

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 1st September, 1942.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Thirteenth Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the 27th August.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [2.18]:

Personally, I wish to express thanks on behalf of the Government and of the Premier himself for the very kindly references made to his health, and for the good wishes extended by all members who have spoken on the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply. We hope that within a few weeks the Premier will be again in his place in this House, and he advised me last night that he hoped to be able to attend at his office much sooner than that.

The Address-in-reply debate has, I think, once more justified its place among the activities of this Chamber. Many opinions have been expressed from time to time as to the futility or otherwise of such debates, but there is no doubt that the scope that is offered to, and is availed of by, members to deal with all subjects that come within the ambit of a debate of such a description, gives them the opportunity to express views, ventilate grievances, and generally to make valuable contributions to our discussions, as well as to voice important comments on various topics, all of which are recorded in "Hansard." I would regret very much if members did not have such an opportunity for the free expression of criticism and to place before this House a summary of conditions as they see them

affecting industries particularly associated with their districts, in which they are personally interested.

This year's debate has been marked, generally speaking, by an absence of criticism. If ever there was a period when we should take notice of worth-while criticism, now is the time, and the absence of such criticism from the debate that is now near its end has been the more marked. It is obvious that war-caused disabilities are affecting the districts represented by members, as well as industries with which they are concerned. I was to some extent disappointed at the number of members who mentioned their keen desire to do more themselves and the lack of any such opportunity. The public outcry that members might do more has become popular. Most of the comments are coming from those who are uninformed and have no idea at all of the duties and responsibilities attaching to Parliamentarians. Very few people are conscious of the work done outside the precincts of this House by members in general, and very few of the public have any appreciation whatever of the administrative tasks that belong to the Executive. So far as private members are concerned, it is remarkable how it appeals to the public fancy to criticise those who, they believe, spend the only active part of their lives within this Chamber.

Some of the fault lies with members themselves. When members criticise the lack of opportunity they are really criticising their own efforts and themselves, because now, of all times, if a person is anxious and has the will and the desire, there is certainly within his own capacity and within his own scope for initiative the greatest opportunity for service and for effort this country has ever offered. I should like to pay a public tribute to the work of the Leader of the Opposition. The work of that hon. gentleman during the last year or two in his personal association with the war effort is something for which he deserves all possible credit.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think we can afford to be generous to him for the unsparing way in which he is exerting himself in the interests of this country. I suggest to those who complain that, within their own resourcefulness and initiative, they will find ample scope if they will only

endeavour to seek the work that is to be done.

There is another popular cry to which I should like to refer. It is unfortunate that all the "mothers of ten," the "pro bono publicos" and Commonwealth Ministers, too, have ample time to criticise the States generally—the achievements of States and the spheres of States' activity and usefulness. I should like to ask for something specific from those who criticise. Not merely do I wish to say very pertinently that I feel the States and those who are administering the affairs of the States have nothing to apologise for, but I can see very little to induce them to revere the Commonwealth in connection with its activities. The States' administration and the States' direction are an object lesson to the Commonwealth if it will accept an object lesson. One could be unkind enough to say that very many of the Commonwealth administrators are mere tyros in administration. Yet it is from them that the States are being subjected to a variety of criticism, to unkindly comment, at every opportunity that is offered.

We have heard in high-flown oratory some very unfair comments that have emanated from the Commonwealth sphere on the duties and responsibilities of the States. I should like to ask those who offer such criticism whether they ever reflect upon the opportunities accepted by State administration and the achievements of such administration. Who has been responsible for the development of the States? Whether it be a land policy, a railway policy, accepting advice and answering needs and, in a Commonwealth sense, making the Commonwealth possible, all comes back to State administration and State management. Who has been responsible for rural policy and rural development in every State? Has it been Commonwealth administration? Which administration has cured the ills within a State? Is it not that experts in every department have made progress and production possible in every State? Consider what the scientists have done under State jurisdiction. I am sure my friends of the Country Party would be most generous in a review of the efforts and the results achieved by scientists of the States in the solving of State problems.

Mr. Hughes: Science owes nothing to politics.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we take notice how the State officers, directed by the political administration, have made progress, there is something for the Commonwealth to look up to rather than to condemn. Who has been responsible for the roads of the States and the public works of the States? Some might say that the good roads of the States have come from the petrol tax. But where did the money come from? Not all of it was handed back that was collected. All of those things have been done firstly from money collected within the States, and then have been done by the organisations and management within the States.

Hon. C. G. Latham: More use could be made of State organisations and management today, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The States as distinct from the Commonwealth have had nothing to do with defence programmes; but they have assisted the Commonwealth, through their organisations, to put into effect such defence programmes and defence works. Without the States' administration and the States' Departments how could such works have been accomplished? I make no apology in any sphere to any Commonwealth authority, but I suggest that such Commonwealth authorities as have been pleased to cavil and to condemn should merely make a survey. Let us look at the facts squarely! Let us look around and see precisely where the States' responsibilities have been accepted and where the work has been done—to the great credit of the whole of the Commonwealth.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We could do a great deal more if the Commonwealth would entrust the work to the States.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We could, and moreover we could do much more if we did not feel at times that there was a certain amount of misplaced loyalty. While we are being chided like children, while we are being lectured, while we are being told that if some tiddleywinking thing is not done by a State Government that State Government is not worth its salt, I would like to point out to Commonwealth authorities that they have always been highly pleased, when there have been unpleasant things to do, to know that State Governments and State Premiers are in the background not merely to be the buffer but actually to do the job. Therefore I regret

that Commonwealth Ministers, and even the Prime Minister himself, for whom I have a very great regard—he is a man of tremendous capacity and achievement—should ally themselves with the people who are pleased to condemn State efforts, but in my opinion are very grateful in their hearts for the tremendous efforts made by the States on behalf of this Commonwealth. After all, it is a trifle wearying to receive constant unfair comment from those who are “dressed in a little brief authority.” I am hoping that the Commonwealth will have a much greater appreciation of the place of the States in this Federation, and give the States jobs to do—advise the States of the needs of the moment, whereupon the jobs will be done.

The Western Australian Government is greatly disturbed on behalf of all its citizens because of the vulnerability of this State, and, through this State, the vulnerability of the Commonwealth. It is an aspect which we, as a State Government, have constantly presented to Commonwealth authorities. We are acutely conscious of the nearness of the enemy. In my opinion it may safely be conjectured that the next two or three months will prove to be the most vital in the history of this commonwealth of nations. At this moment the war is more indivisible than ever. It is so widespread that every continent is affected, and almost every people. Our much-vaunted British Empire and its far-flung resources are at this moment not wholly the resources we have been pleased and proud to believe in; to some extent they are very severe handicaps. We are unfortunately placed in that the major enemy, Germany, has been able to conduct its part of the war by extending its circumference rather than by covering tremendous areas outside a continent to get men, materials and things necessary for war to the scene of operations. In my opinion there is no doubt that even within the next two or three months the whole situation could change overnight by happenings in Russia, because it does appear that, viewing the tremendous resources now at the service of the enemy, if we can reach the coming European winter without the collapse of Russia we shall indeed have some greater prospect, although a highly difficult task. If anything unfortunate were to happen to Russia, then the German command within the Continent of Europe would have free-

dom to recuperate, would have tremendous assets to draw upon, and would have an opportunity to do very serious things to the heart of our Empire, to England.

Our Prime Minister has recently said that this country is in peril as also are its associates, and we have to share the perils as we share the resources. It is well to remember, too, that so far as this island continent of ours is concerned the carrying of the war into the enemy's camp must mean that Australia will have to be the store-house and the jumping-off place for the nations attacking the enemy to the north. There is something to be conscious of, something that very many critical people lose sight of, and that is the importance of the civil population in such times. After all, it is by the civil population that production must be achieved. It is the civil population that has the responsibility of producing all necessary materials—the food and the money. The importance of civil production in connection with the war effort is frequently lost sight of. The directors in a civil sense must be guided by, and it is necessary that they must have faith in, their military advisers. It is necessary, when they meet, that the civil directors take that advice; but it would be highly unfortunate if, while they have the blind faith, there is not a sufficient review of their needs and of the dependence they place upon the judgment of their military advisers. We find generals disagreeing on matters of strategy.

