

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 5th October, 1943.

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

QUESTIONS (2). RAILWAYS.

As to Loan Capital and Redemption.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Premier :

- (1) What amount of bonds of loan capital invested in the State railways are held by investors within this State?
- (2) What amount of bonds of loan capital are held by persons outside this State?
- (3) In which country or countries was the principal amount of loan capital raised?
- (4) How much loan capital has been redeemed since the inception of our State railways?

The PREMIER replied :

(1), (2), (3), and (4) With the inception of the Financial Agreement in 1927, the Commonwealth Government became the borrowing authority for the States, and all securities issued for public loans raised since that year are Commonwealth securities, the registers of which are kept by the Commonwealth Bank.

The State loans raised prior to 1927 have been either redeemed or converted into Commonwealth loans as they matured. It is, therefore, impossible to say how much of the capital of the railways is represented by loans raised outside this State.

At the 30th June last, 47 per cent. of the Public Debt of Western Australia was owing outside of Australia and 53 per cent. owing within Australia. It is not known how much of the debt owing within Australia is held by bond holders in this State.

If the question relating to the redemption of loan capital since the inception of our State railways is intended to refer to the redemption of loans out of which the railways capital has been provided, it has to be borne in mind that the railways pay no sinking fund contributions; therefore the capital is not reduced. Redemptions effected by the National Debt Commissioners are applied to other portions of the public debt.

SCHOOLS.

As to Staggered Hours.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education :

(1) Is he aware that it was stated in the Press that schools not affected by scholars arriving by tram or bus would not come under staggered hours?

(2) That many schools which have few if any scholars travelling by bus or tram are now obliged to observe staggered hours?

(3) That at Thomas-street school, Subiaco, only five per cent. of the children travel by tram or bus?

(4) That children starting school at 9.30 a.m. are hungry at 12 noon, having had their breakfast at the usual hour of 7.30 or 8 a.m. and therefore half an hour's tuition is wasted?

(5) That there is only a small tuck-shop for Thomas-street senior, junior, and modern schools, and one hour is insufficient for all the children to receive their food requirements?

(6) That a Cottesloe school, which has no children arriving by tram or bus, is obliged to observe staggered hours, making it impossible for the few teachers to obtain transport as all buses from 3.30 p.m. onwards from Fremantle are full?

(7) Would he consider holding a conference of teachers representing all the schools in the metropolitan area in the endeavour to rectify these difficulties?

The PREMIER replied : I do not think it would be possible for anyone to remember all the questions asked without notice by the hon. member; but the position is that the Transport Board has received instructions that any application by a school shall be dealt with on its merits. The Transport Board is now receiving applications, some of which have already been dealt with.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: And all have been refused.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I am talking of the general principle. From the tone of the hon. member's question one would think that staggering hours for schools is a crime and a disability.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: It is a crime.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I do not wish to make comments, but great hardship is not inflicted by staggering hours so that children shall commence school half-an-hour earlier. In any case, the Transport Board has jurisdiction to deal with any applications made to it. That is the position as it now stands.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE).

Reports of Committee adopted.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [4.38]:
I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): There is one matter concerning which I would like some information from the Minister. I refer to the definitions clause. The definition of motor vehicle is as follows:—

“Motor vehicle” means any vehicle propelled by gas, oil, electricity or any other motive power not being animal power and used or intended to be used; but the expression does not include a locomotive or traction engine propelled by steam, or a railway carriage or wagon, tram, motor tram car, or trolley bus.

It has been suggested to me that the definition is wide enough to cover an aeroplane; an aeroplane, of course, being a vehicle driven by gas or oil. I ask the Minister to advise me whether there is anything that would eliminate that construction; and, in any case, whether he would give the matter his consideration because, I assume, the obvious intention is that the measure should not cover aeroplanes. As the definition now stands, it is possible to cover an aeroplane. Because there is a certain number of private

aeroplanes in use today and will, in the future, be a great many more, it might be wise to ensure that they are not inadvertently included.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): The title of this measure is that it is a Bill for—

An Act to require owners of motor vehicles to insure against liability in respect of deaths or bodily injuries caused by the use of such motor vehicles, and to make certain provisions in relation to such insurance, to amend the Traffic Act, 1919-1941, and for other purposes. Whether the definition can be interpreted as widely as has been suggested by the member for West Perth I could not say on the spur of the moment. It was intended only to apply to ground vehicles. Is an aeroplane a motor vehicle? I will have the point looked into.

Mr. McDonald: I have not had an opportunity to inquire into it myself. A legal man, acting on behalf of the owner of an aeroplane, drew my attention to it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A provision similar to this is in operation in each of the other States and in New Zealand. I am almost positive that the definitions are similar, but I will have this one examined to make sure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1943-44.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1943-44 and recommending appropriation.

In Committee.

The House resolved itself into Committee to consider the Loan Estimates, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £16,500:

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER [4.45]: In submitting the Loan Estimates, I think it will be agreed that in the expenditure of available loan funds of Australia the needs of the Commonwealth Government for war expenditure are of paramount importance. Loan expenditure of the State is, by agreement, limited to works having a defence value or to complete works which had

been in progress. Members are fully conversant with the difficulties of manpower and, even if the Government were desirous of embarking on an extensive loan programme, it would be impossible to obtain labour. The necessities of the Services and munitions, together with our great responsibilities with regard to food production, have absorbed all the available manpower and womanpower; in fact, for many important aspects of our economic life there is a very acute shortage of labour which the Government, in common with other prospective employers, meets with at every turn, so on this occasion our loan programme is not a very extensive one. I remind members that unlike pre-war days loan programmes have now to be approved by the Loan Council before they are submitted to the Parliaments of the States.

Members will recollect that on previous occasions I have explained that arising out of the system of co-ordination of works adopted by the Loan Council, each State is required to submit in detail its loan programme to the Co-ordinator General, Sir Harry Brown. The Co-ordinator General then submits a recommendation to the Loan Council regarding the amount of money to be approved for each State for loan works, and a list of works covered by the amount recommended. Though the States are not tied completely to the recommendations of the Co-ordinator General, any marked variations between the programmes ultimately approved by a State Parliament, as compared with the recommendation of the Co-ordinator General, have to be submitted to the latter for his verification. The purpose of the system of co-ordination is that States should confine their loan expenditure—especially in these days of limited manpower—to works which have either a defence value or are so essential they cannot be postponed until the war is over.

Some of the States are financing from their loan programme works which have little else than a defence value. In this State we have not had much of this type of work, though we have financed works which have a high defence value but which, in addition, have a value to the State. The result of the system of co-ordination has been that the programmes approved for the States have been very much curtailed. This is quite understandable, because in the pre-war days part of the States' objective in regard to

loan works was to find employment for those who but for the provision of such works would be unemployed. That situation has been entirely altered and now, in place of finding works to provide employment, the difficulty is to find labour to carry out works which are really essential. We have instances in this State of works which are held up through lack of labour and material, one notable example being the Perth Hospital, where, after an expenditure of £228,068, the work had to cease on account of the extremely critical war position which arose following upon the entry of Japan into the war.

Efforts have been made to provide additional labour, and from time to time men have been working on the hospital during the periods when they have been awaiting transfer from one defence job to another. It is admitted that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs, and early in this calendar year I gave instructions that, if possible, a body of men should be set to work on the Perth Hospital with the object of arranging for its completion at the earliest possible time. While this is being done, difficulty is being experienced over the supply of material. Much of the work remaining to be done on the hospital includes the provision of mechanical services, which are, of course, dependent on material difficult to obtain. The consulting mechanical engineer who has been engaged to design the mechanical services was brought to Perth recently and had several consultations with the technical officers of the Public Works Department and with the Hospital Board. The purpose of the consultation was to ascertain how much of the required mechanical equipment could be made in this State, with some modification in the engineer's original plans, if necessary. As a result designs will be submitted to local engineering firms, and it is hoped that a delay that seemed inevitable will be obviated.

Representations have been made to the Commonwealth Government for release of essential material, in addition to which I made a personal request to the Prime Minister, and I am hopeful that we shall see the work continued on to completion. A similar type of work was the completion of the Kent-street School, where, after a contract had been let and commenced, the work had to be stopped. Arrangements have now been made, however, to complete the additions to

the Kent-street School necessary to provide the accommodation which was contemplated when the school was first erected. It is hoped that the work will be finished early in 1944. Of course other people have to submit to building prohibition and, if this is all the sacrifice we have to make for the war effort, it will not be much.

Turning now to the figures of the loan expenditure last year, the amount spent was £774,606. This, of course, included what is known as loan suspense—that is, money spent in a previous year for which Parliamentary authority had been anticipated. The amount thus included was £137,062, leaving a balance of £637,544. To be added to this expenditure, however, is the amount which was spent last year from loan suspense and which appears in the Estimates for this year. This amount was £19,372. The cash expenditure on loan works last year was therefore £656,916. The member for Boulder will recall that during his term of office loan estimates were introduced for a programme amounting to £4,500,000. Thus our loan expenditure last year represented only the odd hundreds of thousands of pounds without the millions.

The Estimates this year total £805,104, including the sum of £19,372 spent last year and included in the Estimates for the purpose of Parliamentary approval, so that the estimated cash expenditure this year is £785,732, or an increase of approximately £130,000. Before outlining briefly the headings under which the expenditure is estimated, I wish to make some reference to our loan funds. No Commonwealth loan has been floated for other than war purposes for some time past. The arrangement arrived at by the Loan Council was that States requiring money for loan works should receive advances from the Commonwealth Government, through the Commonwealth Bank, by the issue of Treasury bills. These bills were funded at the end of the year at the interest rates and conditions applicable to the most recent public loan. Fortunately we did not require to draw any money from the Commonwealth Government for loan purposes last year, as we had entered the year with a fairly substantial carry-over of money, in addition to which we received under the agreement for the transfer of the Savings Bank sufficient money to finance our requirements.

I have just received advice from the chairman of the Loan Council that the bank will not advance any money this financial year for loan works because, in the opinion of the Bank board, the cash resources of the various State Governments are sufficient to finance their requirements. As the bulk of these cash resources represents trust moneys, I think it is a highly dangerous practice to use them unless some guarantee is given that they will be replaced when required. So far as I can see, we shall have sufficient money to finance our loan requirements this year without drawing on trust moneys. In the depression years trust funds were exhausted and the State was in a very awkward financial position. On some occasions the Treasurer did not know where to find funds to permit of the payment of Government employees. It is very undesirable to use trust funds to that extent.

Members are aware that under the agreement made when the State Savings Bank was transferred to the Commonwealth Savings Bank, we are entitled to 70 per cent. of the excess of deposits over withdrawals in any quarter of the year. The amount drawn—viz, £390,000—represented the surplus in one quarter only, and during the year I received a request from the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank that we should limit our right to draw loan moneys in this way from the Commonwealth Savings Bank to an amount of £225,000. I replied stating I was not prepared to agree to this limit, but that I would undertake not to draw more under the Savings Bank agreement than the amount necessary to finance our approved loan programme. The rest of the money would be available for war purposes.

There has been a sharp rise in savings bank deposits. The amount of money to the credit of depositors in Western Australia previous to the war was £12,000,000 whereas, after four years of war, it has increased to £20,000,000. Therefore we should be able to draw about £6,000,000 from the Commonwealth Bank. As I have stated, we have not taken more money than was sufficient to finance our approved loan programme. The position is more marked even in Queensland, where a similar agreement exists between the State Government and the Commonwealth Bank. Last financial year the increase in savings bank deposits in that State was just under £13,000,000. This is accounted for by the military activity in that State, but it

is a tremendous increase for a State with a population of just about 1,000,000 people.

Another item of receipt to loan funds was an amount of £51,000, representing counter sales. Counter sales are, in the main, moneys deposited with the Treasury by local government bodies, mainly road boards, for sinking fund contributions on loans raised by those bodies. Under the Municipal Corporations Act and the Road Districts Act, local authorities are required to provide a sinking fund when a loan is raised; and one method of providing the sinking fund is to lodge with the State Treasurer money for investment in Commonwealth stock. Last year we also received a large amount by way of loan repayments. Ordinarily we receive between £120,000 and £130,000 under this heading; but last year we collected £281,000. Of this sum £100,000 was paid from a trust account created by the Lotteries Commission towards the cost of interest and sinking fund on loan moneys expended on the erection of the new Perth Hospital. With the cessation of the work on the hospital and a continuance of the contributions by the Lotteries Commission, the trust fund was growing rapidly. The Commission, therefore, requested that £100,000 be transferred from the trust fund as a repayment to General Loan Fund on the capital already involved in the hospital. The hospital is going to be a debit of about £600,000, from which this amount of £100,000 will be deducted.

Another item of receipt to General Loan Fund was an amount of £26,000 representing the surpluses for the preceding three years, repaid to Loan Fund to reduce the advances made from General Loan Fund to meet shortages in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. In the years when the State was incurring deficits, money had to be borrowed from Loan to meet the deficits. Now that we have a real, small surplus, the money is used to meet deficits of previous years. In all, therefore, we had an amount of approximately £1,325,000 available to spend on loan works last year; that is, including the amount carried forward at the beginning of the year. The expenditure on Loan works during the year was £657,000, and in addition an amount of £9,468 was charged against Loan to meet expenses on loan conversions. The deduction of this expenditure from the money available left a balance of

£658,000 to meet Loan expenditure this year. With that carry-over, plus the comparatively large amount which we would be able to get from the Commonwealth Bank under the agreement I previously mentioned, we shall, without troubling the Commonwealth, be able to finance our relatively small programme for this year.

The reduced expenditure of loan moneys since the outbreak of the war has meant that the amount spent has been less than the contributions to the sinking fund for the repayment of the public debt; thus for two years the amount of the Public Debt has been reduced. For the year 1941-42 the absolute reduction was £126,000, and last year it was £277,000. The amount of the Public Debt per head of population has declined from £207 7s. 4d. in 1941 to £206 8s. 4d. in 1942, and to £205 2s. 4d. in 1943. Yet for years and years we were told that Western Australia was a prodigal State in expenditure, and was heading for the bankruptcy court; but capital indebtedness has gone down instead of going up. Moreover, most of our Public Debt is partially reproductive. The per capita amount of the debt varies, of course, with the population. If the population increased while the total amount of the debt remained stable, the per capita debt would decrease. The population has varied very slightly during the three years, so that the biggest contributing factor to the reduction in the per capita debt has been the reduction in the debt itself. Last financial year the contributions to the National Debt Commission amounted to £806,000: so it will be seen that the contributions towards the repayment of the debt were about £150,000 greater than the amount expended from loan moneys last year. This is a very satisfactory position and, coupled with the fact that for the last three years we have been able to disclose a surplus in the operations of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, shows that our financial position is very sound.

The Public Debt at the end of the last financial year stood at £96,988,000. Of this amount £43,837,000 was owing in London, £2,015,000 in New York, and the balance of £51,136,000 in Australia. The average rate of interest paid on this Public Debt was £3 12s. 3d. per cent. This interest, however, includes low rates paid on floating debt in Australia and London. In Australia we have

a floating debt of £6,305,000, on which we pay only $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and in London an amount of £2,998,000 of floating debt carrying interest at the rate of $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. When the floating debt is eliminated and allowance made for costs of raising loans, it is found that the average rate of interest on the money available for works is £3 17s. 7d. per cent. In addition to interest, we have to pay exchange on interest payable outside Australia—in London and New York. With exchange added the total cost of borrowed money to the State last year was approximately £4 7s. 9d. per cent. I am giving this information because I frequently have requests made to me that the Government should advance money for various projects at interest rates in some cases as low as $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It is quite clear that unless the Government is prepared to lend money at much below cost—thus throwing the burden on the general taxpayer—money cannot be advanced at these low interest rates. Of course if we can borrow at low interest rates the Government will be able to reduce its charges on money advanced by it.

