

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 30th July, 1946.

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(c) No.

2, The total cost of unification was estimated at approximately £215,000,000, of which work to the value of approximately £57,000,000 was to be performed in Western Australia, and this State's contribution, including associated works, was approximately £8,000,000.

The Western Australian Government did not reject the proposal, but because of differences between the States of Queensland and New South Wales at a conference of Commonwealth and State Transport Ministers held in May, 1946, regarding priority of works to be carried out in those States, no agreement was reached and the Commonwealth Minister for Transport intimated at the conclusion of the proceedings that he would seek his Government's approval to negotiate with the States willing to proceed with standardisation of rail gauges. Up to date this State has not been approached to negotiate.

(b) *As to Lighting at Level Crossings.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways:

Regarding the electrical gear required for lighting purposes at level crossings, will he indicate which crossings are to be included in the scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

It is not possible to state at this juncture which crossings will ultimately be protected by electrical warning devices, but the next stage proposed in equipping additional crossings embraces the following main road country crossings:—

Meenaar,

Livesey's,

Scott's (near Kellerberrin),

Spearwood (South end),

Wilkes (near Picton Junction);

also metropolitan crossings at Leighton and Welshpool, subject to agreement being reached with the local authorities concerned regarding allocation of costs.

	PAGE
Auditor General's Report, Section "B," 1945	23
Questions: Railways—(a) as to Commonwealth proposal for gauge unification	23
(b) as to lighting at level crossings	23
Rural labour, as to withdrawal of P.O.W. Italians	24
Tuberculosis, as to mobile clinics	24
Traffic regulations, as to motor headlights	24
Great Eastern Highway, as to Southern Cross-Coolgardie section	24
State deficit, as to Commonwealth assistance	24
Chairmen (Temporary) of Committees	25
Sitting days and hours	25
Government business, precedence	25
Committees for the session	28
Bill: Supply (No. 1), £2,700,000, Standing Orders	28
Suspension, Message, all stages	28
Address-in-reply, second day	30

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "B," 1945.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "B" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1945. This will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Commonwealth Proposal for Gauge Unification.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Has he noticed a statement in the Press that the cost of unification of Australian railway gauges would be approximately £50,500,000?

(a) That Western Australia's share of the cost would be £7,000,000, the rest to be borne by the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the Eastern States?

(b) That Western Australia rejected this arrangement?

(c) Are these statements correct?

2, If so, will he inform the House what were the reasons actuating the Government of this State in its rejection of the proposal?

RURAL LABOUR.

As to Withdrawal of P.O.W. Italians.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is he aware that notwithstanding the statement of the Federal Minister for Commerce to him that, owing to shipping arrangements having been made, it was necessary to withdraw all Italian prisoners of war from farmers by the end of May last and their consequent withdrawal, that these Italian Ps.O.W., excepting those that have escaped, are all still in camp in this State?

2, Will he draw the attention of the Federal Minister for Commerce to the position and point out the consequent damage to production in view of the lack of rural labour to replace the Italian Ps.O.W.?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes, but it is expected that these prisoners of war will be repatriated in the near future.

2, The State Government has drawn the attention of the Federal Minister for Commerce to the unwisdom of withdrawing prisoner of war labour from farms before rural labour became available.

TUBERCULOSIS.

As to Mobile Clinics.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Health:

1, Is he aware that mobile x-ray and pathological clinics are being provided enabling citizens in New South Wales to be examined for tuberculosis?

2, Does the Commonwealth assist this State to fight tuberculosis?

3, Will he examine New South Wales methods for application in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Yes, under recent legislation, but limited to new diagnostic work and after care.

3, Mobile units are included in a proposed scheme now being considered.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS.

As to Motor Headlights.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for Works:

1, Will he direct his attention to expert opinion that has been expressed criticising the existing traffic regulations as to headlamps, on the ground that they make night-driving dangerous to the motorists and to other road users unless the driver sets his lamp beams higher than is permitted by the regulations?

2, Will he arrange for the regulations in question to be re-examined with a view to any alterations that may be desirable in the interests of road safety?

The MINISTER replied:

1 and 2, The question of the standardisation of head lights and lighting regulations throughout all the States is under consideration and it is expected that agreement will be reached in the near future.

In the meantime the W.A. Traffic Advisory Committee is giving close consideration to this matter on the basis of representations made by the Royal Automobile Club.

GREAT EASTERN HIGHWAY.

As to Southern Cross-Coolgardie Section.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Works:

1, Is there a grader working on the Great Eastern Highway between Southern Cross and Coolgardie?

2, Can he give any indication of when the work of bituminising this road between Bodallin and Coolgardie, that was interrupted by the war, will be resumed?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Re-conditioning and tarring work on the main road between Bodallin and Southern Cross will be commenced in September or October of this year.

STATE DEFICIT.

As to Commonwealth Assistance.

Mr. STYANTS (without notice) asked the Premier:

1, What steps have been taken to finance the deficit of £912,559 incurred for the financial year 1945-1946?

2, If the Premier has made representations to the Commonwealth, has he yet had any reply?

The PREMIER replied:

1, Within the provisions of Section 6 of the Taxation Reimbursement Act, a claim has been presented to the committee authorised to receive such claims, namely, the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and a detailed examination has been made of the budgetary return from this State. The Under Treasurer has appeared before the Commission and given in detail replies to any questions raised by him.

2, I have advices from the secretary of the Commonwealth Grants Commission that a report in connection with the financing of our deficit has gone forward to the Federal Treasurer for his consideration.

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.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.46]: I move—

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 onwards.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [4.47]: It is my intention to move an amendment to the motion. I point out that the commencing hour of our sittings, 4.30 in the afternoon, is far too late. In many of the other States of Australia the Parliaments at the present time assemble at 2.30 and proceed with business until a late hour on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but adjourn at 6 o'clock on Thursdays. I am speaking on behalf of country members, who have a long way to come. The fact of the House sitting late on Thursday night compels them to remain in town until Friday evening before leaving for their homes. Another point that concerns me chiefly is that I, like other members, claim that the average man is too weary at half-past four in the

afternoon to legislate for the State. A man's mind is more active and clear at 2.30 in the afternoon. That is the time we should meet, instead of sitting the long, tiresome and wearying hours under the present arrangement. During the first month of a session we very often adjourn at teatime; but later on in the session we work very long hours, often till 11.30 p.m. I remember that some years ago the Minister for Works moved in the same matter.

The Minister for Works: Are you sure he did?

Mr. MANN: I am not quite clear whether the Minister for Works was agreeable to my present proposition. I claim that a member has a full-time job to attend to his parliamentary work. I do not consider that any man in the city at present is entitled to be a member of Parliament unless he is prepared to give his whole time to the conduct of his parliamentary duty. If he does not, he should not be in Parliament. Our work is to legislate; that is what Parliament meets for. Some members have said that they find their whole day is occupied up till half-past four in interviewing their constituents. That may be so.

Mr. Watts: You will have to train the constituents a bit.

Mr. MANN: It is not a question of training constituents. We are appointed by the people of Western Australia to legislate for this State. I have watched members on the front Treasury Bench at the end of the session and have noticed that they look haggard, tired, weary and worn, and I do not blame them.

The Minister for Lands: I have never felt weary at the end of a session.

Mr. MANN: As I say, I have watched members on the front Treasury Bench carefully and have noticed the strain that the work has on them. I sincerely hope the House will agree to my proposal. I move an amendment—

That in lines 4 and 5 of the motion the words "at 4.30 p.m. and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards," be struck out with a view to inserting the words "at 2.30 p.m. and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary and, if requisite,

from 7.30 p.m. onwards on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and adjourn at 6 p.m. on Thursdays."

I feel that under such conditions we should be able to legislate with a much clearer mind and with much greater advantage to the State generally.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne—on amendment) [4.50]: I oppose the amendment. This question has been raised and debated many times in this House. I recall a motion, moved as a specific motion, by the present Minister for Works in 1933. I can also recall that I supported it. But following the work that has been done in this House in the intervening years and the graduation or promotion, call it what you will, from the fledgling stage when we were both sitting in the back bench—

The Minister for Lands: When you were young and innocent!

The PREMIER: —I am led to believe that the arguments submitted at that time by the then Deputy Premier, Mr. McCallum, were valid and cannot be successfully contradicted. Ministers today are under at least as heavy a strain as in any other period in our history. In the administrative tasks, which are most exacting and require close attention, there is at all times during the parliamentary session an added strain upon them.

Mr. Mann: I agree with you there.