We hear whisperings and many murmurings of why this or that is done. The Australians will find that very many unpleasant things are constantly being said, and I would suggest that in order to get to the bottom of the validity of many of such statements and such opinions it is necessary not merely for the civil leaders to have the opportunity to meet the generals in charge in all spheres of operation. What happens today is that the military advisers meet the political leaders regularly, but that we often find discontent and discord as between the leaders in the military sphere—the general officers and the superiors. The responsibility of conducting a battle or defending an attack rests with the G.O.C. in his particular sphere; but if he is not satisfied, if the populace is threatened by his dissatisfaction, it certainly should be possible to arrange for meetings of the General

Officers Commanding and their superior generals with the civilian chiefs. Surely that could be done! We might thus get a better understanding; we might get to know whether this side or the other side is receiving patronage, whether materials destined and needed here are not getting here for any particular reason. These are topics of current comment, and an opportunity to overcome the difficulties would be furnished if the way were made clear for the generals of the six States and the other senior officers to meet Sir Thomas Blamey with the civil chiefs.

From reports recently made to Premiers of the various States, it is obvious that we are not as strong anywhere as we would like to be; but it is also obvious that during the last six months much material and equipment have come to this country, thus putting it every week in a much stronger position. We have to share the equipment, some of which is coming from far distant ports, with all the other theatres of war. We have no other sources of supply but our own internal manufacture and those of England and our allies. The material has to come long distances and is subject to many interruptions. Losses have occurred, but nevertheless it is admitted—and truly so—that our position is materially better than it was six or even three months ago. We are better off in all those things that are considered to be the wherewithal for waging this war. While we can expect no special treatment, we do expect and desire to get our right proportion, according to the risks that must be incurred, to meet the demands of this country in waging the battle.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We need a daily improvement, I should think.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The shipping position is indeed serious in a world-wide sense. All of us know how serious it has been for Great Britain. It is exceedingly grave for Australia, not merely concerning the goods we need, but also the goods that we produce to export to other countries. Since speaking previously in this Chamber, I have had the opportunity to visit parts of the State that have suffered at the hands of the enemy. I have seen the nature of his destruction. I have noted how thorough have been moves made by him, and I pay a tribute to the courage of our people who have elected to remain in those parts, and who are living there under very

serious circumstances. The enemy has destroyed in some cases all their assets and means of livelihood, and has upset the way of living of very many people in the North.

What these people have done for themselves in their isolation, under such adverse circumstances, is certainly an object lesson to the other sections of the community far removed from the actual scene of battle. The Government has endeavoured to ease the burden for those people. The story is one that cannot be told in this House; but what is being done to ease the burden is only what those people are entitled to. The Government would, I feel confident, receive the approval of every section of the community if the whole story could be told. Suffice it to say, happenings in the North during the last seven days are seriously threatening our activities in getting food to those people; but, fortunately, if we are allowed to proceed with the plans that have been laid down, we shall be able to get the necessary supplies there before the normal wet season sets in. What else is happening there does not matter very much, either from the point of view of information or news; but so far as the Government is concerned—

Mr. Marshall: What Government do you speak of?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The State Government.

Mr. Marshall: That is right. Emphasise it!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No one else has been doing so.

Mr. Marshall: We want to know whether it is the Commonwealth or the State Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All that has been so far done has been done at the instigation of and by the State Government. We are continuing our policy of doing our utmost for our people living far removed from Perth. They are the first line of defence for this part of the State. I am hoping that much more can be done in a defence sense, so that not merely shall their interests be safeguarded, but, through such safeguarding, the well-being of Australia. Some of the things attempted and achieved involve big undertakings. Great risks had to be accepted, but so far the results have been satisfying. We hope they may continue to be so. When one considers the road distance from Perth to Broome is 2,000 miles

and the road distance from Broome to Wyndham an additional 800 miles, one gets some idea of the magnitude of the undertaking to supply the needs of the people in the North.

Shipping losses around the coast of Australia have been big enough to cause serious interruption in the trade that is so necessary between the States. If any of our people not serving in uniform but following their normal vocation, are distinctly heroes, it is the men of the merchant service. All over the world they are making a remarkable contribution to our war effort. Their work and achievements within Australian waters are something to be proud of. The activities of enemy submarines in Australian waters are perhaps much greater than the public has been led to believe. Such activities and the consequent losses are something the enemy himself would like to know a great deal about, but they are some of the few things where censorship and silence have prevailed to some satisfaction. As my colleague, the Deputy Premier, said this morning, one never heralds or mentions the movements of the Navy.

It is important to remember that, if we are not furnishing the enemy with news he would like to obtain, the best news we can get is either silence or the truth. That is something I intend to deal with at a later stage. We are in a much more fortunate position than the Old Country in regard to supplies. That might appear to be an idle statement, but when one considers that the community of England is living on a butter ration of two ounces and a margarine ration of four ounces a week, and that those are the only fats available to the people, it will readily be appreciated how difficult is their position.

Many serious dislocations of interstate trade have occurred in Australia. There have been some very badly adjusted cargoes, comments in connection with which have been freely ventilated here and in the Press, but there are many reasons for the bad arrangements, and not the least of them is the selfish clamour by personally interested firms, who have sought to get their way and to have their agencies supplied with the goods they consider are in the first order of priority. When discussing shipping matters recently with the Shipping Control Board, I was advised by the chairman, Mr.

Justice Clyne, that he had received, in the course of a day or two, two requests from Western Australian merchants for large quantities of South Australian wines to be shipped to Western Australia because of the extreme shortage of that commodity. That is the sort of request that is being made by interested persons, but fortunately the Shipping Control Board is being guided by the State authorities in regard to priority orders. Many difficulties have been occasioned on account of the size of the vessels available. A 5,000-ton ship appears at a particular port to discharge cargo. Suddenly, she finds herself unable to call at certain ports, and it is therefore necessary for her to take on cargo much lower on the priority list. There are many inequalities that we are endeavouring to iron out.

In the matter of coal, this State is largely dependent on Newcastle. We could not light a gas fire, or use gas for domestic purposes at all, if Newcastle coal were not imported into this State. Our requirements are about 2,300 tons to 2,500 tons a month. There has been difficulty in getting colliers. We have a sister State adjoining ours whose total coal needs have to be supplied by Newcastle. The requirement of South Australia is in the vicinity of 80,000 tons a month, all of which has to be conveyed to that State. The competition for the shipping available is therefore intense, because certain types of ships are very scarce. It has not been possible to avoid encroaching on the normal reserves of Colliery coal in this State, but it seems that, as a result of the considerate attitude of the Shipping Control Board, the position is improving. It had not improved in the last week, but the prospects are that we shall not only be able to hold the position, but will also be able to accumulate reserves in the near future. The Midland Railway Co. does not as a rule use any local coal at all, and is dependent on importation. Then, for summer work and for certain country work, our own Railway Department demands Newcastle coal. Apart from this, our own reserves of local coal and the supplies available have to some extent been lessened.

Members will be aware that I have no desire to encroach on the province of the Minister for Mines, but I know he wishes me to outline the position. The problem locally resolves itself into two aspects: An increase in the production of native coal for

railway and other purposes for use within the State, and an increase in the supply of Newcastle coal for all the other purposes for which that coal is needed. The latter difficulty is receiving urgent attention, and it is hoped we shall not be faced with the necessity for imposing the extreme measures found necessary in South Australia. One local difficulty has been that so many young men have left the coalmining industry and are now in the Forces, and that we have an older generation, much depleted in numbers, trying to cope with the situation. No fewer than 154 employees from one company alone are in the Forces. Young miners—154 of the best producers—have been taken from the Collie coalfield.

It must be remembered by all concerned that the internal economics of a country continue to be very important in time of war. As a matter of fact, the well-being and internal economy of this country have, I fear, been too little regarded, both by the military authorities and by the appropriate Commonwealth administration. There is not much prospect of this country continuing to be on an even keel in respect of all its domestic needs, whether of a primary or a secondary nature, unless some regard is paid to the importance of civil life in such times as these. Shipping has affected us in an interstate sense in one matter that is vital to our food production. I refer to the availability of fertilisers, without which, with the exception of a very limited area, ours is a very poor old State agriculturally. Our capacity to produce without fertilisers is very restricted. In spite of the scientific knowledge we have gained in regard to fertilisers for crops, we cannot get very far unless the requisite fertilising agencies are available to us. The restriction of fertilisers will be a very serious limiting factor on the production that we wish to achieve during the next year or two. Every effort has been made to cope with the situation by curtailment, by eliminating non-essentials, and by using the quantity of superphosphate available to the best purposes for which they may be used.

