

only by having a representative on the administration. As for his reference to a State shipping service in connection with a harbours board, I cannot agree with that. While we need to have shipping men on a harbours board, the management of a shipping company is an entirely different proposition from the management of ports. The member for Bunbury seemed to be rather afraid of the proposal.

The Minister for Mines: He always is.

Mr. Withers: What is the proposal?

Mr. HILL: To have a State harbours board to bring about a co-ordinated port policy for the whole of the State. The hon. member made the remarkable suggestion that this should be a trading concern. It would not be a trading concern at all. We on this side of the House want proper State administration for our transport and other utilities. Some experts recommend that instead of a State harbours board we should have local harbour boards, and go so far as to say that each local harbour board should stand on its own feet. If that were applied to Bunbury, what would the position be? Suppose the Minister went to the chairman of the Bunbury Harbour Board and said, "Your port is now £400,000 behind—"

The Minister for Mines: That is about what it would be, too.

Mr. HILL: — "and is making a loss of nearly £30,000 every year. You people who use that port—"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bunbury will not have an opportunity to speak to that. The hon. member should have raised the point when moving the motion.

Mr. HILL: Under my proposal I suggested that the ports favourably situated should be used to help to finance those ports not so favourably situated. I regret that the Minister for Works and the Minister for Railways replied to me only by interjections. Am I allowed to reply to those interjections?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may go on until I stop him.

Mr. HILL: Very good, Sir. The Minister for Works said I was prejudiced against Bunbury. There is a good argument for a State harbours board because we want members who know their job. The Minister for Railways said the ships were cutting out the ports. I contend that the ships are not

responsible for the existing state of affairs. The Minister for Railways administers our tramways. A year or two ago our trams were accustomed to stop every hundred yards or so; but the tramway authorities decided to cut out a number of stopping places in order to provide a more efficient service. Today we want a similar policy adopted with regard to ports. It will be for a State authority on ports to co-ordinate all the ports and to decide what ports shall be developed and what ports shall be used for local purposes. The final speaker, the member for York, truly said that his consideration was for the producer. We must not, however, consider every little parochial interest throughout the State, but should aim at a policy of providing ports so that we can export our products at the lowest possible cost. It is for that reason I have moved the motion.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 9.43 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 12th October, 1944.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1944. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—FISHING.*As to Post-war Control.*

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

(1) Is it a fact that the fishing has improved off Rottnest since the island has been closed as a pleasure resort?

(2) Has he been approached by local sportsmen to charge license fees for fishing in this area?

(3) Will the Government give consideration to these post-war aspects of fishing around our coast, the idea being on the one hand to preserve the sport, and on the other to provide the means to finance inspectors to police the waters concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The prohibition against fishing within three miles of Rottnest Island (later increased to five miles) has precluded the testing of these grounds.

(2) No.

(3) The Government is alive to the desirability of conserving our fisheries and will see that they are adequately policed.

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Minister for the North-West and read a first time.

BILL—NATIVES (CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS).*Third Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present, and there being no dissentient voice I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PAWNBROKERS ORDINANCE AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 3rd October.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [4.36]: The Minister for Health, when introducing the Bill, said that for the present it was intended to confine the application of the amendments included in the measure to the metropolitan area and not to apply them to the whole State. Of course he can at any time by proclamation extend the provisions to any part of the State. I support the second reading. I regard the amendments as most necessary and long overdue. Some of the amendments are aimed to deal more effectively with restaurants, eating-houses and boarding-houses. The Minister gave the House some information regarding those places, and, in consequence, we must all agree that some action is necessary. He explained that most of the back premises of the eating-houses in the city are in a very shocking condition and he told us that when he first received the reports on those premises he was astonished. He sent the reports on to the Commissioner of Public Health who in turn was shocked.

If members of the public who take advantage of the restaurants knew as much as do the Minister and the Commissioner, I think they would be more than shocked, and possibly some of them would be ill. The Minister gave us details to indicate the very unsatisfactory state of a number of the premises, and I do not intend to repeat them. He told us that the places were situated in the centre of the city. I certainly agree with the Minister when he said that despite the shortage of manpower there can be no justification for such a state of affairs. Surely there is someone who must accept responsibility for such conditions, and decidedly some action should be taken in that respect. I looked up the report of the Royal Commission that was appointed to inquire into the administration of the City of Perth Municipal Council in 1938. The member for Victoria Park was chairman of that Commission and the present Minister for Education and the member for West Perth were also members. The report submitted to the House by that body contained a number of recommendations which I notice have been dealt with in the Bill.

The Commission in that report made reference to the collection and removal of

refuse, sanitary arrangements, the provision of bathrooms and laundry facilities, the need to eliminate the distinction between boarding-houses and lodging-houses and to untidy premises. After looking through the report I felt surprised that action had not been taken earlier. The report was presented to the House at the end of 1938 and this legislation has been introduced towards the end of 1944. The Bill contains provision for the registration of premises and also for the licensing of proprietors. This is a very necessary provision. From what the Minister told us, there is good reason to believe that some of these premises will not be able to secure registration under present conditions, and furthermore it is likely that some of the proprietors will lose their licenses unless there is a decided improvement on existing conditions.

I note with satisfaction that most of the premises referred to by the Minister have been put into a satisfactory state of repair. In one case, through action by the City Council, the proprietor has been put out of business, but some of the restaurants or eating-houses are still in the same state as was described by the Minister. We have been told that there is insufficient control because of a flaw in the Act and that this Bill will remedy the weakness. I am prepared to assist the Minister to that end. I regret that the Bill does not contain provision to prohibit the use of cracked china in restaurants. Medical men say that the using of cracked china is injurious to health.

The Minister for Health: That is already provided for in the Health Act.

Mr. McLARTY: If provision is already made in the Health Act, it is not enforced. I have been informed that at present there is no difficulty in obtaining china.

Mr. Marshall: There is a big difficulty.

Mr. McLARTY: Some action should be taken to insist upon the replacement of cracked china used in city restaurants. Provision is also made for the control of lodging and boarding-houses, which is necessary. The Minister gave a number of examples and I propose to quote one of them. A room of 1,600 cubic feet space is occupied by a man, his wife, a baby and three children aged respectively 6, 4, and 2. The room is used for all purposes. Certainly such a state of affairs is bordering

on slum conditions. In the 1938 report mention was made of this, and it was then claimed that this state of affairs arose in the depression but that, on account of the conditions then prevailing, the time was not opportune to turn such people out or require them to find other accommodation. The Minister has said that it is not intended to take immediate action, again on the score that the time is not opportune. Of course, we are all aware that there is a shortage of labour and building material.

Mr. Needham: We have heard that before.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, and I am wondering when the time will be opportune. Soon there will be a tremendous demand for building and building material and there will be a shortage of both labour and materials, and I think it will be some time before the conditions in the city spoken of by the Minister will be improved because we shall be told that the time is not opportune. The Minister also spoke of the shortage of water and lack of sanitary conveniences in some houses. This was referred to in 1938 and again we have reference to it in 1944. The powers sought under this Bill should be granted. The provision regarding sub-standard houses is also necessary. Some of these houses have no bathrooms while the water supply is very inadequate. Regarding old houses, some of which were mentioned as being in the Fremantle district, it appears that in the early days provision was not made for bathrooms. It seems to have been an old English custom not to provide houses with bathrooms, and we can easily understand why some of the old houses are sub-standard in the matter of bathroom and water supply facilities.

Mr. Doney: That applies not only in England but in Europe as well.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. I think members will readily agree to that provision. Leaving that aspect of the Bill, I come to a clause dealing with venereal disease. I do not propose to say much about this proposal except that I am prepared to give the Minister all possible assistance. He has been advised by the professional officers, and I am prepared to accept the proposal contained in the Bill. The proposal to prohibit the sale of horseflesh is another very necessary provision. When I was in France during the 1914-18 war I was always much afraid that in some of the restaurants I might be served with horseflesh.

The Minister for Health interjected.

Mr. McLARTY: The Minister also probably took precautions when he entered a French restaurant that he was not served with horseflesh. In France the sale of horseflesh for human consumption is permissible.

Mr. Watts: Are you sure you have not eaten any here?

Mr. McLARTY: There was a case here some years ago in which a man was convicted for selling horseflesh. For a first offence a penalty of not less than £10 or more than £50 is stipulated. If the Minister cares to increase the £10 to £20, I am prepared to support him. There is no excuse for anyone offering horseflesh for sale, particularly when people do not want to buy it. Another provision deals with private hospitals, and proposes to take the control of these from the local authorities and hand it over to the Health Department. The Minister pointed out that under the Commonwealth hospitals scheme these hospitals will receive 6s. per day in respect of every patient who enters them; or the patient will receive the 6s. per day and will hand it on to the hospital proprietors. That being the case, I consider that the Minister would be justified in claiming that the Health Department should have some say regarding the efficiency and control of private hospitals. Undoubtedly these establishments serve a highly useful purpose. The Minister agrees, and I am sure, that this provision is not being introduced with the idea of embarrassing, but in the way of improvement. I observe a provision that in the event of a dispute between proprietors and the Health Department, the matter is to be referred to a Commonwealth Committee. I would like to know what is to be the personnel of the committee, and what it is to represent.

The Minister for Health: Dr. Murray, the Quarantine Officer, is to be the chairman.

Mr. McLARTY: On the notice paper I have some amendments. They are of such a kind as really concern themselves with the ends of justice more than with the actual working of the measure; and I trust the Minister will accept them. For instance, one portion of the Bill proposes that a local authority should have absolute power to say to a person who desires to establish an eating-house or restaurant, "No; we shall not permit you to do so." That, in my opinion, is wrong, for it interferes with the

liberty of the subject. Again, it might create opportunities for bribery and other unsavoury matters. Why should this power be given to a local authority? To my mind, a person going into an area for the purpose of establishing an eating-house or restaurant would probably create competition, from which would spring better eating-houses and restaurants. Provided that the applicant complies with the health regulations and building regulations in regard to the premises he proposes to use, I see no reason whatever why he should not be permitted to carry on the business.

Further, under the Bill the Commissioner of Public Health will have absolute power to instruct a local authority to refuse to grant a license in this connection, or the Commissioner of Public Health will be empowered to refuse to allow an eating-house or restaurant to be established anywhere. From what I see, the Commissioner need give no reasons at all. I hold that he should give reasons, and that the applicant, if he feels aggrieved, should have the right of appeal. For that I am trying, by amendment, to make provision. Again, I observe that there is no provision whatever for a person to transfer a business, for the Bill provides that every license issued to a proprietor shall be personal to the proprietor to whom it is issued, and shall not in any manner or in any event be transferable or assignable to any other person during its currency. I do not think the Minister should tie the proprietor up in that way, and in Committee I shall endeavour to point out to the Minister reasons why I consider he should accept my amendment. Finally as regards eating-houses, the Bill does not include any building or other structure used temporarily for serving meals to the public at any fair, show, military encampment, racecourse and so forth. I have knowledge that at some of the temporary refreshment booths to which the provision would apply glasses are washed in the same water for goodness knows how long. That is not desirable. However, I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I support the second reading, and as the subject has been so well covered by the previous speaker I shall deal only with aspects on which I can contribute new matter. One point I desire to stress is the need for making a real

attempt in this Bill, after the war, to put an end to three menaces to Western Australia which we have always had with us and which have never been dealt with except indirectly and by admonition. I refer to rats, mosquitoes and flies. We often read lectures by health officers and medical men in which complaint is made that our kitchens are full of flies and our homes full of mosquitoes; and these lectures also make mention of the rat menace, pointing out that certain diseases such as plague and botulism come from allowing too many rats to be about the place. Ratecatchers are employed in the city; but the fact remains that probably not one home in a hundred endeavours to put up screen protection such as used to be available.

The Minister could introduce in Committee a clause empowering health officers to insist upon every building or dwelling house in Western Australia installing wire screens. At present those screens are, of course, unavailable; and there is nothing else on the market that is really satisfactory. I admit that in this climate of ours we have practically everything we could require, as I see it, except freedom from insects and vermin. In my district today there is a very clever inventor who has already put on the market some very useful things. He is now addressing himself to the question of producing a really fly-proof rustless steel screen, which will be in sections and therefore will go into houses neatly, avoiding all carpentry trouble, and will be there for good. I hope the Minister will include in the Bill a clause that eating-houses, restaurants, food stores and private homes must make provision to keep out rats and insects. That is a suggestion that should be adopted. I do not say it can be done in a few months, because we must first get the necessary material; but we have before us an enormous building programme for this State after the war and now is the time to prepare specifications, have the items worked out and make provision for raising finance, so that the job will be done to the satisfaction of all the citizens of the State. As the member for Murray-Wellington has said, the Bill is in many ways a credit and it deserves support.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I do not intend to detain the House, as I think the measure ought to be passed. My purpose in rising is to say that I support the second

reading because the Bill contains many proposals that are thoroughly desirable.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison): I was surprised when the Minister informed the House that no such laws as those contemplated by this measure are in force. I always understood that local authorities had complete control over eating-houses. Do they come under any other Act?

The Minister for Mines: I am told not.

MR. MARSHALL: The point is that we are getting so much legislation on the statute-book that the ordinary citizen is beginning to wonder where he stands. I have every respect for the principles in this Bill, and I shall vote for it. However, I think that the Minister, when introducing Bills, should make sure what similar laws are in existence, and try so to consolidate them as to enable those directly concerned in the legislation to read and understand what is expected of them. The Minister said that eating-houses are not licensed. They are not, but they are registered under the Factories and Shops Act. That does not give a present or prospective licensee any let-up; and if this Bill becomes law he will have to license himself as well as the premises. Then the local authorities will make bylaws and so, as I said when opening my remarks, these people will not know where they stand. So many laws and regulations are being made that the ordinary person becomes astounded when he learns of the responsibilities thrust on him unawares. That is what I am complaining about. Members will notice that the Bill provides for a fee of £5 for registration. No matter where we look, we find taxation. We can scarcely breathe now without feeling that we are breathing taxation either inwardly or outwardly.

MR. J. Hegney: Free air tomorrow!

MR. MARSHALL: Not so; we will pay so much in taxation before we are allowed to breathe! I am fully in accord with legislation of this type, but a certain section can always escape from the enforcement of these laws, while another section can never escape from thorough supervision and inspection. By way of comparison, take our liquor laws! A person desiring to buy a hotel must pay from £25,000 to £30,000, or £40,000—probably more—for the building alone, yet we have in this city hotel buildings that are a positive disgrace, but the owners are not

obliged to pull them down and build new ones.

The Premier: But there is the authority to make them do so.