The PREMIER: On the legislative side they must, of course, be responsible for very close attention not only to the principles but to all the details of the Bills being submitted by them to Parliament. In the preparation of the legislation they must, perforce, work long hours outside of the times when the House is sitting to enable them to bring to the Chamber a clear understanding of the legislation introduced by them. Further, I think that there is a case for Ministers, fairly regularly and constantly, to be available in their offices to members. I will not deny that to obtain progress at the later stages of the session it has been essential, and will continue to be, for the House to meet for longer hours and, in order to do that, to meet, perhaps, earlier in the day. But I suggest to the member for Beverley that if the hours proposed by him were instituted at this stage of the session we would find that members would be unwilling to

speak on motions before the House at this time of the year.

Mr. Mann: I would make them speak!

The PREMIER: The hon. member may have some secret way to make members speak, but I think he would find that he could not, during the first week of Parliament, find, among members, a desire to speak even if we were to meet at 11 o'clock in the morning. In addition, there is a responsibility on the part of the Government to private members—especially country members—to place at their disposal much time, outside of the hours that the House is sitting, to interview, with people from their electorates, not only Ministers, but also various representatives of Ministers, in their departments, to obtain information, not on petty things, but on matters of great moment to the districts concerned. Of course if throughout the parliamentary session we add to the sitting hours—because that is all this will achieve—I venture to suggest that the hon. member will not ease the strain, but increase it. Therefore, on the grounds I have mentioned I do, at this stage, oppose the motion, admitting that I have not given it, nor has the Government, very close consideration. I think that later in the session—much earlier than has been the custom—consideration could be given to meeting on Thursdays at 2.30 p.m. I think that might not only facilitate the business of the House, both for Ministers and private members, but would give to private members who are country residents a better opportunity than they now have. I do, in opposing this motion, assure the hon. member that the Government will give consideration to that aspect with a view to introducing it very much earlier in this session.

MR. PERKINS (York—on amendment) [4.55]: I quite agree with the amendment. I can also understand the fears and the opposition of the Ministers to this alteration, and the suggestion made by the Premier is possibly a way out. It will largely satisfy country members who are in a different position from those representing city and suburban constituencies, in that those members representing constituencies within easy range of Perth can more easily keep keep in touch with their electors than can country members. If the country members are to be given an opportunity to get

back to their electorates and maintain proper contact with their electors, then it is necessary for some consideration to be extended to them in the matter of the third sitting day in the week. Unless we bring our ears to Perth it is practically impossible for us to get home before Friday night. The train services have been altered slightly now and it will be possible for those members using the Great Southern line to get away at 7.30 p.m.; and those who travel on the Eastern Goldfields line as far as Merredin will be able to get away at a quarter to six at night. If the Premier will carry out his suggestion and alter the sitting hours on Thursdays that will ease the difficulties for many of us, and will be a considerable improvement on the custom that has been observed in the past.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—on amendment) [4.58]: I am very sympathetic towards the intention underlying the amendment. I know in particular, the difficulty that is experienced by country members who live sufficiently near to the metropolitan area to be expected to be constantly in their electorates, and sufficiently far from the metropolitan area to find it most inconvenient to get there if they are obliged to wait until Friday night before they can leave in every week of the session. I feel sure that that is the reason underlying the amendment. I think, too, that the hon. member is to be commended for introducing the amendment to the House, firstly in order that the matter may be discussed by members, and secondly that it afforded the opportunity to the Premier to acquaint the public with some of the duties, other than the bare attendance at the sittings of the House, which fall to the lot, not only of Ministers of the Crown but also of private members.

There is an impression abroad—and the quicker it is destroyed the better—that the only duties that a member of Parliament attends to are those imposed upon him during the sitting hours of every session. The actual facts are entirely opposite to that for I venture to say that the work done during the hours and days that the House is not sitting is, in many cases, twice as arduous to the average private member as is the work he does when the House is actually in session. He has many calls on his time and many calls, I might say, upon his ingenuity when

it comes to dealing with Government departments. In addition he is compelled, if he does his duty in a reasonable way—and I believe that virtually every member, if not every member, does so—to make considerable investigation into the effect, or the possible effect upon the people he represents of the legislation introduced. Those investigations cannot lightly be carried out. I know from my own experience, both before and since I occupied the seat that I now occupy, that the work involved was considerable if one applied oneself to it.

This amendment has those two virtues, therefore, of which the most important is the opportunity afforded the Premier to say what he did say, and for me to confirm it from this side of the House in the strongest possible terms. I hope that definite consideration will be given to some such change as has been proposed by the member for Beverley and commented on by the Premier. We had, during last session, an absence of all-night sittings, and on that I express my pleasure and my commendation of the co-operation and co-ordination that enabled all-night sittings to be avoided. At the same time, we had many sittings that were late, extending until well after 11 p.m., for 14 or 15 sitting days on end. If late sittings can be obviated, I am convinced that the standard of legislation and the activity of every member will be greatly improved. I support the amendment moved by the member for Beverley.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland—on amendment) [5.2]: The terms of this amendment to alter the hours of sitting, Mr. Speaker, have been experimented with on one or two occasions. The member for Beverley states that by 4.30 p.m. members are too weary to do justice to their Parliamentary responsibilities, but those of us who were here to experience it appreciate that at 2.30 p.m. members are too busy to attend to their parliamentary duties. The anxieties of the Whips of the period in which we tried the experiment of sitting at 2.30 p.m. were great, when compared with our experience of starting at 4.30 p.m. Over the years we tried it, and it is from practical experience that we have declared that the sitting time should be 4.30. We must appreciate that there has been a complete change in parliamentary functioning, as a

result of Commonwealth interference with the general administration of the affairs of the State.

Mr. Mann: It is nice to hear you say that.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Commonwealth interference by various forms of legislation and of administration has caused a great deal of work to be placed upon the Cabinet. I say, and I intend to repeat—because the people of this State must ultimately appreciate exactly what is the make-up of this Parliament—that the responsibilities of Ministers today and the administrative decisions that they have to give, cause them considerably more concern than was the case when they had the opportunity of submitting questions to Parliament so that Parliament could express its views on them. That cannot be done today and we must therefore give those who are in the Cabinet, and who have to carry the responsibility of administration, more time. Those of us who are excluded from participating in many things in which we used to participate should not be called together so often. This Parliament cannot direct, today. When I say that Parliament cannot direct, I refer to questions of finance. After all, government is finance and finance is government. Once we take from a body the control and direction of the purse—expenditure and revenue—it immediately ceases to be useful in a practical sense. This House must appreciate, sooner or later, where we are, and we must try to reconstruct ourselves in order to fit in with the altered conditions. We cannot go on as we have in the past. The Commonwealth Grants Commission will not always come to our rescue.

Mr. Thorn: Tell us something about the hours of sitting. That is what we are dealing with.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If the House sits at 4.30 p.m., that will enable Cabinet, which has the responsibility of administering the affairs of State, to do more than would otherwise be the case. Members of the Cabinet should be given more time in their offices, by leaving them there until 4.30 p.m. and we should be called in as casual workers to see what is going on and to be informed from time to time what the Executive is doing in directing the affairs of the State of Western Australia.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [5.8]: After hearing the Premier's remarks, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

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. Withers and Mr. North.

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. Rodoreda in the Chair.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [5.10]: I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the services of the year ending on the 30th June, 1947, a sum not exceeding £2,700,000.

This Supply is required to carry on the business of the State until the Estimates are passed by Parliament. The Estimates are now in the course of preparation and will be presented to the House as early as possible. I am hoping that they will be introduced very much earlier this year than is usual. The amount of Supply required, and mentioned in His Excellency's Message, is Consolidated Revenue Fund, £2,200,000; General Loan Fund, £200,000, and Treasurer's Advance, £300,000, a total of £2,700,000. This is an allocation exactly similar to that for the No. 1 Supply Act passed last year. The expenditure for the first three months of the last financial year from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, excluding special Acts, was £2,300,000. The provision of £2,200,000 for this year will, 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.

The advance to the Treasurer to meet special payments that cannot, for the time being, be charged to special votes and accounts, is the source of portion of the amount sought in this Supply Bill. I would mention that last year it was estimated that there would be a deficit of £207,090, and later, on the introduction of the Estimates, it will be shown that as those Estimates were framed to a considerable extent before the cessation of hostilities, altered circumstances and conditions made a great difference when the financial year ended, because as members are aware, the deficit was £912,559. As I indicated, in reply to a question without notice today, our case has been presented to the Commonwealth Grants Commission and a claim has been lodged for the whole of the deficit for last year. I cannot anticipate what may be done, but I know that the report of the Commission has gone forward to the Commonwealth Treasurer and is at present being considered by him. There is very little more that I wish to say on the Supply Bill. It is the usual Bill necessary on the opening of Parliament to enable the public services to be carried on and to provide the moneys necessary in anticipation of the Estimates.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.14]: As the Treasurer says, this is the usual Bill to carry on the State's business until the

Estimates can be presented and considered by the Chamber. I had thought that the first Supply Bill this year might be larger than it is but I find, as the Treasurer says, that it is for the same amount as the Bill for the corresponding period last year. We appear to have left a succession of surplus years which we experienced up to the end of 1944-45 and embarked now upon a period in which expenditure may be very much greater if the accounts of last year are to be taken as a criterion. No doubt the Treasurer, when he introduces the Estimates, will deal rather more fully with this position than has been necessary in the last few years.