This applies not merely to superphosphate but also to nitrogenous fertilisers of all forms. Since Japan entered the war, we have been denied supplies from sources in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The last stone to come to this State was from Egypt, and many of the types of phosphoric rock

being used now for the manufacture of superphosphate in this State are very refractory. It takes much more sulphuric acid to break them down. We have heard of the rotting of bags and other such difficulties that were mentioned earlier in the year by the member for Pingelly and others, all of which have occasioned new problems that have had to be solved. There is a likelihood that there will be a reduction from the normally specified content of 23% phosphoric acid, which is likely to be nearer 18%, because of the difficulties associated with manufacture. Because of the lessened quantity of rock, the British Phosphate Commission is recommending only 50% of Australia's normal requirements, which will be in the vicinity of 480,000 tons. That quantity of superphosphate for Australia for this coming year is in sight. When we consider that Western Australia's consumption three years ago was 265,000 tons we can realise how seriously we shall be affected by this curtailment.

The allocations have been made to each of the States, and Western Australia is to receive 120,000 tons for this year. It is to have priority in connection with crops, and such priorities have been given much consideration. We have conferred with producing interests on the matter, and it is something which must be accepted because no more is available to us. What will happen when the supplies within Australia are exhausted is hard to say. Unless we are able to use some of the lower-grade deposits within Australia our position will be serious indeed within a very few years. We are endeavouring to safeguard the position in regard to tobacco, vegetables, potatoes and other commodities which require nitrogenous fertilisers more urgently than do other crops. Many complaints are made. I heard one today in the lobby of the House in connection with the non-availability of blood and bone fertilisers. All these things must be regarded in the order of needs for essential foodstuffs, so that we can endeavour to bridge the gap which other war-caused disabilities are creating for us. It will be necessary in the future to control all the different types of fertilisers, including blood and bone. We have for this year lost the tremendous supply that used to come from Wyndham. In addition, because of the loss of nitrogenous fertilisers that used to be imported from South America,

we had to make arrangements for sufficient of the nitrate of soda compounds to safeguard the position which would normally be met by supplies of sulphate of ammonia and other highly nitrogenous chemical fertilisers.

Some abuse of the rationing of superphosphate has taken place, and some people have laid in stocks. So that that position may be thoroughly examined, and so that there will be available to the whole of the State what is fair for each particular interest to have, we are now seeking returns from these people who have improperly bought and stored fertiliser to the detriment of others. We have some bad cases. Some people have endeavoured to safeguard themselves, but others have endeavoured to exploit the position. It is expected that by using a lighter dressing in our wheat-growing areas there will be an opportunity to get somewhere near an average because of the residue of fertiliser left in the soil year after year, and not wholly used by the crops. But in our pastoral districts, whilst we can get along for a year or two with lighter dressings, we are likely to strike serious difficulties because of the depletion of phosphoric acid and the inability to replace it after it has been taken from the soil by the growing crops, and through these crops by the cattle pastured thereon. We feel that the cumulative effect of a phosphoric acid shortage will be very serious indeed to this State within a year or two.

The diminishing quantities of superphosphate now available to us can be quickly expressed by noting the amounts used over the last four years in this State. They are as follows:—

Year.	Tons.
1939-40	265,000
1940-41	144,708
1941-42	180,000 (approx.)
1942-43	120,354 (to be made available to us)

We have gone from 265,000 tons down to 120,000 tons, and as I mentioned earlier, without fertiliser—particularly without phosphoric acid—this State is not agriculturally rich. We are also very concerned with other aspects affecting production, and feel that in certain Commonwealth spheres there has not been a complete recognition of the peculiarities affecting this State's production. We have found considerable overlapping in Commonwealth administration, particularly that affecting food production, and manpower. Had the Com-

monwealth embarked on its food production scheme by, firstly, measuring the total needs of the Commonwealth, civil and military, and then given the job to the States to do, it would have been done. It is within the ambit of the States' Government services, and within their ability. They have the organisation to implement it, and have their local Parliaments to supervise it. The stage is very quickly being reached when a further fall in production of some primary commodities will seriously embarrass the war effort. That position should, therefore, be rectified as quickly as possible.

The lack of manpower in rural activities in this State is a serious matter. I flatly contradict the statements made by the member for Pingelly in his criticism of the Manpower Officer, Mr. Stiffold, who is now responsible for most of the manpower activities affecting all industries. The hon. member said that Mr. Stiffold was a man entirely unsuited for the position. It was a most unwarranted and unfair statement.

Mr. Berry: It was characteristic!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Stiffold is an officer with wide experience in State administration. Through the years he has built up a tremendous knowledge of State industry and activity. He is not merely able, but more important, he is energetic and any problem with which he is presented receives energetic consideration. A report was recently laid on the Table of this House to show some of the prospective difficulties associated with manpower, and the difficulties associated with industry starvation unless some of the aspects connected with manpower difficulties receive urgent attention. Wrapped up in food production and in the difficulties associated with feeding troops here and outside Australia, and in sending supplies to England, is the manpower problem. Every effort is being made to provide the food production needs that are now required by the Commonwealth Government. It can only be by the military authorities acknowledging the importance of the producer that we can get some easement of a very difficult situation. We found that in some industries, prior to the present constituted manpower authorities, no progress could be made. There is today the closest co-operation between the Deputy Director-General of Manpower and the military authorities, and I think members who have experienced difficulties in the past

will admit that there has been an easement of the burden they have felt in recent months.

To give an idea of what is expected of Australia in food needs I will mention some of the goals we hope to achieve during the current twelve months. In 1941-42 we produced 6,600 tons of butter, and hope to reach 8,000 tons this year, an increase of 21 per cent. Of cheese last year we produced 550 tons, and hope to produce 700 tons this year, an increase of 27 per cent. Last year we produced 27,000 tons of beef, and this year hope to produce 29,500 tons. With respect to lamb and mutton the production last year was 22,000 tons and we are hoping to get 26,000 tons this year. We produced 4,000 tons of pig meats last year and are hoping to produce 6,000 tons this year. Those figures cannot be reached unless there is an acknowledgment by the military authorities, and those responsible for the release of the appropriate manpower, of the importance of that production. It cannot be obtained by depriving industry of manpower; we cannot in any way hope to increase production by that means.

If we can get adequate notice of prospective prices and of the likely demand for the produce we are aiming to grow, and if the whole business is properly planned, we can expect to achieve our end. I have no fears in that regard. The producers are most anxious to meet every situation that may arise. Families have stinted themselves, and women, girls and boys have in the country districts made, a remarkable effort to meet the urgent needs in specified foods. It is necessary not merely to exhort growers to be patriotic, but to exhort them also to do their utmost to meet the manpower situation in the very important avenues of food production. We can internally reduce the amount available to civilians of some commodities, but the best solution would be to formulate a plan for the employment of suitable labour that is not wholly used in the military sense, but could be more efficiently used in a civil sense in food production. There will still be some export from this State: indeed large quantities of commodities will be shipped from Western Australia. We shall thus be helping to meet the food position in England. It is interesting to note that with respect to some commodities in the early stages of the war Great Britain agreed to take ma-

terials from this State, and from the other States of Australia, far in excess of her need at that time. She has honoured her contracts. I think the position has now been reached when every vessel available for the shipment of food supplies to England should be filled to the utmost capacity whether there is a price reduction or not.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think they are being filled now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Great Britain signed contracts with all the Dominions, even though in some cases that meant exceeding her requirements and paying a greater price than that at which the commodities were available from sources nearer home.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That does not apply to wool.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the matter of export lambs and other commodities that Australia will have an opportunity to export, we must keep an eye upon what can be absorbed in Britain and use every facility possible to get those things there. During the sittings of Parliament held earlier in the year there were serious complaints as to the difficulties confronting the dairying industry because of depleted manpower and the threat to production, and because of the slaughtering of calves and female cattle which should have been kept for later use in the industry. Last year, however, was a record one in dairy production in Western Australia. In butter fat production our figures were 11.3 per cent. in excess of those for the previous year. We increased our cheese production by 37.9 per cent. in spite of manpower difficulties. It seems from records available through the offices of the Department of Agriculture that although numbers of female cattle have been sent to market owing to labour disabilities there is every possibility if the manpower position eases, of our improving even on last year's figures.

