

dingoes and other pests coming south. That portion of our State is far too important to be ignored at the present time. We must see that the sheep and cattle growers there receive all the consideration that we can possibly give them, if we want to save the rich North-West, which is of such importance to every taxpayer and every person in Western Australia. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,700,000.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

House adjourned at 6.18 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 31st July, 1945.

	PAGE
Premiership of Western Australia, resignation of Hon. J. C. Willcock	25
Questions : High Schools, as to attendances	28
Pastoral properties, as to probable foreclosures	28
Country water supplies, as to proposed Great Southern scheme	29
Mica, as to supplies for electrical appliances	29
Country schools, consolidation—(a) as to omnibus services, (b) as to effect of housing priority	30
Commonwealth and State, as to financial relationships	30
Housing, as to costs under Commonwealth scheme	31
Pardelup Prison Farm, as to acquiring additional land	31
Police, Mt. Barker, as to office and court room	31
Grasshopper menace, as to payments for ploughing	32
Greenough Electorate, panel of inquiry nominated	32
Chairman (Temporary) of Committees	32
Sitting days and hours	32
Government business, precedence	32
Committees for the Session	32
Bill : Supply (No. 1), £2,700,000, all stages	32
Address-in-reply, second day	33
Leave to continue	39

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

PREMIERSHIP OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Resignation of Hon. J. C. Willcock.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [4.32]: I would like to inform the House that since its last meeting I have waited upon His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor and tendered my resignation as Premier and Treasurer. I remember that on taking over the office of Premier in this State, nearly

nine years ago, I expressed the desire that when—I left this position the decorum, dignity and general conduct of the Assembly would not have deteriorated or, on the other hand, that it would have been upheld in the traditional way of this Parliament. While, of course, there is not a close political friendship between opposing parties in this House, there has been mutual respect and esteem, even though there are differences of opinion. That was the position while Hon. P. Collier was Premier, and also when Sir James Mitchell was Premier. While they had strong political differences, whenever it was necessary in the interests of Western Australia and to conduct the business of the House in a way which would reflect credit on the Parliament of Western Australia, those leaders got together and arranged the business so that it was carried out to the mutual satisfaction of themselves and with the dignity and decorum that have always characterised the carrying on of the Parliament of Western Australia.

I am not particularly happy in surrendering the seals of office. After having been in the position for a considerable number of years one does not like to feel that the strain is becoming too great, and undoubtedly I have felt the strain of a continued period in office of 20 years, on and off, and one cannot do that with the energy and enthusiasm that one likes without its taking some toll. My general health has suffered a little, and my many friends told me, when I announced that I was going to resign from my position, that they thought it was a very wise move on my part. It is a satisfactory move to me. I decided on this step about a month ago, and after a month's cogitation and experience in having decided to make this move I feel much more satisfied than when I first made the decision. In these circumstances there are no regrets of that kind.

Before taking leave of the House, as Leader, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the courtesy and consideration that you have extended to me at all times. I also want to thank my colleagues, on the front bench particularly, and all the others on this side of the House for, what I term, the wonderful support and consideration they have given to me as Leader. I have never asked any one of my colleagues, or member of the Party to do anything which he has not readily consented to do even

though perhaps it might have meant some serious personal inconvenience to him.

To the Leader of the Opposition, not only the occupant of the office at the moment, but to his predecessor, I say this: There has always been mutual confidence and consideration between us with regard to each other's viewpoint, and also, as I have said, in regard to coming together for the purpose of getting the business done properly. If there was anything of any consequence that might be doing I never failed to take the Leader of the Opposition into my confidence so that he would know how to arrange his business, and the business of his Party in such a way that it would be satisfactory to him.

To the Leader of the Liberal Party I extend the same thanks. I think the member for West Perth once said to me that John Willcock was a very hard man to quarrel with. I think I can reciprocate those remarks in regard to the hon. member because it is not very easy to quarrel with him. He has strong and decided views which he puts forward with the utmost clarity. But he never lets political differences interfere with personal associations and that is, I think, as it should be because we are all here to give expression to our political views and our principles; but we are here for another purpose which is, perhaps, bigger, and that is the advancement of Western Australia. While we take the viewpoint, whether we are in opposition or on the Government side of the House, that it is the welfare of the State which stands pre-eminent in our thoughts and actions we will at least continue to hold the respect and esteem of the people of Western Australia.

Before I conclude I would like to congratulate my successor on his assumption of office. We have all had experience of him. We know that he is capable and has the energy, enthusiasm and all other attributes which go to make a successful leader. I think he has made such a reputation for himself in this House that if there is to be a change the new Premier will be acceptable to the people of the State because of the experience he has had and the energy with which he has carried out his duties. To my friend on my left who is undertaking the duties of Deputy-Leader of the party, I extend my congratulations on his advancement. The

job of deputy is not a very easy one. I had it myself for some years and it seemed that sometimes the hard work came to the deputy and the glory to the holder of the office. However, I know, so far as I am concerned, that my friend has been fair and loyal in his outlook and that whatever he can do to make easier and better the task of the Leader of the House he will do with that vigour which characterises all his actions.