Mr. MARSHALL: But they do not. The person who has every regard for cleanliness and civility is never free from having his doors darkened by an inspector or some man in authority. But the person who has no regard for cleanliness and is prepared to pay a paltry pound or two to escape inspection is not interfered with. I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington that it is dangerous to give supreme power to any particular person or organisation. Parliament should be careful to give any person affected the right to appeal from a decision given by those in authority. Much has been said about families living in one or two rooms and, where the family is large, that is disgraceful and deplorable. But people do not so live from choice. They are forced to do so by economic pressure and they cannot escape from those conditions. Are we to turn them out into the park or put them on the Esplanade or on the highways? We have never made sufficient provision for these people, who are the victims of their environment. Such is the outcome of the system under which we live.

I am rather sceptical about the sudden idea to take control. I presume the Minister will be in office for quite a time, and I respectfully suggest to him that he closely observe what goes on after this Bill becomes an Act. If we are going to persecute boarding-housekeepers—I am not now referring to some of the foreigners who keep boarding-houses—who, because of economic pressure, cannot do better, we shall be adding insult to injury. I know there are businesses in this State that should long since have been closed up, for no other reason than that the licensee is not a fit and proper person to conduct a boarding-house. Some boarding-housekeepers do not know the meaning of the word cleanliness, and consequently many boarding-houses are a disgrace. I am afraid, however, as I said before, that the boarding-housekeepers who do their very best in the present circumstances will be the ones to be watched, while others who pay no regard to cleanliness whatever will not be penalised. That has been my experience and that is what I fear will happen under measures of this kind.

In this case the three or four different laws will apply as well to the prospective as to the present licensees. There are the Health Act, the Factories and Shops Act, and regulations made by local authorities, and people will have to watch all the time to see where they are. We are being "over-lawed" because even we, as members of Parliament, cannot guarantee where we stand in regard to rules and regulations. I have no objection to the Bill, but I will support the amendments of the member for Murray-Wellington. Those amendments are wise, and the Minister would do well to accept them. I believe in the principles of the Bill and, so long as its provisions and the regulations made under it are fairly and justly administered, no one will be able to take exception to them. The measure is long overdue. I was astounded when the Minister said there was no provision under any Act to control those who conduct eating-houses in this city. I do not think the measure should apply only to the city. Anyone controlling or handling food to be issued to the people should be under an obligation to see that it is served under the best and cleanest conditions possible in the circumstances. I am surprised the Minister did not bring down a Bill of this description long ago.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth): No one can cavil at the intention of the measure, but I frankly confess that I for one am not at all sanguine of its effectiveness. At present there are health laws which to my mind mean something, but so far as eating-houses are concerned they apparently mean nothing, and a great deal of the trouble has been due not to the fact that there have been no provisions covering them, but rather to the fact that there has been no policing of those particulars laws. I know a restaurant in Barrack-street that is and has been for months, infested with cockroaches. There are cockroaches on the floors, on the tables, on the walls, on the ceilings and everywhere else—a most disgusting state of affairs, if ever there was one! In a diningroom in Barrack-street it was necessary, because there was a leak in a copper used for the preparation of soup, for a plumber to be called in to do certain work. He found that the copper had in it a sediment or residue several inches thick. The bottom was coated and crusted with all the filth imaginable. There were masses

of hair and so on, and a rotten stinking mess that had been there for months and months.

Apparently successive layers of filth had accumulated, month after month. The copper had never been emptied, but every day a little more water and bones and vegetables were put into it, and so the thing went on. Surely something should be done with regard to that! The Bill will give local authorities absolute discretion as to whether or not they shall apply its provisions. I know that so far as the City of Perth is concerned, when certain very definite statements were made to the Lord Mayor he refused to believe that such disgusting conditions existed in the City of Perth. However, members of the City Council carried out an inspection and he was then satisfied of the truth of the allegations and horrified at the whole situation. It is useless for us to place provisions upon the statute-book unless we do something to insist that those charged with the authority to enforce them do so. Otherwise, we are merely wasting our time. When the Committee stage is reached I would like to see consideration given to that aspect. Instead of leaving it purely and simply to the discretion of the local governing authorities we should insist that they conform to the formula laid down in the measure.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): When the Minister replies to the debate, perhaps he will not mind affording the House a word or two with respect to the control of eating-houses. I do not quite understand the position. I do know that every week—or very frequently, anyhow—proprietors of eating-houses are prosecuted for a contravention of some law or other, but I do not know under what Act. Possibly the explanation may be that the authorities can prosecute in regard to dirty, unhealthy, insanitary conditions in eating-houses, or in or about such premises, but have no power to insist on any improvement taking place. Whether that be the explanation or not, I would be glad if the Minister would give the Chamber a few words on the subject.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (in reply): I have been pleased at the reception accorded the Bill. It has done some good

if it has awakened people to a sense of their responsibilities. I still say and want it to be understood that the administration of most matters under the Health Act is vested in local governing bodies. There is no argument about that. It is the Health Act that we are seeking to amend in order to provide that local governing bodies may deal with matters which their solicitors say they have at the moment no power adequately to attend to. Dealing with the remarks of the member for Williams-Narrogin, I would point out that it is possible to prosecute people for not keeping down rats in their premises, for instance.

Mr. Marshall: That is under the by-laws.

The **MINISTER FOR HEALTH**: That is under the Health Act. But there is no authority to say, "This place has got to be pulled down and reconstructed." There is no power to say to any man, irrespective of how irresponsible or unclean he may be, "You shall not run this restaurant." There is no method of licensing such places or preventing a building being opened as an eating-house, because there is not even a definition in the Health Act of an eating-house. The City Council has not stood up to the job as well as it might. The member for East Perth referred to the Lord Mayor's astonishment concerning conditions he was told existed in Perth. Others besides the Lord Mayor doubted the facts until my report was sent to them. Since then the City Council has been awakened to its responsibilities in this matter. Through this Bill we are introducing into the Act a new section to cover eating-houses. There is in the Act provision to deal with boarding-houses.

The definition of a boarding-house is fairly lengthy but it states that there must be six or more people in a building, exclusive of the proprietor and his family, for it to be regarded as a boarding-house. There is also a definition of a lodging-house. So local governing bodies or the Health Department can control boarding-houses or lodging-houses coming under those definitions. However, people do not run lodging-houses now; they do not take in over six people exclusive of their family. They do not conduct a boarding-house, but they have houses of 12 rooms—and there are several in the Terrace—commonly known as flats. Owing to economic pressure people are living in these places. Instead of taking in lodgers or boarders, the owners of these places let

rooms. The ends of balconies and verandahs are fenced off to a height of 6ft. or 7ft. A bed is put in each enclosure, and that space is called a room and is let for whatever price the owner cares to charge. He puts in a gas stove on the verandah, and half a dozen people use it.

We have no control over boarders-in-lodgings, which is a new name, and we are bringing down legislation to get that control. Those in authority will then be able to say, "This place is not fit for a person to live in; you must find some better place. You must not charge rent for this." That is the position in which we find ourselves today. It is all very well to say that legislation should have been brought down long ago, but these things, particularly in war-time, grow and grow until a climax is reached when something is done. The member for Murchison is worried about the number of Acts under which these people are working. They are not working under very many. They are working under the Health Act. In addition there is a section that has grown up in the city that comes under the Factories and Shops Act, which provides for all establishments that sell something retail.

Restaurants are brought in under that Act, particularly for industrial purposes. The factories and shops inspector has no control in connection with health matters. As far as the Perth by-laws are concerned, well, these places come under the local governing authorities now. There is only in addition the Factories and Shops Act because they are selling something retail, and most restaurants sell something more than the meals at the tables, so that they must come under that Act which provides for a registration fee of 2s. 6d. a year. These places already come under the by-laws of the local governing bodies insofar as those by-laws are made under the Health Act. The amendments will be dealt with in Committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Health in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th September.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.25]: I suppose this Bill will mark—if it passes, and I believe that in some form though perhaps somewhat different from its present one it will pass—another milestone in the history of the methods under which agricultural finance has been attended to in Western Australia. There has to my mind been a need for a long period now for an institution of the type that is usually known as a rural bank. There was, I suppose, in the minds of many people a belief that the creation of the Commonwealth Mortgage Bank as a part of the Commonwealth Bank would result in far greater achievements in rural finance than is likely to be the case. I say that partly because the mortgage bank has taken up the attitude that it will not take over accounts such as those involved with the Agricultural Bank even if the amount is satisfactory, because those loans are payable over a period of years and are not payable at short notice. In consequence, the impossibility of Agricultural Bank clients or customers receiving financial assistance from that institution is quite clear.

It is obvious then, as I think it has been obvious for many years, that there is ample room for better organisation of rural credit facilities in this State. I remember hearing, on the opening day of this session, the member for Nelson refer to the Agricultural Bank. I think that the words he used were that it was "a moribund debt collecting institution." I thought at the time that there was a measure of truth in his remarks. That belief has been confirmed by the speech made by the Minister for Lands when introducing this measure a fortnight ago. It is high time, therefore, that action of some kind—and let us hope that this will be proved to be the right kind—should be taken to alter the constitution and functions of the Agricultural Bank. However, this Bill discloses to my mind a rural bank proposal which has an Agricultural Bank complex. I mean that, in setting up a rural bank with overdraft and cheque paying facilities together with other aspects of the type of bank known as a trading bank, those who drafted the measure have been unable to depart from some restrictive and undesirable

sections which exist in the Agricultural Bank Act.

In consequence, in my view, the proposed institution will be unable to depart from the unsatisfactory conditions which have prevailed in some features of the Agricultural Bank administration. That bank, as the Minister in effect said in his speech, was created for the development of agriculture by settlers who had little or no money. As such it has had, as he indicated, a somewhat chequered career. It has been responsible, from the point of view of the State Treasurer, for substantial losses. I am one who believes that the State has been more than repaid for those losses, for I venture the suggestion that, comparatively slow as development has been in Western Australia, it would have been very much slower had there been no Agricultural Bank from the 1890's onward, and the state of development in which we find ourselves today, from the agricultural point of view, would be much less.

It is therefore obvious that there has been some—if not a sufficient—recompense to the Treasury in a financial way for the losses to which the Treasurer has so frequently referred, and I believe that in the ultimate the development and continuance of agriculture, if we can discover the right methods, will result in substantial dividends being paid to the State upon the money that has been so expended. I do not think that the comparison made by the Minister with the Rural Bank of New South Wales was as apt as are most of the comparisons made by that hon. gentleman. I cannot believe—although my knowledge of the Rural Bank of New South Wales is, of course, less than his—nor can I ascertain from the resources at my disposal, that at any time the Rural Bank of New South Wales had to deal with so many and such varied activities as are covered by the transferred activities as they are referred to in the Bill. There we have the Soldier Settlement Scheme, the Industries Assistance Board, the Group Settlement Scheme and the Wire and Wire Netting Act, and I think there are one or two other minor matters.

It seems to me that one cannot make a complete comparison as to the successful prospects of a rural and industry bank in Western Australia by looking at that which has occurred in New South Wales. Never-

theless, there is a resemblance, and because there is a resemblance the Minister is justified, I suppose, in bringing down legislation which in its principles mostly resembles that which is in operation in New South Wales. I think, however, that different methods should have been used. As I said, the Bill is a Rural Bank Bill with relics of the Agricultural Bank scattered all through it, and in many places most noticeably so. I would have preferred that the Minister had brought down a Bill to constitute a Rural and Industry Bank, a bank with cheque paying and overdraft paying facilities, and that that Bill should have enabled the bank to take over satisfactory accounts from the other institutions which, I will call the transferred activities; that is to say, it should have been provided that where the debt owed by any of these transferred properties was greater than 70 per cent. of the value of the property the Rural Bank would take over 70 per cent. of the value of the properties, and leave some other tribunal to deal with the question of what should be done with the surplus.

In other words, if £1,200 were owing upon the property owned by "X" which was worth £1,000, £700, would be taken over by the Rural Bank as a Rural Bank account, £300 would be reserved to be dealt with, and the £200 excess over value would have been immediately written off. In the course of his remarks the Minister said that in all probability there would be a loss of a further million pounds to be met in regard to the figure of indebtedness. I do not dispute that for a moment. In fact, I am inclined to agree that that may not be other than a conservative estimate. I believe, however, that the loss should be met and met quickly. As to what should have been done with the difference in the case I have mentioned between £700 and £1,000, namely £300, in my view it should have become a debt to another institution or tribunal, not the Agricultural Bank, the institution that is administering the question of value and writing down and making adjustments, and that it should have remained a second mortgage on the property payable over a long term of years at a low rate of interest. Then I think we would have succeeded in adjusting these different accounts to a position where there was some reasonable prospect of success.

The Rural Bank would then have been a Rural Bank. It would have had no accounts upon its books, no account that at the opening of the proceedings represented more than 70 per cent. of the value of the property, as ascertained by the bank or the tribunal I have mentioned. That tribunal should have upon it a representative of the Treasury and of the Primary Producers in order that all aspects of the questions involved might be considered. None of that is in the Bill except in association with the activities of what are recognised as the Government agency departments of the Rural Bank. As I said, this is not separating the insolvent from the solvent, or separating the insolvent part of one account from the solvent part of the same account, which I believe should have been done and a distinct cleavage made. Whatever amount was deemed recoverable by virtue of the value of the property, the 30 per cent. which I mentioned should have been made payable over a long period of years at an extremely low rate of interest and the balance written down as the final adjustment. That, I believe, would have led to a satisfactory adjustment concerning that type of account.

The Premier: You mean that any misfortune suffered by the settler should be written off by the financial institution?

Mr. WATTS: I had better go back over the specimen I have referred to, namely, the debt of £1,200 on a property valued at £1,000, and on which there is £200 to write off. The Rural Bank could not advance more than 70 per cent. of £1,000.

The Premier: That £200 may have been lost as a result of drought or other unforeseen circumstances, and you think it should immediately be written off?

Mr. WATTS: Do not let us get from the particular to the general. Let us assume that the property is valued at that, despite droughts that may be occasioned from time to time. I do not maintain that the value should be based on today's lack of rain or tomorrow's floods. There are suitable methods which could be used to calculate the value of the property. The Agricultural Bank uses methods today, but whether they are satisfactory or not I am unable to judge. I suggest that these methods or others more suitable could be used with equal advantage. My point is that these things should have been straightened out, not wrapped up together in one

parcel practically for all time, which is the position that we shall arrive at if we pass the Bill in its present form.

It would be an impossible task for the House to dissect this measure and turn out such a proposition as I have endeavoured to outline. It seems to me that the restrictive provisions of half a dozen Acts are still to be found in a great measure in the Bill. Although the Minister referred to the consideration he had given to the statutory lien embraced in Section 51 of the Act, I point out that its provisions are almost wholly contained in the Bill. They have this qualification, of course, that they shall not operate without the consent of the Governor. That I am prepared to admit is better than nothing, but it does not overcome that which, in my view, is a most undesirable principle. It is wrong in two ways. First, this institution proposes to be a trading and competitive organisation. To that I have not the slightest objection. It proposes, however, to take unto itself, if the Governor-in-Council thinks fit to agree, a type of lien or security that no other institution can have and which, I venture to say without fear of successful contradiction, this House would not agree to any other institution possessing if a Bill were brought forward for that purpose. In addition, this House has never granted a statutory lien of any kind to any financial institution that was not part and parcel of a State instrumentality.