There are obviously accumulated arrears of maintenance which now press heavily on the finances of the State and there are also other additional calls upon the Treasurer's resources. In view, however, of the existing financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States, it seems to me that Parliament will feel it advisable to examine the position on this occasion in a way that has not been necessary for several years past. If we are to face a series of years of greatly enlarged expenditure, we have to determine whether those years are going to bring a series of heavy deficits. I am not suggesting that expenditure in excess of the limited sum we now receive under the uniform taxation system may not be essential, but I do think that, having found from the experience of last year that we may be called upon to find much more money than we obtain under the uniform tax system, it is incumbent upon us to examine the whole of our financial relations with the Commonwealth.

It would be unsatisfactory if this State year after year had to be dependent for its budgetary plans on an application for assistance from the Grants Commission under the Taxation Reimbursement Act. If, as seems probable, the demands for expenditure in this State and for the development of the State and for meeting the many necessary avenues of expenditure that have been deferred during the war—if all those things are going to mean more heavy calls on the Treasurer, we shall be concerned to hear from the Treasurer when the Estimates are introduced precisely what is his general view as to the future. I do not think we would wish to contemplate a system under

which we would be called upon to invoke aid year by year under circumstances in which we may not get all we need or all we think we need.

At the same time I appreciate that, under the recent arrangement made by the Premiers in conference, there is in contemplation a new system under which the returns to the State will be based, I understand, on an area as well as a population criterion. I am also aware that, under the recent arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State, we will be advantaged by a larger return in our own right from the revenue collected under the uniform tax than we have received in the past. This, I understand, amounts to some £700,000, which will appreciably assist the State's finances. I mention these facts because we seem to have arrived at the end of an era and to be embarking upon a new era, and an opportunity will be needed and will be profitably used if we spend some time in examining the position at the proper occasion, namely, when the Estimates are before us.

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. Rodoreda 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, 1947, 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.

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 25th July.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.27]: desire first of all to join with the members for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe in his speech on Thursday last in extending the sincere sympathy of those associated with me here and, I think, of all members to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor in his recent sad bereavement. I subscribe most heartily to the observations made by the members for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe as to the services Sir James and Lady Mitchell have rendered to this State in the high offices they hold and extend with him to them our best wishes for long life and future happiness.

I would also like to express my personal pleasure at the apparent restoration to health of the Minister for the North-West who was absent for many weeks during last session. Whatever we may think of his political views, most of us are fond of him personally, and it would have grieved us deeply had he not been able to come back and take his part in the House this session. So I must express my pleasure at seeing him looking so well, and I trust that his appearance does not belie the actual state of his health.

Judging by the financial figures at the end of May, I expected to be able to refer to the Treasurer as Gone-a-Million-Franc as was once done in respect of a former Premier of this State in the person of Mr. John Scaddan, but either accidentally or with a full knowledge of what was happening, the deficit was arrested when it reached the figure of £912,000 as at the 30th June. I remember that when the Mitchell-Latha Government was in office between 1930 and 1933 the most uncomplimentary remarks were passed by members, some of them not seated on the benches opposite to me, because that Government had succeeded in achieving a magnificent deficit ranging from £800,000 in the best year to £1,500,000 in the worst. Those were days of vast unemployment expenditure, falling revenues at high interest rates; and judged by the yardstick which was used, according to "Hansard," by his colleagues of those days the Treasurer should be heartily ashamed of himself because he budgeted only for a deficit.

deficit of £207,000, and he has succeeded in exceeding that estimated deficit by some £701,000.

The Premier: I am not a 'bit ashamed.

Mr. WATTS: I said, judged by the yardstick of the Premier's colleagues of 1930-1933. I will tell the Premier in a minute what I think about it. For if deficits were not justified in their opinion in 1930-33, in the circumstances to which I referred, there can be little, if any, justification for such a substantial deficit as there is at the present time; because by comparison these are days of buoyant revenue. Let the figures speak for themselves! There is no unemployment and there is a considerable reduction in interest rates all around. Time after time in recent years, we have been told by the two Treasurers who have held office that conversion effected here has done this, with a great saving to the State, and conversion effected there has done it again, and so on and so forth.

The Premier: Demands are much greater in these days.

Mr. WATTS: I am not denying that the demands are greater, but they are not very much greater when one comes to consider the circumstances in those days. We were in a constant state of trouble in order to relieve thousands of hapless people whom bad mismanagement on the part of somebody—and I do not propose to endeavour to find a scapegoat—had placed in the position that they could not earn an honest living. Hundreds of thousands of pounds—and I do not exaggerate when I say that—were spent out of a depleted revenue in order to provide the very poor and unsatisfactory relief which could be afforded to them at that time. The revenue for the past year I find was accurately estimated by the hon. gentleman. It was, I think, only some 3,600 out. But the expenditure was very much under-estimated by him, in that it was approximately £701,000 out. I noticed a statement which was made in "The West Australian" on the 4th July in reference to this matter, in which he said—

Moreover, as a result of the Commonwealth's policy of economic control, charges made by the rates for services were pegged, despite the fact that all Government undertakings had to meet seriously increased costs.

So not only can we lay charges against the Commonwealth Government, it would ap-

pear, in regard to certain other matters—such as uniform taxation, which I will deal with in a moment—but we can also lay the charge against it that it has continued to prevent the Treasurer—so it appears from his own statement—from taking into consideration increased costs which are imposed upon him when he seeks to obtain revenue in order to pay for those increased costs. I turn now to a somewhat laconic statement in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech in regard to this matter. It says—

Expenditure for the year 1945-1946 exceeded revenue by £912,559.

I would suggest, with the greatest respect to His Honour, the Chief Justice, that in reading this Speech on Thursday last he made an excellent job of extremely scanty material, and I quoted that as an example of the scanty material to which I refer. Virtually no information was provided for anybody as to the facts which generated—if I may use that word—the deficit of which I complain, or refer to; so that I have to make reference to the columns of "The West Australian" if I wish to discover anything at all about the reasons which bear upon it.

The Premier: You realise that I do not want to prejudice a case which is being considered now, do you not?

Mr. WATTS: I am coming to that very aspect.

The Premier: I am not going to run the risk of that position.

Mr. WATTS: The next phrase is even more intriguing to me in all the circumstances. It is this—

Under the Commonwealth Income Tax (Reimbursement) Act, the State has submitted a claim to the Commonwealth Grants Commission for the amount necessary to enable the Budget to be balanced, and Ministers are hopeful that the full claim will be met.

So am I! I make no bones about expressing my hopes in this regard. That phrase, however, leads me to suspect—and to use an old phrase to explain it—that the Treasurer has discovered that there are more ways than one of killing a pig, the pig in this case being the uniform tax law. In this procedure I suspect that the Treasurer seeks to get even with the Commonwealth Government in this particular regard. If he is prepared, even somewhat silently, to admit that

soft impeachment, I will extend to him my heartfelt sympathy in this matter; because in my opinion the Commonwealth Government's treatment and behaviour in respect of uniform taxation have been both fraudulent and dishonest. That is my view of it, and I make no bones about it. Let us examine the history of it for a moment or two. When Mr. Chifley introduced temporary uniform tax Bills on the 15th May, 1942, he said, according to the report in the Federal "Hansard" at page 1286 of 1942—

The Government, having carefully considered the committee's report, has decided to adopt the recommendations with a view to bringing about a single taxation authority for the period of the war and one year thereafter.

This pledge I consider was also included in the Uniform Tax Act itself because it provided that—

This Act shall continue in operation until the last day of the first financial year to commence after the date on which His Majesty ceases to be engaged in the present war, and no longer.

The matter was referred to the High Court by several of the States on the 23rd July, 1942. The High Court gave a decision that the uniform tax legislation was valid and Mr. Chifley delivered his Budget on the 22nd September, 1942, and repeated his pledge that the uniform tax was a temporary wartime measure only. He said—and this is also to be found in "Hansard"—

The uniform tax plan will replace the former multiple taxing systems of the Commonwealth and States, and will operate for the duration of the war and one year thereafter.

The then Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Curtin, said that—

Uniform taxation was intended as a wartime measure only, and would not be imposed by constitutional or any other means as a permanent feature of the financial relations between the Commonwealth and States, and that the undertaking given by his Government would undoubtedly be honoured by any succeeding Government.