The labour position in some industries is less happy than in connection with the dairying districts. There is a 70 per cent. reduction in seasonal labour for shearing according to the latest figures; indeed there has been a 60 per cent. reduction of all pastoral labour available. In the dairying districts a 25 per cent. reduction has been recorded, in wool-growing areas a 45 per cent. reduction, in viticulture a reduction of about 40 per cent., and in vegetable growing

in the metropolitan area a reduction of 25 per cent., and in country districts a 40 per cent. reduction. In the poultry industry there has been the severe curtailment of 70 per cent. reduction. In the case of flax and the newer and smaller industries, as well as in the case of tobacco, the position is very difficult and is likely to remain so. We hope it will be possible to use female labour for those jobs that are suitable for women.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I understand women did a good job last year in the flax-growing industry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Where women have been employed they have done excellent work. In many instances there was a prejudice against the employment of girls in industry, but it appears that there are several spheres in which they have proved particularly useful.

Mr. Thorn: In some instances the producers could not provide the conditions laid down.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A review of the manpower position from the Commonwealth angle was made in this morning's paper. The position is so serious that the national requirements demand considerable sacrifices. There is no one to whom an appeal can be made to do more work or to spare more labour, nor is there anyone to whom an appeal can be made if it is felt that the best use is not being made of the services of those who have been taken. That is one of the difficulties of the situation. As is the case with many other people, I should like to be assured that the labour that is taken from industry is not wasted in these times when it gets into military circles. Very severe condemnation was expressed recently by the Minister for the Army, Mr. Forde, of a statement by the Premier of South Australia, who said that administrative and office staffs attached to military organisations had assumed tremendous proportions. While Mr. Forde severely criticised Mr. Playford's statement, I consider there is ample room for an immediate survey, and an assurance to the public that the manpower, of which we are being depleted, is not merely fully occupied but is being directed into suitable avenue within the control of the military authorities.

Mr. McDonald: There is plenty of room for such a survey.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so, and that applies to all States. It is very

difficult to obtain a true picture of the wastefulness that exists, unless there is such a survey. If they could be assured that the men who have been taken from civil life are now being usefully and adequately employed in military and other spheres, I feel confident there would be an even greater effort on the part of the civil population to make still further sacrifices respecting manpower. Where skilled seasonal labour is essential, such as in shearing operations, we have in recent months had the advantage of close co-operation on the part of the military authorities. Hundreds of men have been released. Difficulties have been associated with the release of men. Some did not desire to be released while others, who were made available, were not placed in the particular industries for the purposes for which their release was sought.

Summing up the position regarding food production and the manpower position—they are very much interwoven—it will be readily seen that there are many difficulties to be overcome if we are to achieve the peak production that is so necessary in view of all the circumstances. There must be tolerance on the part of the Army regarding the availability of physically fit men for urgent civil needs, if such men are available and can be released for periods that will not interfere with their military training. Suggestions have been advanced that an Army labour corps should be created from which all rural labour, seasonal or otherwise, could be drawn. That and other similar suggestions which have been put forward have not made much progress. It seems to me that, if such a battalion were formed, it would then be possible for men to be released temporarily for work in rural or secondary industries, according to the needs of the moment. Such a move would certainly effect a change in the restiveness that obtains among the public in this regard. We have reached the peak in rural activities at which an embargo must be placed on the calling-up of men from country districts. The position is very serious.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is indeed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nevertheless we read in the Press statements regarding the necessity for more manpower being made available. We are told that further sacrifices of manpower must be made. Interwoven with that phase is the question of the efficient use of the manpower already

called up. In reviewing the season it is a pity to think that circumstances, both economically and from the point of view of hostilities, are such that we cannot fully enjoy the effects. Generally speaking, the present would otherwise have been the best season experienced by Western Australia for very many years. The season has been good throughout practically the whole of the State. Members will appreciate the fact that with the advent of such a good season there have been many attendant worries. For instance, in the pastoral areas never before has the prevalence of the blowfly pest been so apparent or its depredations so pronounced. In portions of the northern areas represented by the member for Pilbara and the member for Roebourne 30 per cent. losses have been experienced with the ewes.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That refers to ewes that have been struck.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; to actual losses of ewes due to the blowfly.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That applies to the total flock.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To the ewe population of the flock. One difficulty in that part of the State, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, is the impossibility of mustering. A ewe, when struck, lies down under a bush and the animal cannot receive attention. As there cannot be a muster, the ewe remains there and dies. The absence of labour for such a purpose is a contributing factor to very serious losses in parts of the North-West where the blowfly has not formerly constituted a menace.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Could the ewes not be crutched?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The labour for that is not available.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And crutching does not affect the position regarding the strike.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: These are some of the special difficulties due to the season and the manpower position.

Mr. Warner: Are not the sheep being affected by new types of fly?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are several different types of blowfly, and I hope the one that has wrought so much damage in the Gascoyne and the Murchison never reaches the southern areas, for it is very virulent.

Next I shall refer to difficulties associated with price-fixing. Many justifiable complaints have been voiced in that regard by all sections of the public, and it has been amply demonstrated that many pitfalls exist to confound anyone charged with the administration of price-fixing arrangements and decisions. One difficulty experienced in Western Australia is that for a long time there was reluctance on the part of those charged with price-fixing responsibilities to confer with others who had a better knowledge of the subject and of phases to be understood and measured when prices had to be fixed. I refer particularly to problems associated with primary commodities. We have in Western Australia at present the spectacle of imported potatoes costing £22 10s. a ton and being retailed at prices accordingly, while local producers are paid only £11 per ton—that being the fixed price—for potatoes that cost pounds more than that amount to raise at any other time during the year. That position brought about a reduction of the present crop by hundreds of tons at least, because the growers did not know where they stood regarding prices.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Some of the local potatoes, I suppose, will be sold as the imported article.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The position is difficult. The argument has been advanced that metropolitan washed potatoes, which always command £1 or more compared with the price paid for old potatoes, should receive more consideration and the only answer we have had is that the growers are allowed 1s. per cwt.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If they got the average price, the position would not be so bad.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are many difficulties.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Could not your department control that position?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it could, but the department is not allowed to do so. The opinion was expressed by one or two members that State Governments and departments were anxious to pass on their responsibilities. I shall show later what we have tried to do with a view to securing to the public cheaper supplies.

Mr. Thorn: Is the Commonwealth octopus responsible for the potato position?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The position in Western Australia is due to shortage of production when supplies were available in other States. Unfortunately we had to accept the produce of other States, bringing about £13 10s. in those States, and pay £22 10s. per ton for it here. An instance was brought under my notice recently by departmental officers of the obstinacy of price-fixing authorities in connection with fixing the price of poultry. Many members represent districts in which poultry is produced. There are many people who are prepared to pay large sums for cockerels and gobblers of a particular type suitable for table use—heavy birds—but the price-fixing authorities have decided that the price shall be fixed by the pair, not by the pound. Consequently, if a particular particular breed or type which was not in existence in 1939—that is the basic year for prices—comes on the market, the grower can receive only a special price per pair, and that is a maximum price. On the same day we may find that, on account of scarcity of supplies, white Leghorn cockerels will bring the maximum price, too. That is where we are drifting. But the price-fixing authorities will take no heed. How are lamb, beef, mutton and pork purchased? Those lines are bought on the hoof but sold by the pound at a fixed price.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And so is poultry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it is! A subject mentioned by the member for Pingelly and the member for Katanning in their contributions to the debate was the zoning of cream. The member for Pingelly said he was surprised to learn that National Security Regulations had been issued stipulating that all farmers must send their cream to the nearest factory. He said he did not know how such a regulation could have been passed. This is the unfair part; he apparently considered it a suitable opportunity to express his views about a desire on the part of the State Government to pass on responsibility to the Commonwealth. So also did the member for Katanning. I understand also that a member of another place made comments over the air blaming the Government for trying to get the Commonwealth to do something that should not be done at all. What are the facts? I think those members spoke without being in full possession of the facts, rather than maliciously, but it is

something about which they might have been more careful, and with which they might have made themselves better acquainted before offering comments of that sort.

Mr. Watts: In the first place, it came from a member of your own party.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A resident of the district of the member for Williams-Narrogin approached the Commonwealth authorities to try to get an overriding decision reached by the Commonwealth because the State would not do it. That gentleman wrote to the Commonwealth in these terms—

I wish to present the case to compel all farmers to forward their cream to the nearest factory and to reduce the number of factories manufacturing butter in this State from 14 to eight.

