for this State to maintain a successful case against the suppliers.

We are not denying that this was a bad bargain; but I want to assure the House that everything possible was done by the officers who handled the deal to see that the asbestos sheeting ordered was up to specifications, and when it was not, Crown Law opinion was sought to see what could be done. Unfortunately, this is one of those deals that went wrong. Alongside of that bad deal, let us have a look at one or two exceptionally good ones that more than offset that unfortunate transaction.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Before the Minister gets on to that, would he answer this question: If the State has made a bad deal, should not the State as a whole carry the loss instead of its being loaded on to a small section of the community obliged to occupy the houses?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am afraid that the Principal Architect and I and other understanding people cannot subscribe to the hon. member's views. The poor individuals to whom he refers are not called upon to bear any burden because, as I indicated by interjection the other evening, once these sheets are put up they are quite all right. Secondly, if, through the dry sheets being put on green timber, there are any breakages, they are replaced not at the cost of the individual buying the house but ultimately at the cost of the Treasury. Therefore, it goes into the amount that has to be written off.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is not the loss being charged against administration?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, it is not. At the same time, as I said the other evening, in reply, I think, to another question, it will not be known until this deal is cleaned up what the loss will be. Now let us look at one

or two other deals undertaken by the Government through the Controller of Stores, and see the bright side of the picture. In the years 1949-50-51, approximately £2,000,000 worth of stores were purchased by the department through the Tender Board. They included piping, galvanised iron, cement, builders hardware, nailwire, etc. Some 2,000,000 ft. of galvanised piping, including 885,000ft. of 2in. was bought for this State at a cost of £11 per hundred ft. Within 12 months of that purchase the price of the piping was £40 per hundred feet, the result being that we were able to average the amounts and the consumer in Western Australia paid considerably less than would have been the case had we not had the stockpile on which we could call.

Here are two classic examples. Per 100 ft., ½-inch piping, in December, 1951, cost £9 12s. 6d. The Australian rate was £2 10s. 7d. Because we had this stockpile the piping was issued at the cheap price of £4 11s. 8d. We were providing it for our housebuilding projects, war service land settlement and other public works at £4 11s. 8d. whereas had we not had the stockpile the cost would have been £9 12s. 6d. Imported 1-inch pipe cost £11 13s. 9d. and the Australian rate was £3 9s. 3d. Again, through having the stockpile we were able to sell at £5 1s. 8d. During that period, somewhere in the vicinity of 40,000 tons of cement was brought to this State, which averaged out at somewhere around the £20 mark.

I can assure the House that it is not 12 months ago when the lowest price we could get offered to us for imported cement in this State was £28 15s., so one can see that by the foresight shown in purchasing large quantities of piping, galvanised iron, baths etc., the State has made not thousands but hundreds of thousands of pounds on behalf of the consumer, and the loss we know we are going to make over the asbestos sheeting, through inadvertence, is very much more than offset by the advantageous deals made with other types of imported goods.

Let me cite the experience of our leading hardware merchants in this State, from whom I had a deputation from four to six weeks ago. They brought to this State last year many tons of galvanised iron which cost them £190 per ton. At present they have left on their hands 2,000 tons, and I could buy for them today as much as they want for £107 per ton. I refer to businesses like Elder Smith's, Bateman's, Drabble's, McLean Bros. & Rigg, Harris Scarfe & Sandovers. All of those firms have been built up on good sound premises over the years but they have made mistakes. They bought iron, thinking that the astronomical price would continue. They bought at £190 per ton and have 2,000 tons on hand and could buy as much as they wanted tomorrow for £105 to £107 per ton.

The member for Melville, to my regret and that of many other right-thinking people, including the staff of the State Housing Commission, makes allegations that we fail to enjoy. We do not enjoy the smear campaigns which seem to come up session by session. I believe I am right in saying that two years ago we had allegations made about Chandler and gypsum. I think we sat up all one night debating whether some papers should be tabled. The argument ran that supplies were short and we were giving away something that would be a great asset to the State, and all that sort of thing. All kinds of sweeping statements were made; yet only 12 or 13 months afterwards there was so much gypsum and plaster about in the Eastern States that firms there cancelled their contracts. They took supplies for one year and would not take them any longer.

Last year we had the spectacle of the member for Melville conducting a smear campaign against the State Brickworks. As members know, he got up on the floor of the House and made all sorts of allegations about a Mr. Harrison out there and, as in most of these instances, he only seemed to get half of the facts right. He talked about the central figure being a Captain Bruce, M.B.E., M.M., a man with a great war record. When that unfortunate gentleman, who I have no doubt was just the tool, got into the witness box, on the occasion of the Royal Commission, which the Government appointed to clean up the sweeping allegations, he had to admit that he had never been in any of the Services, but had been to sea for two months in charge of a ship and was therefore entitled to be a member of the Returned Soldiers' League. When he was asked what the "M.M." stood for, he said "I am a master mariner." Those are the sort of things that the member for Melville brings up here because he does not first investigate his facts and find out what is the true picture. It is interesting to examine the findings of the magistrate in that case. They were—

(1) That on the 23rd June 1951 at Byford Mr. Harrison did not offer to accept a bribe from Captain Bruce.

(2) That on the 23rd day of June Mr. Harrison did not indicate that if Captain Bruce would pay a certain sum of money in excess for a certain quantity of bricks which he wanted the supply of bricks would be arranged and expedited.

Earlier this year the member for Melville, in company with Senator Willesee and Mr. Kim Beazley, took a little morning trip down to Willagee to interview some of the Austrian workers, and they were accompanied by two newspaper reporters, one of whom I think I am right in saying—is either an Austrian or German and who speaks German fluently. Having gathered

some of the men together, without asking my permission or that of the contractors, Sandwell and Wood, the member for Melville proceeded to address the men. I will read an extract from "The West Australian."

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Where were they gathered together?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: On the 1st February, 1952, the three gentlemen I have mentioned were reported as having made a statement, an extract of which is as follows:—

If justice cannot be obtained there the men can be assured that despite their assertions to the contrary, there is still a democracy and there is little doubt of redress in the courts of law. If the Housing Commission is not disposed to give justice to a vulnerable group of men it may well be forced to.

I and the Government had been in constant touch with the union representatives in regard to the complaints that these men were making and it was most disturbing to find three men, prominent in the public life of this State, going down to Willagee and more or less indicating to the employees concerned that if they did not get a fair go somebody else would have to answer for it. As the result of that, I had to ask the Government to appoint a conciliation commissioner to go into the allegations and see if there was anything in them. Mr. Schnaars was appointed and opened his inquiry on the 11th February, 1952. His investigations took him until the 7th April, 1952 and in a report dated the 5th May he said that with one slight exception he completely vindicated the Commission's attitude and actions towards the Austrian workers, and with regard to the exception referred to by him, he stated, *inter alia*—

Although I have found that the State Housing Commission was legally not justified in terminating the services of two of the Austrians in the manner they did, I have no hesitation in saying that had both these employees adopted a reasonable and fair attitude, then the circumstances associated with their dismissal would never have arisen. The discontent evident among a section of these workers is brought about by their unwillingness to be in any way co-operative, anxiety to obtain overtime work and an exceptionally suspicious nature.