So whatever one you like to take—and I think at this stage I prefer to take Mr. Chifley, as he is the present Federal Treasurer—there was a definite statement, unequivocal in character, that it would be for a period of the duration of the war and one year thereafter. But notwithstanding this, on the 27th March, 1946, when Mr. Chifley was speaking in the same House, he said—

But this Government intends that uniform taxation shall be permanent.

So therefore there is the clearest evidence of a promise that was made and broken in a barefaced manner. Unfortunately, too, it has been stated that the State Premier agreed to this promise-breaking. One, Dr. Gaha, who was Minister for Health in Tasmania and subsequently was and now is a member of the Commonwealth Parliament—and who therefore may be taken to be a person of some responsibility—stated, according to Federal "Hansard" of this year page 687, that the State Premiers who attended a conference of Commonwealth and States Ministers at Canberra in January rebelled against such centralisation, but after a long and wordy battle, the Premier agreed to uniform income taxation. All that the Lieut.-Governor's Speech says in this regard is that in spite of the protests of State Governments, the uniform tax was to be continued.

The statement made by the doctor, to which I referred, and which nobody up to date seems to have contradicted, admits those protests but declares there was ultimate agreement. I hope that is not true. But worst of all, the Prime Minister himself has denied that any promise was made; and I hope that that will not be used as public propaganda on the Hitlerian theory that the bigger the lie the better it goes down. I am wondering how long it will be before all of our public men, when they make clear and unequivocal promises or statements of that character, will be prepared to honour them however inconvenient it may be to their subsequent convenience, because until that time arrives—and the quicker it arrives the better—Government in any country—and this country in particular, since we are dealing with this country—cannot reach that high and respected state which we are entitled to expect in a democracy such as this.

That is why I observed that if the Treasurer is prepared to admit the soft impeachment that I suggested, that he has studiously taken few, if any, steps to prevent an increase in the deficit in order that he may contend somewhat more successfully with this broken-promise disease to which I referred, then I am prepared to give him my sympathy, and not my criticism. I warn him to be careful, however, because I would like to know what effect such an admission

might have on the Grants Commission, the members of which are Australia's dictators today, as I see them. They have been created by the Federal octopus—that is a good word to use—and they are responsible virtually to no-one, whereas the Premier and the members of this Parliament are responsible to the whole of the adult population of the State. Members of this House are the people who have that responsibility thrown upon them for the time being, but in the case of the Grants Commission, if they do not like our policy or the way we spend our money they can if they choose—I do not say they have done so but the possibility is obviously implied in their powers—make our policy unworkable and put the State upon the financial rocks. So far as I can see the Commonwealth Government of any kind at no time has gone beyond their recommendations. Is it not delightful for a State of 960,000 squares miles, crying out for development and capable of vast development, to be left on the dole? Personally I shall never rest until some of these State rights are restored.

On this matter of uniform taxation, I am prepared to agree to a uniform return and even uniformity in deductions for the family man and other deductions that are allowable to ensure continuance of the present income tax return and the simplification of the whole system, but I am not prepared to agree to a continuance of the present position especially in view of the circumstances in which it came about and of the broken pledges associated with it. I have always felt—I induced this House to say so on one occasion with the special support of the Premier in some aspects of the motion—that there should be a conference representative of both sides of this Parliament and of the other State Parliaments with the Federal controllers in this matter in order that we might arrive at some reasonable conclusion which would re-establish the proper relationship between the State and the Commonwealth Governments in the matter of finance, a conference which would really be a conference and not a gathering together of persons who are going to be dictated to by someone who merely says, "Take it or leave it."

Mr. Mann: We want another J. T. Lang in Western Australia.

Mr. WATTS: That has been the position up to date.

The Premier: You are not advocating a convention?

Mr. WATTS: I am rather suspicious of the word convention.

The Premier: So am I.

Mr. WATTS: I purposely used the word "conference" meaning a conference of representatives of this Parliament and State Parliaments elsewhere with those who are in control of this business in Canberra.

The Premier: You are not advocating an elective convention?

Mr. WATTS: Decidedly no.

Mr. Thorn: We might get shut out again.

Mr. WATTS: I think any reasonable Commonwealth Government would have agreed long ago to such an arrangement and discussion taking place. So far as I know—I asked a question on this subject some eight or nine months ago—nothing more than a formal reply has been given to the communication from the Premier supported by a majority verdict, if not a unanimous verdict, of this House in regard to the matter.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Did you get the support of the other States?

Mr. WATTS: I suggest that it would be possible to get the support of the great bulk of them. If I have read Mr. McKell aright in "Hansard" we would get his support. We would get the support of Victoria and I would be very surprised if we did not also get the support of Queensland as well as of South Australia. If the hon. member wants anything more he can go to Tasmania himself and try his luck. I have made no inquiries there. I do know, however, that Mr. Dwyer Grey, who was the Treasurer in Tasmania some time ago, was the originator of the suggestion. I said in the House at the time the matter was being dealt with that I had had correspondence from him on that topic.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Should you not have done that before approaching the Commonwealth Government? One State cannot influence that Government.

Mr. WATTS: The hon. member has succeeded in achieving something which apparently is dear to his heart. He has put

into my mind, and that of other members that the Government of the State, having been requested by the House to take action in regard to a conference of State representatives with the Commonwealth, has only gone to the Commonwealth and not mentioned the matter to the other States.

The Premier: That is not so.

Mr. WATTS: If that satisfies the hon. member it satisfies me. I was under the impression that the matter had been undertaken in a reasonable way and that the Commonwealth Government had returned merely a formal reply which had hung the matter up. If the hon. member wishes to lodge a complaint against his own Government he is entitled to do so.

Mr. Mann: He is not game to do so.

Mr. Thorn: He would sell us tomorrow.

Mr. WATTS: The Lieut.-Governor's Speech states—

The world-wide food shortage has greatly altered the short term prospects for some of the State's agricultural products, and for some time to come there will be a ready market for all the wheat and meat that can be produced.

This stabilisation of wheat—

The Premier: That would be another expression for orderly marketing.

Mr. WATTS: There is orderly marketing and disorderly marketing. I was about to remark that my observations on the question of the stabilisation problem, whatever they may be, will be made at the proper time. I am assured in the Speech also that there is going to be legislation regarding that question. It would not be wise, therefore, at this stage to anticipate the legislation that may come forward. There will no doubt be ample time and opportunity to discuss it and disclose my views on it and attack it or support it, as the case may be, when the Bill comes before the House. I was also about to say that one of the particular foods in short supply in the world is wheat. When Great Britain starts bread rationing in the circumstances in which it has been introduced it, it may be assumed that there is a real shortage of wheat in the world. I have heard the Premier when Minister for Lands, and I think also in his present office, declare more than once how very important a part wheat plays in the economy of the State.

It does not appear to me as though Western Australia is going to be allowed to make a very substantial contribution towards relieving the wheat shortage by comparison with other parts of Australia. I have drawn attention on more than one occasion to the fact that Western Australia seems to be, as the member for Wagin once remarked, a sort of fifth wheel of the coach. We do not seem to be of much value in the scheme of affairs so far as Australia's wheat economy is concerned as controlled by its present Government. I want to know how it is that for 1946 the wheat licensed areas for New South Wales and Victoria comprised 1,800,000 acres and 947,000 acres respectively greater than they were in 1938-39, and why Western Australia is 799,000 less. Here in this State we know and have been told by the Premier that to our State's economy wheat production is very valuable and important. Notwithstanding that we find we were restricted to the extent of 33 1/3 per cent. in the acreage we were able to plant as against the area planted in the base years 1937-1940, and that instead of being able to take advantage of the improved position we can grow 799,000 acres less than we did in 1938-39, while two other States of the Commonwealth are able at the same time to increase their acreage by two and a half million acres.

I have here the figures quoted by Senator Fraser, the Minister for Trade and Customs, on the 5th July, 1946, as they are given in Federal "Hansard" No. 10 page 1902. He said that in 1938-39 in New South Wales the acreage under wheat was 4,168,000 and in 1946 the licensed acreage for wheat was 5,978,000, an increase of 1,810,000. In the case of Victoria, in 1938, 2,522,000 acres were under wheat and in 1946, 3,469,000 an increase of 947,000. In Western Australia in 1938-39 the area under wheat was 2,864,000 acres and in 1946 it was 2,065,000, a decrease of 799,000 acres. Queensland which is not regarded as a wheatgrowing State had 312,000 under wheat in 1938-39 and 518,000 in 1946, an increase of 206,000 or approximately 65 per cent. above the 1938-39 figures. I take it those figures cannot be contradicted. They have been given by the Minister for Trade and Customs in the Commonwealth Parliament in answer to questions and are reported in the official records of the de-

bates in the House. What I shall want to know later on is whether the Commonwealth Labour Government or the State Labour Government is responsible for that state of affairs, and whether either of them has permitted this to pass without any protest. I have never heard or read of one. In my opinion these figures will take a lot of explaining.