To the new Minister who will assume office in a day or two I also extend my congratulations. He has been in the House for many years—about 24—and is well known to us all. He has all the attributes that we admire and he has that great energy that will enable him successfully to carry on the administration of whichever department he is entrusted with. To the officers of the House, to the "Hansard" staff and all those who go to make up the institution of Parliament itself, I convey my appreciation. I have no complaint of any type on leaving office as I leave it to-day. All have been exceptionally considerate and for my part I have endeavoured to reciprocate the warm feelings that have been displayed towards me. It makes the task of leaving a position such as the one I have held ever so much easier when one has experienced the manifestations of such goodwill since the original announcement was made a few days ago of my intended resignation. I have nothing more to add, Mr. Speaker, except again to thank you and the officers of Parliament for their great courtesy and consideration during my tenure of office.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.42]: Naturally it is with some pride that I accept the position and the honour that my colleagues have conferred upon me. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and the House, that at the moment I feel a very humble person, more particularly when following, as I do, a man of such wisdom as our ex-Leader. I realise the responsibilities of office and the greatness of the task that has been entrusted to me by my colleagues, but I feel assured that, no matter what is the term for which it may be my privilege to hold this office, it will be a remarkable recompense if, when I vacate it, I do so with manifestations of the same respect and with the same reaction from my colleagues and opponents

alike, as our friend the ex-Premier does today. He has made for himself a name in the national sphere and I have been privileged to attend with him more than one Premiers' Conference and Loan Council gathering. I know that his solidity and his wisdom have marked him as someone to be reckoned with at the round-table conferences of representatives of the several States.

I understand that a record has been created by our colleague for period of service in the State as a Minister of the Crown, and he has in that time certainly established a record for statesmanship. I am sure that all members will agree with me that Mr. Willcock has not only earned the goodwill of all, irrespective of which side of the House they may sit on, and that when he leaves the Treasury Bench there will be left a very noticeable gap that will be apparent to all. For my part I hope that I will be able worthily to follow in the footsteps of the two previous Premiers of this State, with respect to their work and their control of the business of the House. In that task they have gained very many friends and, having regard to that aspect, they have left us with a record that I hope can be continued and that the goodwill and friendly feelings existing between the several political parties, which characterised the proceedings of this House in the attitude of members generally and their behaviour compared with other State Parliaments, will remain with us.

It will be possible, I hope, for me to continue to enjoy the relations, between members, that our predecessors have given us the inspiration to achieve. I appreciate the action of my colleagues. They have entrusted me with a very great position of responsibility and trust, and I appreciate the fact that I enjoy their confidence. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that as time goes by, they will have no doubt whatever that their trust has in no way been betrayed.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [4.45]: It is with genuine regret that I and my colleagues view the hon. member for Geraldton vacating the Premier's seat on the Treasury Bench. We all agree, both personally and politically that he has been a very good Leader of this House. He has been fair and impartial, preserving the dignity and decorum of the House. He has always helped

to maintain the high standard which has been set and which I hope will always be maintained in this, the Parliament of Western Australia. We would be false to our beliefs if we did not admit that it is with regret that we see the member for Geraldton leave his seat as Premier of this State. Circumstances have compelled him to retire from his high office and I can only express the hope that the result of his retirement will be that he will be long spared to give us his company and occasionally advice and assistance in the future, with his health fully restored. While we have not always been in agreement with him, he has rendered great service to the State and we trust that he will soon be fully restored to health.

To the new Premier I have already conveyed my warmest congratulations. I now make them publicly. I cannot with sincerity wish him a very long term of office, so I shall not do so; but I will express the wish that so long as it is his fortune to hold office, he will find satisfaction in the work he does in his achievements on behalf of the State of Western Australia. I think that that will be a reward much finer than a long term of office. I trust that he will direct his efforts to that end and that he will attain the end that was sought so much by his predecessor in office. I and those associated with me will do our best to maintain the cordial relationships that have existed in the past, and I think we shall not have much difficulty in maintaining them on that reasonable basis.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [4.49]: My colleagues and I share the general regret that has been expressed with regard to the retirement of the ex-Premier from office, and that that step has been occasioned because of the state of his health. He has indeed led this House with dignity and has largely contributed to the standing which I think this deliberative Assembly holds in the minds of all thoughtful people in our State. The retiring Premier has always extended courtesy to all members of the House and has also given consideration to the representations that have come from members sitting in Opposition, with the result that I think it can be said that the Assembly of Western Australia has functioned as a truly representative gathering on behalf of the people in fashioning the legislation and the measures

which have been passed by it. The retiring Premier has a certain disarming modesty which is at the same time very attractive, but it also serves in a way to conceal his great ability, and we desire to testify our full appreciation of the real capacity which he has always shown. I wish, with my colleagues, that he may be long spared to add his wise counsel to the proceedings of this House, and that he may have many years in which to enjoy improved health and the consciousness of a distinguished period of service to our State.

I extend my congratulations to the new Premier. He has proved his capacity and he has qualities which enable him to enter, if I may say so, with confidence in the high office he is about to fulfil. He has special knowledge which can be, and will be, of great value to our State. I hope that during his term the primary industries will be enabled to advance, because upon them every section of our State depends for its prosperity. I hope his period of office will be distinguished by the advancement of our State and the welfare of all the people in it. May I, too, extend my good wishes to the Deputy Premier, who also has demonstrated his capacity in this House. I am sure that he will be an invaluable first mate to the new pilot when he sails the ship of State.

To the new Minister I also extend my congratulations. It will be a popular appointment. I asked him what portfolio he was going to take; I thought it might be that the present Minister for Mines would move up and that the new Minister might take his place. If he does become Minister for Mines then I hope that in the creation of money he will not allow the pen of Mr. Reginald McKenna to supersede the drill of the Western Australian goldminer; but I wish him every success in his new portfolio and I hope and believe that the deliberations of this Assembly will continue to proceed on a basis which we all think they should attain. I assure the new Premier, the Deputy Premier and Cabinet Ministers of our sincere desire to assist them in their task. I believe that in the future in particular co-operation will more than ever be the keynote in Parliamentary institutions if we are to achieve the best for the people. In that

spirit we congratulate the holders of the new offices and assure them that our co-operation will at all times be forthcoming.

QUESTIONS.

HIGH SCHOOLS.