If we are to claim for the proposed Rural and Industries Bank that it should have all the rights, and indeed something more than the rights, of outside trading concerns, and that those concerns will be required to accept the bank into their association, what is the effect of the provision in the Bill regarding the clearing house, then we should not, in any circumstances, make use of a statute and the powers of Parliament, even though it be on the recommendation of the Governor-in-Council, to grant a statutory lien. There is the other argument which, in my opinion, is that there is no valid reason for the statutory lien provisions either in the lesser form in the Act of 1931 or the later form in the Agricultural Bank Act of 1934. Contracts had been made and this new provision was added without the consent of one party because it happened to be a convenient way to get a security that the authorities would not have been prepared to give

in the same difficult circumstances to any other institution or mortgagee. In fact, it was passed in the first place at a time when other mortgagees were given less security. I have always argued that that was wrong, and my objection today is rather greater than ever to it because hitherto, objectionable though it has been, it has only been applied to those engaged in rural industries.

The Bill now before the House, however, proposes to apply the same principle, with the concurrence of the Governor-in-Council, to those engaged in any industry that happens to be a customer of the Bank. It will apply to the goods and chattels of those in manufacturing industries if they are so unwise, as I believe they would be, in such case, as to go to the bank and seek financial assistance from it. It seems to me with regard to the last item in particular that members, when they go into Committee on this Bill, should direct most careful consideration to dealing with that aspect. Hitherto there have been grave complaints from local authorities owing to the difficulty of recovering rates due to those bodies in respect of properties that have been mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank. Members sitting on both sides of the House have ventilated complaints by local authorities on this subject. It has been a source of complaint at all conferences of the Road Board Association of Western Australia. It has been stated that it is next door to impossible to recover any rates from Agricultural Bank farmers who are in any financial difficulty.

Even the most persuasive arguments have failed to induce the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank to accept the view that they should take any special interest in rates due to local authorities. As a purely developmental and Treasurer-worrying institution, that might have some justification. I say it "might" have some justification. It is possible to see an argument on the Commissioners' side, but now we come to this Bill which says that the Commissioners shall not be liable for rates, whether as mortgagees in possession or otherwise. It is a well-known fact that if any mortgagee goes into possession, he immediately becomes liable for the payment of rates, but the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank, simply because they happen to have the protection, perhaps, of this Parliament, even though they go into

possession as mortgagees, are to be excused from any obligation to pay to the local authorities the rates owing on their properties. I know that other institutions have carefully refrained from going into possession as mortgagees in order to avoid the responsibility being placed upon them of having to pay rates. But if the Agricultural Bank goes into possession, it will not be liable as a mortgagee in possession or otherwise. If we desire to turn that institution into a rural and trading bank, as I believe is fully justified, we should turn it into a rural and trading bank and not have an Agricultural Bank complex behind it all the time.

Let the proposed institution stand on its own feet, as every other institution has to in regard to its accounts, particularly those that are new ones, and are not relics of the past. Another proposal in the Bill is to give the Commissioners of the Bank powers of Royal Commissioners, so that they may make investigations. There is no limit placed upon what those investigations shall be into, so I presume they may be conducted into anything from the state of customers' accounts to the necessity to alter the provisions of the Vermin Act. Where else will we find a mortgagee having the powers of a Royal Commissioner to compel witnesses to give evidence, to take evidence on oath, and all the rest of it? Once again you will see, Mr. Speaker, that this Agricultural Bank complex is there very noticeably in this measure.

The Premier: You do not seem to like the Agricultural Bank!

Mr. WATTS: I am stressing these points because, although I have criticised the Agricultural Bank, I can see arguments that can be advanced in favour of its Commissioners, but I will not suffer the continuance of these phases in a Bill of this description. I can see no justification for so doing. If the proposal regarding rates owing to local authorities is allowed to go through, I warn members that they will find themselves in considerable conflict with local authorities. When we reach the Committee stage, I hope to be able to present some most interesting information as to what takes place regarding this rate-collecting controversy with local authorities.

This Bill also empowers the bank to call upon police officers to eject a borrower. The voice is the voice of one person, but the

hand is the hand of another. The voice is that of the Rural Bank, but the hand is that of the Agricultural Bank, as it has been since 1934. The Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank want that provision. I do not say that they have used it; I believe they have not. I have not made the slightest inquiry, but there is no justification whatever for giving the commissioners of this institution a special privilege to call in police to help to eject a borrower without first moving the ordinary processes of the law. Yet that is what this proposal amounts to.

I turn back for a moment to the statutory lien provisions. I feel it is about time that Parliament was prepared to accept some fundamental principle in regard to the rights of the farmer to a living allowance. I feel that this should be directly related to the basic wage. In all other walks of life, it is directly related to the basic wage as fixed by the State or other Industrial Arbitration Court. I recall that a proposal which had some bearing on the subject was brought forward by way of an amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act in 1937 by the former member for Greenough and was defeated. If I remember rightly, that measure did not tie itself in any way to the basic wage. Maybe for that reason it was less desirable than such a proposition ought to have been, but I say the primary producer actually produces a very substantial proportion of our national income.

The Minister for Lands, in a most interesting speech some time ago, made reference to the proportion of the country's wealth attributable to primary production. The primary producer is about the only person in our community who cannot guarantee to himself any reasonable allowance out of his earnings in any year. He is always the last person to receive any consideration. The difficulty becomes great in a year when there is a drought or some similar visitation. A farmer in advance has no means of judging that such a happening will occur. In good faith and by employing proper machinery and other methods, he puts in a crop that is to give him his annual return. Because of this visitation it does not arrive. Instead of there being some surplus roughly equivalent to the basic wage, in order that he might have a reasonable allowance, he finds himself with a deficit because all other claims come first.

It seems to me it is high time we laid down some principle on which this can be based, so that we might be able to guarantee the primary producer in those circumstances a sum of money out of his earnings for his personal use and, as a reward for his labours, an allowance which every other person in the State doing anything like equal work, and producing anything like equal value, would demand and be given. I hope that before long some consideration will be given to this aspect of the matter. One of the greatest producers of real wealth in our community, as they have been referred to, should no longer be subject to the charity or the dictates of Commissioners in respect of the reasonable personal expenses which they might incur, and the only way in my view of ascertaining a fair basis is to tie our calculations to the basic wage. It would be possible, of course, to make deductions for items in the basic wage allowance that are not expended on farms, such as house rent, but I say, tie it to the basic wage and we will have a basis with which nobody can quarrel and which will vary with the cost of living from time to time.

I am hopeful that the Government agency department will be able to carry out the work of reconstruction as asserted by the Minister. I wish him and the department, if it is formed, the best of luck, although I do not think they have made the task any easier by the methods which have been laid down in this Bill. I have no objection to the borrowing powers of the Commissioners, and I see nothing to object to in the securities in which they may invest. I do regret, however, that no provision is made in the Bill for the acceptance of interest on a yearly basis. The half-yearly collection of interest, presumably, is to be continued on all types of accounts. To a large number of farmers, particularly those in the one-crop-a-year areas, this means the payment of compound interest, because the half-yearly interest falls due and, when not met, is capitalised, and so the farmer has to pay accommodation interest, which is compound interest, on it for the remaining four months of the half-year, even if he is able to pay at the end of the year. I think at least the interest payments should be accepted yearly and thus minimise the possibility of this compound or accommodation interest, as it has been called, having to be met in future as it has been in the past.

I cannot support the proposal in the Bill for handing over the Rural Relief Fund Act to the administration of the commissioners. It had nothing to do with the Agricultural Bank; in fact, the Act under which the moneys were given to the State provided that no part of it should be paid to any instrumentality of the State. Therefore, the funds available to the trustees of the Rural Relief Fund Act could not be paid to the Agricultural Bank. Yet we are asked to bring the administration of all the transferred activities and the Rural Relief Fund Act, if the Bill is passed in its present form, under the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank or the commissioners of the new bank, as they will be then. To do this appears to me to be quite wrong.

Personally I consider that the amount due under the rural relief fund legislation should be written off. In my opinion, it should never have been made a charge upon the assets of the borrower. It was not a charge upon the assets of the State because the money was a gift from the Commonwealth. There was some idea in the mind of the Minister who introduced the Bill in 1935—he was not the present Minister—of establishing a revolving fund which could be continued over a great many years. If that is still a likely project, there might be some merit in asking for a return of part of the moneys which were supplied by the Commonwealth, but I say quite clearly that a great part should be written off every account in order that the persons concerned might receive some benefit from the gift made by the Commonwealth. It is unfortunate that the idea of establishing this revolving fund ever came into being. All that it is doing now is to make the question of writing off difficult, whereas it should never have been difficult.

In this House in 1935—the first night I was in it—an effort was made from this side to have the advances under the Rural Relief Fund Debt Adjustment Act made a free gift to the farmers, as the money had been a gift to the State. That effort was defeated; and from that day the money has been charged on all the assets of the farmer, whether owned at the time the advance was made or subsequently acquired. Two years ago the Minister introduced legislation to enable the money to be written off in certain cases. In my view it should have been written off altogether. I

do not think the present is the time to hand the matter over to the Commissioners of the Bank. If it is going to be used as a revolving fund, let it be administered by three or four men dissociated from the creditor institutions, men who have a knowledge of, and for preference men who are in, the rural industries; let them take charge of the fund and administer it in the way that it has been administered in the past, if we cannot have the advances written off. But to suggest that the Act, and the funds involved therein should be handed over to the Commissioners of the Bank seems to me to be quite wrong.

I noted, too, the Minister's argument that although amounts had been written off by the Agricultural Bank, there was still a personal covenant liability in respect of them. The Minister refers to the powers of the Commissioners to write off under Section 65 of the Agricultural Bank Act of 1934. He announced that although the Commissioners had that power of writing down or off a certain proportion of the debtor's account, the debtor was still liable for that portion upon personal covenant. That may be technically true, but if anybody even suggested to me that the Commissioners of the Bank would legally proceed, after writing off or down the debt of the farmer, then even in my most critical moments I should refuse to believe the statement. However, the Minister has brought the matter up to this extent in the Bill. He does say that the farmer, in respect of the amount written off, shall be absolved both from the amount and the covenant; but he has tied something which I do not like at all on to that provision, namely the proposal that the commissioners may require that the other creditors of the debtor, both secured and unsecured, shall write down their debts.

Why again should we make the poor unsecured creditor, mostly the storekeeper, suffer as he suffered under the Rural Relief Fund Debt Adjustment Act? I have said before in this House, and I repeat, that the storekeepers were the people who as a matter of fact enabled the farmer to carry on for some years—made it possible for him to be still there and for adjustments to be made, because they were the people who put food into his mouth sometimes when there was no-one else who would do it. They have suffered once, and so far as I am concerned it will not be a condition

of an arrangement that the other secured creditors as a whole shall also write down. I do not mind that the secured creditors, if there are any, should join with the commissioners; but I contend that we must remember what has already taken place in the case of the small unsecured creditors, many of them debtors themselves, many of them without much in the way of resources, who have been obliged in many cases to write off as much as 17s. 6d. in the pound.

I suppose some people would say that the unsecured debtors were lucky to get even that half-crown. Still, I do not want to see in any adjustment a condition to be made hereafter, through the commissioners, that the unsecured creditors may be compelled to write down or there will be no adjustment made, because that would mean that the unsecured creditor would be in the unfortunate position of the farmer having to go to him and say, "Look, if you write off ten bob in the pound, I will get so much off my bank debt; but if you do not, I get nothing off my bank debt." What will the unsecured creditor most likely do in those circumstances? I do not consider it a fair proposition. I have now said all that I wish to say on the measure at the present time. There will be much more to be said in the Committee stage. I repeat that a Rural Bank is desirable, and that a re-organisation of rural credit facilities is overdue. With these things said, I commend the Minister for having brought this Bill to us for discussion, because I feel that whether the matter is ultimately arranged to my satisfaction or no, some good will come of the measure; and that will be an advantage to Western Australia.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): This is both a second reading and a Committee Bill. It is a second reading Bill for the reason that it contains a number of principles which we on this side of the House do not like and which we consider should be the subject of very considerable debate; and it is a Committee Bill for the reason that as we pass through it, clause by clause, we shall find ourselves discussing again the arguments that have arisen year by year for many years past. Those arguments are bound to be resurrected as the Bill proceeds. I am in agreement with the Leader of the Opposition that, subject to certain very necessary amendments, the Bill should be

enacted. I hope it will be. Upon that enactment, the Agricultural Bank, which has been with us for a long number of years, will cease to exist and a period will be put to the frequently very painful struggles by this State to develop within itself a prosperous agricultural community. Over the years many farmers have been accused of abusing the Agricultural Bank Act and the Agricultural Bank as an institution. I do not doubt that there have been many occasions when that has been, under force of circumstances, true; but in general I think it has not.

Who can doubt, however, that the Government itself has abused the Agricultural Bank Act? I assert that it has, and that it did so in 1934 when the Hon. M. F. Troy gave us what is now known as Section 51. That, to all intents and purposes, stopped development and progress in this State. The faults that arose later must not be considered as in any way the faults of the Agricultural Bank officers. Certainly they were not the fault of members on this side of the House; because for many years, through probably two or three Bills per session, we have voiced in no uncertain way our dislike of this particular section. So I assert that the fault lies alone with members opposite—I think that cannot be denied—for having too easily given in to the very strong-minded Minister whose name I have just mentioned. Whatever may have been the hopes and intentions that prompted the drawing up of Section 51—and at the time they may have been proper enough—its actual effect generally on rural progress has, without the tiniest doubt in the world, been harsh in the extreme.

The Premier: It was the law at the time the amending Bill was passed. It was formerly Section 37A.

MR. DONEY: I am not referring to Section 37A. I know what it provided for, and Section 51 was supposed to take its place; but Section 51 has been vastly severer than was Section 37A, and Section 37A was brought down, as the Premier will surely recall, not with the object of collecting interest but with the object of protecting the farmer from the too insistent claims of private creditors. That was the object of Section 37A, and I admit that it did particularly good work at the time and right up to its repeal. I am quite prepared to admit that Section 51 has not always—and, as a

matter of fact, not over-frequently—been administered with the severity that the wording of the section would permit, so I cannot understand in those circumstances why, since it was so seldom used to its full degree of severity, the Government is so insistent on making it a part of the new Bill. I would have thought that the Government would welcome the opportunity to drop this infernal provision altogether, but apparently it is of too much use to the Treasury.