About a year ago in this House our Deputy Leader, the member for Toodyay, moved an amendment to the Address-in-reply. He said—

This House regrets that the impending end of hostilities finds your Government and the Government of the Commonwealth almost totally unprepared in regard to servicemen, land settlement, housing etc.

He must have been either well-informed or an extremely good prophet.

The Premier: A Mandrake.

Mr. WATTS: On that day, the 14th August, 1945, the Minister for Works rose in his place in opposing the amendment, and expressed the opinion that if after six or 12 months of peace members of the Opposition had come forward with an amendment of this description and had been able to prove then that the Government had made little or no progress they would have had a strong case against the Government. I then interjected—

I will remind you about that after a lapse of 12 months.

I find myself in the position of being obliged to remind the hon. gentleman that that period has elapsed. I do not find myself—nor do I think the people of this State find themselves—filled with enthusiasm as a result of the activities of that period. At that time, so far as the settlement of our ex-servicemen on the land was concerned, there was none of it, and after the lapse of 11 months and one fortnight I think almost precisely the same position exists. There are none of them actually settled. I do not deny for one moment that there must have been some change; there have been a few properties inspected and acquired here and there. There has been a great deal of investigation done in some places, but, in the net result, the number of persons who have been able to accept the assistance that is

being offered to them, and to establish themselves on the land, is virtually, if not entirely, nil.

Mr. Thorn: Has one returned soldier been settled on the land under the Commonwealth scheme?

Mr. WATTS: I say "almost entirely nil."

The Minister for Lands: They were all settled after the 1914-18 war.

Mr. WATTS: There is a tremendous gulf indicated by those words. When the Minister uses the words "settled after the 1914-18 war," he infers that the job was done too quickly, but in no circumstances can that charge be laid against the present administration because, at the rate they are going, as I read in a provincial paper a few days ago, by the time this horse passes the post it will be 84½ years from now. Unless there is more speed than there is at present, most of the ex-servicemen will be so old and overwrought by the time these investigations are finished that they will not have necessity for anything but the old age pension, which I hope they will be able to obtain. That is the position. On the progress that has been made over a period of months, the outlook is somewhat startling. At the end of March, the information given in the Commonwealth Parliament was that 1,756 ex-members of the Services engaged in the late war had applied for assistance under the Land Settlement Scheme. Of those, 863 had been considered. That left 800 odd that had not been considered. Of those considered, 728 had been approved. In reply to a further question:—

(a) How many applicants are now in occupation of properties? and (b) how many properties have been acquired under the scheme?

The member asking the question was given the following answers:—

(a) None. Until the State Governments submit areas or holdings for consideration, the Commonwealth is unable to approve them. Once the area is so approved, some further time is required for the actual preparation and development of the property. (b) None yet approved by the Commonwealth. Fifty holdings in the possession of the Rural Bank of Western Australia have been submitted by the State Government and are being considered.

As to war service homes, the answer given was that between the 1st July, 1944, and the 31st March of this year, 1,402 applications for homes were submitted to the War

Service Homes Commission in Western Australia. Of these, 267 were approved, leaving 1,150 that had not been approved, notwithstanding that the applications had run over a period of 21 months. This, I think, was the piece de resistance. At that time, eight houses had been built. I thought we would give them another three or four months without saying much about it. When we come to the 30th June, 1946, we find that 2,088 applications for farms under the scheme have been received. Of these, 1,456 had been classified and 317 were awaiting classification. A course of intensive training was required by 888. No ex-serviceman had been placed on the land under the scheme up to the 30th June, 1946.

I invite the Minister for Works to consider, in view of his observations of 12 months ago, whether I would not be justified now in moving an amendment in rather stronger terms than those of that moved on the 14th August, 1945, when he invited me to wait for six or 12 months. In the circumstances, I have been obliged to wait for 12 months. If there is no smarter rate of progress indulged in, the prospects of these young men being settled on the land before they reach their dotage are remote. I do not know whether the bulk of the blame or responsibility should lie with the Commonwealth Government or the State Government. Perhaps the hon. gentleman opposite will be able, at a later stage in the session, to sort it out for me. In either case, it will not do the Government any good, because, if it blames the Commonwealth, it knows what it is doing, and if it blames itself, it also knows what it is doing.

Mr. Thorn: The Minister for Lands is cautious. He is frightened of 1914-18 being mentioned.

Mr. WATTS: I propose now to say a few words on the housing question, which was included in the motion of the member for Toodyay. There were, I believe, at that time, reports extant that 10,000 houses were short-supplied in Western Australia, and that there was likely to be, and had been pre-war, a normal annual requirement of about 2,500. In consequence, as the year opened, 10,000 houses were required, and it may be safely and reasonably assumed that the pre-war accretion to that number has duly taken place. In fact, I would not be

surprised if it were greater, but I have no reliable figures to prove that this is so. Thus 12,500 houses are required at this moment, less the contribution that has been made during the year. Again I turn to the Lieut.-Governor's Speech—

During the year ended the 30th June permits were issued for 1,483 dwellings and 620 houses were completed or in course of construction under the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme. The Housing Division of the Public Works Department has completed 29 houses under day labour conditions and has a further 106 under construction.

So, if I allow for all the dwellings for which permits were issued as having been built—and I am in grave doubt whether that is so, because I am informed that a number of permits have been issued and houses have not been built in respect of them—and if I also take the houses built under the Commonwealth scheme and the completed houses under day labour conditions and the other 106 under construction, I still arrive at the fact that the total of them all is less than the normal requirements of one year calculated on a pre-war basis, and has made no contribution whatever towards a reduction in the number of houses which we were short of in 1945. And this magnificent result has been achieved after 12 months of peace, which was the time I was requested by the Acting Premier to afford His Majesty's Government in this matter and which I have been able to do by the lapse of time since the last session of this House!

Personally, I do not consider that the circumstances as they existed at the 30th June, 1945, would have enabled anyone to make a very much more substantial contribution, without superhuman efforts, to the work of providing houses in this State. I, therefore, do not unduly criticise the housing authority in Western Australia because I believe it was given an utterly impossible position from which to start its work. There have been far too many plans and planners in this country in the last few years, whose plans have existed mostly on paper or in their own minds, with little if any practical effort to bring those plans to development in a reasonable time.

Mr. Thorn: It would be very interesting to know what the cost of administration has been.

Mr. WATTS: It is all very well to argue that, up to the last moment of hostilities, it was essential to keep the whole of the 800,000 people in the Armed Forces actively engaged there, no matter how skilled they might be in certain trades or how little active work some of them had to do in the places where they were stationed, while the necessities which would be required immediately hostilities ceased were not being provided for at all. If the period of only one year, which I submit was amply available before the 30th June, 1945, had been utilised for preparations for the position which was known to be developing and which would require attention before long, then the housing authority in this State might have been able to make a greater contribution and, in fact, I am certain that it would have done so. As it was, through the ineffectiveness of government in this country, there was no reasonable opportunity given to that authority to do the job as it would have liked to do it; and today the people of this community are paying for it in a way that must evoke our most sincere sympathy if we have any heart at all.

Case after case is brought under one's notice where it is almost impossible for people to get a reasonable habitation. I have here a letter from a constituent of mine who has a house consisting of two bedrooms, a sittingroom and a kitchen, and in that home ten persons are residing—three daughters, aged respectively 22, 17 and 12, a son and daughter-in-law, another son who is married but whose wife lives elsewhere because they cannot get a home, a son aged 14, a father aged 79, the writer and her husband. The reason why these people are in that unfortunate position is this: The lady herself who wrote the letter owns another house in the same town, the possession of which would immediately relieve the congestion so far as she is concerned, but in that house a soldier, his wife and four children are living and she has taken no steps to remove them, even if she could be successful in getting them removed, which I doubt. She is a kindly soul and has taken no steps whatever to remove them. The soldier is serving in some part of the State quite close to the metropolitan area and, in fact, quite close to this House—only a few miles away—where he has been for the last four years. He has been continually making application for a home of some kind for his

family in the metropolitan area. I believe he is now in the permanent forces, but he has been unable to get any place for his family to live in and therefore to relieve the extraordinary position in the case of the wife I have just related.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. WATTS: Before tea, I was recounting the sad state of affairs of one particular family as to the housing position and the effect of that position on another equally deserving family, which, of course, is not in the least extraordinary as there is a very large number of people in precisely the same situation. Unfortunately, the position is moving so slowly and in so cumbersome a manner that Heaven at the present time knows when these people can be relieved, for the reasons I have already given. But while, as I said, I am not in any humour to criticise to a degree the actual housing authorities, I do think they have made a very serious mistake in one regard, and that is their determination—as I understand it—not to allow a permit to be issued for the building of a house where only a married couple is to be accommodated. I notice these words in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech—

The Government is fully seized with the vital importance of increasing the State's population and the question of immigration is receiving careful consideration.