Mr. Schnaars said he was convinced that the Austrians had been exceptionally well treated, and had been given greater consideration than would have been shown to a similar group of Australian workers engaged on the same class of programme.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What did the Government plead when this case went before the court?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The member for Melville is now indulging in a further smear campaign with regard to the purchase and erection of these Austrian houses. It is about time this Chamber called a halt to sweeping allegations being made from time to time against people who have no right of reply. I said in this House last year that someone must get up and defend such officers, and it again falls to my lot to defend the accounting section of the State Housing Commission and somebody else whom the member for Melville took to task the other evening. In regard to the Housing Commission, I think he said there was an unallocated expenditure that the accountant did not know where to debit. He said, "Just imagine trying to run a business along these lines! It is absolutely colossal." Then he went on to deal with the person who was instrumental in purchasing the asbestos sheets and said, "I propose to say a word or two in connection with the quantity of asbestos sheets which some bright boy purchased on behalf of the Government." These officers are doing their level best under difficult circumstances and it ill becomes the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to rise to his feet in this House, session after session, and carry on a smear campaign against men who have no right of reply.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What happened to Mr. Andrew?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: While I remain a member of this Government I will not allow the hon. member to smear the reputations of officers who come under my control. It is nearly time that he abandoned this witch-hunt in which he always seems to be engaged, and came down and had a discussion with me or Mr. Brownlee, in a constructive frame of mind. I have no doubt that he has great ability but I think that, if he is sincere on the occasions when he makes these utterances, he is trying to look after certain unfortunate people in order to see that they get houses. I believe he would be of much more assistance to them if he came forward with constructive suggestions as to how we might be able to build more houses and thus expedite the great programme that is being undertaken by the State Housing Commission.

I personally greatly deprecate the attitude of the member for Melville because, as I have endeavoured to show the House, he goes off half cocked in nearly all the sweeping allegations that he makes. The annoying part about it all is that not only myself, but also officers who are trying to help in this great housing task, have to drop everything and, for a matter of

three or four days, do nothing but devote themselves to answering his smear campaign.

This is the third day on which the Chairman, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, the Controller of Stores and I—together with a couple of typists—have done nothing but answer these allegations, which are in keeping with those made on behalf of the Austrian workmen and Capt. Bruce and with respect to the alunite question. Such a campaign means that we are spending hundreds of pounds in getting nowhere, and are wasting the time of people who are sincere in their desire to provide houses for as many people as is humanly possible.

MR. HOAR (Warren) [5.40]: In view of the wonderful write-up that this Government received in His Excellency's Speech, it behoves some of us to give close attention to certain matters included in it, particularly in regard to the factors that make the wheels of State go round. The Speech enlarged, to a great extent, on what has been achieved in the fields of land settlement, agricultural production and so on, but when we examine the facts as they really are we find that we are indeed living in alarming times. Over the last five years the population of Western Australia has increased by some 94,000 people, yet nothing has been done to increase primary production in order to keep pace with the expansion of population.

During its years of office the Government has sought to impress the public generally with what it has managed to achieve or hopes to do, but one thing it has not done is, as I have said, to increase primary production in such a way as to keep pace with the marked expansion of our population. If we turn our attention to the dairying industry we find that in the last two years the number of dairy cattle has decreased by 7,000, and that is a tremendous reduction when we remember how important the industry is to the State. All sorts of reasons have been put forward for that reduction and the lack of interest by the Government in the dairying industry. One reason given by the Premier, by way of interjection, was that quite a lot of dairy farmers had gone over from dairy cattle to beef cattle.

If we examine the position there, we find that in the last few years the number of beef cattle in the State has decreased by 20,000 and so I say there is something radically wrong with our agricultural setup; something that has created a situation which, if not properly and speedily dealt with, will result in chaos as far as the feeding of our people is concerned. Not for much longer will we be able to honour oversea agreements, unless something is done, as we will be hard pressed to feed our own people. In

most directions—with the possible exception of wheat production—our production of vital foodstuffs in Western Australia has become progressively less during the term of the present Government. In many cases it has resulted in an actual lessening of production.

In no case has primary production kept pace with the needs of our expanding population. The situation is such that it should give everyone cause to think seriously about the problem, and I can find little that has been done in the last few years to arrest the decay that has set in. It is true enough that many individual farmers—particularly those operating on a bigger scale—have in the last few years attempted to increase the area of their farms, because they have not had the finance to do so, and possibly because there might have been some reduction of taxation as a result of that development work. However, no very great increase in production has occurred from that effort. On the other hand, we have many small farmers who are the backbone of the dairying industry and many other would-be farmers who have no capital and find themselves unable to take part in an occupation that they desire to follow. As a result of this disability, for financial and other reasons, farmers have had to depend almost entirely on the activities of the War Service Land Settlement Board for the necessary expansion of the agricultural industry over the past few years.

Since the last war it has been the only instrument in this State which has assisted to any extent towards increased production by returned soldiers only. The board has shown interest in wheat and dairy farms. In dealing with the wheat farms it has concentrated mainly on the repurchased estates, has subdivided them and leased them to soldier settlers. Most of the dairy farms, if not all that have been taken over by the board, were those which were established under the old group settlement scheme and abandoned many years ago. So, following seven years since the close of the war, we are facing a serious decline in agricultural production.

Whilst the Government has concentrated on the needs and requirements of returned soldiers over that period, it has sadly neglected the small farmer who, through no fault of his own, has been unable to do any development for himself. Now that the horse has bolted, and there is a lessening of interest as the years go by in the various branches of agriculture throughout the State, the Government is belatedly entering into a scheme of development on behalf of those people. Subject to financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government it has a plan to increase the pastures of dairy farms up to 150 acres in order to place them on a comparable basis with properties held by soldier settlers. Owing to the Common-

wealth Government's new financial policy, which was expressed firmly and clearly at the last Loan Council meeting, some of the work that was already commenced has had to be postponed for the time being. As I have seen no pronouncement from the Minister I still do not know whether the scheme is to proceed or if it is to have Commonwealth backing.

[Mr. Perkins took the Chair.]

The Minister for Lands: The Premier has written to the Commonwealth Government requesting money to carry on with the scheme.

Mr. HOAR: I knew that the Government had approached the Commonwealth, but I now understand the Minister to say that he has had no reply. If that is so it is a reflection on the Commonwealth Government which, in turn, says it is seeking to encourage an increase in overall primary production in the next five to 10 years.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation in the Chamber.

Mr. HOAR: It must know that we in this State, as well as those in other States, badly need money to carry on work of this description. It is not much credit to the Commonwealth Government of the day. Whilst on that point I would explain to the Minister that what has been done under this scheme before the finance stopped is not satisfactory in extending the pastures of the dairy farms I have mentioned. He will recollect that some years ago the Minister of the day sent a couple of bulldozers to the Walpole area to bring pastures up to 100 acres on every farm. With the exception of one property no progress had been made with the work done three years ago.

The Minister for Lands: Whose fault is that?

Mr. HOAR: Without attempting to lay any blame on anyone I would point out that in this heavily timbered country where there are farms carrying more than 20 cows, apart from looking after the stock, picking up branches, clearing the fallen trees and repairing smashed fences and so on, the farmer has no chance to follow up the work that has been done by the Land Settlement Board. During the last two years I have taken particular care to obtain farmers' opinions and they are almost unanimous on the point that where a farmer requires 50 acres of pasture in addition to what he already has, and the Government agrees to knock down the timber on those 50 acres, it would be far better if it completed the work of cultivation and seeding on 30 acres instead of leaving the work half finished.

The Minister for Lands: They have never put forward that suggestion.

Mr. HOAR: I am suggesting it now. As it is now, once the work is started and the Government continues with the clearing, it will be found that in far too many cases the farmers will be unable to follow up that work with cultivation. I am of the same opinion as most farmers, namely, that if the Government concentrated on a smaller area it would be much more effective.

Mr. Hearman: He need not have 50 acres cleared; he need only have 30 acres done.

Mr. HOAR: I am quoting the 50 acres as a figure only.

Mr. Hearman: He could decide on any area he wished.

Mr. HOAR: The point is that the work ceases when the trees are knocked down. Whatever acreage the farmer decided upon it would be far better from his and the State's point of view if he accepted a lesser area and had the work completed.

Mr. Hearman: He might be able to take two bites of 25 acres.

The Minister for Lands: At somewhere about the same capital cost.

Mr. HOAR: Yes, to expend the same amount of money to complete a certain area and leave it in a productive state, rather than in a state of chaos which exists after the bulldozers have gone through. That is the only way that I know to increase the agricultural production of the State.

Mr. Hearman: I do not think there is anything to prevent that proposition being accepted.

Mr. HOAR: It is something that no one else has ever thought of.

Mr. Hearman: I would not say that.

Mr. HOAR: I say it.