There is no doubt that Section 51 brought in a great deal of revenue and therefore from the Treasury point of view—I do not want to be offensive to the Treasurer—it must not be discarded, even though by insisting upon it the rural population falls. The point was that although our farmers were forced off their holdings, the interest collections went up to a considerable degree. Now, at the very time when we anticipated that this harsh provision would be dropped, to our amazement and to our bitter disappointment, Section 51 is a feature of the Bill now before the House. That is a pity.

The Premier: Its application has been ameliorated.

Mr. DONEY: Ameliorated?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. DONEY: No, it cannot be claimed for such a section that it has had in general an ameliorative effect on farmers, because so many farmers in consequence of its enforcement have gone off the land.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. DONEY: By interjection the Premier let it be seen that he did not consider I was too fair towards Section 51. We on this side of the House do not want to be unfair to the bank or to the Bill. All we want to do is to get out of the measure the utmost help for the men most affected. I candidly admit with respect to the section under discussion that whereas it was at one time the practice to make interest a first charge upon production, today the method is not to take any action at all to secure payment of interest until that interest has been in arrear for at least one year. I am glad to admit that that is an improvement, but although that is so it is no excuse whatever for transferring Section 51 in practically unadulterated form to the new Bill.

The Minister for Lands: That is not right.

Mr. DONEY: In practically unadulterated form.

The Minister for Lands: That is still not right.

Mr. DONEY: Having read the Bill, that is the construction I feel inclined to put upon it. I may not be fair.

The Minister for Mines: You usually are.

Mr. DONEY: I am endeavouring to be fair now; but, reading the present Bill and having the Agricultural Bank Act alongside me, I cannot see that there has been left out of the Bill any of the objectionable features of the Agricultural Bank Act upon which this measure was drawn. If the Minister can show me later on that I am not judging this part of the Bill fairly, I shall be glad to make amends. However, I might be permitted to repent, if I have already said it, that I am sorry the opportunity was not taken through the introduction of this Bill to leave Section 51 and all that it implies entirely out of the measure. The platform of the Party to which I belong specifically mentions the need for bringing such an institution as a rural bank into being and deals with that subject in considerably more detail than I have time to discuss now. Members can therefore judge for themselves the depth of our disappointment that the operation of Section 51 is to be prolonged. This prolongation is going to be bad business for us. So far as my memory serves me—and I think it serves me aright—it was in 1930 or 1931 that we on this side of the House were on the point of launching a Bill to bring a rural bank into existence.

As members are aware, however, a general election took place shortly afterwards, and we fell by the wayside, our intentions with regard to this legislation falling with us. That will indicate to the Minister one very sound reason why we are pleased to see the Bill brought down. Today the question is being frequently asked whether the Act now to be superseded was good in its effect upon agriculture in Western Australia. I think it fair to say that prior to the intrusion of Section 51, the Act was admirably suited to the pioneering needs of the age in which it operated. That prompts a further thought. Most people, I suppose, would say that the Bank scored its major successes under Mr. Paterson, whose attitude towards agriculturists and their problems was sound but always very helpful. I do not recall that away back in the time when he was managing the Bank there was much in the way of trouble at all. There was no trouble of

which I can think, and so far as his successor, Mr. McLarty, was concerned, he was of the same type—sympathetic, but firm. Everything might have been all right had not Mr. McLarty struck heavy weather in respect of the depression which shortly afterwards ensued, and certain political prejudices, of which he was made a victim. That was a pretty painful experience for him, and it may be no exaggeration to claim that it killed him and would have killed anybody else in a like position.

The Agricultural Bank Act was reconstructed in 1934. Since then, its usefulness to the agricultural community has, I claim, to a large degree been negligible. The House will reflect that the Agricultural Bank's charter required of it that it promote the occupation, cultivation and improvement of the lands in Western Australia. But I do not think anyone can possibly plead with sincerity that those objectives have been fulfilled, except to a minor degree, since 1934. I believe it to be true, though I am not sure, that since 1934 no loans have been made on entirely new securities. I do not wish it to be thought that I am linking up the present Minister for Lands with any of the failures I contend have ensued since the big change took place in 1934. The present Minister received Section 51 and a very much debilitated Agricultural Bank as a legacy from his predecessor.

The Minister for Mines: A good man!

Mr. DONEY: He was, like the rest of us, all right in connection with those things that suited him. That particular legacy gave the hon. gentleman, whom I am mentioning, no pleasure at all. Section 51 is so interwoven with the general practices of the Agricultural Bank, that it might be no exaggeration to say that the Bank revolves around it to such an extent that it is well nigh impossible to separate it. It seemed to most of us as though the Commissioners had decided to proceed with a policy of gradual liquidation of the position that was fast becoming impossible—or not so much impossible as difficult in the extreme—because the Bank, although admittedly doing a good deal of necessary and useful work, could not be claimed to be any longer a bank since it made no loans and had departed almost entirely from its earlier methods and duties. The present Bill has ensued, therefore, more or less as a matter of course. It is, as I think members will agree, in-

evitable as there is no better way of overcoming the impossible position in which the Bank finds itself. Incidentally it looks to me, and I do not know whether my opinion is shared by any other member, as though the prospective closing of the Agricultural Bank is an admission by the Government that the limit of pioneer farming in this State has been reached. I am hopeful that that is not so, and that that is not the view of the Minister and his associates. I would be glad if the Minister for Lands would later favour the House with an expression of his views in respect of that matter.

The Minister for Lands: I say now that I do not agree with that point of view at all.

Mr. DONEY: I am very pleased to hear that indeed. I think, with the Minister, that the time is certainly not yet ripe when we should discard for all time the idea that the land that is just beyond what is now the outer fringe may not turn out to be a profitable venture for some future development. I would like to say a brief word in respect of the staff of the branches of the Bank throughout the State and head office. I am fairly well known to them and they, in their turn, are fairly well known to me. I have a very high opinion of practically all of them. Many of the men, and the women members of the staff as well, are to my mind highly qualified in a number of specialised field and office duties. I hope that it is the intention of the Government—and I have no doubt that it is—to find scope for their abilities in the intended new order foreshadowed by the Bill.

I intimated at the outset that certain amendments are most essential. The Agricultural Bank is setting out on an entirely new career under this title. It will have to compete with other banks already in existence that deal with deposit accounts, overdrafts, loans, etc. The new bank will be able to compete successfully with these other banks only by the adoption of methods that will attract new clients. The Bill under review is loaded with a great deal that has been brought over from the Agricultural Bank Act, and embodies altogether too much that the trading public will find highly objectionable; indeed, so objectionable that I cannot see how very many prospective clients can be secured. Several of the amendments are aimed at rooting out the worst of these objectionable features.

On motion by Mr. McLarty, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1944-45.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 3rd October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £2,265:

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [7.47]: This is the opportunity for private members to express their views on the affairs of the State in a way that does not otherwise present itself during the session, and one should say what is possible of a general nature on this occasion. The difficulty associated with this question is not to overlabour it or try to speak on too many points but, if possible, to put up new matter. Since I have been in this Chamber I have become aware of the fact that all the different members have certain specific subjects which they pursue with great energy and knowledge. But we are all looking for something new, and as our requests or propositions are granted or achieved it becomes necessary to bring forward another subject for consideration. I have been very fortunate in this regard, and I think that other members have too. As I have said before, many members achieve results and do not realise it, because the credit is not given to them. Those results come about in the ordinary course of events.

Only the other night I had the pleasure of referring to something which would interest the Premier, who has just returned. He is no doubt very concerned about the position after the war, and of the International Financial Agreement and other things of that sort. The question to which I referred was exercising this Chamber some years ago. A proposal was put forward from Claremont that £100,000 should be set aside for examining a solution of the economic and financial paradoxes of our time. We now find that a sum of £100,000 has actually been made available by the Bank of England to meet the problems that have so often been discussed in this Chamber. I trust that after the war we shall get some benefit as a result of that action. The money is for attempts to solve economic and financial problems. I noticed that a statement appeared in the Press recently

indicating that the President of the Chamber of Commerce foresaw the difficulties that will arise after the war. He was anxious about the distribution of products and said that before there could be any such distribution those goods had to be produced.

That is one line of thought. Another is: How can the world handle the enormous production which modern science can achieve? On that particular phase we had a statement in the House of Commons, which I mentioned last night in another connection. That statement was that the British aircraft industry was so organised that in three days of production it could supply the requirements of all the civil air lines of the world for about ten years. In the face of productivity like that—the statement I refer to was official and was made in America by a person highly placed in connection with that branch of industry—we cannot altogether accept without reservations the cautious views that we have heard about the difficulties of production. Everyone knows that work must certainly be made available in the future. That is not the problem that concerns me. What I wish to deal with relates to a phase that was indicated in some remarks by the member for West Perth when he was discussing the Estimates now before the Committee. He said that, in his opinion, there would be need for the Loan Council and the central authority in Australia to attempt some new policy if we were to develop the weaker States like Western Australia.

It was with great pleasure that I read during the Premier's absence a statement of Commonwealth policy to which he referred in the Press this morning. It had relation to the adoption of a system of regional development for the States in such a way that each particular area with certain attributes could be developed separately, and not from a central point like Perth or other capital cities as in the past. In that I conceive we have something into which we can get our teeth. Whether we can influence the Loan Council to alter its outlook regarding the less developed States like Western Australia is the question. Anyone who reads the official reports of the Loan Council meetings usually sees that provision is made for certain loan moneys to be made available to States very largely on a population basis. There is no indication in the Loan Estimates that the

States with large areas and undeveloped assets receive consideration apart from a population basis.

The Premier: We get more money than on a mere population basis.

Mr. NORTH: I think so. If we accept the position as it was before the war, possibly we cannot complain. On the other hand we have all suffered a severe jolt in the last three or four years, particularly with reference to the Japanese menace. I think the Government would be justified in approaching the Commonwealth Government and the Loan Council from a new angle in order to promote development that will aid in meeting the Japanese and other menaces in the future. After the conclusion of the present war with all the peace conferences, international armies and international courts, we shall still have the fact that there are 1,000,000,000 Asiatics in the near north adjacent to our undeveloped State. It seems to me likely that in approaching the Loan Council from a new angle, we should do something regarding the formation of separate States. I do not want to be misunderstood; I do not really mean that Western Australia should be cut up into separate States and I certainly do not wish to commit the National Party in this respect. I think we could, however, view Western Australia in the same way as history shows was done 95 years ago in eastern Australia. At that time New South Wales had a population of 190,000 and Victoria a population of 70,000.

Despite those small population figures, Victoria and New South Wales separated and from that time neither State has looked back. I do not suggest that we should do anything of the sort here and, to use an expression that has been heard so often of late, I cannot claim that we have any mandate for such a move. I suggest, however, that we could look upon our State now, with its population well on the way to 500,000, from an administrative point of view in a light different from that in which we regarded it before the outbreak of the present war. It is interesting to note that the United States of America with its 49 separate States, has a population of 130,000,000 and we can assume that there is a huge population in each of the various States. Of those Nevada can be said to correspond largely with the Federal electorate of Kalgoorlie

which has a population of about 80,000 souls according to the latest statistics available. Nevada has its own university and nearly 2,000 miles of railway run through the State. The area of that State is much less than the Kalgoorlie electorate and is about 180,000 square miles.

That serves to suggest that if a large country like the United States of America with its teeming millions of people can see the sense of administering a territory like Nevada with a comparatively small area and small population in the manner adopted there, what could we not do if we applied that method to a huge State like Western Australia with its area of 1,000,000 square miles if it were regarded as constituting three provinces—even if they were controlled from Perth? During the recent Referendum remarks were made from time to time that Australia, particularly Western Australia, could not be administered from Canberra. If that is so, how is it that the Kimberleys can be run from Perth? Of course, some may say that that is quite a different proposition! Perhaps before the war we were justified in ambling along at a slow gait, but now with the prospect of new projects opening up the Kimberleys where it is suggested we could place 40,000 people without any particular race being specified, we must face the new aspects that arise regarding administrative difficulties.

When he attends meetings of the Loan Council, the Premier goes as the representative of Western Australia and if he were able to say that he represented three provinces, what would be the effect? Let us consider what those provinces might be. Presumably one would be what I would describe as the Swanland Province. That is where the bulk of our people live and where the best rainfall occurs. Within the boundaries of that province we would have an area the size of Victoria or of Great Britain. It would comprise, roughly, 80,000 square miles with a population of, say, 400,000 or about five to the square mile. That would give the province a density of population approaching that of New South Wales, which has eight to the square mile. We would then be able to say that there is one area we are able to handle administratively most efficiently from Perth. When we go to the other end of the State and consider the position of the Kimberleys, another view-

point would have to be advanced. I have gone to the trouble to take out some statistics, I may say that I am merely a student and have not visited the northern portions of Western Australia.

I wonder how many people realise the assets we have in this State, particularly in that part which today is causing us so much concern. It has a good reliable rainfall. In Western Australia we have in the temperate zone about 180,000 square miles with a rainfall of from 10 to 15 inches. Compare that with the relative position in South Australia which has a larger population than this State but which gets a far greater amount from the Loan Council and all the war industries. It has 36,000 square miles of territory with a rainfall of 10 to 15 inches against our 108,000 square miles; and ours is more reliable. I am speaking of the temperate area. Now we come to the territory with a 20-inch rainfall, a very useful rainfall. In Western Australia we have 31,000 square miles of that country in the temperate area, whereas South Australia has only 19,000 square miles. Coming to the 25-inch rainfall country, we have 14,000 square miles and South Australia has 8,000 square miles.

In addition, we have something not possessed by any other State except Queensland, namely, our tropical zone which consists of nearly 350,000 square miles of watered country with a not very reliable rainfall. Rochbourne is a place with an average rainfall of 15 to 16 inches, though in some years it has recorded less than half an inch in a year. In the tropical zone of Western Australia, which corresponds to Queensland, we have 146,000 square miles with a rainfall of 10 to 15 inches and 62,000 square miles with a rainfall of 15 to 20 inches. Then we have a third province which corresponds with Nevada; we often describe it as the pastoral and mining area, which has a rainfall of less than 10 inches.

If the Premier could go to the Loan Council and point out that we have these areas and these assets, we could surely establish a policy of opening up the country in a big way and administering it from Perth with local officers. Still, there is a missing link. The distance from Perth is the drawback. The question arises: Can we overcome that difficulty? There is a motion on the notice paper on this subject. Now that we have the conquest of the air in

such a measure, the Government should obtain in peacetime two or three first-class well-found transport planes so that those areas could be administered and handled from Perth without loss of time. In other words, we want to decentralise by taking the mountain to Mahomet instead of Mahomet to the mountain, or should it be the other way round?