Of the total amount of the Public Debt of nearly £97,000,000, only £2,676,000 was fully productive last year; that is, undertakings with loan liabilities of this amount were able to meet interest, sinking fund and exchange. Undertakings which were partially productive absorbed Loan capital of approximately £81,000,000, showing a deficiency of £1,559,000. The balance of the debt, namely £13,000,000, was totally unproductive; and the cost of interest, sinking fund and exchange on it was slightly over £500,000. The difference between the earnings from the whole of the Public Debt and the cost of interest, sinking fund and exchange was £1,928,000, or over £4 per head of the population. This is a serious burden for any State Government to carry, and is a reminder to Treasurers that the greatest possible care has to be exercised in the expenditure of Loan moneys, as to whether the expenditure will prove reproductive, in order to prevent this deficiency from increasing.

To invest money in roads and bridges without any prospect of obtaining interest is bad finance. Such works should never be constructed from Loan funds. Not only is the deficiency a heavy burden which has to be borne by the general taxpayer, but we are affected in other ways. The Commonwealth

Grants Commission is very critical of the large proportion of our Public Debt which is not fully productive, and makes a "penalty" reduction in the grant which otherwise we would receive, because of the large deficiency which revenue has to carry. Fortunately the deficiency has been declining over the past few years. In 1939-40 it amounted to £2,244,000; in 1941-42 it had been reduced to £2,130,000, and last year, as I say, it was £1,928,000. The Government is using every endeavour to reduce the capital indebtedness on those undertakings which are unproductive, and the contributions to sinking fund made by the Commonwealth Government are applied largely to the redemption of the unproductive debt. In time, therefore, we should see a marked improvement in the proportion of our Public Debt which will be able to meet its interest obligations.

During the year there were six conversion loans—five in Australia and one in London. The Australian conversions covered amounts totalling £3,500,000, with interest rates ranging from $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to $3\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. The loans were all converted to the existing rates; namely, $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for a five-year term and $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. for a 16-year term; and £220,000 was converted to the lower rates. The London conversion was not so favourable. An amount of £3,229,000 at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. was converted to a 3 per cent. loan issued at a discount of 2 per cent. for a term of only three years. That was considered a very bad conversion, but the terms were the best that could be secured.

The programme approved by the Loan Council last year was £750,000. It will be noted that these Estimates cover a cash expenditure of £785,732. The difference between this estimated expenditure and the programme approved by the Loan Council is due to the inclusion in the Estimates of an amount of £36,000 for A.R.P., which was not included in the programme approved by the Loan Council. It was agreed that expenditure on the item would be treated separately and that, if necessary, additional funds for it would be approved.

Turning now to a review of the expenditure last year, and the Estimates for this year, the cash expenditure last year was £657,000 and the estimated expenditure for this year is £786,000. Under the heading of "Departmental," which covers the cost of salaries originally paid from revenue but re-

couped to revenue from loan, we spent £26,800 last year and estimate spending £16,500 this year. The reason for the decline is that with a reduced loan expenditure a smaller part of the salaries is chargeable against loan funds. An amount of £150,314 was spent by the Railway, Tramway and Electricity Departments last year and the estimated expenditure for this year is £387,000. The expenditure last year on additions and improvements to opened railways was £21,746.

The principal items in this amount were the additions to the Midland Junction workshops and the provision of new machinery amounting to £11,800. This work has been going on for some time and is not yet complete. New works include the provision of a new turntable, locomotive depot and barracks at Northam on which £3,800 was expended. This year's estimate is £100,000, of which £32,000 will be spent on the workshops and machinery; £10,000 for the purchase of new machinery which is on order; £5,000 on the completion of the turntable, locomotive department and the barracks at Northam; £4,800 for the renewal of the Claremont subway; £13,400 for the provision of a new dam at Caron and £10,000 for automatic signalling apparatus at Koojeddá. The last item is dependent on the provision of the electrical apparatus, which is difficult to obtain.

An amount of £5,000 has also been provided as preliminary expenditure on the purchase of six double-engine Diesel electric rail cars. Tenders are being called for the purchase of these cars and, as the units have to be imported from overseas, some time must elapse before the specifications can be received from the tenderers to indicate what machines are available and to enable a decision to be made as to the most suitable type. The purchase of the additional Diesel cars is to improve the country passenger services. The proposal is to construct six power cars of 350 horsepower each and 12 trailers, making six trains, each consisting of one power car and two trailers. Each train will provide accommodation for 128 passengers seated and five tons of luggage and parcels. The provision of these additional cars will give a fleet of 12 Diesel cars and 18 trailers. It is unlikely that all of the £5,000 provided will be spent this financial year, but provision has been made in order that a commencement with the designs can be under-

taken. The total estimated cost of the new Diesel trains is £153,500.

The estimates this year also include provision for a continuance of the work on the construction of ten "S" class locomotives. An amount of £10,000 has been provided for this year. Additional rollingstock has also been provided for. It is hoped also to commence this year with a programme to provide five "PR" and five "DS" locomotives at a total cost of £92,000. It is expected that £20,000 will be spent this year.

Expenditure on tramways last year was £71,562 and the estimate for this year is £85,000. Last year's expenditure included an amount of approximately £60,000 on the purchase of 18 Canton type trolley buses. A further amount of £3,400 is estimated to be spent this year to complete these buses. Fifteen have now been put into service and the remaining three are awaiting the delivery of material to complete the bodies. The material has been ordered and, though delivery is somewhat uncertain, it is hoped that it will be available within the next month or two. So far the fleet of trolley buses consists of 40—that is, 22 of the old type and 18 of the Canton type—and 37 are in service. Last year's expenditure also included an amount of £4,300 for the purchase of six Reo Diesel buses. A further amount of £2,200 will have to be spent this year on the buses. An amount of £6,300 was spent during last year on the Inglewood and Victoria Park-Welshpool tram extensions. In the Estimates for this year a further amount of £4,800 has been provided to complete the work. An estimated amount of £28,600 has been provided for the erection of a trolley-bus garage. With the increasing number of these vehicles, the present garage space is overtaxed and it is hoped to make a start with the erection of larger accommodation. The sum of £21,000 has also been provided for the erection of a central sub-station. This matter has been under consideration for some time and it is hoped that, if conditions are suitable, a start may be made this year.

In regard to electricity supply, as members know, a considerable amount of money is being expended on the provision of a ring main feeder cable for the metropolitan area, and it is hoped that the work will be completed this year. In addition, the department is converting the Cottesloe transmission line to take a higher voltage and this is anticipated

to require £20,356. New high tension switch gear for this conversion is estimated to absorb £57,713, while the connecting of the East Perth station to Cottesloe will require a further £21,069. An amount of £5,000 is included in the Estimates as a preliminary expenditure in connection with the provision of extensions to the generating plant in the metropolitan area. The provision of electricity for power, lighting and industrial purposes is an expensive process, and a good deal of money is required to keep appliances up to date.

We have made inquiries into the cost and advisability of converting electric current generated from a 40 cycle frequency to a 50 cycle frequency. Our 40 cycle frequency was put in 30 years ago, but since then electrical current has been standardised in Great Britain and most other parts of Australia to take a 50 cycle frequency. Consequently when any appliances are required in Western Australia, which has a 40 cycle frequency, a supply is not available and generally speaking consumers have to pay an extra price for getting appliances attached to the 40 cycle frequency. That has not greatly handicapped us so far but, now that standardisation on a 50 cycle frequency is Empire-wide, it may be a very serious handicap to us in the future. So, as I have said, before commencing on the extension of generating electrical power in the metropolitan area we decided to make a thorough inquiry into the advisability of converting to a 50 cycle frequency.

Mr. Sampson: Will that make any trouble in the new generating unit?

The PREMIER: No, it can be converted, but it will cost a good deal of money and we are going to put it up to the Commonwealth as part of the post-war reconstruction plan so as to bring Western Australia into line with the other States. It is anticipated that, in the years to come, a tremendous number of electrical appliances needed for Australia will be made in the Commonwealth. This is the only State that has a 40 cycle frequency and most of the appliances were made on a 50 cycle frequency.

Mr. Sampson: Do you consider there is any possibility of extensions being made before the termination of the war?

The PREMIER: There is money on the Estimates.

Mr. Sampson: I know. There is money on the Estimates every year, but still we mark time.

The PREMIER: I have heard the hon. member say that for 14 or 15 years. He is never satisfied. I do not expect him to be. He always says that nothing has been done, whereas thousands of pounds have been spent in extensions in the district he represents. But every time the Estimates are introduced he says nothing has been done.

Mr. Sampson: Comparatively nothing has been done.

The PREMIER: There! The hon. member is saying it again! At least he is consistent.

Mr. Sampson: What has been done has in many instances not been completed.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member is too morbid in his outlook.

The PREMIER: His remarks constitute a repetition which has not much interest.

Mr. Sampson: Hope dies hard in my heart.

The PREMIER: The use of electrical current in the metropolitan area is increasing so rapidly that we must face an extension of the generation of power. Consideration was given to the erection of a new station near Collie where it was hoped savings could be effected on the transport of coal, but detailed investigation disclosed that the loss of power and the cost of providing the necessary transmission line would far outweigh the cost of bringing the coal to the metropolitan area. A lot has been said about the necessity for decentralisation and the establishment of a power house at Collie, but the cold hard commercial fact established by the Electricity Commission is that the cost is too high, in comparison with the advantages that would accrue. That does not mean that we do not intend to do anything in regard to the matter, which is still being considered by the Commission.

The expenditure on harbours and rivers last year was £63,400. The bulk of this was incurred on the new slipway. The total cost of the slipway is approximately £136,000 and the Commonwealth has undertaken to meet this cost on a £ for £ basis with the State, on condition that the charge on the Commonwealth and Allied Nations' vessels for the use of the slipway shall not exceed £30 a day. This charge will be reviewed later, however, in the light of experience in operating the slipway. Added to this amount is expenditure on an extension to the slipway, which was carried out at the request

of and is being entirely paid for by the Commonwealth Government. The arrangement with the Commonwealth will prove very satisfactory, as the State has now been provided with very much-needed equipment which at present is proving remunerative and, when the war is over, should be of great assistance to shipping and enable us to retain work which otherwise would go elsewhere. Eulogistic references have been made to the State Government for having provided the slipway, because it has been of tremendous use to Allied vessels which have had to come to this port—some of them damaged—and I think the slipway has been occupied almost the whole time since it has been completed.

The estimated expenditure on harbours and rivers this year is £24,500, which includes £10,000 for additions at Bunbury, £3,900 to complete the protection to Babbage Island on the Carnarvon foreshore, £5,000 for the continuance of the work at North Quay extension and £1,000 to cover minor works on improvements to harbours and rivers as may become necessary.

Turning now to the question of water supply and sewerage, last year £75,500 was spent in that direction, and the estimated expenditure for this year is £66,900. Most of last year's expenditure and the bulk of the estimated disbursement this year relate to the continuance of the work on the Goldfields Water Supply main conduit. The work on the conduit has been proceeding for some years and is now nearing completion. Last year £11,500 was spent on improvements to the Albany water supply. Members will be aware of the fact that the water supply at Albany was somewhat unsatisfactory, and a fair amount of capital expenditure had to be incurred in order to improve the position. The revenue collected by the Albany Water Board was insufficient to cover operating expenses and meet the interest payments due to the Government. As the result of an investigation by Government officers, it was decided that the State should assume responsibility for the undertaking. I am pleased to be able to say that despite the heavy additional capital expenditure involved in improving the undertaking, the revenue collected in the first two years of control by the Government was sufficient to meet the whole of the operating costs and to pay the annual interest and sinking fund charges.

The expenditure on sewerage and drainage operations for Perth and Fremantle was last year £11,137. That included a small expenditure on loans for sewerage connections for houses; £5,000 for capitalised interest on works in progress; and £2,000 for the payment of outstanding accounts on completed works. This year provision has been made for the expenditure of £5,000, which will include £2,000 for new works involved in the investigation for the elimination of gas from sewers. A small amount has also been provided for loans for house sewerage connections and provision has been made for surveys of new sewerage works.

Under the heading of Water Supplies in Agricultural Areas, £7,849 was spent last year and the estimated expenditure for this year is £12,700. Last year's expenditure included £5,700 spent on the Boyup Brook water supply, and the estimate for this year includes £8,000 for the continuance and completion of that work. Then again £3,000 has been provided for further work on the relining of the Herdman's Lake tunnel. The total cost of the Boyup Brook water supply scheme is estimated at £24,000, of which the Commonwealth has agreed to find £10,000. The supply will serve a dual purpose. It will provide water for the flax retting mill, and also for domestic use by the inhabitants of Boyup Brook and by the employees at the mill.

Dealing with the Development of Mining, the expenditure last year was £98,900, and the estimated expenditure this year is £101,000. Most of last year's expenditure and the estimates for this year cover the operations of the State alunite industry at Lake Campion. Last year an amount of £90,608 was spent and provision has been made this year for a further expenditure of £80,000. Members have heard a good deal about the alunite industry during this session, so I shall not dilate upon that subject at this stage.

Coming now to the Development of Agriculture, etc., the expenditure last year was £35,500, and the estimate for this year is £85,750. This section includes Assistance to Settlers and Industry. Under that heading, £18,000 is provided for extensions to the abattoirs at Kalgoorlie and Midland Junction on which works £3,800 was spent last year. An amount of £7,250 has been provided for the Development of Agriculture as compared with an expenditure of £4,700

last year. This estimate includes the cost of the exploratory work being carried out at the Ord River. The expenditure last year on Assistance to Industries totalled £6,900, including £5,000 advanced to the Albany Freezing Works under a bank guarantee. Extensions have to be made to the undertaking at Albany, and the money was advanced by the company's bankers on the guarantee that the repayment would be made in three annual instalments. Those in control of the works were unable to make the payments from their own funds and the Government met the guarantee from loan moneys. It is anticipated that with a return to more normal conditions the Albany Freezing Works should prove profitable and the money advanced by the Government should be repaid. This year £45,000 has been provided for assistance to settlers and to industries. It is not known, of course, what actual assistance will be required under either heading, but that amount has been included in the Estimates in case financial help is required.

Dealing now with Public Buildings, the expenditure last year was £47,900, and this year's Estimates contain provision for an outlay of £40,000. The principal expenditure on public buildings last year related to the Fremantle Technical High School which cost £5,000, the building of the egg drying plant at West Perth at a cost of £8,000, buildings at Barton's Mill prison which entailed an expenditure of £9,000, and the Government Chemical Laboratory at East Perth, which cost £10,000. In this year's estimates the largest item is for the completion of the Kent-street school at an estimated cost of £13,500, while £15,000 has been provided for school additions in country and metropolitan areas.

On hospital buildings last year the expenditure was £75,000, of which £45,000 was spent on the Perth Hospital and £30,000 was transferred to the Hospital Fund to meet capital expenditure on hospital buildings. This year £30,000 has been set aside for continuing the work on the Perth Hospital. If men and materials can be made available this year, that amount will be largely exceeded.

Under the heading of "Sundries" the expenditure last year totalled £83,600, and the estimated expenditure this year is £44,100. Last year's expenditure included £16,000 on the State Engineering Works, the provision

covering £2,500 for new machines, £6,000 for a canteen, and £6,300 for a 25-ton overhead travelling crane. This year an amount of £2,100 has been provided for the State Engineering Works. This covers £800 for half the cost of a laboratory, the other half being provided by the Commonwealth, and £1,300 for the purchase of additional machinery. Last year's expenditure included £40,000 on A.R.P. requirements, and this year £36,000 has been provided.

I do not know what will happen regarding this year's expenditure, exceptionally contradictory statements having been made by Federal Ministers. One statement was that the present precautions should be maintained, while this morning another Minister said that A.R.P. protective structures could be demolished. In the circumstances, we do not know exactly where we stand.

The Minister for Mines: We have had another statement this afternoon.

The PREMIER: Is that so?

Mr. Patrick: The latest intimation is that they can be taken down.