Mr. Hearman: It is up to the farmer.

Mr. HOAR: It is not up to the farmer because the Government makes no provision for cultivation under the scheme. It only goes in for clearing.

Mr. Hearman: That is so, but the farmer does not have to agree on 50 acres.

Mr. HOAR: He could decide on 100 acres if he wished, but it would be far better if the Government followed up the clearing work by sowing and seeding, if the farmer accepted the reduced area, and so got into cultivation quickly rather than to have an increased area and take many years to cultivate it. Under this scheme the Government is wasting its money because in far too many cases the farmer is unable to follow up its work by doing any for himself. I leave that thought with the Minister in the hope that he might give some consideration to it and assist in increasing the production of this State along the lines which we all so much desire.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Minister for Lands: The hon member was with me at Walpole when we went into the question.

Mr. HOAR: Yes, that is quite true and I was pleased to see the work being done, but it has taken me some time to realise what I now know to be a fact. When the idea was first conceived I thought it was a good one and would help the farmer to increase his pastures, but from the experience I have had over the past three years I realise now it is well nigh impossible for him to do so, and therefore I am suggesting an amendment to the scheme that will enable increased production to be achieved much quicker than under the existing arrangement.

The Minister for Lands: I am not disagreeing with the hon. member. I think it is better to clean it up.

Mr. HOAR: Yes, it is far better to clean it right up. There is another matter to which I wish to refer. It was brought to my mind the other evening by the member for South Fremantle when he mentioned the case of a man who is in the tobacco growing industry and as to what happened to the sale of his leaf this year. Although a record price was received for some of the tobacco leaf at this year's sales the result for many of the growers in this State is well nigh disastrous. Some will be made completely bankrupt because of the methods that are adopted at present-day sales.

The Minister for Lands: Are they soldier settlers or tobacco growers generally?

Mr. HOAR: I am not now referring to the soldier settlers apart from the fact that they come into the general picture. What I am about to say certainly applies to many of the soldier settlers because unless an improvement is made in the marketing arrangements for the sale of tobacco leaf I fail to see how the industry can continue. There is no stability in the industry and men are not encouraged to enter it.

The total crop marketed this year was approximately 445 tons, or 110 tons more than last year which gives an indication of the interest that is being shown in the production of tobacco leaf in this State. However, this year no less than 45 tons or 643 bales of tobacco leaf were rejected. It would not be so bad if that quantity, which is approximately one-tenth of the total production, was spread evenly over all the growers, but unfortunately that is not so and a number of growers who depend upon the production of tobacco leaf for their livelihood face complete bankruptcy this year. In one case—and possibly more than one—the grower never sold 1 lb. of leaf and a great many other growers had a large percentage rejected. It has meant a serious loss to the industry.

To members who are interested, this shows the queer method by which base tobacco leaf values are fixed. Some of the leaf this year was valued at 100d. per lb., some at 88d. and some at 76d. per lb. Unfortunately even some of this was not sold and yet last year it was in big demand. Probably, above all other industries, the tobacco growing industry today needs close investigation. The whole of the present day crop is sold by auction after the leaf has been appraised and an upset value placed upon it. That value is only the suggested starting-point for bidding. Strangely enough, it is arrived at not by any reference to the cost of production. It is not influenced in any way by reason of the fact that the basic wage has increased during the 12 months. The value of the leaf is controlled by the fact that last year the valuation was at a certain figure. It has no reference to the intervening higher cost of labour which, as members will appreciate, is the largest item in production costs. Neither has it any relation to the increase in the cost of fuel, fertilisers or insecticides, the cost of many of which has increased by 300 per cent.

Although a number of tobacco growers have done reasonably well this year, generally speaking, any encouragement for the future expansion of the industry is very remote. To a large extent I blame the present Commonwealth Government's financial policy for the position and particularly its refusal to allow credit to the small manufacturers. Formerly and until the last two or three years, there were from 16 to 26 buyers at auction sales. Today not more than six buyers attend and they mainly represent large manufacturing concerns, some of them with overseas connections. This is a very important phase of the industry in its dealings with manufacturers that operate in the tobacco world.

I wonder whether members realise that for the last 16 months they have been smoking an inferior grade of leaf imported from England and other countries to the extent of £17,250,000 worth, on account of the purchases that have been permitted overseas by the present Commonwealth Government, none of which cheap grade tobacco is equivalent in any way to our locally grown leaf. People generally throughout the community apparently consider that any sort of imported tobacco is better than the local commodity. I have been smoking all my life and I believe I have a very selective taste.

At the last tobacco sales in Perth one of the growers asked me if I would like a smoke. I accepted a cigarette and the grower asked me what I thought of it. I said I was pleased with the cigarette and he replied, "You will be surprised when I say that the value of the leaf used is 15d. per pound". That was just because there was not sufficient competition to enable

a better price to be paid and because the Commonwealth Government had allowed dollars to go to the large manufacturing firms. That was the result of the policy of allowing the money to go to other countries and permitting it to be concentrated on the double purchase of lower-grade leaf. The effect was that instead of a buyer getting 1,000,000 lb. of good leaf, he could procure something like 2,000,000 lb. of lower-grade leaf, and so make the dollar purchase go further.

The restriction of credit has made it impossible for local manufacturers to be represented at the auction sales, whereas last year the small manufacturers bought a tremendous quantity of leaf which today is rejected. The buyers still have that leaf because they could not realise financially on it. As a result, they had not sufficient money to enable them to attend the sales. Despite the promise made by the Commonwealth Government that they would assist the growers, it has done nothing about it. In consequence of that, there has been but limited competition, and we have found that on the floor the buyers have been limited to six only. With me the study of the tobacco-growing industry has been quite lengthy. I have been interested in it since the first seed was sown in what was known as the old Nelson constituency. That is a long time ago.

I have endeavoured to interest the Government in the industry. The former Labour Government, at any rate, did show some interest in it, inasmuch as it established a research station at Manjimup. Furthermore, it secured the attention of the Commonwealth Government at the same time. When the present Government took office in 1947, I spoke on the tobacco question as the opportunity arose because I envisaged dangers ahead of the industry unless there was made available some stabilised method of marketing the leaf. I tried to interest the Government in the industry because I knew the previous Minister for Agriculture in the Labour Government had made a definite promise that if his Government were returned to power in 1947, he would instigate a close inquiry into all phases of tobacco production in this State, even to the extent of seeking the passage of marketing legislation, if that course had been deemed necessary.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot have a stabilised market unless you have buyers for the product.

Mr. HOAR: I realise that we must have a standardised system and so on but, if only six buyers attend the auction sales, the leaf cannot be sold except at the price they agree to pay. I hope the Commonwealth Government will not continue with its present narrow policy, which has been responsible for the absence of competition.

The Minister for Lands: The Commonwealth Government is asking us to plant more tobacco and to establish more holdings.

Mr. HOAR: I think the Commonwealth Government has its tongue in its cheek when claiming it is trying to encourage production, while at the same time it does nothing. Encouragement could be extended along the lines I have suggested if it so desired. On the other hand, we know what has occurred at auction sales in Western Australia and Queensland. In the latter State only six buyers attended the sales and, as I have mentioned, only six attended the sales in Western Australia. We know what was done and what has happened is not the best way by which our product could be sold.

The present method simply discourages the production of tobacco leaf in Western Australia. We cannot expect tobacco-growers or those interested in any other commodity to continue producing at a loss. There is nothing in the setup regarding the marketing of tobacco leaf in the Commonwealth that will enable growers to receive returns that will cover the cost of production. I consider, after giving the matter a great deal of consideration over the years, that there is only one solution of the difficulty and that is that all leaf grown in the Commonwealth should be taken over by a central authority, and every consumable part of the leaf delivered should be purchased. I believe it could be done if the Commonwealth Government were strong enough to act with regard to the issue of import licenses.

If we grow 10,000,000 lb. of tobacco and the consumption is 40,000,000 lb., then I claim that all our tobacco that is usable should be absorbed on the basis of one to three. That is to say, for every 1 lb. of tobacco produced in Australia, the manufacturer buying it should be granted an import license for 3 lb.