Mr. Doney: Who was the writer?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have the letter; Mr. Corrigan wrote to the Minister for Commerce expressing those sentiments. The Minister for Commerce forwarded the letter to me for comment. I wrote to the Minister as follows:—

The zoning of cream so as to cause farmers to forward their supplies to the nearest factory is one which, though at first sight it may appear most desirable, is fraught with a number of practical difficulties particularly in this State. It would be unjust to force farmers to send their cream to the nearest factory if, by so doing, they had to accept a lesser amount per pound for their produce. If compulsory zoning of cream is introduced, it also will be necessary to compulsorily fix the price which all factories must pay for butter fat.

I am advised also that the agent for Mr. Corrigan in this city made representations to support Mr. Corrigan. The matter of a decision would depend upon the recommendation of the Deputy Director of Organisation of Industry, Mr. Taylor. That gentleman interviewed me and said he would make no recommendation of such a character unless he had the support of the State Department of Agriculture. Therefore it is unfortunate that members should seize on matters of that sort in order to complain that the State Government is endeavouring to get the Commonwealth to do something that the State does not care to do, seeing that the statements are not in accord with facts. I have all the papers, and members may see both letters if they so desire.

There has been much comment in the Press and in this House on what is known as the Scully wheat plan.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not like your answer the other day. I do not think it was to the point.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot help that.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You should supply the facts when you are asked a question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I always supply the facts. I do not know what the hon. gentleman is referring to.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You know what the charges on wheat are. I found out from another source, and your departmental officers must know, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is referring to the answers I gave to his question?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The answers contained all the information I had at the time, and were in accordance with the facts.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You do not know the handling costs on wheat?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I got them from another source.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member asked what reduction in handling charges would be made in respect of wheat in a particular pool or delivery. That is not the point I am dealing with. I wish to discuss the Scully wheat plan which has received comment favourable and unfavourable in this Chamber, and has received much criticism and favourable comment in many parts of Australia.

Mr. Watts: Is it a plan?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There has been a lot of confusion so far. Last week the Commonwealth Government asked the States to permit their officers, who are dealing with these matters, to confer with the Australian Wheat Board on the difficulties associated with implementing the plan. Those officers met and, although the difficulties were pointed out to the conference, there was not an officer or Minister present who could give a decision upon any one of the difficult points presented. Therefore, in spite of our having been asked for all the difficulties to be presented, we so far have not had one answer to the very pertinent questions asked. There are many difficulties associated with the implementation of the scheme, whose merits or demerits I do not wish to discuss. The member for Irwin-

Moore took me to task in the Press some time ago because the figures I used, according to him, were out of date.

Mr. Berry: They were!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They were right up to date. I will quote the figures for 1941-42, which will bear out my statement. Someone has been misleading the hon. member, but I do not think it has been Joe Watson, as one member suggested. Regarding the plan, I do not know much more about it than what has been published in the newspapers.

Mr. Doney: I do not think you like it very much, do you?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is well to know the relative groups of production that are affected by the 3,000-bushel scheme.

In the 3,000-bushel limits which are disclosed by the figures of the No. 5 Pool of last year, it is shown that 50.5 per cent. of our growers produced 16.5 per cent. of the State's wheat, and the balance of 49.5 per cent. produced 83.5 per cent. Of the 33,968,000 bushels delivered to the No. 5 Pool of last year, all but 16.5 per cent. was delivered by people who produced over 3,000 bushels—which is a very interesting point.

Some of the questions asked of the Commonwealth Wheat Board or the officers of the Commonwealth Department of Commerce were of this nature: Where a farmer and his wife and his sons elected to come within the scope of one license for the purpose of registration, would they be permitted to have separate licenses as individual farmers for the purpose of the 3,000-bushel scheme? Again, a farmer and his wife have a property each. The husband, working both properties, has at his request been issued a joint license. Can he now obtain a separate license in order to qualify for 3,000 bushels on each property? If so, from what date will the transfer be accepted? Another farmer has his own property, and leases two other farms. Is he entitled to 3,000 bushels at 4s. on each property leased? A landowner has his property leased to two separate farmers, and as rental gets say, 800 bushels. Does the landowner get 4s. per bushel for his 800 bushels, and in addition is each share farmer entitled to 4s. for the first 3,000 bushels? If not, what is the apportionment?

Where a farmer has separate blocks of land in the names of several of his family,

but has in the past worked the property in his own name as one farm covered by a joint license, will he be permitted to cancel the joint license and take out separate licenses to permit each member of the family to obtain the 3,000 bushels? Does the first 3,000 bushels at 4s. apply to a registered farm, or to each of the several license holders? A farmer with 900-acre license crops 300 acres himself, share-farms 300 acres, and rents the balance of 300 acres. Will each be paid 4s. per bushel on the first 3,000 bushels?

Those matters are highly important to farmers in Western Australia. Leased properties are often conducted on a bushelage return as one, and who is to get the 4s. and who is to get 2s.? Is the leasehold to be on a 4s. bushel or on a 2s. bushel? This affects many properties farmed as leaseholds. I have the list of these questions. The arrangement materially affects share farming and cropping farming in this State. So far we have no answers to any of these questions; at the conference there was no one present who could answer them. Therefore we are still without a decision. I will leave rural matters there.

Mr. Marshall: And that is the efficiency of the Federal authorities!

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the Budget will be introduced shortly, I do not wish to encroach on general financial matters. The recent Loan Council decisions can be said, so far as this State is concerned, to be satisfactory. Our approved loan expenditure is £927,000, which, with care, will meet this financial year's requirements. The Commonwealth asked that from all States' anticipations for the time being deficit provisions should be left out of consideration of loan programmes, to be considered at a later stage. For this State £30,000 was included for semi-governmental borrowings. Local authorities will apply to the Minister for Works for approval in that connection. Although it was decided officially that there could be no money available to this State for farmers' debt adjustment, eventually £26,000 was granted for that purpose. Our programme originally submitted to Sir Harry Brown provided for expenditure of £1,017,000. This amount was reduced by Sir Harry to £827,000. We believed this reduction to be too drastic, and submitted to the Loan Council that a further amount of £100,000 should be allowed, subject to nego-

tiation with Sir Harry Brown. Our proposition was accepted, and Western Australia was the only State to secure from the Loan Council an increase on the amounts recommended by the Co-ordinator. Only a small loan raising was needed, because of carry-over. It was also expected that £120,000 would be obtained from loan repayments. Thus £231,000 was all that was required to finance a total approved programme of £927,000. It was agreed that only works of defence value, or otherwise imperative, would be undertaken by the States, so that the fullest possible resources would be available for war purposes.

In connection with uniform taxation I will merely quote the figures for the purpose of record, because there will be a review of such matters within a few weeks, when the Budget is introduced. Uniform tax collections for this year will amount to £2,546,000, less the Hospital Fund Tax of £275,000, which will mean that it will be necessary to show in the Estimates for this year Hospital Fund Tax instead of its going into a separate fund. Being a commitment from Revenue, it will leave the net result from uniform taxation at £2,271,000, which, as members know, will be paid in monthly instalments. From entertainments tax this State collected in the vicinity of £97,000 last year. We expect to receive from the Commonwealth the average of the last two years' collections, or in the vicinity of £98,000. I do not wish to intrude on matters that will be discussed when the Budget is presented, nor do I wish to analyse loan spending, for I know that the Premier himself hopes at least to deliver to this House the statement in connection with Loan Estimates.

I do not know whether I would be given any latitude if I mentioned such things as black-outs; but whatever there is associated with the inability to use all the facilities we might use in peace-time, I consider that the prime motive for consideration is the safety of the nation. I am of the opinion that if we are not permitted to use our normal facilities which would ease our movements at night, there is an urgent need for revision of very many things which are creating dangers to pedestrians and to traffic in these days.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister cannot enter into the merits of black-out itself.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish to say merely that the closest examination

is necessary, firstly to avoid anomalies, secondly to avoid dangers—

Mr. Berry: In any sphere whatever.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS:—because of the inconsistencies not altogether of the restrictions as regards amenities which we might otherwise have at night time. If we can get consistency; if, in spite of military needs, we can get a recognition that the civil population has important rights; if the inconsistencies of the military authorities were to be ironed out, there would be less dissatisfaction. The complainings are not merely querulous complainings of people who are suffering injustice and making sacrifices; they are valid. I am hoping that very shortly the matter will be reviewed. The appropriate Minister in the Federal sphere—

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Minister will not pursue this subject much further.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Lazzarini is expected here very shortly, and I hope he will be able to smooth out at least some of the anomalies. All of us at this time are particularly concerned that no person, whether in the military or the civil sphere, should benefit from circumstances of war. We hope that no person is exploiting the war circumstances.