As to Attendances.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Education:

What is the number of students who attended each of the High Schools of the State—(a) for the year ended 30th June, 1939, and (b) for the year ended 30th June, 1945?

(a) Albany High, 228; Bunbury High, 363; Eastern Goldfields High, 307; Northam High, 311; Perth Modern School, 486.

(b) Albany High, 345; Bunbury High, 400; Eastern Goldfields High, 317; Geraldton High, 256; Northam High, 441; Perth Modern School, 672.

PASTORAL PROPERTIES.

As to Probable Foreclosures.

Mr. TRIAT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that a pastoral trading firm in this State appears to have lost confidence in the wool industry and intends foreclosing on several pastoralists?

(2) Can he advise whether it is true that the firm concerned is prepared to take about one-third of the money owing in full settlement of the debts on properties which appear to have good prospects if carried on?

(3) Is the action regarded as meaning that there are serious doubts in connection with the wool industry, as the firm which has built its wealth to a large extent on the wool industry is anxious to get rid of some of the less profitable accounts?

(4) Is it realised what a menace wholesale abandonments of large areas will constitute to all adjoining properties, particularly in connection with the menace of dingoes?

(5) Is there any practical action to be taken by the Government to prevent the eviction of pastoralists on long established properties, and if so, would he state what action is possible?

(6) Will he advise the House of the action he has taken in the matter, if any?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) I do know that the action of the pastoral firm referred to has been interpreted to mean that it has lost confidence in the wool industry, and it is true that several pastoralists have been given notice of the closing of their accounts and permission has been sought to sell the properties.

(2) The figures which are known to me suggest that a tremendous reduction is acceptable to the firm in full settlement of the debts on the properties affected.

(3) It seems clear that the action being taken is to close accounts which in the judgment of the firm are bad accounts so far as returns are concerned.

(4) Yes. This position is fully appreciated and the Government is taking some action in this connection.

(5) and (6) Being very closely connected with pastoral activities in many sections of its administration, a member of the Government called on the Superintendent for Australia and the State Manager of the firm concerned and pleaded for utmost consideration and the cancellation of the intention to foreclose. The only reply received was that consideration would be given, and the only subsequent information available to us suggests that a review is being made of the prospects of carrying on the accounts. In addition to this action, the Government has had scrutiny given to other ways of arranging finance.

COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Proposed Great Southern Scheme.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

Have the details of the suggested comprehensive water scheme for the agricultural districts along and east of the Great Southern Railway been sufficiently developed for him to state—

(a) Whether all farms situated between the Great Southern and the Narrogin-Kondinin-Merredin railway lines will be connected with the scheme?

(b) If not all farms, can he indicate what farms will be served, and which ones will be excluded?

(c) If it is proposed to serve only farms within a specified distance of the proposed pipe line, what is that distance?

(d) Will farmers whose properties lie between the Wellington Dam and the Great

Southern Dam be rated regardless of whether they use the water or not?

(e) If so, within what distance of the pipe line will such rating apply?

(f) Will all farms within the area mentioned in (a) be rated regardless of whether the owners use the scheme or not?

(g) If not, within what distance of the pipe line will the rating apply?

(h) Will farmers whose properties are rated be charged additionally for water supplied?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) and (b) Yes.

(c), (d) and (e) These matters have yet to be decided, but will be set out in the Bill which will be introduced to authorise the construction of the scheme.

(f), (g) and (h) The rates and charges to be levied for excess water will depend to a large extent upon the measure of financial assistance received from the Commonwealth Government to which a case will shortly be presented by the State Government. The advisability of continuing the "Fixed Annual Rate" (Holding Fee) which is imposed under existing Water Acts in addition to the acreage rate, is under consideration. The decisions arrived at will be indicated in the above-mentioned Bill.

MICA.

As to Supplies for Electrical Appliances.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Is he aware that firms in Western Australia manufacturing electric bath heaters and other electrical appliances are unable to obtain supplies of mica as are essential for such manufacture?

(2) Is he aware that there are stocks of mica in Western Australia but that releases of same, even in small quantities, have been refused to such manufacturers?

(3) Is it correct that the types of electrical appliances mentioned are being imported into Western Australia and sold here because Eastern States manufacturers are able to obtain supplies of mica without delay?

(4) If he is aware of these conditions, have any steps been taken to remedy the position so far as this State is concerned?

(5) If he is not aware of the conditions, will he have the matter fully investigated?

and such representations urgently made as are necessary to conserve the interests of this State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) There are small stocks of mica in Western Australia which until very recently have been entirely required for defence purposes.

(3) Some electrical equipment has recently been imported into Western Australia, but I am not aware that Eastern States manufacturers can obtain supplies of mica without delay.

(4) and (5) Yes. The Director of Industrial Development recently made representations to the controlling authority to obtain releases of mica to local manufacturers who have sufficient stocks of Nichrome wire to commence immediately production of household electrical heating appliances. As a result, it is anticipated releases will be made in the very near future.

COUNTRY SCHOOLS CONSOLIDATION.

(a) *As to Omnibus Services.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many omnibus services for the consolidation of country schools have been authorised for which vehicles are not yet available?

(2) Has the Department made any representations to the Federal authorities in respect of the release of vehicles suitable for conversion to school omnibuses where difficulty is being experienced by contractors in obtaining the necessary vehicles, and if so, with what result?

(3) If not, will he undertake the making of representations to assist in this direction?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Six school omnibus services have been authorised but not yet commenced owing to delay in securing suitable vehicles.

(2) No.

(3) Army vehicles are made available for disposal, firstly to Commonwealth Departments, secondly to State Government Departments, and then to the trade. The present position does not warrant the making of representations.

(b) *As to Effect of Housing Priority.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What effect will the announcement by the Federal authorities that housing will be given first priority in respect of labour and building materials have on the progress of urgent building for the Education Department?