The PREMIER: I do not know what will happen. I think that if the structures are solid and will not entail much maintenance, it would be unwise to remove them. On the other hand, those structures that are falling into decay and crumbling to pieces could possibly be removed. However, that matter will be discussed later. Under this particular section of the Loan expenditure which deals with "Sundries," £25,000 was spent last year on clearing the overdraft on the W.A. Meat Export Works when they were purchased by the Government. The overdraft when cleared from the bank was added to the capital debt of the works to the Treasury. This year £6,000 has been provided for the meatworks for the completion of additional cold storage space. That work has been proceeding for the past two years. If we could secure adequate shipping to lift the fat lambs as we treat them, there would be no necessity for the provision of additional freezing space. However, the shipping position is so insecure and doubtful that it has been deemed wise to increase the freezing space and, in any case, the additional plant will be available for other purposes in the future.

Though the State's loan expenditure is comparatively small, the Government has endeavoured to spread it over those undertakings that will prove most useful in de-

velopment during the post-war period. Very large sums have been spent in Western Australia in past years on the development of agriculture. From that expenditure we have reaped considerable gain, and have built up an agricultural industry that compares favourably with that of any other Australian State. But we need now to diversify our industries and to provide for those which arise naturally out of primary production, and out of the utilisation of the raw products and minerals with which nature has so liberally endowed us. We do not wish Western Australia to remain for all time a purely primary producing State. We believe that we have the possibilities on which to build successful secondary industries, in addition to maintaining a highly diversified agricultural industry. We have made progress in this direction during the past five years in the increased production of tobacco, flax, linseed and hops.

All these products require processing, which assists in the development of secondary industries. The products I have mentioned all represent new crops, adding to the diversity of our production and helping to make us less dependent upon other States for our requirements. The Minister for Agriculture is most enthusiastic in seeking out additional means of diversifying our agricultural production so that should we experience a setback in one or other of the crops we shall still be much better off in the long run. By spending our money on developmental and experimental work we shall test out various possibilities, and this has been the Government's aim in the allocation of loan funds.

Better water supplies, additional irrigation, more good roads, further electrical power—all help towards better development. The work of the Department of Mines in finding wanted materials, of the Department of Industrial Development in the development of new industries, of the Department of Agriculture in assisting new types of primary production, of the Public Works Department in providing better facilities, and of the Railway Department in improving transport facilities and extensions of electric generating plants—all these march together towards the attainment of the Government's desire to develop this State.

As I remarked when introducing the Revenue Estimates, the Government holds this land in trust for those who are now engaged on active service in the defence of Aus-

tralia. When those young men and women return to civil life, there must be ready for them the ways and means by which they can be engaged in useful work. The Government believes that it is carrying out that trust, and that when the war is ended our people will take up their work again under conditions very much better than those they experienced before they went away—largely because of what the Government has been able to do in providing better facilities. It is with this objective in view that the Loan Estimates have been prepared.

Progress reported.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1. Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Act Amendment.
With amendments.
2. Wood Distillation and Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry.
Without amendment.

BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST [5.45] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to alter certain sections of the Education Act. In the first place it is desired to give the Education Department some control over kindergarten schools. Secondly, it is proposed to give to the Education Department—this is perhaps the most important part of the Bill—the right to compel children to attend school up to the age of 15, in place of the present age of 14. It also proposes to provide more control over what is termed public places, and to give authority to inspectors of the department to enter such places for the purpose of looking for children of school age who may be either employed by amusement proprietors or be filling in their time there instead of going to school. It is also desired to give the department more control over parents who neglect to attend to their children and keep them clean when they are going to school. The clauses that have been inserted in the Bill with regard to kindergartens have been put there because of the desire of the Government to have more control exercised over those schools. These schools cater for children under the age of six, at which age they are not compelled to attend any school. Whilst they are at kin-

dergarten, however, the department has no control over them.

Mr. Seward: Is the department going to arrange for the appointment of kindergarten school teachers?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: No, it is not proposed to interfere with the free kindergarten union in any way. That organisation has done a very good job up to date and it has received the support of the Government. It will not be interfered with in any way. I understand that these particular clauses in the Bill have received the blessing of the free kindergarten union. The Bill provides that any person who desires to start a kindergarten school must first secure a permit from the Education Department. The permit will be issued free and little difficulty will be experienced in obtaining one. Members will appreciate that every kindergarten school should be conducted by persons properly qualified to train the minds of the youngsters under their control. It is also desirable that control should be exercised to see that adequate sanitary accommodation and other requisites are provided. In this direction the department has at present no control whatever. It has been revealed at times that sexual perverts have started kindergarten schools on their own behalf, and there is no control over that sort of thing either.

This Bill, however, will give the Education Department the right to refuse to give a permit to any person who is unfit to be in charge of a kindergarten. The qualifications of the applicants for permits will be gone into by the officials, who will require information as to the ability and moral character of the persons concerned. If the applicants come up to the required standard there will be no difficulty about them receiving a permit. I do not think members are likely to object to inquiries of this nature being made of all persons desirous of starting a kindergarten. It is on record that undesirable people have been connected with such schools, but the inquiries that will be made if this Bill becomes law will prevent that sort of thing in the future.

The principal amendment to the Act will be to raise the school leaving age from 14 to 15. The House will surely agree that such an amendment is necessary. Education authorities generally hold the view that the most important stage in a child's education is during his last year at school. It is also

on record that many people possessing high qualifications have recommended an advance in the school leaving age. It may be argued in a general way that even at 15 a child is too young to leave school, and that he ought to be compelled to continue his education until he reaches the age of 16. If, however, this amendment to the Act is agreed to and we make a start by increasing the leaving age to 15 no doubt a further increase in the leaving age will follow as time goes on. I do not desire that there should be any misapprehension in the minds of members. It is provided in the Bill that it will come into operation by proclamation. This means that it is not the intention of the Government immediately to declare that every child must attend school forthwith until he reaches the age of 15. Many things will have to be taken into consideration before the Government will be in a position to put this proposal into operation. First of all the department will have to cater for an additional 5,000 to 6,000 children so that they may be enabled to carry on their education. In the metropolitan area particularly an extensive programme of building construction will have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. McLarty: And in the country, too.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: As the representative of a country district I never forget that there are children there who also have to attend school. I was going to say that this scheme will be taken more in conjunction with post-war efforts than be of immediate application so far as the department is concerned.

Mr. Sampson: Do you mean it will be part of the re-construction programme?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Part of the re-construction plan. Children between the ages of 14 and 15 will have to be sorted out, as it were, as to the trades, professions or other occupations they intend to follow. It would not be a sensible procedure to keep children at school between the ages of 14 and 15 without a change of curriculum—especially in the case of boys who are studying subjects they do not intend to follow when they finally leave school. That point was touched upon by the member for East Perth recently.

Mr. Sampson: The idea is a good one, but we must have more manpower.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Before that is possible it will be

necessary to provide more in the way of technical schools and other educational facilities. Those things cannot be done in a few days or a few weeks; hence the intention to bring the amendment to the Act into force by proclamation. No Government would be likely to fail to put these proposals into operation as soon as practicable. The sooner they are carried out the better. The Bill proposes to give further control to the Education Department over children who do not attend school. The Act lays it down that if a parent is not compelling a child to go to school that parent must first of all be given notice in writing that it is the department's intention to issue a summons for neglect to send the child to school. The serving of such a written notice on the person concerned means nothing. The parent need not answer it and that only means delay in the necessary action being taken. The Bill provides for the deletion of the particular section of the Act concerned owing to the fact that some parents have made use of it to ensure delay and to dodge their obligations. Neither does the Act authorise truant inspectors to enter places of amusement and cross-examine children they find there, either in employment or wasting time when they ought to be at school. The Government has decided that as a matter of policy children must be compelled to attend school, and that facilities should be given to the department to see that that is done.

Mr. Seward: That may be the first intimation the department has that children are not attending school.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: No. The truant inspector visits the home in the first place when it is found, after a few days, that a child is not attending school. If the absence is due to illness that is accepted as a legitimate reason for non-attendance. I can explain that matter more fully in Committee. Good grounds can be shown why the department is asking for this power. Another part of the Bill provides for a notification being sent to the department from parents who are giving private tuition to their children. The Act enables parents to give private tuition to their children. That is all right when the requirements of the department are carried out. It is, however, desired that the parents shall notify the department that the child is given home tuition, and good reasons can be ad-

vanced why that should be done. Regulations will be made for the temporary suspension from school attendance of children who may be suffering from some defect or complaint injurious to the health of other children.

There is at present no provision to force parents to take the necessary precaution to have certain diseases in their children attended to, or to compel them to obtain medical advice and treatment for such complaints. The Bill provides that the department may compel parents to obtain medical advice in such cases as these and to ensure the cleanliness of their children. There is a complaint amongst children known as scabies. If a child is sent home from school because he is found to be suffering from that complaint, and the parent takes no action to cure it and sends the child back to school in a few days, it provides a means of spreading the disease amongst the other children. The complaint is not a serious one and can be easily and economically cured. The parents will have the opportunity to send their children to the Children's Hospital in order to get these diseases cured. The Bill contains a provision giving protection to the parent who is financially unable to pay for the attention that may be found necessary for his children upon being medically examined at the school. This is essentially a Committee Bill and I propose to leave further explanation of it until we reach that stage, when I shall be only too pleased to give members such information as they may desire. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Boyle, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—MEAT.

As to Supplies and Rationing of Mutton.

Debate resumed from the 29th September on the Council's resolution, in which it requested the Assembly's concurrence, as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House, the rationing of mutton in Western Australia is unnecessary for the following reasons:—

- (a) There is a surplus of mutton in this State.
- (b) Owing to the deplorable mismanagement of manpower the treatment of mutton for export to the United Kingdom is impossible.
- (c) Rationing has lowered the price obtained by the producer.

This Parliament urges the Commonwealth Government to exempt Western Australia from the provisions of the regulations until satisfactory arrangements have been made to handle the surplus supply.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question is:—

That the resolution be agreed to.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

[6.2]: I regret very much that there was a move to force me to speak immediately after the motion was brought forward last week for this Chamber's concurrence in the Council's resolution. I feel it is vital that this exceedingly vexed question should be fully reviewed and explained. From the other side of the Chamber we had only two speeches, that by the member for Beverley and the supporting speech by the member for Subiaco. In my opinion, a very much stronger case must be advanced for this Chamber to concur in the motion introduced by Hon. G. B. Wood in another place. I have taken the trouble to read the submissions and claims made by the members of the Legislative Council when the motion was before that Chamber. It was brought forward on the 23rd September and I would like that date to be especially noted. In resolutions such as this, in which both Houses are asked to concur, and which it is desired to convey to the Commonwealth Government, at least temperate language should be used and there should be no doubt as to our being able to support the case with facts. One member of the Legislative Council apparently—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Standing Order 130 states—

No member shall allude to any debate in the other House of Parliament, or to any measure impending therein.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: How are we to manage in such a case as this? This resolution was sent by the Council to the Assembly for the latter's concurrence.

Mr. Boyle: Apparently it does not matter.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I venture to suggest, Sir, that if that be your ruling, there should be no hindrance to my amending the resolution. It seems to be an extraordinary position that we cannot discuss a resolution which originated in another place and that we are prohibited from referring to the debate which is really the supporting case for the resolution.

Mr. Patrick: You can refer to something that occurred in another place.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Unless you, Mr. Speaker, stop me, I do intend to refer to some comments made recently by certain gentlemen. One gentleman, who was very annoyed about the matter, accused the Government of having no knowledge of the facts and of having taken no action whatever to protect the interests of the people of the State. It was a most amazing lie for any member to make such a statement, because I intend to show the House that not merely did the Government have knowledge of the difficulties it had to encounter, but that it took every possible action in the circumstances to try to prevent the difficulties that arose. I am quite conscious of the fact that one has to be extremely careful in times such as these in supporting or opposing a motion of this character, because of the keen desire of some newspapers to distort facts. It is difficult in these times to oppose such a motion, as the grounds for opposition are really submitted as arguments, and deductions are drawn that have no relevancy to the opposition. In spite of all that, I intend to analyse the resolution very carefully and to suggest certain amendments to it.

As the member for Beverley, when moving for the concurrence of this Chamber in the resolution, did not analyse it on a Western Australian basis or on an Australia-wide basis—I refer to meat rationing generally—it is desirable I should give to the House and the public a picture of what the real position is. It almost seems unnecessary to affirm that the meat requirements for civilians, for military needs and for export, have meant a greater demand on meat production than has ever before been made in Australia's history. It is quite safe to say, whether the figure is published or not, that the demand in Australia for the current year is over 1,000,000 tons of meat. That is the quantity required for Australia's internal and external commitments. During the 12 months ended the 30th June last, with the Wyndham Meat Works not operating, Western Australia exported 686 tons of pork, 3,591 tons of lamb and 14 tons of mutton to meet oversea orders. To attain the figure of 1,000,000 tons for the current year, the Commonwealth Government has deemed it necessary—knowing the requirements and on the figures of availability—to institute some form of rationing.

There will be the greatest deficiency in beef because of the supply needs for the Services and for canning. Beef is required not merely because of its adaptability to canning needs but because of the heavy demands for certain Service needs. There was a variable degree of rationing for beef that was introduced on the 15th May of this year. That rationing was decided after an analysis had been made of the beef consumed in Australia between January and March last. That quantity was used as the base to arrive at the average consumption, and the rationing which took place varied according to defence needs or Service needs at between 40 per cent. and 70 per cent.; it went up to 75 per cent. on one occasion. Much play was made by the member for Beverley about the ridiculous insistence upon secrecy in this matter. I submit to him, however, that there are many relevant facts and matters associated with this subject that obviously must be treated very carefully. Would it do for me to announce to this Chamber when the last ship was despatched from Fremantle with thousands of fat lambs aboard and to mention its destination? Does he think it would be wise for me to say that we have a certain tonnage in store for the Navy or for the Army in this State? As I said, the hon. member stated there was too much secrecy.

Mr. Mann: So there is.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He suggested that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the matter.

Mr. Mann: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I venture the opinion that the hon. member's suggestion in that regard is positively ridiculous. We cannot and do not intend to say just what are the anticipated needs of the Navy and the Army in the near future.

Mr. Marshall: If you did, you would disclose the number of the personnel.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course. Rationing of beef has certainly had the effect of increasing the demand for mutton and lamb, particularly lamb, more especially since the sale of pork has been entirely prohibited. An increase in prices was expected, which it was thought the public would be prepared to pay. It is obvious from an analysis of sales that the public preferred lamb, and the big increase in lambs sold during the past two years dis-

closes that on more than one occasion the public paid a price above export parity.

It is well for us to know just what slaughtering have taken place, apart from export, of cattle, sheep and lambs in recent years, as I intend to show there has been a substantial increase in the quantities of mutton consumed and in the quantities of beef marketed in the State. The following table shows the stock slaughtered at the metropolitan abattoirs, apart from export:—

Year ended the 30th	Cattle.	Calves.	Sheep.	Pigs.
1940 ..	34,162	1,095	487,953	19,078
1941 ..	36,180	1,892	531,525	27,044
1942 ..	41,729	1,605	585,075	32,878
1943 ..	50,133	2,750	684,006	39,552

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Prior to the tea adjournment I was giving the comparative figures of a four-year period to show the tremendous increase in slaughtering for the year ended the 30th June, 1943. I think, to illustrate a point I shall make later, that it will be necessary for me to take the figures from January to the 18th September last. The numbers to the 18th September, apart from export, for the years 1942 and 1943 are as follows:—

	1942.	1943.
Cattle	36,800	33,800
Veal	1,227	1,393
Sheep, including lambs	419,408	522,174
Pigs	24,864	25,938

The cattle were down by 8 per cent. and sheep, including lambs, were up 24 per cent. this year. These are vital figures and are also reflected in the estimated total meats consumed in this State from January to the 15th May, 1943, the period during which the datum line was arranged upon which rationing was based. The total amount of meat consumed in the metropolitan area during that period was as follows:—

	lbs.
Beef	646,800
Veal	4,950
Mutton and Lambs	596,835
Pork	24,500
Total	1,273,085

Of that total pork represented 2 per cent. That is the picture in this State of all meats consumed prior to the introduction of rationing. The 15 per cent. reduction that has taken place of all meats was based on the consumption during the month of May.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Why May?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

There had to be a starting point if rationing had to be introduced, and that 15 per cent. reduction during the month of May also was inclusive of a quantity which is reflected in the beef production of 40 per cent. While I do not wish to support any suggestions confidently made in some quarters that there definitely has not been rationing in mutton—because if large quantities of meat to be consumed are restricted or controlled rationing, in essence is brought about—I point out that there has been not a reduction but an increase even on the May figures which I will give in a few minutes. There has definitely been an over-all restriction of meat consumed to the extent of 15 per cent. I want to make the point that in anticipation of increased storage requirements—which I think were referred to by the Premier this afternoon—a sum of £20,000 was spent at Robb's Jetty. During the war years a building up of stored meats has taken place because of the obvious necessity to hold meat and other commodities longer in store while awaiting shipment. I intend to show just how long ago, in an endeavour to anticipate and meet the position, we placed the matter before both the Commonwealth authorities and, on the second point contained in the motion, before the manpower authorities.