The Minister for Lands: That is the only way you will stabilise the industry.

Mr. HOAR: That is so. Why is not someone doing something about it? I know that many statements that are made here do not carry much weight, but nevertheless I cannot understand why some action has not been taken to deal with this matter. A situation has developed this year whereby many growers do not know how they will pay their bills. The best thing in the world for the people representing big interests would be to keep each State separate and be denied the right to co-operate, thereby keeping them in a state of uncertainty, which would enable the buyers to offer whatever price they liked; but that is not the way to foster the tobacco-growing industry here or elsewhere.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What prices were received by the growers formerly?

Mr. HOAR: Prices varied very considerably. Sometimes they were high and sometimes low. In 1941 the price received was about 5s. per lb. and that was regarded as good.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What do they get now?

Mr. HOAR: They have received as low as 12d. per lb. but the price varied according to the grade. The cost of production in the industry today is 5s. per lb. and naturally that is not attractive to the growers. It does not encourage them either here or in any other State to produce the leaf. If the buyers get their heads together, they can offer what price they like.

Mr. May: And what is the retail price?

Mr. HOAR: The hon. member is a smoker and should know that himself. This is a very serious matter. I have given it close attention. If we had some arrangement based on the understanding that the manufacturer who bought 1 lb. of local leaf could import 3 lb. of leaf from overseas, we could continue producing a very useful article. Objections might be raised by the manufacturers that such a scheme would lower the quality of the commodity, but that is not borne out by actual facts. I do not know whether it is generally appreciated but the fact is that if there is any shortage of leaf, all grades, including the inferior leaf, are sold at top prices. The different quality leaves are blended with that object in view. It is only reasonable to suppose that people who purchase under those conditions do not throw the tobacco away. It is also well known that the quality of most of the imported cigarettes that we see in Australia is below the Commonwealth standard and yet they sell at higher prices in ever increasing quantities.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. HOAR: Before tea, I was dealing with the necessity to give some protection to the growers of tobacco-leaf in this State. I suggested that an import license should not be granted to manufacturers of tobacco unless there was a guaranteed consumption of a certain amount of local leaf. While some people might think that would encourage the production of a lower-grade leaf, I believe that if we give consideration to the matter we will find it will do nothing of the kind. Most growers agree with the buyers that there is a percentage, and must always be, of leaf in every crop that is of such inferior quality that it should not be offered for sale. But even if that were so, I do not see that it is beyond the wit of man to evolve some method of standardising the grading of tobacco. I think it could be done by having a tobacco-leaf marketing board established to take control of all leaf produced.

It would be the responsibility of that board to eliminate all grades of such low and inferior quality as would not find a market in Australia. It would, of course, be necessary to bring down legislation to create such a board. The State could assist very largely in the matter, although I believe it would be preferable if it could be dealt with on a Commonwealth-wide basis. Where the State could come into the picture in regard to the production of tobacco is in connection with the land used for tobacco-growing. I have been firmly of the opinion for a number of years that growers should not be permitted to produce tobacco on any sort of land they cared to select. It is a difficult crop to grow at any time, and is usually faced with so much hazard by way of weather, disease and salt, which is found to a considerable extent in the valleys of the lower Darling Range, that to allow unskilled people to select country on which to grow tobacco is asking for trouble.

The State could, by legislation, establish a marketing board which would be responsible for the licensing of growers. In addition, I would say it should be the responsibility of the officers of the research station at Manjimup to investigate and test all land on which it is proposed to grow tobacco. Whilst the officers at the research station at Manjimup are willing to give advice to any grower, there is no compulsion on them to say to him, "You must not grow tobacco-leaf there." New growers coming into the industry, hoping to gain the advantages which their more skilled neighbours have gained in the past, throw themselves open to disabilities and dangers of which they are entirely ignorant. It is only by a control such as I have suggested, where the department itself would be responsible for saying, "This is tobacco land, and you are permitted to grow tobacco there, and here is your licence," as we did with our soldier settlement tobacco-growers, that we will overcome the position. As the Minister knows, the soldier settlement farms, for the growing of tobacco, are carefully selected in the first place.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with you there, but not with the licensing of growers. We have enough restrictions now.

Mr. HOAR: I do not like restrictions any more than the Minister does, but when I see the industry in jeopardy because of lack of Government control and interest, both State and Commonwealth, I think something should be done.

The Minister for Lands: There is no lack of interest. I think you were on the right track when you said there should be some authority to control imports.

Mr. HOAR: Yes, and I think the other should follow. We should in our State control the method by which tobacco should be grown, as otherwise we might

find ourselves faced with ever-increasing quantities of inferior leaf which no-one wants to buy. In addition, the marketing board which I suggest could be responsible for standardising the various grades of leaf.

The Minister for Lands: That is all right.

Mr. HOAR: If consideration were given to that point, and to the establishment of a stabilisation fund, which is most important in the marketing of this uncertain commodity, we would have a setup which would ensure that the growers would always receive adequate payment for their good leaf. I know the State Government cannot start a stabilisation fund on its own account, and that is where the Commonwealth Government could come into the picture. We know that whilst the grower might receive as low as 1s. or as high as 100d. or even more for his pound of tobacco-leaf, his cost of production is at least 5s. a lb. Yet the sale to the public is somewhere in the vicinity of 32s. per lb., and out of that amount the Commonwealth Government gets a tremendous sum by way of excise.

A portion of what the Commonwealth receives could be set apart for the building up of a stabilisation fund. When the fund was established, a proper computation of production per acre could be arrived at by investigation, and if for any reason at all it were not within the power of the grower to avoid a failure or partial failure of his crop—because of disease or other reasons—he could be compensated by being given a percentage payment from the stabilisation fund. Although that might not adequately compensate him, it would, nevertheless, prevent the occurrence of the situation which arose at this year's sales, where many of our growers got no return at all. In these circumstances, there is no encouragement to them to grow tobacco. I hope the Government will give some thought to what I have said, and, if it agrees with my suggestion, contact the Commonwealth Government to see what co-operation it can get from that quarter.

The Minister for Lands: We will have a good look at that, because I agree with you.

Mr. HOAR: Good! Another matter I want to speak on is one which has caused considerable worry to quite a lot of people—the effects and results that have come about under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. I have never known a Government-sponsored scheme of such magnitude or importance to the State that has been the subject of so much criticism and general dissatisfaction from those participating in it as this one. It is not as though the scheme was not well conceived, because it was. Many years of research

went into the building of it in order to avoid the mistakes of past settlement ventures.

The Rural Reconstruction Commission did much good work for many years before any soldier ever thought of going on the land, and provision was made in the agreement between the State and the Commonwealth for both dairying, and wheat and sheep farms. One of the cardinal principles of the scheme was that properties were to be written down at the outset to a value at which a settler possessing no capital at all could make a reasonable living, having regard to prices and costs over a good many years. It was on that principle that the scheme was based, and if at any time it is departed from or broken down, then it fails from the point of view of the settler. I believe that this principle has to a considerable extent, with special reference to wheat and sheep farms, been departed from and, as a result, has been responsible for all sorts of outcries from various people spread over a wide area of the South-West and through the State generally.

Valuations are divided into two sections under the scheme. There is the section which governs valuations for structural improvements and that which deals with non-structural improvements. Structural improvements are to be paid for by the settler over a long period, which is quite a reasonable proposition. The non-structural improvements are to be held under lease in perpetuity at a rental of 2½ per cent. of their value. That is the basis of the scheme. Because the Government knew quite well that it could not cater for all the applicants immediately after the war, it was agreed that an establishment period should be set in motion whereby a settler, with the assistance of the Land Settlement Board, might add to the development of his property and generally put the scheme into quicker momentum than could be done by any other means. This establishment period is laid down in the agreement as being one of 12 months, and on its conclusion the Government has the duty to fix the final valuation. That is what is meant by "valuation at the outset."