(2) Will there be any considerable delay in making additions to schools in various parts of the State where such additions have already been approved?

(3) Will it be possible to proceed with schemes for further consolidation of schools in cases where such consolidation requires additions to the school to which the children will go?

(4) Will he make a statement before the introduction of the Estimates indicating departmental intentions, and informing the House as to representations that have been made to the Federal authorities in regard to these matters?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) This matter is being inquired into so that the actual position may be ascertained.

(4) Yes.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE.

As to Financial Relationships.

Mr. WATTS asked the Premier:

(1) Was the resolution of this House regarding Federal and State relationships despatched to the Prime Minister as required by the resolution, and if so, what reply was received?

(2) Has this State made any representations to the Grants Commission for an increase in the proportion of uniform taxation paid to Western Australia? If so, with what result?

(3) If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes. Reply dated 24th October, 1944, was as follows:—"I desire to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 17th October, 1944, conveying the terms of a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia on 20th September, 1944, in regard to the financial relations between the Commonwealth and the States and concerning post-war schemes for the organised mar-

keting of export primary products. The representations made in connection with these matters will be given consideration."

(2) No.

(3) The States Grants (Income Tax Reimbursement) Act of 1942 provides that if the Treasurer of any State to which payments may be made under the Act is of the opinion that the payments are insufficient to meet the revenue requirements of the State he may submit to the Commonwealth Treasurer a claim for an increased payment. As this State has enjoyed a revenue surplus in each year since the States Grants (Income Tax Reimbursement) Act has been in operation it could not have been claimed that the payments were insufficient to meet the requirements of the State.

HOUSING.

As to Costs under Commonwealth Scheme.

Mr. WATTS asked the Premier:

(1) Has he particulars of the costs of erection of four and five-roomed weather-board and brick houses, respectively, under the Commonwealth Housing Scheme in the several States of the Commonwealth?

(2) If so, what are the costs in the various States?

(3) Do these costs include the price of the land and sewerage where this latter is available?

(4) What steps are being taken to reduce costs of such building in Western Australia?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) The latest information available is up to April, 1945, and is as follows:—

Metropolitan Area—New South Wales—Brick: 4-roomed £1,300; 5-roomed £1,400; timber: 4-roomed £940; 5-roomed £1,070. Victoria—Brick: 4-roomed £995, 5-roomed £1,095; timber: 4-roomed £785, 5-roomed £910. Queensland—Brick: nil; timber: 4-roomed £937, 5-roomed £1,005. South Australia (semi-detached)—Brick: 4-roomed £630, 5-roomed £720; timber: nil. Western Australia—Brick: 4-roomed £919, 5-roomed £977; timber: nil. Tasmania—Brick: nil; timber: 5-roomed £920.

Country houses have not been included because the wide variation in costs dependent on the location of the houses do not admit of proper comparison.

The above figures are for complete building, including all prime cost items, fencing, paths, outbuildings, fittings and all work within the site but do not include cost of land, any proportionate charges for utility services to the site, architects' fees or administration charges.

In Western Australia a charge of 2½ per cent. on the capital cost of the building is made to cover architectural fees and supervision costs during construction.

(3) The cost of the land is not included but sewerage is where it has been possible to provide it.

(4) Many steps have been taken to reduce costs, the principal ones being to obtain additional manpower of better quality than was hitherto available—additional supplies of material to obviate delays in supply—re-designing of houses to provide standard types with the object of providing for repetitive building and the adoption of building by day labour.

PARDELUP PRISON FARM.

As to Acquiring Additional Land.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

(1) Are proposals under consideration for adding to the area of land at present held and used for the Pardelup prison farm?

(2) If so, what land is it proposed to acquire, and to what use will the land be put?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) and (2) No.

POLICE, MT. BARKER.

As to Office and Court Room.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

(1) What steps are being taken to provide a central police office and court room at Mount Barker?

(2) If a decision has not yet been arrived at, when is it expected that one will be made?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) A site for a central police station is being investigated by the Public Works Department and a report is awaited.

(2) Answered by (1).

GRASSHOPPER MENACE.*As to Payments for Ploughing.*

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What amount has been paid for grasshopper ploughing from 1st September, 1944, to the 31st May, 1945?

(2) Can he state the total acreage on which—(a) payment was made at the rate of 5s. per acre, (b) payment was made at the rate of 2s. 6d. per acre?

(3) Of the amount paid at 5s. per acre, what amount was paid—(a) on abandoned or unoccupied properties secured to the Agricultural Bank, (b) on abandoned or unoccupied properties secured to associated banks or other private creditors, (c) on Crown lands?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £6,184 4s. 4d.

(2) (a) 14,849, (b) 19,775.

(3) (a) and (c) £3,712 7s. was paid to ploughing contractors; (b) nil.

GREENOUGH ELECTORATE.*Panel of Inquiry Nominated.*

MR. SPEAKER: As no other means appear to exist for determining whether a vacancy has occurred in the representation in this House of the electoral district of Greenough, I have decided to follow the practice in such cases of the Speaker of the House of Commons in nominating a panel of three members to assist me in determining this question. I nominate the Minister for Justice, the member for Nedlands and the member for Mt. Marshall with myself to be the panel and to report its decision to the House.

CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

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

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the Premier, ordered: That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier, ordered: That on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, Sessional Committees were appointed as follows:—

Library.—Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Education, and Mr. Seward.

Standing Orders.—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Doney, Mr. North, and Mr. Withers.

House.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. McLarty, Mr. Needham, Mr. Stubbs, and Mr. Wilson.

Printing.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Thorn, and Mr. Triat.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,700,000*Standing Orders Suspension.*

On motion by the Premier, resolved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the passage of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [5.18]: I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the services of the year ending on the 30th June, 1946, a sum not exceeding £2,700,000.