I desire to read to the House a lengthy letter sent by me on the 16th September to the Minister for Commerce—posted three days after the announcement that there was to be a 15 per cent. reduction—in order to show that the public man I referred to earlier in the evening was deliberately misstating the position when he said that the Government had taken no action and had no knowledge of the facts. I do not refer to Hon. G. B. Wood, but to one of his colleagues in the Legislative Council. I will say of the mover of the motion in the Legislative Council that I believe he was actuated by a desire to make sure that the mutton position would be safeguarded during the next three months, but I do not quite agree with his methods. But other members made statements that were not merely wholly unwarranted, but were deliberately untrue. The letter I wrote to Mr. Scully—I hope the House will bear with me because I intend to read it all—will show whether we had the position summed up, not a week or two after it was presented to Parliament, but

at the very time rationing was introduced. This letter, addressed to Mr. Scully, is headed, "Effect of 15 per cent. reduction in meat consumption," and reads as follows:—

Owing to different seasonal conditions, and also a generous supply of mutton sheep in Western Australia, it is extremely doubtful whether the imposition of the 15 per cent. restriction on all meat sales—recently imposed by the Meat Industry Commission—will achieve the result you desire.

It is considered that in this State it would be desirable to explore every avenue to have all suitable export types treated for export, so that the large amounts of mutton which are in the country could be used to better advantage for civilian requirements. Under existing conditions, lambs are being purchased for civilian consumption at above export rates, while cheaper mutton sheep are neglected and are tending to fall to unattractive prices.

The following facts form the basis for the above opinion:—

1. The period September-December is the first flush feed period throughout the sheep areas of this State during which time the bulk of the sheep are in good condition. This applies particularly so during the present year, when a very good season has been experienced in all districts with the exception of the extreme northern. The sheep population throughout the agricultural areas is increasing to the extent of about one-third of a million per annum. During the period mentioned, the bulk of the sucker lambs is placed on the market in addition to surplus sheep such as wethers, cull and unmated ewes.

2. From December to say the end of May, fat sheep become increasingly shorter in supply and special provision has to be made at this period of the year to supply local markets. It costs more to produce fat sheep at this time of the year, whereas at the present time (September-December) the cost is at a minimum.

3. High wages result in a demand for the higher priced and better quality lamb and hogget mutton, and, when there are ample supplies of these types available as at present, the cheaper lines are practically neglected.

4. With the price of ewe and wether mutton as it is at present (2½d. per lb. and falling), it is likely that much fat sheep of these types—which is in effect available—will not be forwarded by producers owing to the low returns likely. The surplus sheep meat which is available at this time of the year is unlikely to be made use of under present conditions. This surplus is not available at other times of the year when supplies are more or less only sufficient for local market requirements.

5. The sheep population in the agricultural areas is appreciably higher than it was at the beginning of the war, whilst reserves of stored fodder on the farm are

below the desirable limits. If a bad summer and autumn season should occur next year, it is likely that feed difficulties will result with possible stock losses, including sheep, which could have been utilised at the present time if an outlet could be found for them.

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd.) F. J. S. WISE,
Minister for Agriculture.

I read that letter to show that immediately the announcement was made that the Commonwealth Government would impose a 15 per cent. cut we presented a case on behalf of this State with no motive other than that there should be the best possible utilisation of the mutton available to us.

Mr. Withers: On the 23rd September.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was written a week before that and was delivered by air mail to the Minister for Commerce. I wish, when these matters are being reviewed—although we obviously cannot make available everything we do as acts of administration—that at least we could get some credit for endeavouring to anticipate the position and difficulties likely to face all sections of the community. With the background of the serious shortages of manpower, the anticipated flush of mutton to be available to meet the requirements, as I have explained, that are necessary for both civilian and military needs in Australia and the requirements for export of all types of meat, I will try to analyse the motion, which reads—

That in the opinion of this House, the rationing of mutton in Western Australia is unnecessary for the following reasons:—(a) There is a surplus of mutton in this State.

If we take that point first we know that there are approximately 1,000,000 more sheep in the agricultural districts compared with three years ago. I would, however, point out very clearly that only a proportion of that number is available to meet mutton requirements. Much of that development has been made in new country from which very few mutton sheep are to be made available this year. I know members in this Chamber realise that that is the position. The motion, if left as at present worded, really infers that there is not a ready sale for mutton sheep. Whether that is so or not, surely it does not depend on the facts of one sale or one yarding in the year, but on the spread of sheep available during the whole

of the season. Simply because 16,000, or any particular number of sheep, are yarded at a given sale, does not suggest what quantity of mutton will be available.

I was astounded to find in a current issue of the "Primary Producer" newspaper that some writers are advocating that since there is to be a surplus of old ewes and of the poorer types of sheep available immediately off shears, the public should have forced upon them these types of sheep as mutton sheep. I stress the point that if we are to consider this motion in the light of the way it is framed in the second paragraph—which specifically refers to the United Kingdom mutton requirements—we must admit that there is a very small percentage likely to be offered in excess of the requirements—which I will analyse—and which will be left unmarketed as mutton sheep. I am fearful as to what might happen in this State in regard to the prices of store sheep this year because I am afraid there will be many thousands for which little feed will be available, and which cannot be marketed as mutton sheep. I would submit a table, if it were possible to include it without incurring the delay necessary in reading it, to show the position of the sheep and lambs yarded and slaughtered. Such a table should be published, but it is necessary to point out that a peak was reached, which has not since been obtained during the week that rationing was announced. I suggest that there might be many causes behind that effect.

Butchers had the opportunity or right to assume that meat rationing was to be introduced, and it would have been an easy matter to have arranged for extra yardings and to have made extra purchases. The facts are that 522,000 sheep were slaughtered to the 18th September of this year, compared with 419,000 for the same period of last year. An increase of more than 100,000 sheep was slaughtered for the first nine months of this year. Part of the increase was directly caused by the rationing of beef. No member will argue that the rationing of meat will not be permitted when he realises the requirements and the purposes for which meat is being rationed. An increase of 24 per cent. in the mutton slaughtered and consumed in the State is a substantial one. Cattle slaughterings were down by 8 per cent., and although we can confidently expect a large increase in the mutton sheep to

be available this year, and in spite of the position I mentioned in my letter to the Minister for Commerce, if we sum up the position we will find that in view of the serious restriction of beef, the non-use of pork, the need for holding reserves for defence requirements and of the probability that Great Britain will agree to its meat contracts including mutton at more favourable prices, and taking into account the shortage of hay, it is extremely likely that we shall have to ask the producers of this State to deliver more mutton sheep during the next four months than they can provide.

This might appear to be quite an opposite opinion from the one I expressed when I stated that there has been a tremendous increase in the sheep population in the southern areas of the State, but I deliberately used the term "mutton sheep" because, for oversea contracts particularly, we must have very large quantities of good quality. I must suggest that the figures I am about to quote should not be published in the Press. For one military order alone for the first nine months of this year, 64,750 mutton sheep have been used. The orders in hand—these also should not be published—exceed 300 tons, with an additional 500 tons awaiting finality. Those two orders will in the immediate future take from the market over 40,000 mutton sheep.

Mr. Perkins: Can you handle those in addition to the lambs?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not dealing with the manpower situation because it forms the subject of the next paragraph of the motion, but I intend to offer some remarks on it later. The main difficulty is not that the numbers reflect an excess of mutton sheep or lambs required; it is the one I expressed in my letter to Mr. Seully that, unless the flow is arranged properly, the manpower position might not be satisfactorily met. Concerning the price for mutton for the United Kingdom, I should not like to make any premature announcement, but I suggest to members that if we can anticipate a mutton price of 4¾d. per lb. at the works and if the mutton is to include, as we are endeavouring to have included, 20 per cent. of ewe mutton, very many of the anticipated difficulties of the producer will not be realised.

Mr. Perkins: You suggest 4¾d. as an average price?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: As the base price at the works, which would mean, for a 48 lb. sheep, exclusive of the skin value, round about 17s. I asked the stock sections of four leading firms in this State whether they anticipate there will be a surplus of mutton sheep in the State, and their answer was, "No, if the labour is available to treat the sheep as they are marketed." But they all expressed the view that there is likely to be a serious position in regard to store sheep, because of the inability to place them and because of superphosphate and other incidental seasonal circumstances.

Mr. Mann: What about the skins of those sheep?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When sheep or lambs are treated through agents for export, the skins pass through the brokers; and the skin margin will depend upon the final arrangement made with the United Kingdom. The negotiations are still in a state of flux. I am not saying that 4¾d. will be the figure; but if it is the skin adjustment will have to be made at the time.

Mr. Mann: The skins should belong to the owner of the sheep.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think the same basis might apply, but there might have to be bargaining in that regard. I have no reason whatever to alter the view I expressed to the Commonwealth authorities on the 16th September for our problem will be to have the labour available to handle mutton sheep when the arrangement is operating. Paragraph (b) of the motion reads—

Owing to the deplorable mismanagement of manpower, the treatment of mutton for export to the United Kingdom is impossible.

"Deplorable mismanagement of manpower and export to the United Kingdom impossible." I have no personal love for some of the manpower authorities, and I have adequate reasons for adopting that attitude, but I would not allow my personal opinion on one point to sum up unfairly the case which I know so well and with which I have been closely associated since last lamb-killing season. I would not like to alter an opinion because I have a prejudiced view, perhaps, from another angle. But I say definitely there has not been chaos in lamb-killing as has been alleged. It might be better expressed if we said that there have been happenings which gave us cause for very great concern.

For many months we have endeavoured to safeguard the manpower position. We have done it in connection with other industries that required seasonal labour. Members will agree that the arrangements for shearing and for potato digging and for flax carting and other things, although they have not measured up to actual requirements, have enabled us to get through serious difficulties simply because we endeavoured to anticipate the problems. I believe that the wording of the motion would definitely prejudice the case because it could be successfully as well as strenuously denied. Although it presupposes that no manpower is available, I should state at this stage that in the early part of June of this year a conference was called between representatives of all the lamb-killing works, the skin and hide brokers and the stock and station agents in an endeavour to get a measure-up of the position and requirements of manpower at killing time.

As an outcome of those meetings to safeguard the position at Robb's Jetty, the manager addressed a letter to the Deputy-Director of Manpower, Perth, on the 24th June last, and pointed out that he attached to his letter a complete list of the names of the men required for release from August onwards. In addition to a list of the permanent staff of the works, the letter also contained a request for 118 men, with a mention that at a later stage a further 150 would be named for release before September. All the particulars that were necessary, from a casual and permanent point of view, were given in quite a lengthy letter to the Manpower and Army authorities. Both these authorities replied to the effect that the matter would receive earnest consideration and every endeavour would be made to co-operate. But I suggest that since June serious alterations have occurred in this State in the numbers of Army personnel from which those men might be drawn. One of the great difficulties with which we have been confronted is that men who had been placed on a list and specifically named were thousands of miles from this State when we needed their services. I think the manpower authorities have endeavoured to assist by recruiting surplus labour from different sections of the Army, but because of Army movements a much more serious task has confronted us than there would

have been if the Army numbers had been stationary in the State during that period.

I present that point of view without holding any brief at all for the manpower authorities and can confidently say that, for the seasonal requirements in this State, they have given a close scrutiny to all the representations made to enable us to meet the difficult situations as they have arisen. I have from them a rather lengthy document of explanation as to the approaches they made to the Army authorities and the difficulties of getting specified men from different places. It also mentions that on occasions the Army suggested transporting over long distances men in military vehicles in order to meet pressing needs at the meat-works. I point out that at Robb's Jetty on the 30th September, 1942—and this is a point members should note if they criticise the scarcity of manpower—221 men were employed; on the 30th September, 1943, 331; and although we still need an extra 60 men to get the fourth chain going, I am sure that that figure rather surprised members opposite.

In spite of the competition for all manpower in all sections of industry, we were able to find this year at Robb's Jetty 100 men more than at the 30th September of last year. Therefore I consider it quite wrong that we should rush into wholesale criticism and use such expressions as "the deplorable mismanagement of manpower," when there are so many interwoven interests which have a determining influence as to whether that manpower should be released for this or for any other industry. An interesting point, too, in connection with the lamb and mutton treated this year is that at the 2nd October there had been 52,218 lambs slaughtered, and including mutton over 60,000 carcasses for this season, as against 37,000 all told last year at that date. So that there has been at the metropolitan abattoirs for local consumption an increase of 158,000 for the first nine months, and for the first two months of the lamb-killing season an increase of 22,000 killed. And all those, except four per cent. of rejects, were for export.

In examining the manpower side I think we should generously regard the causes of the failure for manpower to be available just when we need men. There are causes, and many likely causes, which can upset our calculations. It is necessary also to point out that lambs might be 5,000 in supply

during the week of the peak, that ended on 18th September, the week before the time when this motion was lodged in the Legislative Council. I have given reasons why that number might have increased in the anticipation of rationing. It was not a seasonal slump in price because immediately in the following week, when numbers went down by 5,000 and have since stayed about that level, the price slump has not been as anticipated. The price and the market have recovered. I can give members either per pound or on the hoof rates for all those weeks, if they wish them. I think it can be safely stated that not merely in the war period, when there is so much competition for labour that is in short supply, especially at the peak period, have we been greatly worried. In fact, we are always worried at peak periods.

I have a recollection of interviews with almost frantic individuals, Messrs. Monger and Lee Steere, when they owned Robb's Jetty works, in an endeavour to cope with the whole season in 1939, anticipating 500,000. I think we got 336,000, but Messrs. Monger and Lee Steere and other growers anticipated 500,000. In October, 1939, we had a peak of 9,000 in one day, and we had an average of 8,000 for several weeks in October. Members will be generous enough to admit that we were placed in an almost frantic condition to cope with the lambs and sheep that were offering in peace-time, with recourse to all the labour offering. So how much worse is the position in wartime! Therefore I think we must be far more generous than to say that deplorable mismanagement of manpower is responsible for the position at the slaughter houses. I have also a weekly report from the Government officer at the Midland Yards, a report that I have followed very carefully. I can quote, too, for the benefit of members, the report of the Associated Salesmen on the yarding week by week. I notice that some of their statements have been very carefully deleted when the report has been served up for Press comment. It is worth while recording that during the week ended on the 18th September, when the market was over supplied, the sales were held on a very boisterous, wet day. Sheep, it is mentioned in the report, did not serve up attractively because of the inclemency of the weather.