When a settler goes on to his farm under these conditions, he knows exactly what he has to face. He knows the cost of his structural improvements, and how much money he has to pay for them over a period, and he knows what rent he has to pay for his non-structural improvements which, of course, are land, water supplies and pasture development. There has been a breaking down of the principle so far as land settlement is concerned and it has caused a good deal of uncertainty in the minds of farmers as to whether they should have gone into the scheme or not. It is not a very happy position

when one comes to think of the hopes that were raised in the minds of these returned soldiers when they were away at the war.

In quite a number of cases, particularly in regard to the dairy section of the scheme, the Government has broken down the standard originally set. As is generally known, the dairy section of the scheme was launched on the old abandoned group holdings and to that extent it was a wise move. Much work had already been done and it would have been a pity if the Government of the day had not taken advantage of that situation. But the scheme for dairy farmers laid down that the basis of settlement would be a 40-cow unit and not a 20-cow unit. The brochures, advertising the scheme, which the men accepted in good faith, specifically stated that fact. That was a moral obligation upon the Government, in fact a contract in the very spirit of the word, and the settlers accepted that basis. The men have gone into the scheme with the idea of working towards that end.

The position is that in 1947 this Government came into power as a result of a good many promises made to the people of the State. One of the promises was that it would do far more in getting soldiers placed on the land than had its predecessors. Those of the present Government pointed with scorn to the Government of the day and said that not one settler had been placed on the land, despite the fact that the war had ended only 18 months before. This is all true, and because of that I can well imagine the present Government's consternation when it came into office and found that it could not possibly do any better than its predecessors unless it broke down the standard set for the farms. Rather than admit that the previous Government was right, this Government proceeded to break down the standard set which was in effect, a contract in every sense of the word.

The Minister for Lands: Tell me one instance where we have broken down the standards.

Mr HOAR: I can give the Minister many instances.

The Minister for Lands: Give me one.

Mr. HOAR: The principle of a 40-cow farm has been broken down completely. When the settlers went on to their properties they had a written agreement which, in my opinion, is binding in every way, and they were assured that these farms would be established and developed to that standard.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, but the Commonwealth would not allow us to do it. That Government is finding the money.

Mr. HOAR: The Commonwealth Government has been hoodwinked by this State Government.

The Minister for Lands: Nonsense!

Mr. HOAR: That is the position.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. HOAR: I know it is.

The Minister for Lands: Nonsense!

Mr. HOAR: I can give the Minister a case in point. Where pasture development has taken place under this Government's control, and the assessment of work done for each individual farmer is recorded, the figures are incorrect. Where it says that there are 140 acres on one man's farm, if one finds 110 one is lucky; where it says 170 acres one is lucky to find 140. The liaison officer between the Commonwealth and this Government found that out for himself when he toured the South-West. He was amazed to learn that the work specifically mentioned by the War Service Land Settlement Board as having been finished, was not, in fact, done.

The Minister for Lands: He did not seem to be amazed when he consulted me.

Mr. HOAR: He was amazed.

The Minister for Lands: I think you are wrong.

Mr. HOAR: The fact that some fictitious figures are down on paper in order to make this scheme look bright has been responsible for farmers overstocking their properties. If the Minister thinks that the figures provided by his officers are correct he would be justified in asking each year for an increase in stock. But that increase in stock is taking place now on pasture that does not exist.

The Minister for Lands: Explain the point that you mentioned about this Government being responsible for a man overstocking his property. Do you mean that he is such a goat that he would not have a look at what land he had under pasture?

Mr. HOAR: The farmer has been complaining about that ever since he has been on his property.

The Minister for Lands: But you said that we were responsible for a man overstocking his property. Surely a man would look at what pasture he had.

Mr. HOAR: He was on the farm before that area was established and, in many cases, helped to establish it.

The Minister for Lands: But you said we were responsible for the overstocking of his property.

Mr. HOAR: Because he has to increase his herd every year, whether he has the pasture or not, in order to create good figures.

The Minister for Lands: Nonsense!

Mr. HOAR: I have the details of a case here.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is the way an argument starts.

The Minister for Lands: If he does not have the area cleared we do not make him overstock. That is too silly for words.

Mr. HOAR: This is only one of many cases. This is a farmer at Pemberton and he writes to tell me that when the supervisor came down to look at his farm, after a long conversation he felt he had proved to him that last year, with 25 cows he was overstocked. This farmer has known that all along because he was one of the original settlers. He knows what pasture he has, but he does not know that in the Minister's office the figures show that he has more pasture than he actually has. In discussion with the supervisor, he was of the opinion, as a skilled farmer, that his carrying capacity was 25 cows. On the supervisor's return to Perth the farmer was instructed—he was even threatened—to increase his herd. The farmer knew perfectly well that he could not do it and he had to sell his young stock, which will leave him short next year. I could tell the Minister of dozens of cases like that throughout the South-West.

The Minister for Lands: I think you have given the answer. He had too many beef cattle and not sufficient dairy cattle.

Mr. HOAR: That is definitely wrong.

The Minister for Lands: He was told to get rid of some of them and increase the number of dairying cattle.

Mr. HOAR: The Minister is quite wrong. This case will stand investigation. He was carrying the normal amount of stock required for replacements. But now he is in the position that he will have to buy more stock to make up his leeway. When he does that he will be in trouble with the Land Settlement Board again, so it is no use the Minister saying that the farmers do not know what is going on. These complaints have been made over the last two or three years.

The Minister for Lands: I have the report you are discussing.

Mr. HOAR: That is exactly what I am trying to get into the Minister's mind. These settlers are not satisfied, and because they are not satisfied it does not mean they are a lot of disgruntled people with imaginary grievances; it simply means that there is something wrong with the management of the scheme. These men were passed over to the Rural Bank prematurely, in my opinion. They were passed over to the institution not with 40 cows on their properties but with 20. As soon as the Rural Bank investigated the holdings it found that a good deal of what the Land Settlement Board said had been done had not, in fact, been accomplished. The bank promptly asked the board to take all the settlers back again. That is what the bank thought of the administration of the scheme. I could give the Minister many cases on the

same point; they are genuine complaints from farmers throughout the South-West.

The Attorney General: You are making a very serious charge against departmental officers when you say they are faking figures.

Mr. HOAR: I am telling the truth.

The Attorney General: They would not fake figures.

Mr. HOAR: The trouble with the War Service Land Settlement Scheme, in my opinion, is that there has been a lack of ministerial interest in it.

The Attorney General: That is not what you said. You stated that the departmental officers give false figures to the Minister.

Mr. HOAR: I can prove it.

The Attorney General: I doubt it. This is another smear campaign like those used by the member for Melville.

Mr. HOAR: No, it is not. I do not say that they intentionally gave false figures to the Minister but when Col. Norman came to this State to inquire into the scheme he found that in almost every case the State figures as to areas under pasture were incorrect.

The Minister for Lands: Col. Norman is in the State all the time.

Mr. HOAR: I am talking about when he was down the South-West on this particular work. That is a true statement.

The Attorney General: I do not know about that, but you are accusing departmental officers of making false statements.

Mr. HOAR: I do not give a hoot about that but this scheme has been boosted up unnecessarily simply because of the promises made by the Government during the 1947 election campaign.

The Attorney General: That may have been so.

Mr. HOAR: It is perfectly true.

The Attorney General: But you say that departmental officers have been putting up false figures. You will not find Western Australian officers doing that sort of thing.

Mr. HOAR: The figures that have been produced with regard to pastures are not true.

The Attorney General: I think you are mistaken.

Mr. Graham: The Attorney General would not know the first thing about it.

The Attorney General: I believe in our departmental officers.

Mr. Graham: You would believe anything.

Mr. HOAR: There is another weakness in the scheme. Because of the inability of the Land Settlement Board to bring the

farms up to the standard required under the agreement, it has now been found necessary, in many cases, to extend the established period laid down under the agreement. That means that the farmer himself is now doing a tremendous amount of work that the Land Settlement Board said would be done for him. In many instances the farmers have had to spend their own money and in spite of that, when the final valuation is made, the farmers will lose because of the work they have put into their farms. This will be so because farms will be assessed on present-day values and no reduction will be made where a man has spent his own money and carried out his own labour.