The Supply asked for is required to carry on the business of the State until the Estimates are passed by Parliament. The Estimates are at present in course of preparation and will be presented to the House as soon as possible. The amount of the Supply now

required is a total of £2,700,000, as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	2,200,000
General Loan Fund	200,000
Treasurer's Advance	300,000
	<hr/>
	£2,700,000

This is the same allocation as was sought in the No. 1 Supply Bill of last year, and the expenditure for the first three months of the last financial year from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, excluding Special Acts, was £2,200,545. The provision of £2,200,000 for this year should, therefore, be sufficient for approximately three months. Interest and sinking fund payments are included under Special Acts and therefore do not require authority under the Supply Bill. Loan expenditure is still restricted by war conditions, but it is hoped to expand developmental works as soon as manpower and materials become available. The advance to Treasurer is to meet special payments that, for the time being, cannot be charged to votes or accounts. Last year it was estimated that there would be a surplus of £1,673 and the actual surplus was £4,490.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

The House resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [5.22]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1946, a sum not exceeding £2,200,000 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £200,000 from the General Loan Fund and £300,000 from the Public Account for the purpose of temporary advances to be made by the Treasurer.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

All Stages.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced, passed through all stages without debate and transmitted to the Council.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 26th July.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin) [5.25]: I had anticipated that, owing to the unusual and extremely interesting circumstances prevailing over the weekend, and of course today, the House would have adjourned early, but the new Premier—apparently with the concurrence of our old friend the retiring Premier—has decided that it must be “business as usual.” Therefore, since the Leader of the Opposition is unfortunately a little indisposed, I must address myself to the House in the usual manner upon current problems. I regret that I have to do such a thing today, because current problems are always contentious, and up till now the atmosphere has been a particularly friendly one, and I will not feel at all easy in disturbing it. Before getting on to that there are two obligations which must be observed. I have to compliment Hon. Frank Wise on his advancement to the most responsible post in this State. I do that gladly, and without the slightest reservation, as I have been for a long period on terms of close personal friendship with that gentleman. I have—as I think most of us have—a very deep respect for his qualities: as a matter of fact, I cannot think of a single essential qualification for Premiership that he lacks. He is, therefore, without doubt the logical and proper choice for the office of Premier of this State.

Mr. Watts: You might say he is the “wise” choice.

Mr. DONEY: I concur in that. His past experience and his conduct as a Minister of the Crown and as Deputy Premier give grounds for anticipating that he will be a sound, fair and wise Premier. I hope and believe that he will give due regard to the constitutional rights of Western Australia. I would like to repeat those words, because I want them to sink in. I do not think there is any need for emphasis there, but I am going to some trouble to indicate that I wish to emphasise that sentiment. I know very well—as do we all—that the Premier has a strong sense of duty, but despite that it is still our duty, on this side of the House, to watch him and his Government and to offer criticism at such times as they deviate, if they do—being human, I assume

they will do so every now and then—from the straight and narrow path.

The Minister for Mines: What makes you think that?

Mr. DONEY: My next word is one of very real and deep regret that Hon. J. C. Willecock should have found it necessary, on grounds of health, to resign the Premiership of this State. I have and we all have a very full respect for Mr. Willecock and I imagine we have also not a little affection. We cannot help liking him. There is something inherently decent and gentlemanly about him, a quiet dignity that we do not find in every Premier of every State. Far from it! I can truthfully say that, as the Leader of the House, he has been incomparably the best we have had during my 17 years of membership in this Chamber. Many indeed have been the occasions when I have found it necessary on behalf of my colleagues and myself to approach him with the object of changing to some extent the Orders of the Day so as to accommodate the wishes expressed by this side of the House and, if I have had anything at all approaching a good case, invariably he has acceded to the request.

This can be said with truth, too, that no Premier better than he has been able to introduce a Budget in understandable terms. No Treasurer, either, has done better than he in explaining the Budget. I have had experience of an odd Premier here and there who has submitted a Budget without having the faculty of explaining it, but I have never known Mr. Willecock to be at a loss when making budgetary explanations. And here is a most unusual tribute also; I have never known him, in the House or outside, to express himself in anger. I have not found introduced the tiniest touch of acerbity, which is remarkable. I seem to be writing the hon. member down as a most unusual person; I must add, too, that he has had a remarkable faculty for keeping his team together.

I have to follow custom and compliment the Minister for Works upon his advancement. That hon. gentleman has very many fine qualities that fit him not only for the duties of a Deputy-Premier, but also for those devolving upon a Premier should the occasion ever arise when he is given that

big responsibility. A compliment is also due to the member for Murchison upon his elevation to Ministerial rank. I congratulate him upon it. I suppose the proper time to compliment him will be in a week's time or thereabouts when there is no doubt that he has jumped over the intervening hurdle and is set as a Minister. What I should very much like to see is the member for Murchison acting as Treasurer to the Government. That would be extremely interesting. Whether the hon. member would then need to violate that monetary conscience of his, I do not know, but I am inclined to think that like others of his strange banking views who have suddenly found themselves elevated to ministerial rank, he would find himself adopting such monetary orthodoxy as the new situation demanded.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Alberta has not.

Mr. DONEY: The hon. member to whom I am referring does not live in Alberta.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is a fact in Alberta, nevertheless.

Mr. DONEY: The fact might be there, but I do not know that this is the proper occasion on which to deal with the politics of Alberta. There will be ample opportunity for the hon. member to dilate upon the subject later in this debate. I would pass my compliments, also, to the member for Victoria Park. He has been somewhat snowed under in the general shower of compliments that have been extended this afternoon. Anyhow the hon. member won the seat at his first election attempt, and won it by a very large majority, not that his victory gave any pleasure to members opposite, but possibly it was not unwelcome to members on this side of the House.