Hon. N. Keenan: There are thousands of them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Nedlands, in an almost inaudible interjection, says there are thousands of such persons. I am afraid there are many people who are hoping the war will continue. The Federal authorities directing the war effort should ensure that no person, whether in the civil or the military sphere, should make a profit or bring anything to himself from the war effort.

Mr. Hughes: How is it to be stopped? Is a man now receiving twice his pre-war salary to continue to receive the higher salary?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It depends upon the nature of the services he is rendering. If the war situation is not being exploited—

Mr. Hughes: Some people are getting three times the salary they are worth.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Our greatest need is to build up public morale and confidence. I am not at all satisfied with the presentation of news. I do not refer to

the correct accounts of happenings or to the records of disappointing results that we have experienced, but to the tendency of those in charge of the censorship to put over something because it might be readable. The newspapers are the guides of public opinion and the builders of public morale.

Mr. Marshall: God help the public if the newspapers are its guide!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Each day the people are influenced by the matter they read in the newspapers.

Mr. Thorn: Definitely.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No matter what the headlines may be, no matter in what terms the news is couched, deny it or not, the newspapers exercise a big influence on the outlook of the people. But who today has faith in the published news? Not very many! The people have had so many disappointments that they prefer to listen-in to Tokio or Saigon in order to get the correct version. They prefer reading the inch in the column devoted to the German or Japanese version to reading the version released by the Australian censor.

Mr. Berry: That is correct.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Until we get a proper perspective in that respect, we shall continue to destroy public confidence. One of our greatest needs today is to build up public confidence not merely in respect to war news, but in respect to what the conflict is about, what we are fighting for and what our ideals are. Because the published version creates some weird reactions in the public mind, the public cannot be blamed. During last week there were one or two happenings at Broome and the two published versions were somewhat remarkable. The Tokio version was as follows:—

It is claimed that at Broome 14 transports were sunk and two set on fire and that at Darwin barracks were badly damaged. Three Japanese planes were shot down, it is stated.

The Australian version, under big headlines, is as follows:—

Broome attacked. Bombs fall wide. No casualties. Few planes involved.

We always notice that enemy bombs fall in a marsh or in the bush, while all our bombs hit the target! There is something required in the type of news liberated by the censor under the authority of the Government, probably directed by high command of some sort.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is an insult to the intelligence of the people.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it is! I made an extract recently of something that was said by Demosthenes 300 years B.C. It reads as follows:—

It is shameful, Athenians, that we deceive ourselves by allowing all disagreeable news to be suppressed, that we listen only to the pleasing speeches of our leaders, and thus we delude ourselves by putting off everything that is unpleasant.

Mr. Hughes: That is conclusive proof of reincarnation!

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: What Demosthenes said will stand much longer than will some of the statements of the member for East Perth. We all realise that all the news cannot be published immediately. It might be to the advantage of the enemy if all the truth were told all the time; but, if the Japanese version is incorrect, it should be made to look ludicrous as soon as time permits. If ours is correct, the German or Japanese version should not be published with it.

Mr. North: Of course, this is entirely a matter for the Federal authorities. We have no say in it at all.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But surely we can express ourselves!

Mr. North: We have no right to interfere.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The newspapers should be given the opportunity to disseminate authoritative statements. Never mind what the other fellow says. But while we play with public fancy, while we pander to certain sentiments, while we misrepresent the position, we are contributing to the lowering of public morale. We must insist upon a greater degree of mental honesty, and we must encourage a greater appreciation of it. The Press, with directness, and with subtlety, too, should in every way possible help our cause by answering such questions as, "Is it worth while?" "What is it all about?" "What are the alternatives?" Every day in every column available for the purpose, the greatest prominence should be given to such points. What solace is there for the mothers and wives and families who have already been bereaved as a result of the war? They wonder what it is all about. If we have faith in our cause, surely we can, through the media available to us, give some inspiration and create a national spirit that is very

sadly lacking in many spheres today! I hope that of its own volition the Press will make use of the opportunities available to it and that, where it has no choice, there will be some saner outlook in the expressions of opinion given to it and the news released to it by the censor.

I fear that I have delayed the House long enough. I hope that in the coming weeks there will be better news and that it will be the truth. I hope that we shall not have accounts of what are merely skirmishes presented as major battles. I hope that we shall have news of major battles treated with some little modesty rather than have skirmishes presented to us as major victories. I trust that the results achieved in the northern parts of this Continent, through efforts of this Continent, will not merely be worthy of this nation, but will assist substantially in hurling the enemy back to where he belongs. We must not lose sight of the tremendous assets the enemy controls. Everything—including cocoanut oil, rubber, tin, iron, petrol and other things that a warring nation needs—is in the hands of Japan, to the north of this Continent. Our task will be very hard, but I am sure that if all of us make personal sacrifices and personal endeavours, we shall much more quickly attain the summit of the achievement we are so anxious to reach.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan): Having listened with interest to the informative speech by the Minister for Lands, and to the many and varied speeches delivered since the Address-in-reply debate began, I do not intend to delay the House long. There are, however, several matters about which I wish to express my opinion as the representative of a large and substantial electorate. In the last day or two a leading article appeared in the morning newspaper which, as has been stated this afternoon, formulates and moulds public opinion. That article took Parliament to task for its lack of interest in the activities of the State. It attacked Ministers and said the Opposition lacked courage and even the members themselves were criticised, it being suggested that they did not give that attention to their job which was required of them. All this criticism arose out of the fact that the Government used the powers given to it under the National Security Regulations in connection with an increase in the basic wage. Members are aware that the increases

due to workers were not received by them and they, through their organisations, sent appeals to the Commonwealth Parliament and to the State Government, as a result of which, in due course, the Premier acted upon authority given to him under the National Security Regulations.

Mr. Sampson: And made a very great mistake!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That seems to me to be the principal reason for the comments in the leading article in "The West Australian." The Government is criticised for having used powers given to it to see that justice was done to the workers of Western Australia. Since the Industrial Arbitration Act was amended in 1930 to provide for quarterly adjustments, cost of living increases that had accrued were made available to workers until early this year. In February, however, the President, in giving the decision of the court, said that it had been decided to withhold the increase for that particular quarter. The next quarterly increase was also withheld. The primary reason given by the President for this action was that he desired to check a tendency to inflation. He suggested that if the increases were awarded to the workers, they would have additional spending power and that that would tend to lead to inflation. Consequently, for six months the workers did not receive the increases they expected, and which would in the ordinary course of events have accrued to them, up till the quarter ended last June.

Figures made available by the Government Statistician in July, and submitted to the court for consideration, disclosed that there was a substantial increase in the cost of living amounting to 2s. 10d. for the previous quarter. The three previous increases had each amounted to 10d. Members are aware that the cost of living has increased to a considerable extent. The price of vegetables is almost prohibitive, particularly for those on the lowest wages. Peas have been from 10d. to 1s. 3d., and the common cabbage has been priced at 8d. a lb. Those vegetables were consequently out of the range of the basic wage earners. However, they are forced to feed their children, the basis of whose diet is vegetables. The increased prices were reflected in the cost of living figures for the quarter ended last June.

This is the only State in which the cost of living increases have been withheld. National Security Regulations were introduced in February by the Commonwealth Government, dealing with the pegging of wages, the fixing of rents, sealing of prices and so on. It was found that in the other States increases in the basic wage to meet the cost of living were automatic, and no discretionary powers were vested in the court. Consequently when wages were pegged, it was definitely understood that the cost of living increases were not to be affected. Workers in the other States benefited by the increases as they accrued, but increases were refused by the court to workers in this State. Consequently the time came when the workers of Western Australia, through their industrial organisations and workshop committees, complained bitterly about the fact that the increases to which they were entitled were not accruing to them. They made representations through their union organisation, and sent the secretary to Melbourne and Canberra to point out to Ministers the discrepancies and to have the matter remedied.