In some cases, in the wheatbelt areas, thousands of pounds have been spent. That is an entirely wrong way to value a man's efforts and it breaks down the spirit of the agreement. It has not happened in the dairying section up to date because those farms have not been offered for sale, but it has happened many times in the wheat and sheep areas. The valuations placed on properties have been out of all proportion to the principle laid down in the agreement—that is, the valuations should have been made as a result of assessment of prices and costs over a long period of years. If a fictitious figure is brought into the picture and a man is expected to pay rent on his non-structural improvements, it is only natural that the Minister should receive so much hostility from the wheat and sheep farmers in the Wagin area and in other parts of the wheatbelt. That is the reason; that is the point in dispute.

The Minister for Lands: Not very much hostility.

Mr. HOAR: A great deal of it.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. HOAR: There is so much of it that I think the matter will be taken to court to test it out. I am no lawyer, but as a man with ordinary commonsense, and having read this agreement backwards and forward and knowing it thoroughly, it seems to me that there is every possibility of the charges being sustained.

The Minister for Lands: We will see.

Mr. HOAR: I think the spirit of the land settlement agreement has been shattered so far as this Government is concerned; it has been deliberately done in order to create in the public mind the feeling that this Government has been able to do something about soldier settlement. I would like the Minister to go down and see some of the dairy farmers in the South-West.

The Minister for Lands: I have been down several times.

Mr. HOAR: I have never known the Minister to go down and meet any of them.

The Minister for Lands: I have been through Augusta.

Mr. HOAR: I have heard about the Minister poking around in a car.

The Minister for Lands: You have not heard about me poking about in a car at all.

Mr. HOAR: I have never known it.

The Minister for Lands: I have been to Cowaramup, through the Busselton area and Augusta.

Mr. HOAR: I have been trying to get the Minister to go down there.

The Minister for Lands: One individual has been trying to get me to go to Karri-dale; and I will go when it suits me.

Mr. HOAR: Not one individual at all.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, the Labour candidate for Forrest; he will not play politics with me.

Mr. HOAR: It is all due purely to the disinterestedness of the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: I have been through Rocky Gully many times.

Mr. HOAR: The area I represent and the places mentioned by the Minister are the ones in which the people are complaining that they have never seen him.

The Minister for Lands: Where?

Mr. HOAR: Through the Karridale area and numerous other places in my own electorate.

The Minister for Lands: I went through with you.

Mr. HOAR: The only time the Minister came through my electorate was three years ago and that had nothing to do with soldier settlement.

The Minister for Lands: Is Pemberton in your electorate? I have been there twice.

Mr. Griffith: Why do you not answer that?

The Minister for Lands: He has no answer.

Mr. HOAR: I think most of the dissatisfaction in the soldier settlements could have been cleaned up long ago if there had been someone in charge who was personally interested.

The Minister for Lands: You are not being fair.

Mr. HOAR: I am telling the truth.

The Minister for Lands: You are upset because the scheme has done so well.

Mr. HOAR: That is rather a funny thing to say.

The Minister for Lands: Not as funny as you think.

Mr. HOAR: It is very strange.

The Minister for Lands: Not as strange as you think.

Mr. HOAR: The scheme ought to be going much better; the Government got a good enough start.

The Minister for Lands: It only started to move when we came in.

Mr. HOAR: The previous Government gave this Government a good start and if it had not been for the opportunities provided by the previous Government nothing would have been done. This Government has not taken advantage of those opportunities, and as a result we find dissatisfaction in the wheat areas and also in the dairy country. The Minister cannot say that the scheme is satisfactory when we have so many people complaining about it.

The Minister for Lands: A Federal Minister, in addressing a conference last week said Western Australia had done a wonderful job.

Mr. HOAR: I do not think that is the case.

The Minister for Lands: I would not expect you to.

Mr. HOAR: I have always given credit where it is due but I cannot say that this Government deserves any credit at all.

The Minister for Lands: You must have been looking through a fog.

Mr. Griffith: How many men did you Government put on the land?

Mr. HOAR: I will tell the hon. member why the previous Government did not put any men on the land. The earlier basis of this scheme was founded on an inquiry into rural reconstruction; it was evolved on the principles which emerged from that inquiry, during the war years when one would not expect to see soldier settlers placed on the land. At the conclusion of the war this Government had left to it a blue printed scheme which was in operation until it was mutilated to the extent it has been. There were 30 labourers as prisoners of war to maintain and improve certain areas and get them ready for the post-war years.

At the time this Government took over there were, I think, 50 farms ready to advertising. In 18 months that was done with no machinery; nothing but hand labour. That is why there were no soldier on the land. Eighteen months afterwards we gazetted the regulations. This Government came along and gave no credit at all to its predecessors for the work they had done. This Government said "Give us the job and we will put a lot of men on the land; we will settle them." The Government settled them alright; it has settled them completely!

The Minister for Lands: Why are you not fair? They are not settled completely they have a great future.

Mr. HOAR: I refer to the word "completely" in a different manner to that which the Minister does.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot see good in anything.

The Premier: Who do you think would be a good man to be in charge of it.

Mr. HOAR: I would like to see the Premier have a go. I now wish to proceed to the wheat and sheep farms. The Minister knows all about the disturbance in the Wagin area over 47 farms, and in another place too for that matter. He also knows of the dissatisfaction regarding the present-day valuations in respect to the properties. I have a case of what has happened under the amended regulations governing valuations. They were amended by the present Government and it cannot blame its predecessors for that. In this particular case I will only quote the figures that apply to rent and non-structural improvements because they are the only assets on which rent is charged. In this man's case, the initial gazetted value at which the property was allotted was £6,022. The rent on that was £150 11s. In the meantime the Government has done £532 worth of non-structural improvements, bringing the total to £6,554; the actual cost of developing that farm to its present state. The officers of the Government now value that same property at £9,288 which is an increase of £2,732 and means that the rent will have to be £232 4s.

The Minister for Lands: It is not the rent of a decent sized house in the city.

Mr. HOAR: That has nothing to do with it. The point I am trying to make is that under the agreement it is laid down clearly what method shall be used when arriving at valuations. Section 6, Subsection (4) of that agreement reads as follows:—

The Commonwealth shall make a capital contribution in respect of each holding of an amount equal to three-fifths of the excess of the total cost involved in acquiring, developing and improving the holding over the sum of valuation of the land and improvements.

That is quite clear; that is the basis of valuations; the total cost. Incidentally the original regulation gazetted in respect of this section allowed for that cost and allowed for that method and no other. But because it sees an opportunity of increasing the values of property to meet the present-day inflated situation, and therefore to get more money, the Government comes along and amends its own regulation in such a way as to strike out all reference to this subsection. It is now possible for the Minister to have no regard whatsoever for this agreement when coming to a valuation. He can place

any value he likes on the property. That was never meant to be in the original agreement; that was never meant to be the spirit of it.

The Minister for Lands: That is stretching things—any value you like!

Mr. HOAR: This man was so incensed with what took place on his property that he interviewed an officer of the department, and protested that the increase in total valuation bore no relation to the improvements carried out. The officer of the department replied that the improvements that had been carried out had no bearing on the final valuation, which was a figure arrived at after averaging costs over a number of farms including the costs of State administration. He said that the initial gazetted values and rentals were in no way binding and that the Minister had the right to impose any value or rentals he chose. He also said that the Crown Law Department was satisfied that this was legally sound. On being pressed the officer finally admitted this man's interpretation of the lease was the original intention, but said that the policy had changed when Mr. Baron Hay succeeded Mr. Fyfe.

The Minister for Lands: What nonsense!

Mr. HOAR: This is one of your departmental officers.

The Minister for Lands: Did the departmental officer read that?

Mr. HOAR: No, I do not suppose he did.

The Attorney General: Of course not.