I know of no way that is better and cheaper for increasing the population than that of encouraging the birthrate. I do not think the delay of a year or two, or perhaps longer, which is obviously going to be the fate in a great number of cases, will make any contribution whatever towards increasing the birthrate or any contribution to the best means of bringing migrants into this community. In order that there may be no misunderstanding as to the decision of the board in this matter, I have before me a letter written to myself by the secretary of the board and dated the 23rd July, 1946, in which he refers to applications which were submitted for the board's decision and which consisted mostly of requests by young married couples without families or by those about to marry. Whilst recognising their difficulties, the letter goes on to say that the board feels the time is not yet opportune to

approve of applications where there are only two to be housed. The secretary goes on to say—

You, I feel sure, appreciate the difficulties of supply and the need to regulate permits on an overall basis of hardship. At the present time the pressure is so great that the board is hard put to provide for man, wife and one child.

It does seem to me that that decision is one which ought to be given the most careful and early re-consideration, because I say without fear of successful contradiction that it is having an exceedingly deterring effect on young people who otherwise would be married, for whom the best years of their life are passing and for whom I think we should do everything possible as early as we can to assist. I make that submission in this case in the hope that it will receive consideration different from that which it has received in the past. I think the board in that instance is making a very great mistake. I also want to know whether it is a fact that permits are issued by the board—a number at a time—to architects and distributed by them to whomsoever they please. The effect of that, as I see it—if that be the case and it has been reported to me that it is—is that the architect, when receiving a number of permits, can allocate those houses virtually to whom he pleases and probably to those who are best able to pay the fees which architects receive for their services. If that is the case—

The Premier: That is not the case.

Mr. WATTS: I am very glad to hear that it is not; but it has been reported to me by an authority whom I regarded as very reliable. If it were so, then the effect would be, as I said, that people who were most deserving of consideration certainly would not be receiving it; but if the Premier, who is also Minister for Housing, says that it is not so then the only thing I can do at this stage is to accept his assurance. I propose to make a suggestion or two as to one or two other matters which seem to me to be of importance. I have listened of late to the broadcasts of the debates in the Commonwealth Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: Very rowdy, are they not?

Mr. WATTS: The Minister has taken the words out of my mouth. I was about to say

that, as compared with the behaviour in this Legislative Assembly, the conduct is extremely rowdy.

The Minister for Lands: We will send our Speaker over there.

Mr. WATTS: Yes, that would be desirable, too, from happenings that have come under my notice, because he would certainly display more fairness and impartiality than are sometimes displayed by the hon. gentleman who fills the position in that House.

The Minister for Lands: This fellow shot the Leader of the Opposition out one night, you know.

Mr. WATTS: I repeat that our Speaker displays more fairness and impartiality than does the hon. gentleman who holds the same position in the Federal House. But my point this evening was not to discuss with the Minister for Lands, or with the House, the virtues of yourself, Mr. Speaker, in the honourable position which you occupy. I merely wished to point out that we now have the clearest evidence, if we did not have it before, that the behaviour in this Legislative Assembly is very much better, to put it mildly, than that of another place at Canberra.

The Minister for Justice: It might be the best in Australia.

Mr. WATTS: I am not going to dispute that statement. Long since have I formed the opinion that it was better and nothing that has occurred in recent weeks will induce me to alter that opinion. But, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that now is the opportunity, if this House and Parliament is prepared to take it, as I believe they are, to improve the status of this Legislature in the public opinion by making arrangements to broadcast some of the debates in this Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: What have the people done to deserve that?

Mr. WATTS: They have done nothing to deserve it. I have heard speeches by the Minister himself which, as to their subject-matter and delivery, were worth a little more publicity than they received. I must admit, of course, that I have heard speeches from the same hon. gentleman which I would not have broadcast in any circumstances, but that is purely a matter of opinion.

Mr. Withers: You do not expect publicity of good behaviour.

Mr. WATTS: No. You cannot make publicity of good behaviour; but you can make public that there is considerably less rowdiness in this Chamber than there is in the other place to which I have referred. Of course, I think the way they have gone about this broadcasting of the Commonwealth Parliament is quite the wrong way. To my way of thinking, the manner in which we should approach it in this State would be for the Government to acquire a commercial station network—say three stations—which would cover the greater portion of the settled areas of the State; and to vest it and the management of it in an inter-party committee of both Houses, the members of which would virtually be—as they would be incorporated, I have no doubt, by Act of Parliament—the directors of the concern. They would be changed from time to time as the personnel of Parliament changed, but they would still preserve the same balance of representation in respect of each party and of each House as the statute provided in the first instance.

The committee would not be authorised to have broadcast the whole of the proceedings of Parliament. It would be directed to select such portions of the proceedings as it thought were most likely to be informative to the public. When I say that, I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not mean that it should select what speakers the public should hear. I mean that it should select what particular measures that are being discussed should be broadcast and there should be no reservation in regard to those measures. The whole of the speeches on them should be available over the air for the public to hear. We might come to the conclusion, for example, if we were dealing with last session, that the debate on the Soil Conservation Bill was one of the most important before Parliament, and in consequence the procedure would be that the committee having decided that was the Bill or one of the Bills to be broadcast, the whole of the discussion on that Bill would be broadcast to the public. I consider that if we continued, as I believe we would continue, on the same basis as we have for many years past as a general thing there would very shortly be a substantial revival of the status of this Legislature as compared with

the other one which is now being broadcast—to the eternal advantage of this State and of this Commonwealth. That is a suggestion I throw out to His Majesty's Government for its consideration, because it would be impossible for anything other than impartial control to be exercised and in those circumstances I am perfectly certain the management of the concern would be in quite safe hands.

We have heard much in recent weeks about the creation of regional hospitals, and various places have been named as the likely spots for their establishment. Into that aspect of the matter I do not propose to go. Neither do I propose to criticise or object to the general principle of the establishment of regional hospitals, provided—and this is not a point that has been made clear to me or, I think, to anybody else at any time—that it is not intended, in consequence of the establishment of regional hospitals, ruthlessly to close down the smaller country hospitals in this State.

The Minister for Justice: No, that was never intended.

The Minister for Lands: I made that statement time after time.

Mr. WATTS: It is an unfortunate impression which is abroad in many quarters that when a regional hospital is available within some measurable distance of a place, either the existing hospital—the rural hospital, I will call it—will be closed, or else the facilities available there will be so minimised and the position, in consequence of modern demands, made so difficult that the net result will be that the rural hospital might just as well not exist.

The Minister for Justice: That is not so; the status quo will remain.

Mr. WATTS: On that assurance I rest. It gives me great satisfaction. While I am enthusiastic about the provision of the best surgical and therapeutic treatment that can be afforded and made available as near as our great distances will allow to every person, at the same time I did not want it to appear that all and sundry would have to be carried long distances to these hospitals because facilities formerly available nearer to their homes were no longer available. I again accept quite willingly the Minister's assurance on the subject which, I think, will give satisfaction also to a great many others.

There has been formed in this State recently a safety council, with the idea of educating the public to minimise the number of accidents that take place, both fatal and otherwise. If I may, I am going to commend to every member of this House and to every person in this community the need for supporting, both practically and in general, the activities of this organisation. I believe that at present the membership is fairly limited. I would suggest that the membership and the interest in the organisation should be widened very considerably so that greater sections of the people will have an intimate connection with the council. According to statistics which have been given to me, in the four years up to the 30th June last year, there were 15,818 deaths in Australia from accidents and 650,710 persons were injured. Quite apart from the pain and suffering caused to those who are injured and to the relatives and friends of those who are killed, the loss to industry—directly and indirectly—must be terrific; and the financial expenditure involved must be very considerable.

Many of these accidents take place in industrial establishments. Many of them are occasioned by the use of high-powered and modern efficient machinery. I know there are laws regulating the use of such machines and also prescribing as many safety devices as can reasonably be used, and I am fully in accord with those laws and with any reasonable extension of them that may be required to cope with modern practice. But there is also a need for the education of the people who are employed in those places and also of the general public in regard to street accidents and other calamities of that character in order that they may understand that there are methods they can use and precautions they can take which will save them and those related to them a great deal of care and expense.