Eventually an order was promulgated and, in turn, the Premier of the State acted under that order. As a consequence the workers have received only what they are entitled to—nothing more and nothing less. My attitude was that they were denied that to which they were entitled, and I did not care how they got it, whether through a Commonwealth or a State authority. I adopted that attitude because a grave injustice was being done. That matter is probably the basis of the leading article published in "The West Australian" of Saturday morning last. The paper, in that article, takes the Opposition to task because it has not the courage to test the position, and so on. Towards the end of the article, a solution to the whole problem is put forward, and that is that a National Government or composite Ministry be established. That having been done, all the sins of omission of the past will be wiped out, and everything will be plain sailing.

Mr. North: There was also a letter in "The West Australian" on Monday.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I am coming to that. That was the complaint of the leading article. It referred to the passing of money to the pockets of the workers, and said it was

"political stunting." It also suggested that if three or four men from the Opposition were elected to a composite Ministry, everything would be all right. The article concludes with these words—

This done, there would be no further occasion for political stunting, and the reconstructed Government would be in a position to govern confidently and far-sightedly on non-party lines. Nothing more effective than this could be devised to counter the daily trend towards unification and to restore the dwindling prestige of the State Legislature.

That was published on Saturday, and on Monday some genius wrote to the paper and signed himself "Interested." Whilst he used the phrases employed by the leading article on the previous Saturday, in which the Opposition is charged with not having courage, the remarkable thing is that this person signs himself "Interested" and has not courage enough to sign his name to the letter. He attacks the State Parliament for drift during recent times, for slackness, inefficiency and so on. He then takes to task the representation of the State Parliament at Loan Council meetings, Premiers' conferences, etc. He says that the war situation and party interests over-ride everything else, and that there should be a burst of State indignation at all Commonwealth gatherings.

Mr. Marshall: Did he not say anything about the second front?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: No, but he criticised the representatives at those meetings. It can be said that our State Parliamentary representatives have acted as courageously—

Mr. Marshall: As he did, anyhow!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: —as representatives from any of the other States. Our representation would not suffer by comparison with that of other States. No matter what outburst a State Premier had made at the Premiers' Conference or Loan Council meeting, he could not have affected the position one iota.

The Minister for Mines: The Premier made a pretty good speech at the meeting I attended.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Yes, and I have no doubt that the Acting Premier strongly put the point of view of this State, and that he did it with a good deal of ability.

Mr. North: It was one vote against seven.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: In this case it was not one vote against seven. The State Premiers were unanimous on matters affecting

their vital welfare. It cannot be said that the representatives of the other six States were voting against Western Australia in particular. The last paragraph of this letter states—

The suggestion for remedying this extremely serious state of affairs is the proposed "formation of a composite Ministry."

That is the proposition put forward by the leading article. Towards the end of his letter "Interested" goes on to say—

Is the necessary material available for such a new administration? The article speaks of the Government's being "contemptuous of Parliament," and again "that no keen sense of injury" comes from members, and still further that the "Opposition has not been courageous enough to force the issue." Not much material here! The position is, however, desperate. An election is out of the calculation, primarily because of the war position, but mainly because new men are not likely to be attracted to an obviously dying institution.

Just fancy that!

There seems to be only one means of revitalising the general administration from within the Parliament as at present constituted. That is to remove three men from the tail of the Government and replace them by the three Independents.

Mr. Wilson: What did he mean by the tail?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The letter continues:—

This would provide a new Minister representative of the metropolis (Mr. T. J. Hughes), one for the agricultural industry (Mr. H. T. Berry), and one for the mining industry (Mr. L. F. Kelly). This is a desperate remedy, but is the State not in desperate need?

It certainly is a desperate remedy! After all his criticism and talk about inefficiency and so on, and his suggestion of a composite Ministry, that is the desperate remedy which "Interested" put forward to overcome the difficulties confronting this State Parliament. All members of this Parliament do their duty to the best of their ability. Certainly the war has overshadowed many of our problems, but the Premier of this State and the Government, and members, too, have had their say in that respect. The Government has offered our State Government machinery to the Commonwealth, and we will all do our utmost to assist. That offer was made by the Premier at the outbreak of the war. The Government wishes in every possible way to assist the Commonwealth in its task of organising Australia on a defence basis. I myself, and other members, have in various directions rendered what assistance we could. We have,

through our party meetings, urged that the Premier should, at the Premiers' conferences and Loan Council meetings, put forward this State's point of view in regard to matters appertaining to the welfare of Western Australia, and particularly in respect to the manufacture of munitions, finance and other questions of vital importance to us. That has been done with the idea of influencing the Premiers' Conference and the powers that be in other places to give this State greater consideration.

This Parliament is not a dying institution. If it is, it will be interesting to know what will take its place. Western Australia will require some Government machinery if it is to function. My experience in this State Parliament and with Federal authorities, is that it will be impossible to have both Commonwealth and State machinery. It would be a tragedy if there were no State Parliament to deal with matters of interest to Western Australia. We have also to be careful that we do not get too much civil service administration. Both parliamentary representatives and Ministers should see that too much authority and power are not delegated to civil servants. If it were so we would not have government of the people by the people but government by bureaucracy. In the Federal sphere, months go by without any Commonwealth Minister visiting Western Australia to deal with problems that arise here. Should any matter crop up respecting which there is any variance from the normal procedure, a decision cannot be arrived at locally, and the question has to be referred to Canberra for determination. I have had many such experiences, which apply not only to the Defence Department but to other Commonwealth departments as well. In those circumstances Ministers of the State Government must exercise great care to ensure that control by the Civil Service does not usurp the functions of the Government itself, which is so often the position in the Commonwealth sphere. Ministers must see to it that their policy prevails.

During the course of the debate much has been said about the vice squad in relation to liquor reform and so forth. I shall not labour that matter because the position has been stressed by other speakers. Many points of view prevail, regarding the vice squad, and in the course of his speech the member for East Perth analysed the problem

in detail and gave utterance to a statement to which I am sure he did not give adequate thought. Generally speaking the hon. member is logical in his arguments and his reasoning is sound. The words he used were—

The vice squad will not solve the present problem—

He was referring particularly to the presence of young girls in hotel lounges, to their association with soldiers and so on.

—for it was a biological problem which could not be solved by theological precepts.

For the life of me I cannot understand how any question of theological precepts could enter into the consideration of the actions of members of the Police Force in going to hotel lounges, interrogating young girls who appeared to be under 21 years of age and who are under the influence of liquor, who are examined for health reasons and ultimately appear before a magistrate who may consider it advisable to place them under observation for a month or some other period. No theological precept is involved in that issue! On the other hand, the present represents an abnormal period, and very often young girls are carried away by their feelings.

Mr. Hughes: But the trouble regarding hotel lounges did not arise with the commencement of the war.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That is so, but I think the hon. member's statement was wrong. I feel certain he does not believe what he said. I am sure the new regulations will have a deterring effect upon the drinking that goes on at present at cabarets and other functions. Of course this type of conduct has been indulged in for the past 20 years or so and drinking at dances has become a custom. Even among the best people are to be found instances of flasks being taken to dances in hip pockets or liquor being brought along in motor cars.

I regret that even young women coming from the best of homes have been under the influence of drink at dances and other functions, and, in fact, the position has reached the point where if one does not take drink one is regarded as not acting in conformity with the spirit of the party. To me it is amazing that the drink problem associated with dances and so on has not been tackled long ago. Experience in connection with functions conducted in the Trades Hall at Midland Junction has dis-

closed the fact that it is almost impossible to obviate this trouble. Always someone brings along liquor and it is extremely difficult to cope with that phase. The custom has grown up over the years, but in view of the provisions embodied in the new regulations I trust that they will remain in force for many years to come, particularly as they affect drinking in hotel lounges, dance halls and at functions generally.

During the course of his speech, the member for Toodyay referred to the difficulties experienced by school children in the Midland Junction and Guildford districts. Schools in West Midland and Bellevue were closed and the young children were dispersed. Some went to Middle Swan, and on representations being made to the Education Department a school was opened at Swan View to alleviate the position. Some of the older children have been going to Darlington for their tuition. Infants have travelled from West Midland to East Guildford, while others go to Middle Swan. Generally speaking, conditions have not been satisfactory, and I understand that at this juncture the military authorities have no objection to the re-opening of the schools I refer to. I have been informed that those in control of civil defence matters are the ones to determine when schools should be re-opened. In my opinion the time has arrived when at least some of the schools should be availed of so that the difficulties under which parents, and particularly young children, have been labouring may be obviated.