The Minister for Works: It did not give much pleasure to some members on your side, either.

Mr. DONEY: I am inclined to be with the Minister there. The member for East Perth, in moving the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, spoke interestingly, but nevertheless I could agree with very few indeed of his conclusions. According to the Press report, he insisted that reconstruction plans must be fully prepared so that they could be effectuated immediately upon the discharge of a soldier following the cessation of the war in the Pacific. Why he added those last few words, I do not

know. Let me tell the hon. member that his insistence in respect of this matter will bear no fruit. In any case, what was his point in asking that the implementation of reconstruction plans should be delayed until after the war? Having regard to the length of time that the Commonwealth Government has been working on those plans, they should be ready now. They should be ready at this moment, so that soldiers who have been discharged and soldiers in their turn as they are discharged, may be accommodated with farms or other occupations in order that they need not be hanging around uselessly, losing time, money and temper. That is not too much to ask.

Members will recall that something like two years ago we entertained in this building a deputation of Parliamentarians from the Old Country and from Canada. Those delegates one by one talked to us, and we had the privilege, following each speech, of asking questions. Naturally we availed ourselves of the opportunity. The Leader of the Canadian delegation was Mr. Ross. When Mr. Ross resumed his seat after having made a most interesting speech, I asked him in respect of soldier settlement whether in his country there was any scheme in operation whereby soldiers who had at that time been discharged could, without delay, be put upon farms of their own. He replied in the affirmative and, if my memory serves me aright, he proceeded to say that in Canada legislation was being used that was applicable to the position that arose in regard to soldier settlement after the previous war. That legislation had apparently been amended in certain details, and Canada was then carrying on under that old legislation. I do not know whether there is any reason—I cannot see that there need be—why we here in this country could not have done the same thing instead of having to put up with delay that can only be described as dangerous and very regrettable indeed.

The trouble with the Commonwealth Government, as I see it, is that it already has too many boards, too many committees, too many departments, too many sub-departments and so-called experts and that sort of business, with the natural result that the various reports and views of those bodies are not dovetailed at all, and consequently there is the chaos that we are ex-

periencing now. I might submit this question: What is being done with that series of very fine reports submitted to the Commonwealth Government by the Rural Reconstruction Commission presided over by our Premier who was then Minister for Lands? I am sure the hon. gentleman and his colleagues were proud indeed of the report, and we all know that it has been very loudly applauded right throughout this country, but I do not know that it is having a great deal of effect upon returned soldier settlement planning by the Commonwealth Government. As a matter of fact, it is one of those questions about which we know extremely little, despite its great urgency. It and housing are the two most important subjects we have to deal with. One good thing that has happened here has been the appointment, by the same Minister, of Mr. Fyfe. I cannot conceive that a better appointment could have been made for the work involved in the big task of settling soldiers on the land in this State.

Still referring to the speech of the member for East Perth, may I remark that he loudly applauded the Commonwealth Banking Bill. Had he stopped there, we might have agreed with him in some small details, but he carried on to take strong exception to the insurance companies of this country using their funds for the printing of literature which, in his opinion, distorted the facts of the banking case. I cannot help thinking that the hon. member would have been wiser had he said nothing whatever about the use or misuse of funds, public or private, because he only invites the rejoinder from this side of the House—and possibly from some of his colleagues—that the Labour Party fought the last Referendum at the expense of the public revenues and, instead of debiting that expenditure to the right account, took the extremely questionable course of debiting it, of all things, to post-war education. Why the Commonwealth should have chosen to debit the cost to post-war education, I have no idea.

Continuing his speech, the member for East Perth said the Referendum had been defeated, and it was unfortunate that this was so as it threw upon State Governments the full responsibility for the work of rehabilitation. Of course, the hon. member was wrong in saying that. Everybody is

aware that he was wrong; I thought he would have known the position. Perhaps by now some of his colleagues have told him that the cost of rehabilitation in this State, and for that matter in all the States, is a joint responsibility of the Commonwealth and State Governments, as it would have been had there been no Referendum at all or had the Referendum gone the way of the "Yesses." He said also that war factories operated by the Commonwealth Government—such for instance, I suppose, as the factories at the Midland annexe and at Welshpool—would pass to private enterprise when, instead, they would have been used, or should have been used, or might have been used to make necessary articles for civilian consumption. On what grounds the hon. member could say that private enterprise also would not make articles for civilian use or consumption, I do not know. And how indeed could any factory, for that matter, profitably carry on unless it did make articles for civilian use or civilian consumption which is practically the same thing? His view that under the Commonwealth Constitution, war factories must inevitably pass to private enterprise is answered in today's "West Australian" by the hon. member himself when at a deputation to the Minister for Works he, the member for East Perth, said, that if the Commonwealth Government did not use them the State Government might use them after leasing or purchasing. There, as I say, the hon. member fairly aptly answers himself.

The matter of soil erosion was referred to by His Excellency in his Address. Admittedly soil erosion is not yet a major problem in this State, but the fact that the position is substantially worse today than it was 10 or 15 years ago, and that soil erosion is a condition which, by its very nature, cannot be expected to cure itself with the passing of the years, indicates that a progressive worsening must be looked for, and that immediate steps should be taken if we are not to be suffering in, say, 1960 in the same way as South Australia and Victoria are today. Erosion is the most costly and the most destructive of all the agricultural and grazing menaces. But we in Western Australia, fortunately, are at that stage when corrective action can be taken effectively and at small cost. Obviously, therefore, we would be short-sighted—criminally short-

sighted—if we did not at once take the steps outlined by His Excellency.