Mr. HOAR: What has that to do with it? If the Minister has any doubt about the matter I will get him all the proof he wants. This man is stating his case and he is not likely to make the mistake of saying something which is not true. If the Minister has any doubt at all I will get him all the evidence he wants; but it will make matters much worse.

The Minister for Lands: You could not because you have not the evidence.

Mr. HOAR: I have all the evidence I want here and elsewhere.

The Minister for Lands: No, you have not.

Mr. HOAR: I am so dissatisfied with the War Service Land Settlement Scheme that in a day or two I propose to test the feeling of the House by moving for the appointment of a Select Committee to go into all its ramifications.

The Minister for Lands: Your inference is that Mr. Baron-Hay changed the policy.

Mr. HOAR: I said nothing of the kind. I merely read the opinion of your officer that the policy was changed when Mr. Baron-Hay succeeded Mr. Fyfe. The Minister is responsible; it may have been

on the advice of Mr. Baron-Hay I do not know. But there is no doubt that he is responsible for bringing about the method involved in this agreement. That is the sort of thing I am complaining about. I do not intend to take up any more of the time of the House, but a little later on I shall have a chance of speaking to the motion I have mentioned. I will then give the Minister all he wants in this regard. The whole scheme has been completely spoilt by the activities of the Government in its vanity, and its anxiety to impress the public without any thought at all of the settler who is on the other end of the stick. If there is any question that requires close investigation, it is the War Service Land Settlement Scheme, and I hope the House will agree to my motion.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [8.15]: His Excellency the Governor, in his opening Speech to Parliament, referred amongst other things to migration and stated that 64,000 migrants had been received into the State in the last five years. Of them 30,000 were British migrants, so that we received approximately 34,000 who were aliens, some of them displaced persons. This big migration policy and the admittance of so many migrants does not help the housing problem. Calculating by simple arithmetic we see that 64,000 people would require some 16,000 houses, and would be in a position to absorb all the houses built in the last few years.

This, of course, is a problem that we must accept, because we greatly need additional workers to overtake the lag that has accumulated as a direct result of the war. We have been very thankful to receive those migrants, particularly because a lot of them have been absorbed in work needed in the country areas, on the rehabilitation of the railways and on other laborious tasks. Quite a few migrants who started work in the country, however, have made their way into the city and the drift to the city has continued at an ever-increasing rate. This is one of the things that the present and future Governments must endeavour to combat. I shall have more to say on this subject at a later stage.

With all these migrants in the city and in some parts of the country, one feels almost as if one were in a foreign country because, although many of them have learnt to speak English, when they get amongst their fellows they converse in their native tongue. With the increase in the rate of transport by ship and air, we are getting a lot of foreign visitors, and may expect more now that Guildford has been made an international airport and the terminal of the South African aerial route. We may expect a lot of people to visit us, perhaps for a few days or a few months, and they should bring more business to the city, but they and the presence

of so many migrants will accentuate the problem of traffic control. During the last few years many traffic accidents have occurred in which migrants have been involved, and there does not seem to be much sense in bringing people here only to be killed at the alarming rate they have been in traffic accidents.

I should like to suggest means by which traffic may be better controlled in order to keep the number of accidents down to a minimum. One method would be by adopting road signs on our traffic ways in conformity with the international standards. In Europe, including Britain, and also in America, standard road signs have been adopted, so that whether a person be in America or in Europe, the signs are uniform and people can understand them.

Something along the same lines should be done here. I was pleased to hear a few months ago that the Government had decided to erect signposts about the city. I suggest that a committee be formed of all the authorities associated with traffic control, in conjunction with members of the Transport Board and representatives of the R.A.C., to work out a scheme whereby we could undertake the erection throughout the State of traffic signs in accordance with the international standard.

The road board in my district has made inquiries from the R.A.C. in England and has been in communication with authorities in Sweden who have indicated a willingness to co-operate in bringing about the adoption of the international road signs in Australia. I hope that the Government will give some thought to this suggestion. I believe that quite a few traffic accidents could have been averted had the people concerned had the guidance of road signs they could read and understand.

There is a matter of grave concern to my electorate, and possibly more so to it than any other area, and that is the problem of gravel pits still being operated and those abandoned in areas at the foot-hills, mainly in the districts of Maida Vale, Forrestfield and Wattle Grove. The sandy nature of the soil in the metropolitan area makes it necessary to use gravel to form the foundations of roads and prepare them for sealing, and the areas I have mentioned, located as they are within nine or 10 miles of Perth, have gravel pits, and so we must expect them to be the spots where the gravel will be quarried. There are hundreds of acres of abandoned gravel pits which are not only an eyesore, but have the effect of hampering development. They are simply useless and, to add insult to injury, they not only detract from the value of adjacent lands, but for rating purposes their value is very low and the road board suffers loss of rates.

Unless these abandoned pits are dangerous and need to be fenced, no action can be taken under the Road Districts Act. We did consider the idea of taking some action; in fact, for many years there was a prohibition on the opening of a gravel pit within a quarter-of-a-mile of certain roads but that did not prevent existing pits from being developed, and when the Main Roads Board was concerned the by-law, of course, did not apply and that department has been responsible for removing gravel from hundreds of acres.

Further steps were taken requiring all pits to be registered, and contractors are required to lodge a deposit sufficient to ensure that the pit is left in neat condition before being abandoned. That scheme is in operation, but unfortunately very few of the pits have been worked out during the time the by-law has been in operation. The local residents are much perturbed about these gravel pits and have asked that some action be taken. I have requested the Minister to receive a deputation on the subject and perhaps a solution will be found.

As an agriculturalist, I consider that the process of removing gravel for road-making purposes is closely akin to soil erosion in its worst form. This serious type of soil erosion does not occur in other parts of the State and is not experienced by us in the normal course of events, but to supply gravel requirements there are hundreds of acres that have been eroded to a depth of 6 feet or 8 feet, leaving the bare subsoil exposed and useless for agricultural or building purposes. If it were possible to secure the co-operation of the Main Roads Department, local authorities, gravel contractors and the landowners concerned, and enlisting the aid of the Soil Conservation Branch, we might be able to accomplish something worth while. If with some minor drainage these old pits could be kept free of water during the winter, the Soil Conservation Branch might work out a programme that would enable us to rehabilitate those denuded areas so that they could eventually be used for farming and probably a few areas could be used for building blocks. I regret that the Minister for Works is not in his place, but I hope that the department concerned will co-operate in an effort to rehabilitate those areas.

Another matter of great concern to me and many of my colleagues in country areas was the theme touched upon by the member for Pilbara last night, namely, the neglect of the outer areas. If I were a clergyman, I feel that I could preach a sermon based on the text, "To those that have shall be given". This Government, in common with preceding administrations, has merely given lipservice to the matter of decentralisation. Those people who are in the metropolitan area or are within a distance of, shall we say, 15 miles from

the middle of the metropolitan area, seem to receive all modern conveniences, but people in the wide-open spaces of the rest of the State are in many instances living under very crude conditions. I admit that the policy of decentralisation is hard to put into full effect, but as things are at present we cannot blame people if they leave the rural areas and go into the cities where there are amenities which do not exist in country areas.

Thousands of houses have been built and are being built in the metropolitan area, and one of the first things that is done before they are erected is the installation of water to enable the builders to mix mortar for the houses. Buildings are barely erected when electricity is laid on. So as soon as the houses are ready for occupancy, amenities such as a good water supply, electricity and, in some instances, gas are available, and good sealed roads are provided so that it is not much trouble to get into the city and enjoy the social life there.

The Premier: Great numbers of houses have been built in the country, too.

Mr. OWEN: Yes, but the people have not the amenities that exist in the city and metropolitan area.

The Premier: Roadmaking is taking place in the country all the time, and water schemes are being established.

Mr. OWEN: Yes, that is being done in the country, but at a very reduced rate as compared with the progress in the metropolitan area.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Mr. OWEN: To illustrate my point, the Governor in his Speech said:—

The vital work of conservation and distribution of water is continuing to receive particular attention—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you believe that?

Mr. OWEN: The Speech continues however, with a big "but"—

—but progress with the Comprehensive Country Water Supply Scheme has been retarded by the acute shortage of steel plate necessary for the manufacture of pipes.