In connection with the impossibility of treating mutton for export, that also, if it goes East from both Houses of this Parlia-

ment, would be very quickly refuted. It is not right to say that because of deplorable mismanagement of manpower the treatment of mutton for export was impossible. Others can speak of "deplorable mismanagement" if they like—if there was deplorable mismanagement—because the treatment of mutton for export to the United Kingdom is going on; and we must appreciate this point, that the authorities will not be misled by any unwarranted statements of ours, for we shall have those statements challenged if we send them in their present form. Only yesterday, because of a lull in the availability of lambs on three chains at Robb's Jetty, 700 mutton sheep were immediately treated. Those sheep were awaiting an opportunity for slaughter in case of sales or railway circumstances making it possible to treat mutton. So even yesterday over 700 sheep were treated at one works for export to the United Kingdom. Therefore I think we should readjust our views and not utter, in the words of paragraph (c) of the motion, the sentiments expressed there, thus leaving ourselves open.

I am advised by Mr. Farrell, telephoning from Melbourne on Sunday, that he has every reason to believe that the United Kingdom will include mutton in its next contract for meat at a price favouring mutton producers. Mr. Farrell did not hazard what the ultimate price might be. The figures I have given might be regarded as a guess, and I am pleased to think that 4¾d. at the works may be the price. In connection with paragraph (c), the member for Beverley submitted no figures proving his case. I admit the depression of prices during the week beginning on the 13th September; but since the manpower position has improved and numbers have been more regular, and there is a keen demand for mutton sheep at better prices, as has undeniably been the case since the 13th September, we may also review the statements in paragraph (c) of the motion. I have, if members desire to hear them, the weekly rates per pound for any week they care to ask for, which will immediately reflect the price on the hoof, of which also there is a record. Since the average weekly consumption of mutton was 484,500 lbs., in case the month of May can be said to be an average month, the adjustment made has been an increase of 505,000 lbs., of mutton permissible, which includes the 15 per cent. overall reduction.

There has been an increase in metropolitan consumption to the extent of 21,000 lbs. per week. Considerable clamour has come from some sections of the butchering trade, and the figures submitted by the member for Subiaco last week show clearly that there had been a reduction in the mutton and lamb available for the individual butcher, but also that his trouble was that he could not bridge the gap between the beef reduction and the total meat requirements. That is the trouble which has worried many of them, because numbers of butchers have specific sales of beef but cannot increase the mutton allowed by the wholesale butchers, who certainly must be in short supply to cover all the requirements from the restricted quantity. A statement has been made that pork has caused a reduction of 15 per cent., but of course that is quite ridiculous. The total consumption of pork in Western Australia in normal times, either before the war or during the last 12 months or the past nine months, has not exceeded 2 per cent. of the total meat consumption.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What about the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am speaking of the metropolitan area. But there are individual butchers whose trade is unusual. For instance, there are those who supply the Chinese community. There was one butcher of whose trade 50 per cent. was pork. Another had 15 per cent. of his trade pork. Because of the absolute cutting-out of pork, he immediately was rationed 15 per cent., which, plus the 15 per cent. of over-all rationing, makes his cut about 30 per cent. But I am advised by the Meat Rationing Commission that special allowances have been made to people who have been so circumstanced. It has been notified that if such people have a case, they should submit it. But it is quite wrong to say that pork has represented a reduction of 15 per cent. save in those exceptional cases. The total consumption of pork in relation to the total amount of meat represents an average of 2 per cent.

I would not like to defeat this motion without offering something more suitable to replace it; and because the Standing Orders do not permit of my amending this motion—

The Minister for Mines: Why?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Because I understand I am simply allowed

to agree to the motion subject to an amendment—it has now devolved on me at this stage to move, which I do not intend to do at the moment but shall do later, an amendment reading “Subject to the following amendment” and then to have a further amendment moved to introduce the substance of what I desire to insert.

The Minister for Mines: Why cannot you move it?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Because I have been told that I cannot. If I move the first amendment, I am informed I cannot move the second. I must move to insert the words “Subject to the following amendment.” Now I wish to give the House an idea of how I intend to amend the motion. I have shown, I hope, that although there has been a restriction on the mutton, the extra demand made on the fat mutton to be available to us shows that there will be a shortage before the end of the summer of mutton sheep in this State. I think members will concede that. As to the second point concerning deplorable mismanagement of manpower, I think it would be unwise to send a comment like that to the Minister for Commerce or to the Commonwealth Government for their concurrence and attention. The resolution might be amended to suggest that the rationing and restriction of mutton in Western Australia, if warranted by the need to have adequate quantities available to the Services and for export, should not take place unless and until certain things are done. That is to say, unless the Commonwealth Government gives us an assurance that during the next three months all the mutton sheep available for the local market and needed for local trade and requirements are lifted, the rest should be taken over and stored for the United Kingdom and the Services.

The second condition is that the Commonwealth Government should make an immediate announcement as to the price to be paid for United Kingdom contract mutton. That is very vital. Thirdly, it is very necessary that the Commonwealth Government should make sure that manpower releases are made to meet labour needs of the works handling sheep and lambs offering. I suggest that if the resolution were amended to include such sentiments and principles, it would convey to the Commonwealth Government, in rational and temperate language more likely to receive attention, the opinions

the hon. member in the Legislative Council desires to have conveyed. I think the point necessary will have been made and that, above all, the interests of the farmers concerned in the marketing of mutton sheep are more likely to be adequately safeguarded. If the motion is amended as I suggest, it will express our opinion and contain our request but will not make allegations and mis-statements. It is a motion of that sort which should be carried by this Chamber. I move an amendment—

That after the words "agreed to" the words "subject to the following amendment" be inserted.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker! How can we intelligently vote for an amendment of that description if we do not know what the subsequent amendment is going to be?

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister has outlined the proposed amendment.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Has he?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Amendment put and passed.

Point of Order.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker! I submit it is irregular for one member to have the right to insert other words subject to further words being inserted and then not to follow up his amendment with the insertion of the words.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am not allowed to.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The amendment has to be intelligible, and to say that we are going to insert words, and then for the member to outline—

Mr. Speaker: Order! Is the hon. member raising a point of order or making a speech?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I am trying to make some commonsense observations.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I think it is irregular for a member to move half an amendment and then for another member to move other words to complete the amendment. To me that is not commonsense.

Debate Resumed.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury): Following on the explanation made by the Minister for Agriculture, I move an amendment—

That all words after "rationing" in line 2 of the resolution be struck out with a view to inserting the following words:—

and restriction of mutton sales if warranted by the need to have added quanti-

ties available for the Services and for export should not take place in Western Australia unless and until—

(a) There is an assurance that during the next three months all mutton sheep not needed for local trade and consumption be lifted from the markets and after slaughter stored to meet United Kingdom and Service needs;

(b) An announcement be made as to the price to be paid for United Kingdom contract mutton;

(c) Manpower releases be made to meet the labour needs at treatment works to handle all sheep and lambs offering.

This resolution to be transmitted by telegraph to the Commonwealth Government immediately.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—on amendment): I do not think that we on this side of the House have any objection to the phraseology of the Minister's amendment except perhaps that it does not make any provision, as a resolution of this Parliament, that the price he contemplates in regard to the oversea contract should be one which will make a fair return to the producer.

The Minister for Agriculture: That has already been presented by the Government through the Deputy Meat Controller.

Mr. WATTS: I do not doubt that it was in the Minister's mind. I do not propose in any circumstances to accuse the Minister of neglecting in his mind that aspect of the matter, but I feel we would be well-advised to say so in the resolution. The Minister was good enough to let me have a copy of the proposed amendment, which reads, in part, that restriction of sales should not take place unless—

(a) There is an assurance that during the next three months all mutton sheep not needed for local trade and consumption be lifted from the markets and after slaughter stored to meet United Kingdom and Service needs;

(b) An announcement be made as to the price to be paid for United Kingdom contract mutton.

I feel this House should make a declaration to the effect that the price to be paid should be one that represents a fair return to the producer. It is quite apparent from the controversies that have taken place on this subject, and even from the remarks of the Minister this evening, that there has not been a thorough understanding of the position by responsible authorities in the Eastern States. They have not, I think, made themselves sufficiently clear as to what they intend to do, nor made themselves sufficiently aware of the circumstances in Western Australia. We are the only people who can

stand up for the primary producers of this State. We are the only folk who can explain to the Commonwealth Government in anything like an effective manner just what we feel in this regard.

The Premier: Whom do you include in "we"—the whole Parliament?

Mr. WATTS: Yes, I am dealing with this question on the basis of a resolution from this Parliament. We have heard of the representations the Minister has had occasion to make from time to time, and it would appear to me that they have not received sufficient attention. We should make ourselves clear as to what we intend in this regard. There have not been lacking examples in other circumstances where price fixation has not been advantageous to Western Australian producers, nor indeed to other sections of Western Australian people. I do not attribute any bad intention to the people who have been responsible—I think it is merely lack of understanding of the circumstances existing—but there have been extreme divergences in prices paid to our people and those paid to people in other parts of the Commonwealth for what are apparently, on the face of it, the same articles. I do not think we should let the amendment go through without some attention being paid to that aspect.

In offering no objection to the Minister's amendment, I think we are going a long way towards achieving unanimity in a resolution which seeks rectification of existing conditions. I do not altogether subscribe to the point of view that there has been no mismanagement of the manpower position. I think I said to the Minister this afternoon that the manpower position is deplorable, even if it is not mismanaged, and on those grounds he might easily meet us half way with regard to the phraseology appearing in the original resolution. What we want the resolution to convey to the Federal authorities is that what has happened in Western Australia is not regarded as satisfactory. Past experience has shown that if there is a considerable measure of unanimity in what goes forward to the Commonwealth Government it is likely to be taken notice of, whereas the contrary might be the case if a resolution is sent forward indicating that there has been a strong divergence of opinion between the Houses of Parliament. In consideration of all those aspects, we are prepared not to offer any opposition to this amendment. In softer language, it tells—

Mr. SPEAKER: I would point out that we are only discussing an amendment to strike out words. I do not mind allowing a certain amount of latitude.

Mr. WATTS: I beg your pardon! The procedure is somewhat involved, but I think I am in order in saying that in softer language the proposal deals with the manpower question by saying something different from that which appears in the resolution. It is proposed to strike out the reference to deplorable mismanagement. I would like to add something to paragraph (b) when the right time arrives. Nobody—and least of all the Minister—judging from the frequent utterances made in this House and elsewhere can be satisfied with the manpower position in Western Australia. Undoubtedly there is a great emergency and admittedly for a period of months we have endeavoured to appreciate that emergency by being extremely reasonable in our representations. I am convinced, however, that had we sat down quietly after that period had expired and allowed the manpower position to go on as it was, we should have had no redress at all. We are not getting much yet, but there are not lacking signs that some relief is coming. I think it will be obtained only by continual observations and representations from both sides of this Parliament. That is the only way in which we are likely to get anywhere. I do not propose to object to crossing out these words with a view to inserting the other words outlined, but I shall ask the House subsequently to insert a request that there should be some reasonable return to the producers concerned in these transactions.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury): I move an amendment—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

MR. PERKINS (York—on amendment): I largely agree with the summing up of the position by the Minister for Agriculture, and I think that possibly the words to be included in the amended motion more suitably express our views than did the motion in its original form. I have not been quite so much concerned about the position of the consumers as about that of the producers. Most consumers are quite prepared to make any reasonable sacrifice asked of them when they appreciate that the object is to in-

crease the supplies of meat necessary for the people of the United Kingdom where the ration is so very small, and when they know that they are thereby to aid the men in the various Fighting Services both in and outside the Commonwealth. On the other hand, there has been a very strong suspicion in the minds of many people that the sacrifices being asked of them were not achieving the end that the Commonwealth Government said it had in view in imposing the rationing of meat. The Minister has cleared up some of our doubts on that point, and possibly the motion in its amended form will cover the requirements of the situation. I stress, however, the need for securing action to deal with the serious position that has arisen in the producing areas.

I have the honour to represent one of the areas in Western Australia where fat lambs and sheep are produced in the greatest quantities. If a survey were made of the output of the York-Quairading-Bruce Rock section, it would be found that a very large percentage of the fat lamb and mutton supplies are drawn from there. One has only to go through that large district at present to be impressed by the fears uppermost in the minds of the producers of fat lambs and sheep regarding their future prospects. If we are able to despatch a large proportion of our surplus mutton overseas it will greatly relieve the dangers of present-day prospects for the producers. Actually, as the Minister stated, the number of sheep in the agricultural areas today shows a great increase upon past figures. Most of us think the present number attains a level higher than we can safely carry over the summer months. In the existing circumstances every additional sheep we have to carry during the next four months means consuming so much essential feed that will be required by the remaining store sheep to carry them over the lean summer and autumn periods. One of the main reasons for the agitation on the part of producers is the necessity to get rid of all fat sheep that can be conveniently consumed at present. Even in the areas I refer to the store sheep are in very good condition.

One need only attend one of the off-shear sales being held throughout the Eastern agricultural areas to be impressed by the excellent condition of the major portion of present-day flocks. Possibly from 50 to 70

per cent. of the stock marketed can be said to be in good killable condition. That being so, there is no room for doubt about plenty of mutton being available for killing if the meat can be consumed at this end. The Minister has given us some very good news in his statement that steps are being taken to kill and freeze surplus mutton so as to relieve the glut that is threatening, and that possibly in four months time the whole of the surplus mutton will have gone into consumption either in Western Australia or overseas. That is the position I particularly wanted to deal with in the interests of the producers. I am quite prepared to support the amendment.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly—on amendment): As indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, I think it would be advisable to include in the motion some reference to prices. Consequently I move—

That the amendment be amended by adding at the end of paragraph by the words "such price to provide a fair return to the producer."

During the war period there have been instances of contracts being entered into without any specific references to prices, and the subsequent arrangements made have not been satisfactory to the producers. I appreciate that in a motion such as that under discussion we cannot stipulate the definite price that should be fixed, but we can give an indication that to the producer the price factor is most important and that it is one that should not be overlooked in determining the contract to be accepted. As the Minister mentioned, there is nothing said about the skin values or offal. We should indicate a certain price on hooks, and then the producer would know what the price was likely to be. The Leader of the Opposition pointed to one of the difficulties of such situations when he referred to the varying prices received for honey in the different States. He showed that there is a difference of 1½d. between the price fixed in the Eastern States and that which obtains in Western Australia. As regards our meat supplies, we have nothing to fear from the standpoint of quality. Our fat lambs are the best in Australia, and there is no reason why we should not receive for mutton just as satisfactory a price as that obtainable in the Eastern States. The amendment on the amend-

ment will serve as an indication that price is an important matter affecting the interests of the producers.

Amendment on amendment put and passed.

Amendment, as amended, put and passed.

Resolution, as amended, agreed to, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1943-44.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 1st October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Labour, £1,250:

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR [8.41]: I propose on this occasion to leave the portion of my speech dealing with industrial development until the end of my remarks. The first department I shall deal with is the Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief Department. The number of women and children assisted by the department during the last financial year decreased very substantially. The number of children cared for and supervised by the department during the year was 3,100, which total was 526 less than the number cared for and supervised during the previous financial year. The number of wards of the department who were placed in various institutions during the year was 469, representing a decrease of 126 as compared with the position in the previous year. The number of wards boarded out was 352 as compared with 294 during the last financial year, representing a decrease of 58. The total number of relief cases—that is, families to which financial relief was granted—was 1,600 in 1939, the last completed year before the war and 463 in 1942-43, representing a decrease of more than 1,000 cases. The reduction under that heading is very substantial. Members may wonder how it would be possible in a period of three or four years for the number to decrease to that extent. There are several reasons for it, but the main reasons are associated with the war.

In many instances wives and children had to be supported by the Government before the outbreak of war because of the fact that the husbands and fathers concerned were not realising their responsibilities towards their families. That state of affairs has been changed because the menfolk concerned have joined one or other of the Fight-

ing Services and, as a result, allotments have been made in favour of their wives and children, thereby allowing them to be fully provided for out of those allotments. Another important contributing factor to the reduction is to be found in the fact that immediately before the war there was some unemployment, although not very much in this State. War conditions have almost completely abolished unemployment and thus men who were unemployed before the war and were consequently unable to provide for their families have, since the war, obtained employment and are now fully providing for the needs of their families. That development has relieved the Child Welfare Department of the obligation of providing for a large number of families. Briefly, that covers the main features of the administration of the department during the last financial year. As a result of the reduction in the number of families to be provided for, the Government has been able to increase the rates of allowances to the various groups of people being provided for by the department. Those increased rates are now applying.