It is no doubt hard for us to break away from the years of history wherein we have regarded the North-West as being a very long distance away. But it is not far distant today, and who would expect Ministers and Government officials or even members of Parliament to use the existing airways? To suggest that would be unreasonable. If surveys are to be made of the big rivers in the North that do run—I do not include the rivers that fail to run regularly—we should be able to go there in transport planes, see what is happening and learn all about it in the space of a couple of weeks. In this way we would acquire a closer knowledge of the North than could be gained in a couple of years by using the older forms of transport. If it is good enough for Mr. Churchill, a man of nearly 70, to fly to America, Moscow and other places, if it is good enough for the British to do much of their Army work by means of air transport, surely we could make a start to do something with the North with the aid of air transport! The cost would be a mere bagatelle as compared with the outlay that would be entailed to put on extra ships or to undertake road and railway construction.

I feel that such a scheme as I have outlined must come, and that it would be a comparatively cheap venture for the Government to acquire its own air transport planes for work of this sort. We must bear in mind that people in the Eastern States, such as the members of the Loan Council, the members of the Commonwealth Bank Board and engineers, must be invited to Western Australia and taken for a ride to see these projected works. They should be taken to the several localities and informed of what is proposed; and perhaps in the thrill of the moment they might be more inclined to do something than if left in the cold cautious atmosphere of Canberra where they cannot see more than a few maps, which, of course, could not be so convincing as an actual view of the country.

For many years Western Australia has been known as the Cinderella State. I think it is time that term was dropped. We have been fooled for a matter of nearly 50 years with this tale of Cinderella. The other States might be allowed to fill the role of the ugly sisters, but how are we going to scoop the pool? Only recently our prince, Dr. Evatt, attended the ball, but so far there has been no 12 o'clock and no happy wedding. It seems to me that we should regard ourselves more in the light of the nursery rhyme about the old woman who lived in a shoe and had so many children she didn't know what to do, meaning by children, of course, unsolved problems. If we make the approach without waiting for the prince to come along and thus attempt a new method of development through the help of the Loan Council, we might realise some of these opportunities that are awaiting us.

When I prepared my notes of these suggestions there had not yet appeared a most interesting news item. It was published in "The West Australian" a few days ago and made reference to the Ord River area of Western Australia, the subject of which the Commonwealth was taking up with the State Premiers. Apparently five resolutions were agreed to. These appeared under the headings "Regional Planning, Resources Surveys, Federal Offer to States." One resolution read—

That the States should aim at defining regional subdivisions for the purposes of development and decentralisation, and should endeavour where possible to adjust existing administrative subdivisions to correspond with the regions thus defined.

I believe there is a lot in that, and I think we can perhaps achieve it in a new way, namely, by adopting modern means of transport and local administration for those territories, something which 100 years ago the Eastern States achieved by forming new States. If the proposals suggested in the Press are given effect to, we shall be able to do for Western Australia a great many things that have already been done in the Eastern States and thus gradually take our place with the other States.

Reverting to the first question about the difficulties affecting all classes of business, and labour and industry generally, due to the extraordinary advances in science, invention and production, I think the time has come when the Chamber should consider the appointment, through the Government, of a

roundsman for this Parliament. A Parliamentary roundsman would do his job perhaps through the Press when he could, and otherwise through the broadcasting system. That proposal is not brought forward in order to boost any particular Party. The object is to try to bring before the people the great difficulties that do occur in the case of members of Parliament and the Government in handling the new situation that is coming over the world, in view of the changing effects of science and machinery. I do not believe the public are fully aware of the difficulties that confront the Government of the day and private members too. One hears many extraordinary remarks showing that the people are not at all au fait with the difficulties of any particular Minister, or of the Government, or of private members. It is easy for the people themselves to utter complaints against Parliament because of the fact that we are not moving as fast as the people see science moving outside; but we here all know that the real difficulty is the tradition in the people themselves.

We know that very often a member of Parliament or a Minister is willing to do things, and that very often it is the people themselves who, the moment a move is made, begin to criticise and oppose. That, I think, is due to the fact that they have not been shown the great obstacles that we are conversant with here in making over the various changes. Of course one question often discussed in this Chamber is a question which you yourself, Mr. Chairman, have handled; that is the defects in the financial system. They will no doubt be gradually tackled and worked out. The financiers are attempting to make the necessary changes. They do not like all the criticism they get, any more than a man who sells lemonade wants to see any person blown up or suffering from dropsy. They want to see good trade and good business. But this Parliament is a matter we should consider. The Commonwealth Government has a Parliamentary roundsman, and one often hears interesting comments over the radio.

What would our suggested Parliamentary roundsman discuss? In the first place, he might put Parliament over. It is about time that was done. Everything else has been put over. Everybody in private life and everybody in industry is being put across, but this poor institution is now left completely in the dark, right

out of the picture. All know the difficulty of retaining our seats, and going through all the Standing Orders and instructions which prevent us from carrying out our duties and at the finish perhaps receiving two or three lines in a very crowded newspaper. Still, we are very grateful because our Press, in the difficulties connected with the war and in consideration of other important news, does what it can for Parliament. But let us consider what we could do over the air if we had a Parliamentary roundsman! I repeat, at present we are completely out of the picture. If, for the sake of argument, the member for Irwin-Moore could be taken out of his seat and put on the air every morning for half-an-hour, why, within six months he would be running this State, so to speak, because he would have the first innings. While women were sweeping the floors and washing the dishes they would know exactly his views. Of proceedings in Parliament one sees only a few lines in a week, which is the most that the papers can do for us. If we could have a Parliamentary roundsman not only for broadcasting, but also for securing space in the Press, there would be good results.

The roundsman would not deal with Parliamentary matters as they are now dealt with in the Press. I freely acknowledge that we are very fortunate as regards the space we do get in the newspapers, but what we require is someone to handle the problems of Parliament as they are today in reality, and not as they appear to be in ordinary conversation. Let me give a simple instance. There were two or three fellows in the bus today when I was going to work. One of them said, "There goes a member of Parliament. He goes to Parliament House in the afternoon to smoke a cigar, and to play billiards all the evening. It is all free." That is the kind of talk that goes on. It is all very well if we get only a little of it, but the talk continues year after year and there is nothing said on the other side. Some years ago we had here a champion of Parliament, a man who now lives in the Claremont electorate and is no longer robust. I refer to our old friend Mr. Grant. He used to take up the cudgels for Parliament in many ways. He used to publish in the Press articles which put Parliament in a very different light. There is a great deal of joking about Parliamentary allowances.

It is said that everything here is free, and that members of Parliament receive very large amounts, perhaps a thousand a year, and anything more a member of Parliament wants he gets by a little graft. That is the general idea.

Some years ago Mr. Grant showed in an article published in "The West Australian" that the Parliamentary allowance is given not as a wage but to enable representatives of the people who desire to be elected and who have no private means, to do the job without any financial considerations, thus preventing them from being liable to be bought and to be largely twisted in certain directions because of their financial situation. That is the kind of thing we want broadcasted. Another mistaken idea that has to be combated is that this Parliament House is a terrible financial burden on the people. The general belief is that it costs a fortune every year. It has been shown that it costs the people of Western Australia 1s. 6d. per head per annum to have an Assembly of Parliament, or in some cases more per head; in my case the cost is 1s. 6d. That is what the people pay for the right to send someone here to take their part and watch over their interests. Electors are relieved when they learn that it costs only one bag of peanuts, only 1s. 6d., per year to have a member of Parliament representing them. Figures show that the Australian national income is about £1,200,000,000 a year, and the Australian people are mulets to the extent of something over a million sterling annually for their Parliaments and all their Parliamentary officers and the Governor-General—less than a farthing in the pound of the national income to run all these institutions!

The people should know these things. They would soon know them if we had a roundsman to look after this place by explaining our procedure to the people and showing them that, if they go the right way about certain things, they can get results in this Chamber. If we would only appoint a roundsman of our own, we would have somebody to put Parliament over to the people. It is their show, even if it costs only a farthing in the pound. A farthing is a farthing. Let the people know how they can use this institution. Let them be shown what can be done. Last Tuesday we had the hay story. It was a good story, and it showed that one might have a ter-

rible trouble in the community, but not without having the whole Opposition up in arms from half-past four until about 9 o'clock—when it is time to hit the hay—to remedy the position. All that is interesting. The last question I wish to ask tonight is whether it should be the Premier, or the Leader of the Opposition, or the Parliamentary roundsman who would explain to the people the economic difficulties. Some of us may have been to the pictures and seen the use of slow motion. It has been very unpopular lately, but some years ago a picture would be shown at the ordinary rate of speed and then repeated at slow speed.

Mr. W. Hegney: That reminds me of another place!

Mr. NORTH: We see the things that happened many years ago very quickly; the standard events are clear to us, although the details may be forgotten. We can see the mistakes of the past and make our deductions from them. But in these days we are, unfortunately, placed on the slow-motion side of the picture. We are moving along from day to day, although in our present generation we have witnessed the greatest revolution ever considered possible. We must get that quick-motion outlook, or we shall not make the changes that are necessary. It occurs to me that if at this moment we looked back 150 years, we would suddenly see a dandy in his silks and stockings and with his wonderfully powdered hair, while next morning, as it were, we would see a gentleman like Mr. Chamberlain, with his top hat, morning coat, striped trousers and umbrella. How did it all happen? We see it like a change overnight; but there was a great revolution. That revolution in clothes is like the revolution in machinery. I realise today the difficulties we are facing in our work here. When we talk to people we use words and sentences which have no meaning for them.

I will give an instance. We talk of thrift; and we have a motion before us at present dealing with pensioners. People say, "These old people should have saved money. Had they been thrifty they would have been independent today." Then they point to someone who died last week and left £25,000 or £30,000, and they ask, "Why did not those old people do that?" While that question is being asked, there are business people in this city who know that if thrift were really

practised in the sense that these people talk, business would collapse. Our State would be worse than it was in the last depression. It is only because very few people practise thrift, so-called, instead of expending money adequately to feed their children or to repair their houses, that industry does not collapse. It would do so under modern conditions, if everyone practised that kind of thrift.

People still talk of thrift; they still consider that it is a good thing to have all this money unexpended at a time when under peace conditions so much has to be destroyed because it cannot be sold. There are many other words we use and ideas which we champion but which have no meaning today. We had some talk the other evening about our natives and some members seriously asserted that the natives were looking for an easy living. Across the seas have been built million-horse-power plants to drive automatic machinery, and there is at present a move for cheap power in the South-West. What else is that but making things easier? What we really require is a new dictionary, a sort of economic dictionary, which will explain to the people what is happening in the world. We are living in the fuel age; we have left the muscle age behind us, the age of honest sweat. By all means let us have sports and manual exercises such as are performed at school, but at work these are ridiculed by the engineer who has invented some mechanical means of doing things in a better way. Unless we bring these matters before the people, our lot will become harder and harder. There is the old language of scarcity, of pounds, shillings and pence, and it is being used in this new fuel age which has completely ousted the muscle age, although it is not generally realised in the community.

I say again that we can well afford to appoint a parliamentary roundsman to bring all these matters directly under the notice of the people. The least we on the Opposition side of the House can ask of the Government is reasonable tolerance towards anything we put forward. I make these remarks because of one made by the Minister for Industrial Development. We all know he is doing most important work in opening up secondary industries in this State. No-one denies the great work he is doing, and he is receiving commendation from all directions. He made a remark the other night by which he suggested that the motions brought for-

ward on this side of the House were, so to speak, merely for amusement. I point out that we bring these motions forward in all seriousness, after having given a great deal of thought to them. Of course, the Government side of the House is the pounds, shillings and pence side.

What can we on this side of the House say? We can have our pounds, shillings and pence, but we call them plans, notions and hunches. We can put forward our suggestions and our hunches and treat them as pence. We will look after the pence and let the pounds look after themselves. If we watch our hunches, perhaps our plans will look after themselves. I feel we should be encouraged. Twenty years in Parliament has taught me that a good idea is worth all the money in the world, because it is ideas that eventually prevail. I shall therefore personally continue in all humility to bring forward anything that my electors think I should. I shall bring forward any proposals from my district or elsewhere if I consider they will assist this Government or any other Government, even if my attempts are not always successful. One never knows how often those ideas will be adopted, and adopted sometimes in the near future.

MR. PERKINS (York): I have no doubt that upon examining these Estimates closely it would not be difficult to find some expenditure that one could justifiably say is unnecessary. I also have no doubt that it would be possible to find other classes of expenditure that could be employed better in other ways. I am fairly certain, too, that to bring about a proper state of affairs in some of our public utilities and social services, considerably more expenditure will be needed in the future than is provided for in the Estimates. Of course, we have before us at present only the Revenue Estimates and therefore cannot ascertain what projects the Government has to bring forward that will be financed by the Loan Estimates. At present we are obtaining the greater part of our revenue under the uniform taxation law. The Government is not directly responsible for the collection of that revenue, but we hope the time is not far distant when Parliament will again be imposing income taxation directly on its own account, and for which it will be directly responsible. There is one question which I think must be exercising

the minds of all members; it is how far it is possible to raise direct taxation. Most members will agree with me that at present the rate of direct taxation has reached its maximum, if it has not already seriously curtailed the initiative of our people.

Mr. Rodoreda: You said that when the taxation was about 10s. in the pound.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know what we might have said in the past, but many concrete examples have forced us to realise that if direct taxation is too high, our people will not seek to enlarge their activities. We have seen the same effect in the coal mines and in other activities where men have been earning high overtime rates. They have found that a large portion of their increased earnings has gone in taxation and for that reason have refused to make any extra exertions. That is a major problem which faces us: to set a limit to the rate at which direct taxation can be levied. I think the taxation rates are just about as high as it is possible to make them at present. If we are going to have an increase in the productivity of our State it will be necessary to make relaxations in some directions in the post-war period, or we shall not get the maximum development for which we hope. However, that is a question which can be discussed when this Parliament has again the responsibility of imposing taxation. Some of the remarks I propose to make could perhaps more appropriately be made when particular estimates are introduced.

I am especially concerned with the Education Estimates, and I would leave my remarks on that subject until the Minister actually introduces those estimates and tells us exactly what the department has in mind for the coming year but for the fact that it may be some considerable time before he makes his speech, and I would like to put forward some suggestions that he may care to reply to when he speaks. I am not sure that the general set-up of our educational system is as well based as it might be. We are giving a type of education to certain of our young people which would be of much greater value if it were varied to some degree. We are pushing the great majority of our pupils in the secondary schools through the university examination course when many of them have no intention whatsoever of proceeding to the university, or even of taking up any class of technical em-

ployment in which that type of education could be profitably employed. Having regard to certain of the pupils, I think that if we gave a general background of culture rather than attempted to lay the foundation of an education necessary for a university career we would be doing a greater service to them. I know the subject is a very difficult one. It means the separation of the classes in secondary schools, and would no doubt entail a great deal of re-organisation to bring about.