Only this morning I heard the announcement over the air that in Queensland the Government is lifting restrictions formerly imposed upon school children and is permitting very young children to return to schools. In Western Australia the Government has endeavoured to keep such youngsters at school as much as possible. The member for Toodyay, the member for Guildford-Midland and I have made representations with a view to securing relief for the younger children, who have had to walk from two to four miles to school. In some instances where a bus was available for transport purposes, if the accommodation of the vehicle was overtaxed the children who could not secure seats were required to walk the full distance to school. The time has come when the

Minister for Education should make representations to the Civil Defence Council on the matter. I understand that the military authorities have no objection to those schools being reopened.

The Minister for Mines: Is not there a bar?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I know there was a bar in respect to the Perth Girls' School and the Midland Junction State School, but I understand the military authorities have no objection to those schools being reopened.

The Minister for Mines: If that is so, one would think that the military authorities would advise the Civil Defence Council.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The Civil Defence Council might have been advised. However, I am merely stating the attitude of the military authorities.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Is not the Air Force after the East Perth school now?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Notwithstanding the needs of the military authorities, the educational needs of our children are of very great importance. In Melbourne some time ago the Minister for the Army stated that no additional schools would be taken over for military purposes. If that rule applies in eastern Australia, it is reasonable to suggest that it should apply also in Western Australia. A protest should be entered by the Minister for Education against these schools not being put to the use for which they were originally intended.

I have a complaint to make regarding the shortage of firewood supplies. I know the Minister for Labour has this matter in hand. The Bassendean Road Board has experienced difficulty in its area. Firewood was promised for the district, but the supply made available was altogether inadequate. The position is already serious and, with the further calling up of manpower, the difficulties will be accentuated. The matter is one for organisation to ensure that urgently needed firewood supplies are made available. Surely this Parliament and Government should take active steps in a matter that so closely affects the welfare of the whole people, particularly elderly people and children! Many citizens are scrounging around trying to get firewood in order to carry on their cooking. Numbers of them have been unable to obtain any wood at all from merchants, and have been compelled to go out with prams and bicycles and find a

little wood to meet their needs. The matter is certainly one that should be investigated in order that the difficulty may be alleviated.

The people are again being urged to contribute to a war loan. An Austerity Campaign is being inaugurated. People are being asked to save and invest in the war loan and in war savings certificates. If conditions of austerity were applied generally it might be a good thing, but the people who are urging others to practise austerity are in fairly good positions, and I wonder whether they practise austerity to the same degree as many of the people I represent are compelled to do. We read in the Press that Mr. J. L. Webb, the Chairman of the Commercial Bank of Australia, appealed to people to save and said we must insist upon getting full value for every pound of public expenditure. Sir Alexander Stewart, Chairman of the Trustees, Executors and Agency Co. Ltd., said that public spending would have to be cut to the minimum, and that a simpler life would have to be led and every penny saved. During the period of the depression many people had to live very austere lives, which extended over many years, and now, notwithstanding the increased costs of commodities, they are again asked to live austere.

What we need is a levelling up of incomes. Let the people on the lower rungs be brought up and not be compelled to live such austere lives as they have had to do in the past. If there was a better distribution of the world's wealth, there would be no need to appeal for the practice of austerity on the part of the workers while other people, after paying high income taxation, are still able to get enough clothes and commodities to enable them to live in reasonable comfort. The workers have never been in this happy position and, if they have to live more austere, their difficulties will be great. There will be great need for post-war reconstruction, but can anybody visualise what the conditions will be after the war? Are we to have a continuance of the old evil of unemployment, with men, women and children ill-clothed, badly housed and often in want? Many of our people are badly housed. Some of the garages in Perth are palaces compared with the homes in which many people have to live.

What will be the condition of Europe and the rest of the world after the titanic struggle has ended? When the people of

the world are impoverished and prostrated, when the nations of the world are exhausted, what system will come into vogue? Will the communistic system of the Soviet extend through Europe, or will a system of socialism be ushered in? Will the system of capitalism, which is so strongly entrenched in the United States of America and still well entrenched in Great Britain, continue to operate? I assume that the post-war plan will be conditioned by the available resources and the particular form the government takes. These are matters of vital importance.

It is difficult to visualise what conditions will prevail. We can only judge the future by experience of the past, and the experience of the past leads us to believe that, unless the people themselves take a keen and active interest in their own affairs, the conditions that existed during the depression will continue after the war is over. It behoves the people of the world, who are being called upon to pay, suffer, deny themselves and work excessive hours, to take a much closer interest in the affairs and government of their country so that they may mould an effective policy and enjoy a greater share of the world's wealth.

I do not wish to detain the House longer, realising how very difficult it is to follow after a speech like that of the Minister for Lands, who delivered a highly lucid exposition of many things that the State has done and is doing. Certainly the members of the Government, and more especially the Premier and the Minister for Lands, have used every possible effort to try to induce the Commonwealth Government to realise the need for looking after Western Australia, both from the point of view of military protection and that of industrial development. Let me quote an instance that occurred at the very outbreak of the war, when the Commonwealth Government offered to contribute £15,000 towards the expansion of the Midland Junction workshops. In response, the Premier made available £30,000 or £40,000 as a supplement towards the completion of the annexe now at Midland Junction. That building cost £50,000 and we have heard during the course of this debate that its activities have been slowed up through delay in receipt of necessary supplies. The same position has existed at the Welshpool factory.

Members of this Party have urged the sending of representatives to the Eastern States with a view to securing more contracts for Western Australian industries, so that this State may obtain its share of Commonwealth defence expenditure, and thus be enabled to build up industries. If we have no industries in Western Australia, our boys now coming on will in due time be unable to learn a trade or else be forced to migrate to eastern Australia. I know scores of young fellows who learnt trades here but went to eastern Australia, married and settled there. All this because of the fact that Western Australia had no industries in which they could be employed! It is true that a factory has been established at Welshpool, but the activities there are not such as please me. There is a hope that the Welshpool factory will give employment to a few thousand men, but the war may be over before that position is reached. I hope the Commonwealth Government will help Western Australia in the direction indicated. Again, we have other representatives in the Federal Parliament. We are all aware, of course, that the Prime Minister himself represents Fremantle. It is the duty of all our Federal representatives to ensure that this State shall receive its reasonable share—we want no more—of the contracts that are being let and the work that is being made available as the result of defence activities, so that industries may be established here.

Mal-administration and exploitation in connection with contracts let by the Air Force have been referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle. He quoted an instance where a manufacturer tendered for the supply of sea-markers at a price of 13s. 7d. He explained to the Commonwealth officers that he could supply one description of sea-marker at 13s. 7d. and another description at 14s. 7d. Eventually he was paid 15s. 7d. to supply a portion of the contract. The remainder of the contract was let in Queensland at a price of 25s. 5d. So there was a clear rake-off of £30,000 or £40,000 for the Queensland manufacturer. We have brought this case to the notice of the Prime Minister and of the Federal Minister concerned, but so far we have not made much progress. I repeat that unless we can develop industries here, our young men and young women will be forced to leave the confines of Western

Australia and seek employment in the Eastern States. Our Ministers have the task of impressing the Commonwealth Government with the need for giving to this State a fair share of Federal industrial expenditure. I thank members for their patient hearing, especially as I follow the eloquently delivered speech of the Minister for Lands.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

BILLS (18)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Labour.

- 2, Mining Tenements (War Time Exemptions).

Introduced by the Minister for Mines.

- 3, Motor Spirit and Substitute Liquid Fuels.

Introduced by the Minister for Industrial Development.

- 4, Water Boards Act Amendment.

- 5, Road Districts Act Amendment.

- 6, Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections).

- 7, Goldfields Water Supply Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

- 8, Dried Fruits Act Amendment.

- 9, Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

- 10, Bush Fires Act Amendment.

- 11, Albany Reserve Allotments.

- 12, Perth Dental Hospital Land.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

- 13, Jury (Emergency Provisions).

- 14, Administration Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

- 15, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.

- 16, Criminal Code (1913) Amendment.

- 17, Licensing Act Amendment.

- 18, Supreme Court Act Amendment.

Introduced by Mr. Hughes.

House adjourned at 4.59 p.m.