In South Australia the condition of hundreds of farms, particularly from Port Pirie down to round about Adelaide, makes a lamentable and pathetic sight for anyone with any thought for his country or for the interests of the farmers immediately concerned. His Excellency intimated, if I remember rightly, that the Government was on the point of submitting legislation to deal with this question. I hope that is so. I assume that the Bill to deal with the question of soil erosion will take cognisance of crop rotation, the indiscriminate clearing of trees and other relevant farming factors. The most competent advisers in the world on the matter of erosion, would, I presume, be those connected with what is known today as the T.V.A., that is to say, the Tennessee Valley Authority. I have a cutting here on soil erosion. It deals with the visit to Australia of a gentleman who is, I think, the chief of the American Soil Conservation Committee. I take it he is visiting Australia with the purpose of inquiring into erosion problems here. It would, of course, be very nice if he could visit this State but since on the other side, where he will be visiting, there are soil and climatic conditions comparable to our own it should, I suppose, be sufficient if we see that we are represented by someone from the State Department of Agriculture.

I draw attention to a letter which appeared in "The West Australian" of one day last week. It was written by Mr. J. H. Aekland, a prominent farmer in the Wongan Hills district and one who, when he speaks upon farming, is well worth listening to. In this letter he deals with soil erosion on sound educational lines. I hope that the Department of Agriculture—I see the Minister is listening—will take that cutting and duly note the lessons which even it might learn from a perusal of the letter. I suppose that of all the many problems that bear heavily today upon the public of Australia that of housing irks the people most. It is so, anyhow, in this State and that is easily understood. Actually, I suppose, a job and a house would be of about equal importance. But the Commonwealth Government has said that there will be ample work for everybody always. Because of that, or perhaps because of that, the house emerges as the larger concern, for the time

being anyhow. Having regard to the position in Western Australia we need some 10,000 houses, if I know the position aright. That would be 7,000 houses because the existing number is not sufficient, and 3,000 more because 3,000 that do exist are sub-standard, making a total of 10,000 in all. The housing position in Western Australia, admittedly, is not as acute now as it was, say, one year ago, but at least it is still acute and that acuteness will be gravely accentuated in one, two, three or more months' time when the troops are discharged.

My colleague on my right and I, had an opportunity some few months ago of seeing house building going on in Victoria. They seemed to be tackling the home building job there with a considerable measure of success, and to be doing it in a sort of non-stop way. They seemed to us to have but little difficulty arising from problems affecting manpower, and substantially less than we have in regard to materials. Victoria appears to follow the community idea of erecting houses in groups of 20 or 30 so that each group is self-contained as to shops and playgrounds. This, of course, is where, and only where, there is no difficulty as to the accessibility of the building area, and there is, at the same time, a sufficiency of land. I recall, too, that over there they have gone in fairly largely for pre-fabricated houses. Some of these were, as a matter of fact, in the course of erection, whilst we were on a tour of Melbourne. We found, on questioning the householders, that they were giving a substantial measure of satisfaction.

I noticed that the ex-Premier had something to say recently in regard to pre-fabricated houses to a deputation from the A.L.P., and that "something" was such that it certainly gave no satisfaction to me. He said that the Commonwealth Government had an experimental building station but to date, he explained, no positive results had been reported from that station. To me it is a poor old experimental station if no positive results are available to the States at this late stage. I presume that the experimental station has been in existence since probably April, 1944. The officers, therefore, of that station must surely have seen the component sections in course of construction on probably scores and scores of occasions. They must, too, have seen the finished dried sections, and have seen them socketed into their

positions and must, on occasions innumerable, have seen the completed pre-fabricated building. Yet in spite of all that, according to the Premier's remark, they are still not in a position to submit a report as to the suitability of pre-fabricated houses to the conditions of emergency that exist today in all the States. I just cannot understand that. I hope that before the debate on the Address-in-reply is over someone on the Government side of the House will amplify the remarks made by the ex-Premier on that matter. The then Premier also added this—

The plant required to do this class of building is very expensive, and as the saving in time is not so great it was considered that this scheme could wait until later.

We all know, of course, how extremely difficult it is to get bricks. They are very scarce and have been for a long time and are likely to continue so for a long while yet, because brick-making is a very hard job and one entirely unlikely to be very attractive to any large numbers of men coming out of the army who may, previous to going to the war, have been brickmakers or brickmakers' assistants. I cannot visualise, in the brave new world that we are supposed to be facing, any big rush on the part of ex-soldiers to become brickmakers' labourers. For that reason I find it difficult to foresee any big increase in the output of bricks in the future.

We all know, of course, that the main attraction of the pre-fabricated house is that it very substantially minimises the brick problem and, of course, provides a less costly home. The ex-Premier said that the plant is expensive. It is not a plant, as I see it, that would involve any very intricate mechanism. In any case, if the cost is reasonably large I question whether it is larger than that in which the ordinary builder and contractor is involved. Even though the cost may be large it would be spread, in due course, over many houses so that the amount per house arising from that cost would not be very great. I have been told—I do not know whether or not it is correct—that the objection to pre-fabricated houses is that they lessen the volume of labour per house and in consequence the move is not favourably regarded by the unions. Whether that is so I am not in a position to assert or to deny. In any case that argument has weight only if the Commonwealth Government's promise

of ample work always for everyone proves to have no foundation.

Apparently the unions are sceptical on the point and, frankly, so am I. If we face the position truthfully, I think we all are. We have no faith whatever in the suggestion that has been advanced—and certainly we do not hear so much of it today as we did six months ago—that after the war work will be most plentiful. Whether that will prove to be so or not, it behoves the Government further to investigate this method of house construction and, in fact, any other method that has a bearing on time and cost and utility factors. I will admit that the Premier did not have time to go fully into all phases of this most contentious building question. On another important point, the Premier gave but the smallest amount of explanation—I refer to the vexed question of day labour versus contract. He went no further than to say this—

Up to date houses have been built under contract but it has now been decided to carry out the work under day labour.