It is reported to me that in New South Wales in the year ended June, 1942, industrial accidents alone caused a loss of 700,000 manpower weeks, which represent 4,000 employees absent daily; and it would, I think, be a reasonable guess to say if we took the whole of Australia into account—though I have no statistics—those figures would be doubled. We know perfectly well that insurance companies cover the employer if his employee is injured in

the course of his employment, and that they also cover nowadays the great majority of cases that are injured and killed in street accidents. But in many cases no monetary compensation can repay the bereaved relative for the loss of someone killed in an accident; nor does compensation in the event of injury in many cases nearly compensate the injured person. Above all, if we are successfully to engage in industry in this country and to try to level up the competition with other countries without reducing the standard of living of our people, it is obviously essential to cut out all the extraneous expenses we can, so that our industrialists may have a fair and reasonable opportunity of competition.

If the number of accidents that take place can be steadily minimised—and perhaps in the end very greatly reduced—it seems to me quite obvious that the cost placed upon industry for workers' compensation on the one part and accident compensation on the other, and hospitalisation on a third, is going to be very greatly reduced and in consequence the cost of production is going to be very greatly reduced without in the slightest degree minimising the reasonable standards which are available to those engaged in these various industries. So it seems that the formation of this safety council has wider implications than appear at first sight, and that its membership, for that reason, should be increased by taking in other sections of the community than are on the body which, I believe, has been appointed; and that, most important of all the general public should be educated and advised to give it their support in every way possible and to follow the advice it gives.

When I was marooned, with my friend the member for Toodyay, in South Australia for a few days, I had a most interesting discussion with the secretary and the chairman of the local safety council. I was delighted to find the extent to which they had gone—although they reckoned they had a very long way to go—in educating the public in accident prevention. Efforts were being made to show members of the community, from children of school age to the oldest persons, how to avoid personal injury from accident to themselves and their friends. The more that can be developed, the more I am convinced that it will be good for us, not only from the point of view of

the saving of suffering and inconvenience but also from the point of view of national production and industrialisation. That is why I took the opportunity to make some reference to the matter this evening.

I would like to pay some passing attention to the amount that is outstanding for advances made under the Rural Relief Act. Whether it is known to every member of the House or not, it is well known to most that the money that was used for the purpose of making advances to rural debtors for the relief of their excess obligations in 1935 was derived from a grant made by the Commonwealth Government of that time which, I think, had for its Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, and for its Minister for Commerce, Dr. Earle Page. That Government made the amount which was available—a total of £12,000,000 to all the States of Australia—a grant and did not require repayment from the States. I do not know what attitude was adopted in the other States regarding the question of its repayment when advanced to the applicants. I am not concerned with the other States in this instance, but only with Western Australia. But my view would apply equally strongly if I were dealing with the matter in another State where the same conditions applied as do here.

In this State, the advances were made a charge upon all the property of the applicant both owned at the time and subsequently acquired. He was required to enter into an agreement to repay the amount by instalments over a period of, I think, 25 years, there being no instalments required for the first four or five years. In consequence he was relieved of a liability, for example, of £800, which was compounded by an advance of £400, and he was required to repay the £400 to the State, although the State was under no obligation to repay it to the Commonwealth Government, as it had not been in the nature of a loan but in the nature of a gift. From time to time, representations have been made by me, and by other interested parties, to the effect that it was unwise to impose that obligation on the applicants although it was done at the time, perhaps with the idea of making use of the fund as a "revolving fund"—I think those were the words used by Mr. Troy, the then Minister for Lands. That it should

be a charge and not a gift to the individual applicant always seemed to me unjustified in these circumstances.

In 1942, the Premier, the then Minister for Lands, introduced a Bill, which I think I can truthfully say was partly due to some discussions I had with him, which enabled the trustees to write off the debt in certain cases. This could be done if a man had seen service in the war just concluded; if his principal secured creditor had, in the meantime, written down the debt; if the farm had been abandoned; or for any other reason that the trustees thought satisfactory. It is true that a great many have had the whole or portion of the debt written off. However, last year I had the pleasure of again taking the matter up with the present Minister for Lands, and he subsequently stated that it was receiving consideration. That is to say, the matter of writing off the remaining amounts outstanding in all cases was being considered. Whether it has received consideration or not I do not know, but I do say that, in my opinion, there is some need for an answer to this question to be given fairly quickly in that a great number have, in the meantime, had substantial reductions or writings off made, and it seems to me that the whole business should be decided once and for all.

I want to say a word or two on the question of the Western Australian tobacco industry which seems to me to be in some danger of extinction. There have been, from time to time, many statements in the Press. The last one I noted was on the 11th May, 1946, in which there was a message from Manjimup. It is as follows:—

Due to difficulties which could not be overcome before the planting of this season's crop, a serious setback has been sustained by the tobacco growing industry in this district. The growers' request for a guaranteed price of 3s. a pound for leaf was not recognised by the authorities, and many growers turned their attention to other crops. This season only 25 growers planted a total of 295 acres (which includes the acreage of Michelides Ltd.) for an anticipated harvest of 275,000 lbs. of leaf. This falls far short of the State's requirements.

The peak year for tobacco in this district was 1942-43 when 1,579 acres yielded 1,335,557 lbs. of leaf, of which 1,219,557 lbs. was sold at 31.21d. a pound.

The acreage in 1942-43 was just about five and a half times as much as is being planted this year, according to the report. There

seems to be something seriously wrong when there is such a state of affairs as that. So far as I can see, nothing has been said since that date to relieve the apprehension which is in my mind and which, I am sure, is in the minds of many other people, that an industry that started, not so many years ago, in Western Australia and which for some time showed great promise, should now virtually be bordering on extinction instead of making progress. I say that because from all the indications there is no lack of demand for the product of this industry, either in this State or the balance of the Commonwealth. In consequence, there should be the utmost encouragement meted out to it, especially when one finds, according to a booklet supplied to me by the Department of Information, that approximately 62 per cent. of the cost of every packet of cigarettes or tobacco is absorbed in taxation—mostly excise.

The Minister for Mines: More than that.

Mr. WATTS: The figures are 6¼d. on every 10d., and 11d. on every 1s. 6d., according to what I worked out some months ago from the booklet of the Department of Information. So far as I can ascertain, that is a rough average of 62 per cent. It is quite high enough, in any event, but it does seem to me that if the difficulty of this industry is that it cannot achieve a sufficient price to pay expenses so that there is a distinct minimisation—in fact, its almost total disappearance—of the industry in that area, then it is about time, if the public of Australia are going to continue to pay excessive taxes of that nature, for some contribution to be made from that source to provide something for them to pay taxes on. I was impressed with the belief that it was purely a matter of the price per pound that had been refused to them, but I came across some extracts from a speech made in the Commonwealth Parliament by a Mr. Adermann, who I think represents an area in Queensland where tobacco is grown. He made what are, in my opinion, serious assertions as to what is taking place. He said—

Since the Government has had control of marketing, appraisements have been very liberal and I have no quarrel on that point. In 1941-42 the Government increased payments by 10 per cent., and in the following year by another 10 per cent. It had previously increased them by 25 per cent., so the total

increase represented 45 per cent. The point is, however, that though prices were increased by 25 per cent. growers did not obtain any financial benefit as a result. This is my quarrel with the system, and in this the Minister for Commerce agrees with me.

Mr. Adermann said the granting of the 10 per cent. subsidy in addition to the 25 per cent. increase was the only addition that had resulted in an actual increase of income to the grower, because that did not come into conflict with the interests of the tobacco combine. Stating that the combine had declared that the quality of Australian grown tobacco had deteriorated, he said tobacco was grown in Australia in four zones—northern and southern Queensland, northern New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. The tobacco combine said it would not buy Australian tobacco unless it was graded by the combine's own appraisers. In theory the grading is done by the representative of the combine, a representative of the growers and one of the department, but in practice the combine representative gives his verdict and the others agree with it. "The stage has been reached when the Government must act," said Mr. Adermann. "The question is whether the Government or the combine is to control this industry." His conclusion was that in consequence of this method of appraisal, when the price per pound was available for increase the appraisement had been graded lower, so that the grower received no benefit from the increase in the figure. If that is so it is time there was a close investigation into the position, because no person can be expected to contend with a method of that character. As far as I can gather there is no evidence whatever that the grade of tobacco has deteriorated materially in any way in recent years, particularly if one takes it on an Australia-wide basis, and Mr. Adermann's contention is that this position applies throughout the tobacco areas of the Commonwealth.

I think the question of transport in Western Australia is of considerable interest to us all. Time was when road transport was permitted to operate in this State under the ordinary system of road licenses, but otherwise without control, and in a way that ultimately brought about the passage of the Transport Co-ordination Act and a measure of injustice, in some respects, to people who

previously were lawfully carrying on business. As the years have gone by, and particularly since the war, the importance of road transport as a means of shifting goods and passengers from one place to another has become more and more apparent. We still have in Western Australia the same Transport Co-ordination Act, but it seems to me that there is ample room for inquiry as to what alteration should be made in the law, and in the application of the law, relating to transport co-ordination.