The State Insurance Office during the last financial year has not transacted the same volume of business as in previous years, the reduction being mainly accounted for by the decrease in the activity of the goldmining industry. Members are probably aware that practically all workers' compensation insurance for the goldmining industry is undertaken by the State Insurance Office. With the reduction in goldmining activities since the commencement of the war, the amount of workers' compensation business has been considerably reduced, the result being that the income of the State office has greatly suffered. Some reduction in expenditure has taken place owing to the reduced number of claims in that industry, but the reduction has not yet caught up with the reduction in income. The expenditure will, however, reduce as each year passes. The State Office has, as a matter of policy decided by the Government, established reserve funds in order to meet any substantial volume of claims which might arise in the goldmining industry in future, or in any of the other activities for which that office is providing insurance cover. From the reserves so established, the Government has invested substantial sums of money in the various war loans floated by

the Commonwealth Government since the outbreak of the war.

The Labour Department has been carried on very much as in previous years. Members will recollect that some few years ago Parliament amended the Workers' Compensation Act to enable the compulsory provisions of the Act to be enforced. Before that time, there was no legal provision under which to enforce the compulsory provisions of the Act. Since the Act has been amended a constant endeavour has been made by the officers of the Factories Department to ensure that every worker employed in the State and entitled to be insured under the Act is so insured. The position today is very much better than it was two years ago when Parliament gave the necessary authority. A fair number of employers have had to be prosecuted because they were not meeting their obligations under the Act. The main value of the prosecutions was to set an example to those employers who had not up till then provided insurance cover for their employees. That was the object of the prosecutions, not the mere punishment of the offending employers. It can be said with considerable confidence that the great majority of working men and working women in this State, who today are entitled to be insured under the Workers' Compensation Act, are insured and therefore protected against the risk of loss through accident.

The officers of the Labour Department, including the officers of the Arbitration Court and the Factories Department, have rendered a very substantial measure of assistance to the war effort by the work they have carried out since the outbreak of war for the Commonwealth Government. This remark applies particularly to the inspectors of the Factories Department, whose help has been enlisted by the various Commonwealth departments for the purpose of ensuring that maximum production shall be achieved in the factories and workshops of this State. These inspectors have also played an important part in the improvement of working conditions in factories and workshops, both private and Government. In this regard, the Government itself has made a sum of money available for the special purpose of improving the amenities in Government workshops and factories, as

well as improving to the greatest extent possible the conditions under which the employees work in those places. Our war experience has proved to all employers that it pays in pounds, shillings and pence to make the conditions of their workers in factories, workshops and other establishments as favourable as possible. Most employers have learned, as a result of the war, that expenditure on improvement of conditions under which men work leads to greatly increased efficiency, as well as increased and better quality production. As a result, employers are now much more inclined to spend money upon improving conditions in factories, thus enabling their employees to put forth their best effort in the discharge of the duties entrusted to them. This is a modern development, but it has been considerably accelerated by the war. Some improvement in factory and workshop conditions has been forced upon various employers under Commonwealth rules and regulations.

I desire to refer now quickly and briefly to the main work attempted and achieved by the Department of Industrial Development during recent years. Members are well aware that the Government in 1939 decided to concentrate upon the task of developing to the greatest extent possible the secondary industries of the State. It is hardly necessary to tell members of the policy which prevailed prior to that year in Western Australia right from the time of its settlement, when the notion and the policy may be expressed briefly as being centred upon the primary and goldmining industries of the State. By and large that policy proved to be beneficial. It provided not merely work but a good living for the great majority of our population. It increased our wealth production year by year and it seemed that for all time this State was destined to concentrate upon primary production and goldmining. The depression period from 1930 to 1933 gave most of us an exceedingly rude shock. It exposed Western Australia, more so than any other State of the Commonwealth, to grievous loss, sorrow and suffering, because we depended much more than did the other States upon world markets for our stability and our income. Consequently we were much more seriously affected than were the other States by what happened from time to time in the markets of the world.

As a result of that terrible experience, which so many of our people went through during that period, the idea gradually developed that there should be a serious attempt made in this State to strengthen the foundation of our economic structure. It was felt that the biggest step forward that could be made was to set to work to establish as strongly as possible our existing secondary industries, and to establish as quickly as possible as many other secondary industries as could reasonably and safely be done. Therefore, after the 1939 State election the Government set to work along those lines. We brought into existence what was known as the panel system under which—as I have explained previously—a panel is appointed to deal with any particular suggestion or proposal for the expansion of an existing industry or the establishment of a new one. The personnel of each panel is carefully chosen; it is not restricted to Government officers but includes representatives of private industry, wherever it is considered the work of the panel would be advantageous by having outside representatives, as well as Government officers, upon it.

The main panels which have operated during the last year or two have been, iron and steel, hops, vermiculite, sulphur, mica, linseed, forest products, fisheries, phosphate, asbestos, drugs, alunite, lithium, insecticides and vegetable fibres. Most of these panels have already reported to the Government. The reports have been considered and in every instance action has been taken for the purpose of expanding existing industry if an existing industry was being dealt with, or for the purpose of establishing a new secondary industry if a new secondary industry was under consideration by the panel concerned. There is no need for me to go into any detail in respect of the major new industries which have been established, or are in the process of being established, because the members of the State Parliament have already, on several occasions, been given full information in respect of those matters. I am in a position to inform members that the whole of the crushing section of the potash industry plant is now operating, and has for several days been successfully crushing alunite drawn from the lakes near the works. This is an excellent development because it will enable a reserve stock of crushed alunite to be available for pro-

cessing into potash when the processing section of the plant is completed. I have previously said that the processing section is complete except for one special piece of equipment which will be available in this State in the near future. As soon as it is available it will be sent to Campion and installed. When that is done the processing section, as well as the crushing section of the plant, will be in operation and the actual production of potash will commence.

Members have had complete information regarding the wood distillation and charcoal iron and steel industry, that information having been made available to them only a few days ago when a Bill authorising the Government to establish these activities was discussed and approved in this House. They will be aware that a semi-commercial pilot plant is being erected for the purpose of processing potash residues in order to extract from these residues alumina so that that alumina will be available to the Commonwealth Government when it establishes the aluminium industry—as it proposes to do—in Tasmania. The aluminium industry will be a splendid one for Australia because it offers large possibilities for the future. The uses of aluminium in the years to come are practically unlimited and, therefore, when the Commonwealth establishes the industry in Australia it will require the raw material of alumina in order that it might be smelted into aluminium. We believe that we will be able to produce, from the potash residues, high quality alumina and be able to make it available to the Commonwealth Government at a price less than would be possible for anyone else in Australia. The interests concerned in the Eastern States are experimenting for the purpose of producing alumina from bauxite.

We have in this State many and large deposits of bauxite, but the technical officers of the Government are convinced that the production of alumina from potash residues will be a much more economical proposition than will be any attempt anywhere in Australia to produce alumina from bauxite. Members are aware that the Government anticipates producing annually 10,000 tons of charcoal iron, 486 tons of acetic acid and 112,000 gallons of wood naphtha from the industry which it has commenced to establish some 40 miles from Perth. The Government, through the De-

partment of Industrial Development, has rendered a considerable amount of financial assistance to those engaged in the production of manufactured goods in this State. The financial assistance rendered has covered a variety of industries. In the engineering section, for instance, it covers the manufacture of war munitions, electric motors, tool holders, machine tools, fire extinguishers, precision instruments, agricultural machinery and general engineering products; in the foodstuff section—meat chilling works, tomato, crayfish meat and fish canneries and fruit juice and vegetable packers; in the clothing section—tanneries, new clothing factories, existing clothing factories and woollen mills; in the miscellaneous section—manufacture of fertilisers, implement handles, charcoal briquettes and various minerals which previously had not been processed in this State.

Since 1940 the amount of financial assistance granted has totalled £49,000; the number of firms or individuals to which the money has been advanced is 29. This financial assistance has been granted mainly by way of bank guarantee. As a result the Government has not actually been called upon to provide hard cash. It has made the assistance available by way of bank guarantee which is, of course, the most satisfactory way, to all parties concerned, of financing the development of industry. Repayments amounting to £27,000 have already been made, and 13 of the 29 applicants assisted have discharged their liability in full. It will be realised that considerable care has been exercised by the Government, through the appropriate department and its officers, in making financial assistance available to the firms and individuals to which it has been extended.

I was interested to read the newspaper report of a speech made a few weeks ago by a member of the Legislative Council, in which he sought to place this Government, at any rate, in an entirely wrong and false position by quoting the total amount of money advanced by Governments in all the years past, by way of assistance to industries. By doing that, of course, he made it appear that the present Government had been responsible for the losses incurred by past Governments in making money available to industries of all kinds in different parts of the State. I have, therefore, been careful to explain to members tonight the re-

sults which have been achieved, in the financial sense, since this Government commenced to concentrate in a serious and solid way upon the task of extending and developing secondary industries in Western Australia. The Government, in connection with this policy, has also carefully considered the position of country districts. We realise that one of the great disadvantages in Australia today is the concentration of population in the cities. We know that in all the cities of Australia large groups of population are concentrated. We feel that in such a country as this, and particularly in a State like Western Australia, it is not merely undesirable but indeed dangerous from the point of view of real stability and the possibility of solid progress in the future. We have, therefore, wherever possible and wherever there has been justification, provided financial, technical and other assistance to expand already existing secondary industries in the country, and also to establish new secondary industries in country districts.

The factories and workshops assisted in the country extend to places as far apart as Broome, Geraldton, Bunbury, Busselton, Chandler, Albany, Northam, and Wundowie. The portions of the metropolitan area in which financial and other assistance has been granted are: East Perth, South Belmont, West Perth, Perth, North Perth, Fremantle, Victoria Park and Robb's Jetty. I previously explained just what the Government has done in connection with a number of other industries. In the information made available only a few nights ago as to the post-war planning of the Government, this ground was covered fairly comprehensively, and I think members gathered from that information a fairly accurate appreciation of what the Government has been able to achieve in building up the secondary industries of the State. I told members what had been done in connection with phosphatic rock and its production, and the production of pyrites ore for the subsequent production of sulphur so that by producing in this State both sulphur and phosphatic rock we might make progress along the road which will lead eventually to our becoming independent of outside supplies of superphosphate.

I think I mentioned that a factory is now almost completed in which 12,000,000 square feet of plywood will be produced each year. This factory is being established at Carlisle

by a private firm. It will draw its supplies of karri timber from the karri districts of the State. The plywood industry will be an entirely new one for Western Australia, and the production of plywood in this State will not only obviate the necessity for importing it from other States, but will, I imagine greatly popularise the use of this particular article in the future. Members are aware of what has been achieved with regard to the mining of asbestos. I do not propose to enter into details except to say that one of the companies, in addition to mining the asbestos, will also process it. I am not sure whether the Minister for Works explained what had been done in the direction of shipbuilding. Members know what has been achieved in this industry new to Western Australia. Two wooden ships have been built and launched, and each launching was highly successful. Representatives of the Commonwealth Government who examined the work praised the achievements of the workmen and technicians. The people of the State have reason to feel very proud of what has been accomplished in that new industry.

Mr. Sampson: In the old days, did not the late John Bateman build wooden ships?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes. Wooden ships of various kinds were built years ago, but for several years before the war the industry had become very depressed, and only a few very small wooden sailing craft were being constructed. This is the first time for many years that anything in the shape of a large ship has been built in the State. Implement handles are now being manufactured on a large scale for the first time. Some might have been produced previously but, so far as I can ascertain, there was no large-scale attempt in former years to manufacture handles for axes, picks and other implements.

Mr. Withers: There was one at Bunbury.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Whatever large-scale attempt might have been made in the past, it did not survive. Why it came to an end, I cannot say, though the reason might have been the force of competition from other countries. Anyhow, a firm undertook the production of axe and pick handles a year or two ago to meet the demands of the Defence Forces. The firm had very hard-working principals, but not much money. However, they were game to

try. They experimented and found that morrell from the Narrogin district was the most suitable timber. They have contracts with the Defence Department to manufacture large quantities. A certain quantity has been made available for sale to the civilian population. These handles were seconds which were rejected by the Defence Department, but they met with a ready sale and are a serviceable article, apart from blemishes, which do not materially affect the value of the handles. I myself have been using one for many months, and have not yet received any complaints from my wife on the score of any shortage of wood for cooking operations.

In years gone by sheep pelts in this State have been wasted. They have been either buried or burnt. We have been able to prevail on a local firm to undertake the processing of pelts for producing certain leathers, which will be available for use within the State. If there is a surplus, it will be exported. The classes of leather which can be produced from sheep pelts have not previously been manufactured in this State. This processing is being developed by an established tanner, so there need be no fear as to the success of the undertaking. It is well under way as regards the erection of the factory and installation of plant.

An established local company, whose headquarters are in Eastern Australia, has been manufacturing amber bottles here for some years. Previously, the only class of bottle manufactured was the ordinary-shaped one. All others required in this State, such as bottles in which milk and medicine are retailed, were of white glass and were imported from the Eastern States. As a result of war conditions and the control exercised by the State Shipping Priorities Committee, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to get white glass bottles brought here, and so the local factory has undertaken the manufacture of all sizes and shapes of bottles in glass of amber colour.

Mr. J. Hegney: Where is the factory?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: In East Perth.

Mr. Patrick: It is not making white glass bottles?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No.

Mr. Sampson: The amber-coloured bottle is very popular.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: This factory is supplying a large number of

bottles that previously were imported. The Government has made representations to the company with a view to getting it, as soon as possible after the war, to manufacture all classes of white glass bottles in this State, and there is a good prospect of this being done. The company has recently undertaken the manufacture of metal screw-tops for bottles. The use of these metal tops for bottles has increased considerably during the war, owing mainly to the difficulty in obtaining corks. This development, though not of major importance industrially, will, together with others, assist to expand our industries, increase wealth production, and provide additional employment opportunities for our men and women. The company has recently undertaken the production in this State of corrugated cardboard, which is used for packing bottles and other glassware, eggs, certain fruit, especially for export, and other commodities.

Mr. J. Hegney: Not corrugated iron?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No. Members may have read of the expansion of the paint-manufacturing industry. This is a sound development. It will mean that much more paint than was previously made here will be manufactured locally, and many more local materials will be used. The company is one of the largest manufacturing factories in the world and, therefore, will not be hampered on the score of finance. It has available all the money required to pay for future development, to withstand any competition it might be called upon to meet, and to ensure a system of distribution of the highest order, particularly in the direction of providing liberal terms on account of sales to approved wholesalers and retailers.

Action has been taken to establish the salt industry on a solid basis. Previously it was rather a ragtime affair. There were salt-producers in various parts of the State, but they were operating in a small way and each was struggling against all sorts of difficulties in the matter of finance, manpower, and transport. The department has been able to bring about a much greater co-ordination of production activities with the result that today the whole of our salt requirements are being produced locally. This was not so until a few months ago; previously salt was imported, chiefly from South Australia. We hope that it will not be neces-

sary to import this commodity in future. There is every indication that the industry is now established on a solid basis, and that the whole of the State's requirements will be produced locally. Plans are in hand to mechanise the industry, if that is necessary, to enable larger quantities of salt to be produced in the harvest season. The difficulty in the past was that each small producer had only a short season in which to harvest salt. Because of lack of finance and inability to employ labour at reasonable rates, these small-scale producers were not able during the season to harvest one-half of the salt required to meet local demands, despite the fact that the salt deposits of this State are very large and occur in several parts of the State. There are a dozen and one other items to which reference could be made; but I feel that it is not necessary for me to cover the whole field, a good deal of which has been traversed on past occasions. If there are any other items on which information is required, I shall be pleased to make whatever information I have, available to members at a later stage of the debate.