Just that, and no more than that. I hope that before long some Government spokesman will be found who will be prepared to explain why that uneconomical decision was made. The present Government and, for that matter, all Governments, I suppose, represent the interests of the people. I ask whether the Government considers that it has met the views and wishes of a majority of the people by adopting the day-labour principle. I ask the Government whether its experience teaches it that day labour is better than contract labour? If it can satisfy critics and also itself that day labour is superior to contract labour, all right—it will have its case. If the Government cannot do that, it should straight away change back to contract labour.

Here we are at the most critical stage of our existence dealing with one of the most pressing problems confronting the State, and yet we find the Government arriving deliberately at a decision with which I imagine 90 per cent. of the people would decidedly not agree. Certainly it is likely that there will be trouble about this matter subsequently on account of delays and cost by comparison with what we have experienced in the immediate past. The Government of New South Wales, obedient, I suppose, to its announced policy, started

its building programme under day-labour conditions, but it has been the experience there that achievement was so slow and costs so very high and house-hunters so angry that it saw fit to revert to contract labour. It will be futile for the Government of this State to try to explain away the position by saying that the policy is in conformity with its platform and therefore cannot be helped. Obviously, policy has to be set aside when the country arrives at a state of emergency bordering upon a crisis. There can be no doubt that a crisis is approaching. It may be said that it is not a real crisis and to that I would reply, perhaps not; but it is likely to become a crisis within the next two or three months. There can be no two opinions on that point.

In this State we are not under Federal domination in this matter and we can please ourselves. I hope that even at this juncture the Government will see the reason for scrapping its day labour plank of the Labour Party's platform for the next five or six years, a period that is likely to elapse before we get to the end of our building programme. I have ascertained that the houses being constructed in North Perth average £920 for a four-roomed brick dwelling and £985 for a five-roomed house. The fifth room, apparently, costs about an additional £65 only. I do not know if there is anyone who can give an explanation as to why the additional cost is so little. I have observed from a perusal of comparative figures that in New South Wales a four-roomed house costs up to £900 while for the fifth room not more than £50 was added to the total expense. In those circumstances I cannot visualise anyone building a four-roomed house, yet the Government continues doing so. It is interesting to note that the group of timber-framed houses in Collic cost on the average £942 for a five-roomed house.

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that in Collic, right in the centre of the timber country, where there are ample mills and presumably plenty of well-seasoned timber, a five-roomed house built of timber costs nearly as much as a five-roomed brick house erected in the metropolitan area. Reflecting on those figures, one gets the impression that away from the mills, say at Wongan Hills or at some point along the Midland railway line or in the wheat areas, the cost of erecting

a five-roomed timber house would be substantially more than £942.

Mr. Watts: The cost would be colossal.

Mr. DONEY: Yes, it would be probably well over the £1,000 mark. I cannot see that there is anything whatever in the present building plans that gives prospect of any easement for housewives in the agricultural areas or, for that matter, for those anywhere else who have been waiting for the long-promised wonderful post-war period for the alleviation of their major worries, particularly those associated with their housing difficulties. These prices I have quoted are staggering and positively frightening. I cannot visualise people building at such cost. If they insist on having houses, they will of course have to build at the ruling prices, but I cannot see many of them being prepared to do so at such a cost. On the other hand, I can see them prepared to allow the Government to build houses that they will be able to rent in keeping with vastly lower constructional costs. In those circumstances, one can see the Government landed with a large number of unwanted houses. Then by and by when prices go down, as architects say they will, people may start building for themselves and, unless the prices of the houses already erected by the Government are substantially reduced, quite a lot of these houses will be left on its hands.

To revert to the comparison between building costs in the country and those obtaining in Perth, surely we are now at a stage in our social and political development where this vast disparity between metropolitan and country costs should be equated by legislation. I direct the attention of the Premier to that suggestion. I freely admit that such an equation will not be easy, but I assert that it can be done, not only with respect to the cost of housing but also to food, water supply, electricity, petrol and transport charges. Isolation itself defies equation although the aeroplane and the radio have to a marked degree tempered that disadvantage. I was one of those who accepted the invitation of the Premier to inspect the houses being erected in North Perth. I thought then that, having regard to all the circumstances, the job being done was quite creditable. Certainly the cost was excessive, but that was no fault of the Government. What disturbed me and always has disturbed me is the fact that no provision is ever made

in connection with the construction of these houses for big families. The houses I inspected were being erected for a family comprising the husband and wife, with one to four children. It must be plain to all that houses of that description are of no use whatever for families of up to ten people. Such families require a five-roomed or six-roomed house, with ample verandah space. The fathers and mothers of such families spend so much or, for that matter, owe so much for food, clothing and medicine that if they are to do justice to their children little money will be left for house rent. At this stage, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Premier whether, in view of the time, I may have permission to continue my remarks at the next sitting of the House?

Leave to Continue.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the member for Williams-Narrogin be given leave to continue his speech at the next sitting of the House.

Motion put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 1st August, 1945.

	PAGE
Chairmen (Temporary) of Committees	39
Questions: Housing, as to applications from Eastern Goldfields	40
Potash, as to production, costs, etc.	40
Railways, as to cost, etc., of Garratt engines	40
Munition factories, as to alternative work for employees	41
Narrogin School of Agriculture, as to use for convalescent camp	41
Wire netting, galvanised, as to making supplies available	41
Bill: Supply (No. 1), £2,700,000, Standing Orders suspension, remaining stages	41
Address-in-reply, third day	46

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

CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

The PRESIDENT: I desire to announce that, in accordance with the Standing Orders, I have appointed as temporary