Secondary education in all the States is divided, in that part of it is provided by the State and another part through church secondary schools. Unfortunately, none of the State education departments has conducted any very extensive experiments in regard to broadening the system of secondary school education but some of the church secondary schools have made experiments along those lines, and those of which I know have been very successful. I know of one school in particular that has divided its senior pupils into two classes. One section, the members of which propose to take up a particular business or a university career, follows one course, taking the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations; while the other section, the members of which have no intention of going on to the university and do not require a specialised secondary school education to fit them for that purpose, takes an entirely different course which is more concerned with the development of a general cultural background. I do not know whether our Department of Education is considering anything along those lines. I have no doubt that, if the department is doing its job and the Minister is giving consideration to this problem, they must be making some research and inquiries into what can be done in that direction.

Undoubtedly, if this State is going to be given reasonably satisfactory secondary school facilities it will be necessary to make very great extensions in the not too distant future. When the Minister is speaking on the Estimates, I hope he will tell us something about the intentions of the department in that regard. I have no fault to find with, and indeed I think I can congratulate the Minister on, his control of the department up to the present. I have found the officers of the Education Department quite progressive in outlook. I know many of them quite well and, if the Minister acts on the

advice many of those officers are able to give him, I am sure we can look forward to considerable improvements in our educational system. The improvements, however, cannot be effected without a considerably greater allotment of funds to the department. The basic trouble is that insufficient money has been allotted to the department. I have no doubt that if a greater amount was made available the officers of the department could be relied on to give a very much improved service. The provision on the Revenue Estimates is for only a very small increase indeed, one that is entirely inadequate to provide for the improvements I would like to see in the whole educational set-up in this State. There may be some provision on the Loan Estimates about which we do not know, but a very much greater amount than the paltry £15,000 provided on the Revenue Estimates is necessary to give anything like a reasonably satisfactory educational set-up in this State.

At this stage I should like to compliment the Teachers' Union on the very good plan set out in the booklet a copy of which I think all members of this House have received and which has been widely circulated throughout the State. The booklet discusses concrete matters of which the department could very well take particular notice. If effect were given to only half of the suggestions made, there would be a tremendous improvement in the situation. I do not believe that the facilities offered in any part of the State—either in the metropolitan area or in the country—are satisfactory. I do not wish anyone to construe anything I say as indicating that there should be any slackening in the rate of improvement of the services in the metropolitan area. I think that they are at an absolute minimum at the present time and I have every reason to believe that many improvements are urgently required. However, the position in the rural areas is considerably worse. I think that immediate action is necessary to bring about an improvement there. I know that the department has certain plans for the development of area schools, or central schools, which I believe is the proper term.

The Premier: We can discuss all this on the Education Department vote.

Mr. PERKINS: I want to raise these matters now to give the Minister for Education a chance to reply to these specific points.

They need only be raised once and I think it is better to do it now.

The Premier: The Minister for Education has the right of reply when introducing his own Estimates.

Mr. PERKINS: I know that the department has certain plans in regard to the development of the central schools in the rural areas, and I believe its policy is very good indeed. As the Minister knows, probably as well as I do, there are many difficulties in the way. For instance, there is great reluctance on the part of many parents, whose children attend small country schools, to agree to bus services taking their children to the large central school in the present circumstances. There is only one way to overcome that reluctance on the part of the parents, and that is to give so much better education at the central school that they will be attracted to the idea of sending their children there. At the present time that improved education is not to be found in the greater number of the larger country schools. I have one or two concrete instances in mind of parents who have stated that the particular teacher at the small country school gives better education than their children would receive at the larger central school. That to my mind is a problem confronting the department. First of all it is necessary to improve the standard of education in the central schools so that the parents will be induced to send their children to them.

I wish now to deal with the question of the bus service. I believe that the department at the moment is asking for too great a concentration of children before agreeing to a bus service. I do not know exactly what the figure is, but what I mean is that the department demands, say, that there shall be two children per mile—that is not the correct figure—before making a bus available. Until many of the country areas are more closely settled, and the people who have left have gravitated back, it will be impossible to establish such services if the department maintains the standard which it is setting at present. There will have to be some relaxation in order to establish these bus services, and unless they are established, and until satisfactory school services are available through these rural areas there is not going to be much incentive for the people who left those areas in the last few years to return from the city where, although the educational facilities are far from ideal, they are much

better than those available in the areas from which they came. In fact, in many cases where bus services are non-existent there is no school available at all. In the area which I represent there is now no school between Bruce Rock and Merredin. There is a small assisted school at Belka, one at Korbel, and one at Muntadgin far away on the other side. The distance between Bruce Rock and Merredin is 32 miles, and it is about 35 miles from Korbel to Muntadgin, and there are no school facilities whatsoever within that huge area.

The Premier: What happened to the school at Belka?

Mr. PERKINS: There were not sufficient children to keep it going. Many of the families have left those districts for one reason or another. They have drifted to the city, and now there are not sufficient children to keep the school going.

The Premier: There were about 30 or 40 there.

Mr. PERKINS: That may be so, but I am pointing out the position into which these rural areas have drifted. In many cases lack of suitable facilities has been responsible for parents leaving. They have gone so as to give their children a better chance. In many cases the parents were having a hard time, but I think they would have put up with that, but when it came to seeing their children denied a reasonable education and a chance to get into some other walk of life where there is, perhaps, more opportunity, the parents took advantage of the war conditions to go to the city. The problem before the Government at present is to induce those people to return to the country when the war is over. That cannot be done unless the conditions are relaxed somewhat in regard to the establishment of the bus services or, alternatively, more small country schools are established.

I quite agree with the department that if it is possible to establish the central school idea with the bus service it is very much preferable to the small school where obviously the teacher is working under great difficulty. But I would say that rather than indiscriminately send teachers, who have not got very far up the ladder in the Education Department, to the small schools the department should take particular care in selecting them. Where the teachers have been particularly suitable and have been sent to the small schools the kiddies, as a general rule, have got on

fairly well and there have not been complaints. But there have been many other cases where the teachers have not been very satisfactory, for some reason or another, in some of the larger schools. Then the easy thing for the department to do is to transfer them to a small country school where it is thought, perhaps, that the parents are long suffering. Unfortunately the reaction is against the children who have to receive their education in that way.

Mr. McLarty: Many of our best teachers have started in the small country schools.

Mr. PERKINS: That is so, but unfortunately when they prove to be good teachers the department naturally takes them away and puts them into responsible positions in larger schools. That must be done in fairness to the teachers. I make the point that the department should take particular care in selecting teachers for these schools until such time as it is able to eliminate the greater number of the small schools. There are many complaints too about the equipment in our schools. That applies throughout the educational system generally. I know that complaints about equipment can be levelled at all the schools in my electorate, from the large school in York to the small schools in the outlying parts. I would not advise the Government to take any visitor to our State inside our country school buildings. I can assure the Government that, from the point of view of equipment in country schools, nothing would be seen of credit to it.

The Premier: The great credit the Government can claim is that it establishes schools where seven or eight children can attend, and no other country in the world does that.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know whether the Premier is correct in making that statement, but I claim the responsibility rests upon the Government to provide educational facilities for country children. That must be done if it is expected that the parents will remain in the rural areas and continue the production that will give economic stability to the life of the State.

The Premier: The Government does not close down schools if there are seven or eight children to be catered for.

Mr. PERKINS: I understand that an attendance of eight is the minimum, but I claim that, if it is the policy of the Government to keep the outer areas in pro-

duction and even though the number of children available should drop to six, the responsibility still attaches to the Government to provide educational facilities for those children by one means or another. The only way to do that is to find more money for the educational services provided in the rural areas.

Mr. Cross: Or to put a tax on the farmers.

Mr. PERKINS: The booklet issued by the Teachers' Union contains many interesting points but, as members have received copies, I shall mention only one aspect, namely, the training of teachers. I was glad to note that the training period has been extended to two years, but the suggestion made for an extension to three years is certainly justified. It would be the means of raising the status of teachers to a higher level and possibly would serve to attract the best type of individual to that calling.

Mr. Cross: It would mean training a woman for three years and she would probably get married in the fourth year, and all that expenditure would be wasted.

Mr. PERKINS: That brings to mind another point. I do not know that the departmental regulation that forces women to give up the profession upon marriage is altogether justifiable. I think the regulation should be applied with considerable elasticity because, during the war period when many women teachers have been called upon to resume active association with educational work, they have proved much better teachers because of their experience in dealing with their own children than they were before marriage. I know that the department has plans for the re-organisation of some country schools. I understand that new schools may be erected on sites where the old schools have proved unsatisfactory. If the provision of an infants' school is contemplated, I commend to the department the establishment of kindergartens in conjunction with them. There is a demand for that in country districts. I am aware that one disability in that regard is the lack of a supply of teachers trained for that particular branch of education. However, I trust that in future the department will find it possible to establish kindergartens in conjunction with infants' schools. From all I have read, I have gained an appreciation of the value attached to the

kindergarten work among young children, and I trust that the Government will give attention to that phase.

Passing on to the question of secondary education, the general position is really far from satisfactory. The existing schools are considerably over-crowded and the Education Department must be hard put to it in planning for the future. In my own electorate, a suggestion has been made that the children attending post-primary classes should be transported by bus to the Northam High School. On that question I hope the parents will have an early opportunity for a discussion with the Minister, and I trust he will be able to agree to some such proposition. I understand, however, that the accommodation in the Northam High School is severely taxed at present, and possibly plans will have to be made in the near future, probably before the end of the war, to extend the secondary school educational facilities throughout the eastern areas generally. From time to time requests have been made to the Government to establish more high schools and I believe that some action in that direction is vitally necessary. At present many children are denied the opportunity of a secondary school education because of the difficulty experienced in getting to the existing establishments. I do not know that in Northam itself any children have been actually deprived of the opportunity, but I understand that in Perth the schools are much over-crowded.

One difficulty in connection with the Northam High School is the lack of accommodation for children coming from the outer parts of the district. I do not know whether the Education Department has any concrete plans regarding the establishment of a hostel at that centre, but that question should certainly be considered. I have had a number of complaints regarding the lack of suitable accommodation for students. One matter to which my attention has been drawn—I do not know whether members are aware of the position—is that in Melbourne there is an institution known, I understand, as the Emily MacPherson College of Domestic Science. At that institution, girls who are in business have an opportunity to attend evening classes for tuition in domestic science, quite apart from the other classes held in the daytime for ordinary students. From all reports I have received, the college is doing a very valuable work, which is

spoken highly of by pupils who have been in attendance. I have been wondering whether something along those lines could not be carried out in Western Australia.

The Minister for Education: We are doing it already.

Mr. PERKINS: I was not aware of that. I am glad I mentioned the matter so as to give the Minister an opportunity to tell the Committee what is being done here in that regard. In addition to the ordinary primary and secondary school facilities provided for children, we should be making some more concrete plans for adult education after the war. I have no doubt that the Adult Education Board has done good work, though I understand that it has been rather short of money during the whole period of its existence, and that it is necessary for it to have considerably more funds if it is to extend the work to any great degree. I consider the question of adult education extremely important, because whatever we may do in our primary or secondary schools, a great proportion of any person's education must be obtained after leaving school, and I am afraid that a large proportion of the education that we give in the primary and secondary schools will have been wasted unless we have a good system of adult education to carry on the interest of people after they leave school in all the cultural activity in which they should be interested.

It is a criticism justifiably made at the expense of the people of Australia that we take far too little interest in the cultural side, and I believe the only way to overcome that is through the general educational system. At present very little attention is being paid to that aspect, and I am hopeful that some plan can be evolved for a better co-ordination of the work of adult education with our other general educational activities. The building up of culture is not something that can be accomplished overnight. It must of necessity be a long and steady process, and if we have neglected that aspect in the past, the only way to rectify it is to lay the foundations now and do whatever is requisite to get the matter on to a proper footing for the future. There are several other matters to which I might refer and I do not intend to deal with any of them at great length. We had quite a prolonged debate on the transport position recently when discussing a certain motion. There has not been much evidence up to date that the Government

has taken notice of what was said on that occasion.

The Premier: The debate only finished in another place last night.

Mr. PERKINS: The Premier heard what members here had to say about the general transport position, and some of the criticism was so severe that I would have thought the Government on the next morning would have been considering what it was necessary to do to improve conditions. I believe that debate has already had some effect. In fact, one leading member of the Railway Union approached me not long after the debate took place—

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that he is out of order in alluding to any debate of the same session upon a Bill or question not now under discussion.

Mr. PERKINS: I regret that I have offended unwittingly; I was not aware of that Standing Order. I consider, however, that our transport system must be about the worst in the Commonwealth.

The Premier: Why cry stinking fish all the time?

Mr. PERKINS: The statement might be unpalatable to the Premier, but it does not alter the fact that it is true.

The Premier: No.

Mr. PERKINS: Queensland is the only State I have not visited and I do not know the position there, but I am certain that conditions are worse here than in any of the other States.

The Premier: Why always run down your own State? Have a bit of local patriotism!

Mr. PERKINS: There are many ways in which the service could be improved without great expenditure of money or effort—

The Premier: Of course there are.

Mr. PERKINS: —provided those responsible for the transport system show a little imagination. Let me give one example. The refreshment-room in the Perth station is a disgrace to the present Government. There is no other way of expressing it.

The Minister for Justice: What is wrong with it?

Mr. PERKINS: Has the Minister ever been in it?

The Minister for Justice: I have.

Mr. PERKINS: I know of nothing right about it. It is a dingy, dark, wretched place. Compare it with the refreshment-rooms in South Australia, and the refreshment-rooms at other stations that could be mentioned!

If the Minister does so, he must feel ashamed of the service the department is giving here.

Mr. Cross: Have you ever been to Quorn?

Mr. PERKINS: Recently I went to the Perth station refreshment-room to get breakfast before catching an early Diesel for the country. I expect all the other people catching early trains received the same treatment as I did. The best I could get was a cup of coffee and two biscuits. I asked whether toast and sandwiches were available, and was told there were none that morning.

Mr. Seward: What time was that?

Mr. PERKINS: Just before the departure of the early trains about 8 a.m.

Mr. Doney: Steak and eggs are often served.

Mr. PERKINS: On that morning one was lucky to get coffee and a couple of biscuits.

The Minister for Justice: I have often had a midday meal there and have found it quite good.

Mr. PERKINS: Perhaps the Minister's idea of what is a good meal is very different from mine. The Railway Department, regardless of the lessee, is finally responsible for the conduct of the refreshment-room, and I see no reason why a worse service should be given in the Perth railway station than is given in any restaurant on the opposite side of the street.

The Premier: Then why do not you go over there?