[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands): I desire to make only a few observations, and perhaps it is desirable that I should follow the Minister in the selection of subjects. The first item dealt with by the Minister was the Child Welfare Department. Although I am quite in agreement with the contention put forward that there is a great shrinkage in the number of children to whom the department is called upon to give its protection, undoubtedly I cannot see the effect in this vote. The sums appearing before us on the Estimates are practically identical with the vote for the preceding 12 months. As far as my recollection goes, that figure was not by any means a reduction on the 12 months preceding. And so it may be said that in fact the expenditure on this department would appear to be pretty well stationary. Now, that is difficult to understand from the point of view of economy, because where so much less work has to be done and so much less expenditure has to be incurred, it would be only reasonable to expect to find those things reflected in the overhead charges. The Minister also in the course of his remarks on that vote referred to the increased allowance which is now made for every child; but he did not state the figures.

The Minister for Labour: The allowance ranges from 5s. per case per week to 15s., according to the different class of cases.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is certainly a substantial increase, and it will be welcome news to many institutions which have been carrying on at a considerable loss themselves.

The Minister for Labour: It does not apply to them.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In that case it may not be very welcome, but rather aggravating.

The Minister for Labour: Those institutions had increases previously.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I have been assured perhaps a dozen times by the Salvation Army people and by the Parkerville people—

The Minister for Labour: We increased the allowances to the institutions in respect of the children we sent to them, and we also arranged that they should receive child endowment from the Commonwealth.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This is not a matter with which I am very conversant; but the member for Subiaco, if she were in her place, would know.

The Minister for Labour: We would not accept the hon. member as an authority.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Only quite recently an official of the Salvation Army told me that although the Army handled the administration costs in the very closest manner, nevertheless it was running its institutions for boys at a loss. The Minister's next observation dealt with labour generally in factories. I do not propose to follow it in regard to the improved standard that has been produced by better supervision. I also join with him in believing that the provision of amenities to workmen does tend towards better relations between the employer and the workman, and also towards better work. I have a strong recollection of considerable trouble at the State Implement Works, due entirely to the want of amenities. In fact, there was a strike at those works.

The Minister for Works: When was this?

Hon. N. KEENAN: About six months ago.

The Minister for Labour: The employees there have splendid amenities. You are quoting ancient history.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Ancient history is not six months ago.

The Minister for Labour: They have as good a dining-room as we have.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I have no doubt of it, but they had to make a row to get it.

The Minister for Mines: They did as others have had to do through the ages.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is not only the private employer who is to blame. Perhaps we are all to blame for not continuing the right attitude in a matter of this kind. Now I have a very few observations to make on industrial development. Let me say at once that although the Minister and I do not see eye to eye too often, in this matter I am—if he will allow me to say so—an unquestioning admirer of his. I have always supported the proposals he brought forward, and I have always believed that there was a good case for them. It is not that they were always successful. If one were to hold one's hand until one was certain of success one would never have success at all. So of course it may well be that some of the ventures to which the Minister is prepared to give the State's aid in their establishment may not succeed but if one does not run the risk of failure one will never achieve the triumph of success.

The Minister for Labour: One would be very lucky, if all one's ventures succeeded!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Extraordinarily lucky! Meanwhile I am in thorough accord with the policy of making an effort in any direction in which there is a reasonable hope of success. Spurred on apparently by the desperate conflict in which the world is indulging, mankind is discovering new means of doing things that before were extremely difficult, every day that we live, and discovering, too, that progress is so rapid that what is today discovered is tomorrow discarded. An instance of that is in the very case of aluminium. It is now alleged to have been discovered in the United States that aluminium can be superseded industrially by magnesia, and that magnesia was only 60 per cent. of the weight; and now, wherever it is very largely a matter of weight, things are determined from the one aspect, because the future will be in the air.

It may well be that aluminium will bow its head at the introduction of this new substitute for all the uses to which hitherto aluminium has been put. The very appeal of aluminium is its lightness compared with all other products that up to the time of its discovery we had knowledge of. If one compares an aluminium kettle with the old

kettle made of tin or iron or lead, the comparison is tremendously in favour of aluminium; but I am afraid it is possible that this position may change. However, that is no reason why in the meanwhile we should not devote all our resources and efforts to the production of an article which at any rate has a present market; and aluminium has a very large and valuable present market.

Now I wish to say a few words on what this State has done regarding the establishment of secondary industries. It is not at all correct to allege that the statesmen who from time to time have been in charge of the life of this State shut their eyes to the necessity for developing secondary industries, and devoted their attention exclusively to the development of primary industries. That is not a fair or just charge to bring, because in fact so long as I have had anything to do with public life it has always been admitted that it was necessary—not merely profitable, but necessary—to establish secondary industries, if for no other reason than that of allowing a choice to those who at present were engaged in primary industries, and not have them all travelling along the one road. The other alternative was to widen the base of our industrial structure and so be able to stand a shock when the shock came, in a manner that would be extremely difficult where there was a narrow basis. In that respect the remarks of the Minister are perfectly correct.

When the primary industries lost their market in 1941, this State lost almost all its sources of wealth except gold production. However, when disasters come to this State, almost in every case, as by a miracle, the gold saves the position. So in 1941, though the world's markets for our wheat and wool and timber had practically disappeared, the market for gold remained; and to the extent that gold was taken to produce wealth, this State remained in a secure position. But that was only a very limited secure position. We could never hope to establish a large State here on a gold basis. So I welcome the Minister's declaration that he proposes to do everything he can to widen the basis of our industrial world and thereby to ensure prosperity. What has stood in the way in the past and stands in the way today is the almost unchallengeable position of the Eastern States.

If we could establish a barrier against the Eastern States, we could at once embark on an industrial development here that must remain undreamt-of unless conditions change, because we never can establish it under present conditions. But that is the great bar to our secondary industries, that every possible industry one can think of is immediately met with the fierce competition of the Eastern States, which have established industries whilst industries here, unless they get help from the Government of the State, are unable to resist that challenge. I find myself prepared to indulge in a spirit of confidence in looking to the future because we are developing our secondary industries in certain fields, and those are fields in which we have some advantage.

They are fields in which the raw article which is to be manufactured is found in this State under very advantageous circumstances. Therefore we start our secondary industries with an advantage that may enable us successfully to compete against the challenge of the Eastern States. Unfortunately the days we are passing through are illusory. We can establish secondary industries now if for no other reason than that lack of shipping prevents the importation of certain articles from the Eastern States and because even in the Eastern States, owing to the manpower restrictions, the output has become extremely limited. I was told the other day that in certain trades—for instance, the clothing trades—practically the moment the goods are manufactured they are seized on. There are buyers waiting in queues outside the doors of the factories, and under those conditions—war conditions, pure and simple—it is possible that we may appear to get a market which under peace conditions we might not be able to retain. But if industries are to be established I am sure that all of us, including the Minister, are anxious that they shall be established on a firm basis.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison): I do not want to review any of the observations made by the Minister when introducing these Estimates, but I want to speak concerning the administration of his department in a matter upon which he did not touch. It is particularly difficult to understand why, if there is any virtue in the legislation on the statute book of this State, the Minister has not taken stricter

observation of the amount of exploitation taking place not only in the city but also in country areas. The Minister has control of prices, and is supposed to be giving every consideration to amounts charged for the goods of different kinds which are essential to the everyday life of the community.

The Minister for Labour: You are quite wrong, there.

Mr. MARSHALL: I put it to the Minister: What was the use of his introducing his Bill this year?

The Minister for Labour: I put it to the hon. member that our Act has been completely overridden by the Commonwealth regulations.

Mr. MARSHALL: In view of that statement, who is really in charge of price-fixing in this State?

The Minister for Labour: The Deputy Commonwealth Commissioner of Prices.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The man who sells the goods!

Mr. MARSHALL: I think it is high time the Minister displayed some activity in this regard and temporarily forgot a little of his enthusiasm concerning industrial development. There is no doubt that the people are being positively exploited in the charges levied upon them for essential goods required for everyday life. Not only are they being hard pressed in regard to the prices being charged, but also in regard to the quality of the goods that have to be purchased at such exorbitant prices. That indicates to me that the whole system of price regulation and fixation is wrong. It is useless and utterly impossible to get control of prices under the system being adopted by either the State Government or the Commonwealth Government. There is the line of underwear—such as men's singlets—for which it is said a certain price shall be paid. That is the maximum price, and for that price the purchaser receives minimum value, because immediately the producers proceed to manufacture an article much inferior to what was previously sold. The new article costs very much less to produce; so the profits are much greater. The members of the public have been long-suffering in regard to the way they have been exploited in the matter of low-quality articles being sold at maximum prices. I suggest to the Minister that articles should be grouped in departments and the maximum

amount of profit for each department should be fixed. That would render it utterly impossible to exploit the public in the way it is being done today.

It is of little use fixing the price of a pair of trousers—dungarees, tweed or otherwise—and saying that for that pair a certain price shall be the maximum price. The members of the public are no great judges of value nor can they classify materials, and in consequence, immediately the price is fixed, an article is brought forward costing much less to produce though the maximum price is still charged. I want to know from the Minister whether he has any knowledge of any attempt by any authority—State or Federal—to control the price of fish in the flesh and in the shell. The prices charged for fish are absolutely scandalous to say the least, and I respectfully suggest fish is a commodity necessary to the good health of the people.

The Minister for Mines: We do not see much of it.

Mr. MARSHALL: No, but the Minister knows, and other Ministers know that we never do see too much of it. With the introduction of scientific means of preserving it, only sufficient to satisfy the whims of those who have the monopoly over its distribution is sold, and the rest is kept in cool storage.

The price of fish has been scandalous for a considerable time and there is no justification for it. I remember some time ago a reputable businessman in this city attempted to distribute fish from a shop in Murray-street. At that time his competitors—those well-established within a given circle dealing with fish only and most of them being foreigners—seemingly could exercise some influence somewhere, because this man, Mr. Broadhurst, was refused the right to sell fish in his shop as that shop did not conform to the requirements of the Health Act. There may have been some truth in that, but I venture to say there are very few fish shops in Perth today that would be found, if the Health Inspector gave strict supervision to them, to comply with the provisions of the Health Act, particularly if their backyards and back lanes were carefully inspected. At that time Mr. Broadhurst sold fish at 10d. lb., which was retailed by others at 1s. 4d. I am speaking of schnapper. That blessing was denied to the public. At the outbreak of the war the

price varied from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 6d. per lb. Having regard to the supply, which no one could check up on, and the vendors having a monopoly of the distribution and, through the benefits conferred on them by science, being always able to keep a big supply on hand, we can assume it was a fair and reasonable price. Today that commodity is priced at 5s. and 6s. a lb. It is a positive disgrace to the Parliamentary institutions that such exploitation has been tolerated for such a length of time.

I rose merely to make some reference to the tragic way in which the people are being exploited and to the apathy and indifference that are apparent. Because there is no real authority in control of these matters, those who are trying to exploit the public are having the heyday of their commercial experience. In consequence, children are denied such commodities. The cost of fresh fruit is almost prohibitive, although I understand some attempt is being made to regulate the price. Here again we find the same anomaly—a maximum price for an inferior article or an article of low quality. Wherever we look we find the same thing happening and this applies to the outback centres as well as to the city. In some of those outback areas those commodities are unobtainable. Throughout this State where I have travelled the same features are in evidence. People are being exploited and the exploiters are encouraged insofar as there seems to be no keen activity in regard to their control, with the result that they are experiencing a real success in the commercial sphere. It is a disgrace that that should be tolerated.

Let us not forget that the husbands and fathers of many of the women and children who have to pay these exorbitant prices are giving their all on foreign battlefields for 6s. a day. They are not allowed to exploit the community but we sit idly by and permit their dependants to be exploited. Every Friday we contribute to some particular fund, assuming that we are thereby giving some care and attention to the welfare of the dependants of these men; yet we allow them to be exploited. I rose to enter a protest in that regard.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): I think it was a wise move of the Government to create the Parliamentary Post-war Reconstruction Committee. As a member of

that committee I admit that the Minister has given the members every possible encouragement to further secondary industries. He has given us a wealth of information and encouraged us to let people know just what is taking place in connection with those industries throughout the State. There is an opportunity for members of Parliament to help in this direction. I was interested to hear the Minister give figures tonight in regard to the help that the Government has accorded to private enterprise, in order that industries may be established throughout the State. From the figures, I should say the money has been wisely spent. The Minister told the Committee that the Government has not actually had to find the money but has given guarantees, and that the total amount guaranteed was £49,000. He said that the repayments had amounted to £27,000, 13 firms having repaid in full. From the Minister's complete figures I am glad to note that only £13,000 is now owing to the Government. That is a most satisfactory result. That only £13,000 should be owing on account of help extended by the Government to private enterprise should convince members that that form of help has been well worthwhile.

The Minister for Labour: That result is in connection with all activities since 1939.

MR. McLARTY: That is so. I would not for one moment suggest that the Government should give guarantees without the firms concerned being prepared to put up some of their own money as an indication of their good faith and their willingness to take part of the risk. I agree that close investigations should be carried out. The policy would be excellent if the Minister would say from year to year that a certain sum of money was available for the assistance of secondary industries. The panels that have been set up are serving a useful purpose and the Minister is getting the right class of man to advise him. We can all agree with the Minister's suggestion that industries should be spread, but I confess I am somewhat doubtful about the spread of some. There is an excellent chance of some industries starting in the metropolitan area or in close proximity to it, but I cannot visualise much prospect of such industries being established in country districts.

The Minister for Labour: There are great possibilities in the South-West.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, perhaps more there than in any other part of the State. I do not desire in any way to belittle the Government's work in promoting secondary industries. My reason for expressing some doubt is that wherever such industries are established there will be the necessity for cheap power, and that is not available in the South-West or in any other part of the State except the metropolitan area. No doubt the Minister will say that the Government is investigating the possibility of providing cheap power, and I certainly hope it will be found possible to make it available. There are three factors absolutely essential in country districts if secondary industries are to be established there. Those essentials are—cheap power, fast transport and housing. I know that all those matters are receiving the attention of the Government but I think you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, as the representative of one of the largest country towns in the State, will agree that until those three essentials are forthcoming there is not much chance of secondary industries spreading throughout country districts.

The Minister said we needed distribution of industries and increased population, and with that statement we can all agree. In my electorate I have seen some secondary industries established. I have noted what was just a village with little activity develop into a modern country town within a very few years. I have noted that in two instances. Hundreds of people have gone there and a great increase in population has been apparent straightaway. The secondary industry may be very small and may employ only half a dozen men who have families, but even that makes a great difference in a country town. Half a dozen families may reasonably represent an addition of 12 or 13 children to the school attendance, and half a dozen new houses may be erected in the locality. An industry may be so small as to be classified as a "back-yard" undertaking, but it should be encouraged because it will probably grow even though it may not develop into a large industry. Then again quality must be the watchword in secondary industries just as it is in primary industries. The member for Murchison has drawn the attention of the Committee to the lack of quality of certain articles in connection with which price fixing has taken place.

Mr. Seward: There are matches for instance.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. Right from the start we must keep our eyes on the quality of the article turned out. I know the Minister realises that quality must be the watchword. He referred to the glass manufacturing industry and said that a factory at East Perth was producing some of our requirements under that heading. When I was in Belgium during the 1914-18 war, I was struck by the number of glass factories there and the great amount of work provided by the industry. It did not appear to me that glass manufacturing was a difficult undertaking. I remember that from any hilltop one could discern fair sized towns distributed as far as the eye could see, and everywhere the manufacture of various articles was being undertaken. While we cannot expect to have a population as thick as that of Belgium we can, nevertheless, by the creation of secondary industries, greatly increase the number of people residing here.