A little later it is stated—

To provide for the increased requirements for water in the metropolitan area, the Kangaroo Gully Diversion Scheme and the Second Reservoir at Mt. Yokine have been put into operation.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is for the golf club.

Mr. OWEN: The Speech continues—

The sinking of the artesian bore at Attadale is proceeding.

So it seems that water supplies in the metropolitan area will be proceeded with but country water supplies, unfortunately,

must be retarded because we have a shortage of steel! I am particularly concerned with the country areas, but being only human, I am very much perturbed by the failure of the Government to provide at a decent pace a water supply for Kalamunda. I have at times inquired why the work is not continuing. Operations began and the reservoir was completed some time ago, but is now standing idle. The pipe line has been cleared from Kalamunda to the Weir but no pipes have yet been installed. On inquiring from the Minister some time ago I was told that the steel was here but, because of the strike, it could not be made into pipes.

Since then, quite a lot of pipes have been going to Kwinana to provide for the water supply there. I am told that Kwinana is of national importance and I am prepared to take second place to some extent and allow some priority to the work being done at Kwinana. I asked the Minister why there has been a continued delay in connection with the Kalamunda scheme. I was told that financial limitations, the metal trades strike and the necessity for concentrating on works of higher priority made it unlikely that the pipe-laying at Kalamunda would commence this financial year. So it appears we will have to wait for another 12 months. I thought those were reasons, but I found they were only excuses, because in my area, only a few miles from Kalamunda, the connecting link between Mundaring Weir and Mt. Yokine is proceeding at quite a fast pace and the installation of the 30-inch main connecting the weir with the metropolitan area is well under way. I was interested enough to ask the Minister just how long it was since that work was authorised, and I was told that it was at the beginning of last year, less than 18 months ago. Yet the comprehensive water supply scheme was authorised over four years ago and the Kalamunda scheme was authorised four years ago. Those schemes are held up, but the connection between Mundaring Weir and Mt. Yokine is being proceeded with. That scheme is estimated to cost £488,000, and to date £54,000 odd has been spent on it. What annoys me is that the expenditure on that line this year will be £250,000, whereas the complete scheme for Kalamunda would cost probably only one-quarter of that. However, the other scheme is for the metropolitan area!

So far as I know, no-one has suffered from a water shortage in the metropolitan area even in summer-time, when we use nearly 60 million gallons a day. True, there was a threat this year that water restrictions would have to be imposed unless the situation was eased; but if the metropolitan area became short of water, bores could be sunk and plenty could be obtained. In any event, I think the residents in the metropolitan area could economise in their use of water.

The Premier: I wish it were the case that we could put down bores and get all the water we wanted!

Mr. OWEN: There are quite a lot of places in the metropolitan area where millions of gallons of water could be obtained by the sinking of bores and only small quantities of steel would be used for casing. We are on a sub-artesian bed here and there is plenty of scope for tapping underground water supplies.

The Premier: You put the metropolitan consumers on bore water and see what will happen!

Mr. OWEN: I would rather drink bore water than have to cart supplies. Two years ago people were carrying water in water bags from Perth to Kalamunda on the bus in order to have sufficient to drink and to use in cooking.

The Premier: Scheme water has to be heavily mixed with bore water.

Mr. OWEN: If the consumers in the metropolitan area would economise, there would be no difficulty. They are not short of water, but in the country areas there are people who never had a water supply and who are athirst for water. There is no chance of their getting rain-water tanks to catch the water that falls in the winter, yet they are told they have to wait for a water scheme because of the shortage of steel and because of financial limitations. The people of the metropolitan area apparently cannot wait and their schemes must go ahead.

The greater part of the Mundaring Weir-Mt. Yokine link passes through the Darling Range electorate. For several miles it will go through unoccupied country, but might be tapped lower down. I have asked the Metropolitan Water Supply Department to consider the possibility of water being drawn from the 30-inch main to supply people in Maida Vale and Forrestfield.

The member for Guildford-Midland, too would be interested to have some of his constituents in the Bushmead and West Midland areas supplied. I hope consideration will be given to supplying these consumers because, in regard to this main, the only bright spot, to me, is that these small areas might be supplied. I think it is wrong for a quarter of a million pounds to be spent on a scheme for the metropolitan area where there is plenty of water while people in the country have none at all. The same thing applies to electricity. Before a house in the metropolitan area is finished, electricity is supplied to it and electrical amenities are available to the occupants as soon as they move in. But electricity extensions further out are going ahead very slowly indeed.

My electorate is a little fortunate in having had some extensions made there, but others which should have been finished 12 months ago are still not completed. The rate of progress is most dis-

appointing. As the member for Harvey mentioned, it seems to be the aim of the Commission to link up the large towns in the South-West which already have adequate electricity supplies. The primary producers in between the towns have so far received no benefit. Although the power lines may go over their properties, they have not been able to draw upon them. The city seems to be No. 1 priority, the large country towns No. 2 priority, and only after that do the primary producers come into the picture. They have to wait until the others are satisfied before they can get electricity, and thus be able to do away with many of the crude power contrivances they are forced to use at present.

Mr. May: Have you ever worked out what the cost would be? I think that is your stumbling-block.

Mr. OWEN: I can speak first hand of the cost of lighting without electricity, let alone power. My home is only a little over a half mile from where there are high-tension mains, but I am not supplied with electricity, so I am forced to use oil lamps. Up to a week or so ago I had to use an open-wick lamp for two or three weeks because of lack of supplies of mantles—and I blame that lamp for my poor eyesight. When mantles became available in Perth I secured two. Early in the evening I put one on the lamp, and within half an hour it had split in about four places and was useless. I paid 5s. 3d. for it, so members can imagine how much I have to pay for a mediocre light, whereas if electricity were available—

Mr. May: It would cost you twice as much.

Mr. OWEN: The supplying of power in my district would be a good investment for the Commission, because within five miles of my place there are over 50 tractors being used in primary production, besides many small rotary hoes and other such mechanical devices. Nearly all the people have pumps using motors of up to 20 horsepower, besides the motors in the packing sheds. In addition there are chaff-cutters, saw benches and so on. The rates the Commission would collect would more than pay interest and sinking fund on the expenditure involved in taking electricity to this area. We were told, when the Bill to create the Commission was introduced, that so long as there was a concentration of about three or four users to the mile, reticulation would be warranted. There are many areas in the South-West to which electricity could be profitably reticulated; and the farmers would then receive a few of the benefits that the city folk are now enjoying.

The Premier: I am told it requires four to the mile.

Mr. OWEN: Even so, there are plenty of areas to which it would pay to reticulate electricity. I have discussed this matter with the member for Harvey. We can imagine a dairy farmer getting up in the wee small hours of the morning and trying to start an oil engine. Usually quite a lot of sweat and bad language flow before the engine becomes hot enough to start. With electricity, the farmer could, by a mere flick of the switch, have all the power he required. The progressive agriculturist would be only too happy to invest a few hundred pounds to take the electricity from his boundary to the homestead. There are men in my district who have paid £300, £400 and £500 to reticulate electricity from the boundary to their houses and pumps which were, perhaps, quite a distance from where the power was brought on to the property.

Mr. Nalder: That is only an initial cost.

Mr. OWEN: That is so. It is unfortunate that the Electricity Commission will not put more than one line on to a property. I admit there would be complications if it departed from this rule, but where there is a fairly extensive property it means that if the farmer has to run a line for, say, half a mile parallel to the Commission's lines, the cost is borne by him and not the Commission. From that it will be seen that there is some truth in the saying that to them that hath shall be given, and one could even add that from them that have not shall be taken away, but in the country districts many people have nothing left to take away. Even the pioneering spirit, which took them into such areas to carve out a living for themselves and help build up the State, is, if not already taken away, fast disappearing. I know the Government has made efforts towards decentralisation and I hope it will speed up that trend and make decentralisation a reality in the not distant future.

On motion by Mr. Bovell, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.52 p.m.