Mr. PERKINS: Because such restaurants are not open early enough. Is there not some responsibility on the department to give a reasonably decent service? I consider that there is. The same criticism applies in a greater or less degree right along the line wherever the department has refreshment-rooms. To rectify matters would not entail a great amount of expenditure. What is needed is a little imagination and enterprise in the administration of the department. Probably a few shillings spent on paint, and some change in the management or some brightening up in the general administration would effect a tremendous improvement. I repeat, however, that the present position is an utter disgrace to the Government, and no one else can be held responsible.

The Minister for Justice: At any rate, the railway refreshment-room is clean.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know whether the Minister has had his inspectors in there lately, but the outside does not give one any

confidence that the conditions inside will bear very close investigation. However, I will not make any charges on that score because I am not in a position to support them with concrete evidence. There is another matter to which I desire to refer, the plans for the future of our transport system. The Premier in a recent speech has not given much information as to what is planned for the future, and neither has the Minister for Railways done so. As I have indicated here previously, I hold that we should be making some concrete plans as to what we will do after the war. All the statements we have had from the Minister for Railways would lead us to believe that he regards the Diesel service as the objective to aim at in providing satisfactory transport for country districts. I have to disagree with the Minister on that point.

I have stated before that it takes $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to travel from Perth to York, a matter of 60 miles, which distance I think any of us will easily do in $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours even though using a gas-producer car. The railways apparently cannot provide a satisfactory service over that route. If they have to run all round the country in order to get to York, it shows that the Government should consider other means to give York a satisfactory service. I have every hope that in the not too distant future we shall have bitumen roads throughout the country area. The Main Roads Board, I understand, has plans for bituminising the greater proportion of the main roads in the State. When that is done the Railway Department should consider the establishment of road transport to serve the nearer areas which cannot be economically served by the air services to which the Minister has referred. At present, apparently, no plans whatsoever are being made in that regard.

The Minister for Justice: How do you know?

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister has given us no indication on that point. I understand that the only experiment carried out by the Railway Department up to date in regard to road transport has proved very satisfactory indeed. I refer to the bus service which runs to Kojonup, and which the Leader of the Opposition recently informed me had made a profit of £3,000 in one year. I understand that before that transport service was established, many people used to travel across from Kojonup to Katanning

in order to catch the Albany express to Perth. Others have adopted a different plan. Recently I met two people who now, instead of patronising the Albany express, travel across to Kojonup to catch the bus. Those two persons live in the neighbourhood of Katanning. The facts I have stated leave not much doubt in my mind as to the service preferred by the public. If the Minister for Railways will give us a satisfactory service to cover that same route as soon as the bitumen road is available, I would be willing to let him discontinue the present Diesel service to Bruce Rock.

The Premier: All right! We will pull the railways up and see what you say then!

Mr. PERKINS: At present it is impossible for the railway service to handle the freight and passengers offering. There have been continual complaints regarding the wheat traffic, for instance. The Railway Department is not able to handle the wheat as it is required from a shipping point of view.

The Minister for Justice: That is only because of the extraordinary conditions.

Mr. PERKINS: I believe that if the department took the passenger traffic over the roads, it would then be able to give a satisfactory service and possibly make the railways pay better. I cannot believe that the passenger traffic is satisfactory to the railways at the present time. With single track railways it is necessary to give passenger traffic priority, and the result is endless delays to goods trains. Goods trains are frequently seen waiting at sidings an hour, or even two hours, in order to allow a passenger train to get through. I have seen that with my own eyes.

The Minister for Justice: Are you advocating that the Government should take over the whole of the transport of the State?

Mr. PERKINS: No. I advocate that the department should give consideration to some routes where at present it runs an inadequate service, and over which—unless the department does something to effect improvements—private cars will travel as soon as cars, and of course petrol and tyres, are available.

The Premier: They won't get licenses to do it!

Mr. PERKINS: The private cars will get licenses because they will be licensed by private people and will be carrying the people who own them. When the private cars go back on the road—if the department

does not meantime provide a satisfactory road service—there will not be enough passenger traffic left to pay for the Diesel service or any other kind of service. But if the department can run a passenger service from Perth to Bruce Rock in about five hours, people will avail themselves of that service rather than incur the fatigue and discomfort of driving their private cars. However, something is being done in other States, and I suggest that our Minister for Railways make some inquiry as to what it is that is being done there.

The Premier: We have only one person to every two square miles in Western Australia!

Mr. PERKINS: There have been reports in the Press regarding semi-trailer buses. Anyone who has travelled in the Eastern States away from the main railway systems must have seen the road transport operating there even in wartime. Those services operate between towns not larger than those we have in our wheatbelt. The member for Pingelly has just told me that the present road service to Kojonup runs between small towns. It is not a question of large towns on that route. I have fulfilled my responsibility in bringing this matter before the Government.

Mr. Cross: Of course, you are not at all serious!

Mr. PERKINS: If the Government chooses to ignore the advice which we give it, that is entirely its responsibility and we can safely leave the matter to the public to judge. I am leaving the position at that. There is one other matter to which I wish to refer. It is the general re-establishment of industry in our State. I think the Premier will agree with me that the stress of war has caused more dislocation of industry and of our general economic life than it has caused in any other State.

The Premier: That is what the people of every State are saying.

Mr. PERKINS: I am not complaining about it. I think that at least to some degree it was inevitable. Matters were so serious at one stage that I think all of us were prepared to make any sacrifice to defend Australia. The time has now arrived, however, when the Government of Western Australia should make strong representations for preliminary arrangements to be made to get our State back

on an even keel. I understand that, notwithstanding the projected programme of homebuilding, materials necessary for the purpose were never shorter. The member for Murray-Wellington recently asked a question as to the capacity of our State brickworks and the answer was that the present capacity of those works—which I understand are the only brickworks operating—is only about 800,000 bricks, I think, per week.

Mr. McLarty: Per month!

Mr. PERKINS: That production is being used up practically as soon as it comes out of the kiln, and there are certainly no bricks in reserve. I understand the same position applies, to a greater or lesser degree, to other materials required in undertaking repair and developmental work. It is necessary to get our economic life back to normal. In my opinion, key men should be released from military duty, unless they are absolutely vital for the military effort, in order to get our key industries going again. It would probably be easier for the Premier to judge the number of men who would be required for this purpose, but certainly some plan should be made.

The Premier: Those sentiments do not get much sympathy from the Commonwealth Government when it speaks of what is required for the war effort in the next 12 months.

Mr. PERKINS: I am sorry to hear that.

The Premier: So am I, but it is a fact all the same.

Mr. PERKINS: The position will be very serious indeed.

The Premier: The war position is very serious from the Australian standpoint.

Mr. PERKINS: When the European war ends, apparently there will be considerable demobilisation of the various forces. There must be, so far as Australia is concerned, if we are to fulfil our commitments to supply food to the United Nations. The other day we had the Chairman of the Australian Meat Board and the representative of the British Ministry of Food addressing us here on this very subject, and I say that the best contribution Australia can make to the United Nations is to supply them with food.

The Premier: As far as foreign peoples are concerned, the Australian Government will make up its mind. Do not take too much notice of these missionaries who have a mission for themselves.

Mr. PERKINS: I am surprised to hear the Premier say that.

The Premier: There is serious disagreement as to what these representatives of other nations and Australia think about this matter.

Mr. PERKINS: The representatives of the British Ministry of Food came here as the accredited representatives of the British Government.

The Premier: And their statements have been denied.

Mr. PERKINS: Is that so?

The Premier: They said that Great Britain could take our produce if ships were available.

Mr. PERKINS: I am very surprised to hear that. If it is impossible to secure shipping for that purpose, one wonders how it will be possible to find shipping to carry the Australian troops into the forward combat areas in the Pacific.

The Premier: That is what the ships are wanted for.

Mr. PERKINS: I feel still inclined to accept the advice recently given to us by the representative of the British Ministry of Food. He said that there was vital need for the food which Australia is so well fitted to produce, provided the wherewithal is available to produce it.

The Premier: Yes, that is so.

Mr. PERKINS: The wherewithal to provide it is manpower and materials.

Mr. Cross: We must finish the war first.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If there are any more interjections I will take action. I have frequently called for order, but have not been obeyed. If there are any more interjections I will take the necessary action to bring the Committee to a state of decorum.

Mr. PERKINS: As I say, if we are to make this vital contribution of food to the United Nations, we must have the men and materials to do so. I make this further point, that when it comes to the demobilisation of our men and we have not any reserves of materials, we will have the spectacle of tradesmen being retained in the Forces because no material is available for them to work with. I hope our Government will continue to put the case of this State before the Commonwealth authorities, not from any selfish standpoint, but to enable us to fulfil those obligations which I believe we are called upon to fulfil.

Mr. SEWARD: I move—
That progress be reported.

The Premier: No, let us make more progress or we shall never finish.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly): First of all, I wish to express disappointment at the enforced absences of the Premier from Parliament. I think Parliament has been placed disadvantageously, particularly as the Premier and the Deputy Premier were called away to conferences and have been absent for about five weeks. It is not right that they should be away during the debate on the Address-in-reply and the debate on the Estimates. These debates should not be conducted in the absence of the Premier. I am aware, and agree, that Western Australia must be represented at these Commonwealth conferences. I remember that when some conferences were held some years ago the representatives of this State received only sufficient notice to enable them to catch the train in time to be in attendance. The Premiers' Conference meets every year, and representations should be made for it to be convened when Parliament is not sitting. If that cannot be done, we should take steps to arrange our sittings so that they will not clash with that conference.

The Minister for Justice: Which Parliament?

Mr. SEWARD: This Parliament.

The Minister for Justice: There are other Parliaments in Australia.

Mr. SEWARD: I am not concerned with other Parliaments, but with this one.

The Premier: The question of soldier settlement was an important subject.

Mr. SEWARD: I agree that that was a special matter. I am not blaming the Premier for one moment. He is summoned to these conferences and he has to attend, but I am offering the suggestion that if possible such conferences should be held at a time other than when the House is sitting. One matter to which I wish to refer, and which I have mentioned previously, is the question of post-war housing. This was the subject of a special debate. I had not an opportunity to reply to the debate on that occasion, but when the Acting Premier spoke I think he took refuge behind the wording of the motion rather than give attention to the spirit of the debate. He drew attention to the fact

that the motion which originated the debate referred to post-war housing but that we were building houses at the present time, and therefore the debate should not be taken to refer to present activities. I want to point out that I referred equally to the building that is taking place at the present time.

I find it difficult to believe that the plans being used for the building of houses today are different from those that will be used when housing is undertaken in the post-war period. I do not see why it should be necessary to have a separate set of plans for the post-war work. In response to my invitation, the Premier has laid on the Table copies of the plans now being used. I wish to refer particularly to those of houses being built at Collie and Boyup Brook. I am surprised to notice that wooden houses are being built, without a verandah, at a cost of from £800 to £1,000. I know that frequently brick houses are found in the metropolitan area in what is called the Spanish style, and that they have no verandahs. Those houses may suit Spain but they do not suit Western Australia. Many of those places are owned by people who go away to the seaside for the summer. I have no hesitation in saying that such houses are not suitable for the country districts of Western Australia, especially when they are to house children. They are not suitable for our climate. I do not use the word "verandah" to describe a little porch which keeps the rain off while a visitor is being admitted to the house. There is, of course, a back verandah which is used for many purposes.

It is surprising to know that buildings are being put up in Guildford for half the cost of those we plan to erect. There are houses which the State proposes to erect at prices varying from £844 to £871, without a verandah, yet in Guildford buildings with a verandah all round are being erected for £500. That is wrong. The people are entitled to more information about this matter, as I mentioned previously, and there should be an inquiry to ascertain whether our designs are suitable, which I think they are not. The majority of people prefer a house with a verandah. I would not like to live in a house such as is proposed in these plans, without a verandah to keep the sun off. A verandah, too, is useful for sleeping-out purposes during hot summer nights. These houses are being

built, we hope, for families to be reared in, and in those circumstances verandahs are absolutely necessary. I previously complained about the excessive cost of some of these houses it is proposed to erect. Some will cost from £890 to £900 as against £500 for other structures such as those to which I have already referred. I think a friend of the Premier occupies one of those houses, and he preferred to secure a bungalow type to the other styles submitted.

The Premier: We call for tenders to get them erected as cheaply as possible.

Mr. SEWARD: I know. But steps should be taken, as they were in New Zealand, to ensure that prices are not inflated to the Government, especially when it is remembered that the sales tax is to be removed from the cost of building materials. I join with the Leader of the National Party, who declared the other night that it is high time the Government took the people into its confidence as regards post-war plans. We have heard a lot about the need for post-war planning and I suppose a lot of planning has been done; but it came as rather a shock to me when I read in the paper after the recent conference in Canberra on post-war planning that the Co-ordinator General of Works, Sir Harry Brown, reported that only a fraction of the £200,000,000 works programme proposed for the immediate post-war period had yet been completely planned ready for work to start. He stated, according to the Press—and no information has been given to us yet so we have to rely on Press statements, and if they are wrong, we are wrong—

Unless special steps are taken to make additional assistance available to administering authorities planning post-war works, the delay in completing the work is likely to be prolonged and may cause an embarrassing and awkward situation in the comprehensive demobilisation planning work Planning of works has progressed only far enough to permit of one-third of the works in the whole programme being started immediately.

That programme, according to the Press, is going to cost £149,000,000, of which £49,000,000 is about one-third. The next thing I have to ask myself is how Western Australia stands. Is a programme sufficiently well developed for us to be able to start work in the early future as soon as war finishes? When I review the various programmes, I am not at all easy on that

matter and I hope the Premier will take the earliest opportunity—if we do not devote a sitting to a review of post-war planning—to give us a comprehensive detailed statement.

The Premier: I will give it when the Loan Estimates are presented in a fortnight's time.

Mr. SEWARD: I do not want to intrude matters into this debate that are not relevant; that is to say, I do not want to touch on the Loan Estimates programme, because we shall have those Estimates before us shortly. But I do want to point out that it is becoming difficult to review our finances. We have now the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in connection with the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and later on we shall have the Loan Estimates. I have been wondering when we shall hear something about post-war Estimates because they are belated Loan Estimates, covering something to be done in the future. Before they are submitted, I think the public of the State, or Parliament, at any rate, is entitled to have some idea of what plans are being recommended for Western Australia. We have heard a great deal about post-war housing. According to the Press, it is hoped that the Commonwealth Housing Commission will be able to publish its third and final report in the next few weeks, after an investigation lasting 18 months. When we compare that with the fact that in New Zealand 25,000 houses were built during the war, we have nothing about which unduly to flatter ourselves in connection with the progress we have made. New Zealand is well on with its programme, whereas we are only at the stage of getting the third report from that Commission.