Even though at the outset we would manufacture for local consumption only, some of the industries might probably be able to export their products in course of time. I have heard it stated that Western Australia will never be an exporting country for secondary products, but I do not think such people are competent to judge. We do not know what post-war requirements will be. Western Australia may prove quite capable of exporting some of its secondary products. We must always keep in mind the fact that the home market is the best for primary industries; but in order to have a home market it is necessary to encourage secondary industries wherever possible so that that market will be further expanded.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): I move—
That progress be reported.
Motion put and negatived.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am convinced that the Minister is keen in his desire to develop secondary industries in Western Australia, and I desire to refer to one unfortunate venture. The Auditor General's report for the past financial year is not yet available so I must depend for my facts on the best information available—the Auditor General's report for the previous financial year. I shall refer particularly to the experience of the Liquid Fruit Company, Ltd. It was a

very useful organisation and had all the appearances of becoming a really permanent success.

[*Mr. Marshall resumed the Chair.*]

The Minister for Mines: The trouble was that you teetotallers did not drink enough of its products.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not know about that, but I did notice that in a shop in Hay-street the company's products were on sale at 2s. a bottle. That must have been very profitable—if it had represented the ordinary price. I do not think it did because at that juncture there was a great shortage of soft drinks. The weather was excessively hot, and I think the price of soft drinks was unduly increased. The growers put a lot of money into that concern to enable it to be established. Certainly, very fine types of drinks were produced. Not only were fruit-juice drinks made available to the public but also drinks made of vegetable juices. Among a section of the public vegetable-juice drinks were very popular, and very suitable lines were turned out by the Liquid Fruit Company, Ltd.

The Minister for Mines: Carrot juice reduces weight.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not advocating weight-reducing at present but I think the Minister could do with a little carrot juice. The company was making progress, but after a while it was stated that the Government was very backward in making money available in accordance with the arrangements that had been entered into. I am hopeful that I am not making an incorrect statement of what I was informed. As the Government, it was stated, was backward in making the necessary payments, when vegetable and fruit supplies were delivered and payment was due by the company to the producers, the company could not make those payments because the Government had not fulfilled its obligations.

The Minister for Labour: You are advised to inquire.

Mr. SAMPSON: We know that Governments have an unfortunate habit of holding up payments. I hope it is not so in this case; but there seems to be some truth in the statement. I believe the Government recovered the money which it put into the venture, but had the Government exercised a little more patience and perhaps given a little advice—that sometimes is needed—the

company might have made a success of its undertaking. If the Government were disinclined to advance the money which it agreed to advance within a reasonable time, the Minister did not get the treatment which he should have received; or alternatively the Minister did not give the company the consideration it should have received. The consequence was that the production of liquid fruit and vegetables sustained a slump, and control of a very fine factory, besides a fair amount of machinery, changed hands.

The Minister for Mines: It was in a good district, too.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes.

The Minister for Mines: With a good representative!

Mr. SAMPSON: In spite of the representative, the district is a good one. The company produced a good commodity. I hope the Minister will, when replying, advise the Committee how it was that this company, substantially supported by growers should have come to such an untimely end, and whether it is a fact that the Government in spite of its promise failed to find the funds within a reasonable time, and so brought about a state of depression in the minds of the directors of the company until they felt there was no alternative but to close down the business.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (in reply): All I want to say is that the Commonwealth Government is entirely in charge of price-fixing. Its regulations have completely replaced the State Act and I have no authority whatever in the matter. I do, however, continue to take keen interest in the matter, and I assist the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Mathea, to the greatest possible extent. We have been able to help him to have prosecutions successfully carried through. In reply to the member for Swan, all I need say is that the department gave the liquid fruit juice company every assistance. I do not propose to state the reasons which caused the company to fail, as I am afraid these would not reflect much credit in certain directions.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Factories, £7,670:

Mr. SAMPSON: Does the Minister propose to give the Committee some information relating to this matter?

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Arbitration Court, £5,300:

Mr. SAMPSON: I think were you, Mr. Chairman, sitting in your usual seat, you would regard these Estimates as being submitted in a farcical manner.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! To what item does the hon. member refer?

Mr. SAMPSON: Item No. 1. The Minister might properly and helpfully give the Committee information regarding these Estimates. If passed in this present fashion—

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Swan must confine himself to Item No. 1.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am inclined to think that the member for Swan was not present during the whole of the time I was addressing the Committee on my Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister must confine himself to Item No. 1.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Had he been present, he would know that I did deal with the Arbitration Court officers. I said that they had rendered a great deal of assistance to the war effort by helping Commonwealth departments. The State Arbitration Court, as such, has carried on its usual activities, which have not been so great as hitherto. The State has enjoyed a splendid period of industrial peace, and in that respect we are in a better position than is any other State of the Commonwealth. I could dilate on this subject for a long time, but the facts are so well known it is not necessary for me to do so.

Mr. Sampson: I am hopeful that the Minister might give the Committee some information touching the present outlook and the possibility of Arbitration Court awards dealing with agricultural workers.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Next year!

Vote—put and passed.

Votes—State Insurance Office, £5; Department of Industrial Development, £1,994; Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief, £82,346—agreed to.

Vote—Mines, £112,307:

THE MINISTER FOR MINES [10.23]: I desire briefly to deal with the Mining Estimates. Unfortunately, I have not the story to tell that was told three or four years ago. Notwithstanding the fact that we have had a big slump in the industry, we are to the best of our ability endeavour-

ing to hold our own. Both the tonnage treated and gold won were considerably less than last year as a result of the loss of manpower during 1942, our miners having been diverted to the Fighting Services, and also as a result of the closure of many of our producing mines. During 1942, 3,225,704 tons of ore were treated for a reported yield of 845,772 fine ounces of gold. This was equivalent to an average of 5.24 dwts. of fine gold per ton, and is the lowest average grade of ore ever treated in the State. The department has been faced with many problems during the year in regard to the gold-mining industry, the main one of course being manpower. Frequent conferences with the Commonwealth Government, the manpower authorities and the Allied Works Council have been held, with the result that we have been able to retain the nucleus of 4,500 men agreed upon when the Mining Delegation interviewed the Prime Minister with regard to this industry.

Constant requisitioning of mining plant by the Munitions Department, the Army, the Allied Works Council and various other organisations, has taken place and we have done our best to prevent vital plant from being taken away. In some instances it has been difficult to oppose the requisitioning in view of its urgent need in the war effort; but in many others our mines have been regarded merely as a useful storehouse to be drawn upon without any thought being given to the present or post-war effect of such losses to the mines, nor to the rehabilitation of the industry after the war. We have placed the position before the Prime Minister and told him how necessary it was to replace this machinery before the war is over, and we are now awaiting his reply. Spare parts and stores have become a problem. Goldmining does not rank very high in the order of priority so far as concerns shipping, petrol, oil and frozen goods. We have constantly to intercede with the authorities on behalf of the mines in this regard and have generally received sympathetic consideration.

Despite all these difficulties, the gold production and activity are surprisingly good. Although four years of war have elapsed we anticipate a yield of 500,000 fine ounces for the calendar year 1943. The value of gold is a most important factor to Western Australia. Should it retain its value of £9 13s. per ounce, it will at the end of the

war prove an immense asset in the rehabilitation of the industry. The department has made certain inquiries abroad as to the movement of gold after the war. There appears to be no doubt that, with the changed trend of the war, attention is now being turned by financial authorities in all the Allied Countries to post-war financial arrangements with gold again as the basis. If this be so then, provided we can keep our producing mines working, I am sure the industry will be an important factor in any reconstruction scheme.

We have been fortunate because of the large number of minerals suitable for war purposes found in the State. The past year has been notable for the big advance made in the opening up of our strategic mineral deposits. In normal times we have been somewhat at a disadvantage in this respect, as we have had to compete with producers in Malaya, South Africa and other places where cheap native labour is available. With the loss of supplies for various reasons, attention has been directed to this State's deposits, and I am pleased to say that the Commonwealth Government has supplied funds in many instances for the development on a large scale of many of these minerals. Some particulars will undoubtedly be of interest to the Committee.

In regard to antimony, approximately £40,000 has been advanced by the Commonwealth Government for the development of the Blue Spec mine at Nullagine. This, we hope, will be the successor to the Wiluna mine as Australia's antimony supplier. Unfortunately, it looks as if the Wiluna mine will within the next 12 or 18 months, cease to produce antimony so the Blue Spec mine is now being made ready to take its place, if necessary. Plant erection and development are proceeding satisfactorily on that mine, all expenditure being under the direction of the Mines Department. Approximately 40 men are at present employed.

Deposits of blue asbestos at the Hamersley Range are now being developed by no less than three parties, two of them being very large companies. Plant and buildings are being erected, and there is every indication that an industry of great future importance to the State is being developed. In fact, one of the companies proposes to manufacture sheet asbestos on the job at Hamersley Range in the belief that the near Eastern countries, after the war, will offer

a big market. Already about 50 men are employed in the industry. White asbestos deposits further north are also being opened up with Government money, and while we have not located any deposits at all comparable with the blue asbestos, there is a prospect of a reasonable tonnage forthcoming for which there is a ready market.

Beryl is likely to be one of the most valuable alloy minerals of the future. It is being mined now at Wodgina and at Yin-nietharra, and already we have exported a considerable tonnage for urgent war purposes. This mineral is so valuable that only a limited amount is shipped in any one boat to America. It is used for hardening steel for very fine tools. The war has shown how fortunate we are to possess our own coalfields. With the extension of industry throughout Australia and the shortage of shipping and manpower, several of the States have had a constant problem to maintain coal supplies. In our case, until recent months, Collie has fulfilled all but special supplies such as for gas and shipping. Recently, for various reasons, such as shortage of firewood, increased power requirements, etc. and principally because we have been unable to import coal from Newcastle, there has been an increased demand for coal.

The enlistment of so many of the younger men from Collie has made it impossible for us to maintain the supply of coal to the stage that we would have liked. Anticipating this trouble a few months ago the Mines Department together with the companies and the men, embarked on a scheme with a view to reorganising some of the work of the coalmines at Collie and to locate the new seams that we believed to be there. A very fine seam was discovered at the Griffin mine, and was opened up. Unfortunately, owing again to manpower problems, we have been hung up for the want of three-quarters of a mile of railway line and the materials for two sidings. The materials are now well on the way and in a short period a large supply of coal should be forthcoming from that area. Two additional seams, one on top of the other, were located close to the surface and we started out with an open cut, but owing to the very wet weather it has been somewhat difficult to shift the overburden. The Mines Department went through the State almost with a fine toothcomb looking for machinery and

it has been able to obtain drag-loaders, scraper-loaders, an electric shovel and large sluicing pumps. They are all in operation now and we anticipate that from this source a lot of coal will be made available. It is estimated that about 460,000 tons can be obtained very quickly and cheaply with about eight men.

This month, so far as coal is concerned, will be the critical one. Thereafter additional coal should be available and Western Australia should have no more coal difficulties. I take this opportunity to pay a high tribute to the men working in the industry. Notwithstanding all the disabilities from which they suffer they have done a remarkably good job whenever we have appealed to them. From a patriotic point of view they have never let the Mines Department down. The department, at Government expense, has erected and now has in operation, a small copper smelter at Ravensthorpe for the purpose of treating the Ravensthorpe gold and copper ores. Here again manpower has affected operations, but the smelter is now functioning and should be a boon to the local prospectors and at the same time provide some copper for the war effort.

The Londonderry mine at Coolgardie is supplying practically all Australia's felspar requirements for the manufacture of glass and bottles. This is an industry of some permanence. I was going to suggest that this glass be manufactured in Western Australia. I noticed the other day a building in which glass bricks were being used. I asked where they were made and was told that they came from the Eastern States. They were manufactured out of felspar that came from Coolgardie and were sent here packed in straw. We should make our own glass bricks. At Yinnietharra the Commonwealth Government has provided the money to open up the mica deposits on a large scale. This mica is of high quality, and over 30 men are now engaged on the proposition. Buildings and plant are being operated and already mica has been produced.

Phosphatic rock is of considerable interest to the farming community. Details have been published in the Press of operations undertaken by the Government in conjunction with the British Phosphate Commission. The latest news is that operations are well on the way at a group of

islands while the Commission's decision regarding Dandarragan is expected any day. Another group of islands was examined and found to be quite uneconomic. Another deposit near the Murchison River was described by the Commission as likely to be of value in the future when this country had been more opened up, but quite useless at the present time. Pyrites: Sulphuric acid is being supplied from Norseman to the superphosphate companies operating in Western Australia. We are hopeful that this will be the State's permanent source of sulphuric acid and that it will take the place of imported sulphur. Scheelite is being mined at Yalgoo and is helping the war effort. Its main uses are in the manufacture of tools for metal cutting and as a core in armour-piercing bullets.

This State possesses the main world supply of tantalum—the member for Canning was hoping to tell us about this the other night—in the Wodgina district, while a very useful supply has also been located at Greenbushes. Both are being actively worked, and a quantity has already been exported. The Greenbushes deposits are rather interesting. There, it is free and, to all intents and purposes, alluvial. Very quickly one and a half tons was won and it was of the highest grade found in Western Australia.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It was got from underneath the road.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was traced to the road and after some difficulty the miners went under the road. They found a piece as big as my head, and there is just as much in it as there is in my head. It is a very valuable metal, being worth £880 per ton. A large plant is being erected at Wodgina where 40 men are employed, while the Greenbushes deposit is being worked by scoops and sluice-box methods. The two propositions are employing over 50 men, which number will undoubtedly shortly increase. At Westonia a goldmining company, with Government assistance, is erecting the plant necessary to extract wolfram from its ore where it is associated with gold. It is rather interesting to see the way these metals are spread all over Western Australia. Production of wolfram is expected on a fairly substantial scale and a large number of men are employed.

There is no necessity for me to deal with the Lake Champion deposits; they have al-

ready been dealt with by one of my colleagues. There are many other mineral activities, including the Lake Campion alunite, tin ochres, clays, greensand, vermiculite, gypsum, etc. These are all being produced and, generally speaking, mineral mining is more varied in this State than ever before. The Under Secretary for Mines, Mr. Telfer, was some 12 or 18 months ago appointed Deputy Commonwealth Controller of Mines for Western Australia, under Mr. Newman of Canberra. He is responsible together with the Mines Department for supervising the Wodgina, Yinnietharra and Nullagine mines which are being operated solely with Commonwealth funds. The Department has undertaken the buying and supplying of all plant, buildings and stores and is maintaining such supplies. This has been a job of some magnitude, particularly under existing conditions. On these three properties, approximately £75,000 is being expended, so some idea can be obtained of the work entailed. These supplies all have to be purchased, overhauled and forwarded North.

The erection of a new Government chemical, analytical and mineralogical laboratory was completed early this year and we are now in occupation. This laboratory cost £43,000 and is modern in all its fittings. It will enable practically the whole of the Government chemical work to be done in addition to mineralogy. With the varied industrial activity taking place in the State, the research work into the many problems that will arise can also be done. Amongst the laboratory's functions at present are many chemical examinations for the Fighting Services and munition works. The Schools of Mines at Kalgoorlie, Wiluna and Norseman have continued to function very satisfactorily and have at the request of the authorities provided special tuition for servicemen.

The other functions of the department, such as the inspection of machinery, examination of miners by the x-ray laboratory, State Batteries, geological surveys, have all been carried on. The geologists at the laboratory have carried out considerable work on water supplies for Commonwealth and service authorities. We have to examine all the water taken on by transports leaving Western Australia. Unless it is examined by our officers the transports are not allowed to leave, and that takes a con-

siderable time. The department has also done a lot of work generally on strategic minerals. This has been undertaken in addition to the normal departmental functions, and several of the senior officers hold honorary Commonwealth appointments in order to assist the Commonwealth Government in its war efforts.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 6th October, 1943.

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

QUESTIONS (2).

FARM BUTTER.

As to Exemption from Rationing.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary—

(i) Did the Government make a request to the Federal Minister concerned to exempt small farm butter producers from the rationing regulations?

(ii) If so, when was the request made?

(iii) What was the reply received?