The trouble was that the transport vehicles that were licensed prior to 1933 were subject to no type of control whatever. The employers utilised the services of the men engaged most unfairly, in many cases. Those men were employed at all hours of the day and night, and for unnecessarily long periods, with no regulated standard of pay or conditions. In consequence both the men concerned as employees, and also the employers in many cases—for the reason that they were engaged in cut-throat competition—ruined their health, and the whole situation was extremely unsatisfactory. What is more, competition by these vehicles with other recognised forms of transport was often most unfair, because they were able to pick the eyes out of the business. The most attractive types of goods, which paid the highest transport rates and were most convenient to handle, were selected by them on every possible occasion, while the more unpleasant types of goods were religiously ignored.

The Transport Co-ordination Act and the operation of the Transport Board virtually removed road transport of a private character from anywhere except within a small radius of townships, and in respect of vehicles owned by producers and used for their own purposes, even then under some limitations. That might have been all right then, but as the years have gone by the position has developed where something will have to happen and should happen in the near future. One thing is that the Railway Department itself should undertake the use of road transport, particularly to bring goods to the railways to be carried by rail. The department should charge a through rate for that service, from the point of origin to the point of destination. There should be one rate to cover both the transport by road, over a portion of the distance, and the

transport by rail over the remainder. I think the Railway Department should have first choice in instituting public transport services of that nature, because while I am not anxious to create or encourage or preserve a monopoly, as a general rule, the position of the finances of the State of Western Australia must lead us to be a little bit gentle with the Railway Department, provided it supplies a good service. That is the point I wish to make; it has to supply the service.

Mr. Seward: That is the point.

Mr. WATTS: It seems to me that is one way in which it could supply the service, and it would be entitled to first class consideration from the public, but there would be many areas and many circumstances in which no transport of that kind could reasonably be provided. I think, therefore, that due consideration should be applied to granting licenses to public transport carriers, provided it is ensured that the competition is perfectly fair, not only fair to the railways, but fair to others in competition with them. In order to do that I think we must lay down provisions to ensure strict compliance with the Arbitration Court awards applying to the industry. Regular timetables must be provided and there must be an obligation to carry all goods offering.

There must be a published schedule of prices to be adhered to, and reasonable license fees, based partly on the revenue derived from the service. In those circumstances, if regulations along those lines were applied and enforced, I am convinced that no other transport service need fear unfair competition and that the use of modern mechanised methods to which the people of a State of so vast an area as ours are entitled would be available in cases where they were justified and not in competition and especially not in unfair competition with any part of the State enterprise which we have created, which we must take an interest in and which we must preserve for the very reason that without it there might have been no development in this State. While I do not for one moment recommend that there should be a wide opening of the State Transport Co-ordination Act to bring us anywhere near the position which existed in 1932—a most improper state of affairs—yet I do say that there should be some amendment covering conditions such as I have mentioned—on the one

hand of railway feeder services and on the other hand of independent transport systems where they can be justified, complying with rules and regulations relating to industrial awards, timetables and the carriage of all goods offering, in order that there may be fair competition.

Some two years ago there was a debate in this House on the suggestion that the Commissioner of Railways should be replaced by directors, and the amendment to the motion moved by the member for Pingelly was ruled out of order—and I believe rightly so—by you, Mr. Speaker, on the ground that the Act provided that the Commissioner should be appointed for five years and that as the amendment dealt with his appointment or renewed appointment for a shorter time, it could not be accepted. Consequently the debate, which had lasted for some little time, came to an end, and the Commissioner was appointed for a further period of five years. I still believe that the method suggested in the amendment is the correct method.

The amendment provided for the creation of a directorate to govern the railway system on which the Government should be represented by a responsible officer skilled in railway management and engineering, that the trade unionists employed in railway transport should have a representative, that the commercial community should have a representative and that the primary industries, as the other principal users of the railways, should also have a representative. The intention was that such a board of directors should take the place of the Commissioner and function in the management of the railways, the belief being that those four sets of interests were the ones most vitally concerned—the Government as responsible for the financial side, the men employed, the commercial interests and the primary producers as the principal users of the railway services. That proposition could not be discussed at the time, but I believe there is a vast need for an alteration of the present system. That belief has not been minimised by a communication which was sent to me by the Minister some months ago containing some information and memoranda in regard to the railway services. The hon. gentleman forwarded it to me because I had made certain representations to him on the same subject in respect to my district. The minute which he had forwarded to the

Commissioner of Railways made reference to the bad stowing of goods and merchandise destined for the Goldfields—Coolgardie, North Coolgardie, East Murchison and the Murchison only. He said that bitter complaint had been levelled against the Railway Department because of the apathy and inability that was apparent in the stowing of goods and merchandise destined for those centres. The minute continued—

It was apparent that no consideration had been given to the way these goods were stowed, for perishable and other edible goods such as fish, etc., were frequently found mixed up with fittings and furniture, and on one occasion fish destined for Kalgoorlie was found to make a convenient resting place for a dog, who no doubt felt cool during the hot period of the day.

Further, the cleanliness of the coaches themselves and the lavatories attached to the trains were severely commented upon. It would appear that very little interest or care is given to the cleanliness of coaches and lavatories attached to passenger trains, mixed trains either, for the comment was general and particularly severe.

I have no doubt that all of these complaints were very genuine, as they were put forward by citizens of high standing, and from my own personal experience over a period of years, I can endorse some of the complaints.

I respectfully suggest, therefore, that you take immediate action to see that these particular services, which are expenseless and only require supervision, are given to those people who richly deserve at least this much consideration.

(Sgd.) W. M. Marshall,
Minister for Railway

7/3/46.

I regard that as a very fair and truthful statement of the position as it existed. In the Minister saw that sort of thing in the areas to which he went, he knows that I told him I had seen the same sort of thing in the area from which I come. As a consequence of his activity in the matter, instructions have been issued and have been carried out, so far as I am aware, in most cases. There has been a great improvement in the area about which I was concerned. It works down to this that the Commissioner of Railways or a board of directors, which ever might be appointed to govern the railways, must insist that the railways give reasonably good service to the public—the best service that can be given taking into consideration the difficulties of the area and population with which we in this State have to contend. But I was convinced—and never

more convinced—of the necessity of appointing some new management for the railway system when I read the remainder of the paper which the Minister sent to me on that occasion. It contained the Commissioner's observations to his Chief Traffic Manager—a subordinate officer—and included what I regard as the most disrespectful remarks concerning a Minister of the Crown that any departmental officer could make, remarks especially bad seeing that they were addressed to a subordinate officer in the service.

On the 14th March, some seven days after the earlier communication from the Minister, the Commissioner of Railways wrote to the Chief Traffic Manager in these terms—

After allowing for a certain extravagance in the language of the minute, and also for the known fact, born of long experience, that when our clients get alongside a Minister—especially an inexperienced one—without a responsible officer present to check or correct statements made, there is a spate of exaggeration, I feel that the complaints under the three headings of bad stowing, cleanliness, and water bags have justification.

Mr. Mann: Sack him straight away!

Mr. WATTS: That statement, which says the Minister is irresponsible, refers to a Minister that I know has never suffered from irresponsibility since he assumed office. The minute states "There is a spate of exaggeration; our clients get alongside a Minister—especially an inexperienced one." What state of affairs are we coming to if that is the sort of thing that is going to be done by an allegedly responsible officer of the railways service in this State?

Mr. Seward: No wonder we cannot get any improvement!

Mr. WATTS: If I did not believe before, when the member for Pingelly moved it, that the matter required considerable amendment and a new form of management, I do believe it now; but for reasons quite other than those I am mentioning now, I certainly believed in it a great deal before. I commend to the Government the immediate consideration of appointing someone to the management of that institution, an institution which is of tremendous value to the State and which I desire to see preserved and used in the best interests of the community. But we are not going to get that service if we have a management that is prepared to take up such a point of view, in reference to the Minister in particular.

It might be any Minister, but this particular Minister, whom most of us know, and with whom we may disagree violently on political points, we have considerable respect for personally and we do not wish that respect to be undermined by treatment of this nature.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.22 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 31st July, 1946.

	Page
Motion: Committees for the session, ballots	45
Bill: Supply (No. 1), £2,700,000, Standing Orders suspension, remaining stages	46

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

MOTION—COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.33]: I desire to move without notice, in accordance with Standing Order No. 65—

That the following members be appointed to serve on the Standing Committees during the present session, namely:—

Hon. C. B. Williams: On a point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member should wait until the Chief Secretary has finished.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Then the fat will be in the fire! He will have named the members.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the following members be appointed to serve on the Standing Committees during the present session, namely:—

Standing Orders.—The President, the Chairman of Committees, the Chief Secretary, Hon. C. F. Baxter and Hon. H. S. W. Parker.