As I said a while ago, we have our expenditure, as it were, reviewed in several lots. A few years ago we had a statement made by the Premier—I am not sure whether it was the present Premier or his predecessor—that the presentation of our accounts would be altered so that they would be more easily read and understood by members. The other day I saw a review of some University Bill, although we have not had it here yet. I turned up the Estimates to see what was spent on the University. I found that the University subsidy amounts to £34,500. There was another item under it, University of Western Australia, Agricultural Bank building, £630, and then another one, University

Building Accounts, £6,215. Adding them together I found that we spent on the University a total of £41,345.

The Premier: You can add another £6,000 on to that.

Mr. SEWARD: I waded through the Estimates and about 20 pages further on I found mention of another £6,000. I revised my estimate as a result. I find now that we give about £47,000 to the University, whereas by looking at the Estimates at first the figure seemed to be £34,000. It is a pity that our Estimates cannot be put forward in some more compact form so that one does not fall into these pitfalls. I wish to mention another matter. I was at home the other day when a businessman came to me and said, "I notice that the State Government has guaranteed a businessman for nearly £7,000. What is that for?" I said, "I do not know." He seemed to think it extraordinary that the State Government should give such a guarantee without my knowing about it. As a consequence I looked through the Estimates, but could not find any reference to it. That is a liability, and it should be shown somewhere. We should have information about it. I do not think it could come under the Loan Estimates, although it might.

There seems to be room for the better presentation of our Financial Statements, although I admit that they have been considerably improved in recent years. I was dealing with post-war works. When I saw the amount that Western Australia is to receive I was rather surprised. I had, as I previously mentioned, to consult the newspapers. When I had done that I was not any more pleased. As I pointed out, the post-war programme that had been approved by the Labour Conference amounted to £149,000,000. Sir Harry Brown made a statement to the effect that only 33 per cent. of the plans in existence were in a state to be proceeded with should war cease in the immediate future. Many people in this State are wondering how we stand and what condition our plans are in. Having looked up the matter I found that an amount of about £3,667,000 was approved for Western Australia. On the other hand, South Australia will receive £17,000,000 worth of work to be carried out in two years, and to provide employment for between 12,000 and 15,000 men. The items for South Australia include, sewers for the metropolitan area, £2,300,000; railways, £3,600,000;

wharf construction, £5,873,000; teachers' residences, at schools, £1,500,000; deferred maintenance, including railways, £1,900,000, and so on. Victoria got £36,000,000. I admit that Victoria has a bigger programme, but that is what the Premier on his return told us had been agreed to. For Victoria we find the following sums allocated:—Electricity, £5,500,000; rivers, £3,900,000; railways, £6,196,000; and so on, down the list to a total of £36,000,000. Tasmania got £3,500,000, including £1,600,000 for the hydro-electric scheme, £221,000 for transport and so forth. Queensland got £4,127,000 including £435,000 for the electricity supply of Townsville. The figure for New South Wales is £49,000,000, including £7,000,000 for a water supply.

As I mentioned earlier, Western Australia has £3,667,000 only. What I am more concerned about are the purposes for which that amount is to be applied. Public works are to receive £966,000, the railways £1,013,000, metropolitan water supply £300,000, tramways £112,000, electricity £86,000, main roads £800,000, forests £30,000 and local government £360,000. What I want to know is this: Where do our water schemes come in under these proposals? We have been told that the question of water schemes is urgent. I do not think that any member sitting in my vicinity, at all events, wants to be told that the Great Southern water scheme is not a very urgent matter. I hope the Premier will be able to dispel my fears, because after reading these figures—the only ones I can get—I have come to the conclusion that the question of water schemes is not sufficiently advanced to be able to be put into operation in the early future. In other words, our plans are not completed.

The Premier: We put them up as requiring Commonwealth assistance for the first year or two. We shall then have to put up other plans. The Commonwealth authorities said that they would not consider anything that needed Commonwealth assistance. So we had to alter the whole of our plans. We have plans for another £10,000,000 in addition.

Mr. SEWARD: They will not come forward until next year. My particular complaint is this. We have just seen a programme of £150,000,000 approved. That is a lot of money. Where does Western Australia come in? By the time we get our plans

sufficiently advanced to be put forward and have them approved, such enormous sums of money will be already earmarked that we shall be about last.

The Premier: No. Our proposals were rejected because they required Commonwealth assistance. We have plans for another £10,000,000.

Mr. SEWARD: I am pleased to know that.

The Premier: That was published in the Press when I returned. It is recorded in my comments.

Mr. SEWARD: I hope the people have understood it better than I have. The people of Pingelly had a deputation to the Minister in connection with a water scheme. His reply was to the effect that neither of our suggestions was acceptable, and that we would have to wait for this big scheme. When the Pingelly people received that reply, their comment was, "That is no good to us. We will be dead before we get the scheme." I could not refute their contentions because I knew these amounts were being spent but I could not say what was going on. Consequently the people there and at other towns, such as Narrogin and Katanning, are alarmed about the position. I trust the Premier will see fit to make a more explicit and detailed statement about the plans in view for these particular works. I attended a function held at a centre between Pingelly and Narrogin last Saturday and I was asked what the surveyors were doing out that way. I said I presumed they were on work in connection with the water scheme. If surveyors are out there now, it does not seem as though the Government's plans are ready for submission to the Commonwealth Government. I have been assured since returning to Perth that that is what the surveyors have been working on. Apparently there is still a lot of preliminary work to be done before the plans can be finally completed.

The Minister for Works: Not so long ago you opposed the whole idea!

Mr. SEWARD: That may be so. Why did I oppose it? I cannot recollect just what the Minister is referring to, but I probably opposed the proposal on the ground that we would have to wait so long for any results from the projected undertaking that the local scheme should be approved. As the Minister admitted, Pingelly is on the border line between the one scheme and the existing Mun-

daring scheme, the pipes for which pass some 30 miles away from the township. Our suggestion was that a reservoir should be constructed at Pingelly and water brought there from Beverley.

The Minister for Works: Those were not the grounds upon which you based your opposition.

Mr. SEWARD: I have been endeavouring to get a water scheme for my district for a long time, and the Minister knows that is true. He will recollect that we were told that the Mundaring scheme, as planned by the Government, was not to be taken south of the Goldfields line and naturally we concluded that we were quite out of it. If the water is to be brought from Collie, goodness knows when we will get it, and we certainly want the provision to be made in our time.

The Minister for Works: You objected to the scheme.

The Premier: Or to be rated under a comprehensive scheme.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. The feeling among the farmers was very strong on the rating question, because they had already spent a large amount of money in providing their own water supplies on their farms. They argued that if the scheme water was to pass their holdings and they were to be rated, they did not want it because they already had their water supplies.

The Premier: Have they got water there?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes.

The Premier: I thought they were short of water.

Mr. SEWARD: That applies to the towns and areas out east such as Kondinin and Kulin, etc. The farmers along the Great Southern have their water supplies, and they are seriously concerned as to the possibility of their being rated in connection with a scheme that will be of no use to them. I hope we shall have some more definite statement from the Premier than we have received so far as to what are the post-war plans of the Government. I prefaced my remarks on post-war planning earlier by saying that I joined with the Leader of the National Party in the views he had expressed, but now I most certainly disagree with him and also with the views of quite a number of people. There seem to be today many who advocate the transference of some of our departments to Commonwealth control. I am strongly opposed

to that course. The member for West Perth suggested the other night the transfer of the Education Department to Commonwealth control. The Commissioner of Native Affairs wants to hand over the natives of this State to Commonwealth control.

The Premier: He had no right to make that statement without the authority of the Government.

Mr. SEWARD: Perhaps so, but that statement is included in his report.

The Premier: I know it is.

Mr. SEWARD: Those two instances serve to indicate that this tendency is becoming apparent. A member of the Legislative Council suggested handing the North-West over to the Commonwealth Government. If this sort of thing is to go on, we might as well hand over to the Federal authorities the control of the whole State. I maintain that the Commonwealth Government has not, in its administration, shown consideration for the outer areas. Its administration of the affairs of the Northern Territory has not been such as to suggest that our educational requirements or the interests of our natives would receive better treatment under Commonwealth control than they obtain from the State.

Mr. Watts: We will hand the suggestors over to the Commonwealth.

Mr. SEWARD: I would not object to that. I will content myself with drawing attention to the manner in which the position is dealt with in South Australia. I noticed in a report of the Budget Speech by the South Australian Treasurer, which appeared in "The West Australian" of the 30th September last, that complaints had been raised there regarding the work of the Education Department and it was pointed out that the State had no money. According to the report, South Australia does not intend to hand the control of its Education Department over to the Commonwealth Government but is content to budget for a deficit of £400,000 because the people of the State require that expenditure. I commend that attitude to the Premier and his Government. In His Excellency's Speech attention was drawn to the fact that Western Australia has for four years had a surplus and the Premier has mentioned that as well. I see no credit in that accomplishment when the people are denied the benefits to be derived from necessary expenditure. It would be much better to have a deficit of

£500,000, and, as a predecessor of the present occupant of the Treasurership said he would do, write out a cheque and tell the Loan Council to pay it. I commend that suggestion to the Premier for I think that if we were to adopt that course and tell the Commonwealth Government that, as we had concluded the financial year with a deficit, we wanted the money from the Loan Council, the Commonwealth could furnish the necessary funds or borrow the money and hand it over to the State. I believe that if we were to do that, we would receive far more consideration from the Commonwealth Government than we experience at present as a result of cheese-paring and finishing up with a surplus.

One other matter to which I shall refer comes within the province of the Minister for Agriculture. It is a subject of importance to Western Australia. In the course of his Budget Speech, the Premier said that, in the dairying districts production has been well maintained, and later on, he said, in referring to the record number of sheep shorn, that this was a tribute to the way in which the agricultural community had gone in for sheep. He said that the farmers deserved every credit for what they had done. I agree that they do deserve that credit. In that regard I have for years ventilated the need for more veterinary surgeons. That need is more necessary to-day than ever before. I maintain that when we put people on the land, irrespective of whether they are new settlers or experienced farmers' sons, they cannot take a full practical interest in their stock unless they have at least some veterinary knowledge. When Estimates have been before the Committee on several occasions, I have urged the provision of a veterinary class at the Narrogin School of Agriculture. That school is to be re-opened in the near future and I appeal to the Minister to see if he cannot make provision for a veterinary class there.

The Minister for Education: Are you not talking about Muresk College?

Mr. SEWARD: No.

The Minister for Education: But the Narrogin school has been re-opened.

Mr. SEWARD: That must be only recently. I want a veterinary class established at that school for two reasons. If we have a lot of students attending the school in order to prepare themselves for going on to farms, they need a certain amount of veterinary

knowledge. When a farmer has a bull, cow, horse or sheep suddenly stricken with sickness and has no veterinary knowledge, he might as well look at the wall because he cannot tell what is wrong and probably the animal dies. We have not many veterinary surgeons in the State and after an animal becomes sick, by the time a veterinary surgeon can be obtained, probably the animal is dead. If we had a veterinary class at the Narrogin School of Agriculture the officer need not necessarily be there the whole of his time. He could attend at certain times and lecture on the subject at intervals. I have been asking for such an appointment for about 10 years and have not yet succeeded in getting it.

We had a man here, Mr. Verron, connected with one of the lick manufacturing companies, and I have never heard a better lecture than was given by him. He had a sheep brought in, killed it, opened it up and showed where the worms occurred, with the result that one could obtain a fair understanding of the trouble. One can see sheep in good feed paddocks walking about looking like skeletons because they are full of worms, but often the owners do not know what is wrong with them. They should drench their sheep at least twice a year, and in many cases they cannot possibly have thriving animals unless they do so. This is where the veterinary class would be of immense value to students.

We have a serious complaint affecting sheep in my district. I do not know the name of it, but the veterinary surgeons are investigating it. The trouble is that ewes have suddenly become infertile. We have breeders with as many as 1,000 ewes who have got no more than 20 lambs this year. If the veterinary surgeon could get some specimens and take them to the Narrogin school, after killing an animal and making his post-mortem examination in front of the class he would be imparting valuable information to those young men. Such instruction would be of immense help to the boys after they leave the school. Classes of this sort would have another beneficial effect. If a veterinary surgeon carried out such demonstrations before a class, it would probably be the means of inducing one of those students to take up a course in veterinary science. We have great difficulty in getting veterinary surgeons and the position would be relieved if we could induce only one of

those boys each year, through the intimate knowledge imparted to him at the school, to take up a veterinary course at the University.

Another matter that will have to receive attention is that of the salaries the Government is prepared to pay veterinary surgeons and the facilities provided for them. We have a wonderfully good man in Dr. Bennetts. I do not say he is the only good one, but he is certainly an excellent man. Yet he is quartered in a back room in a tin shed that is like a refrigerator in winter and a hothouse in summer. That has to serve him for an office. To see Mr. McKenzie Clark one has to go into a sort of henhouse and there one finds Mr. Clark cooped up with a little bit of an office here and a little bit somewhere else. This is the sort of accommodation provided for highly qualified men. When the superphosphate rationing was on, Dr. Teakle was in Government House ballroom sorting out papers or doing something like that. He is a soil specialist and to employ him in that way is not to use his skill to the best advantage.

Coming to salaries, I find that the Chief Veterinary Officer is on a range of £635 to £735 and is drawing the maximum. The Chief Pathologist is on a range of £666 to £699 and is drawing the maximum. The Senior Veterinary Surgeon is on a range of £510 to £558 and is drawing the maximum. Other veterinary surgeons are on a range of £414 to £486 and are drawing various amounts from £438 to the maximum. A prominent firm recently advertised for a veterinary surgeon. I do not know what was offered to the chief man, but the salary offered for his assistant was £700. Even that amount is nothing wonderful when we consider that a man has to undergo a five years' course to qualify in veterinary science. A medical officer is paid at least £1,000 a year, and yet the highly qualified veterinary surgeons to whom we look to effect so much improvement to our stock, are paid £600 or £700.

The Premier: Plus the cost of living allowance of £60 or £70.

Mr. SEWARD: All of them?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. SEWARD: I have no hesitation in saying that we are lucky to retain the services of these men and I think the Minister for Agriculture will agree with me. We have to endeavour to get our stockraisers into the

position of being able to compete with the world in what will probably be very animated and even fierce competition after the war.

The Minister for Lands: You will be pleased to know that the Premier has recently approved of the funds necessary for the construction, to commence immediately, of an animal health laboratory.

Mr. SEWARD: I am delighted to hear it. I hope the Premier will give us a detailed statement in the near future of what our post-war works are going to be, especially the earliest ones to be undertaken, so that the people will be satisfied that at all events we are not behindhand. In the newspapers we read of big programmes being approved for the Eastern States. Trespassing on the Loan Estimate for a moment and speaking from memory, I think Western Australia is to receive about £330,000 while other States have been granted millions, the total for all the States being £21,000,000. From those figures it would not appear as if Western Australia's interests are being looked after properly. I appeal to the Premier to give us a detailed statement in the near future so that the people will know what the post-war programme is going to be.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 17th October, 1944.

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