

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 18th August, 1949.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Housing, (a) as to abolition of permits for small homes	1261
(b) as to number of applications	1261
Coal, as to imports from Eastern States	1262
Water supplies, as to pipes for Wittenoom Gorge	1262
Local government, as to effect of adoption of model bylaws	1262
State Transport Board, as to constitution	1262
Education, as to Glendalough school site	1262
Sewerage, (a) as to works in progress	1263
(b) as to plans for Joondanna heights, etc.	1263
Prices control, as to excessive charges for meat	1263
Bills : City of Perth Scheme for Superannuation (Amendments Authorisation) (No. 2), 3r.	1263
Fisheries Act Amendment, 2r.	1263
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 4), Council's amendments	1274
Petroleum Act Amendment, 1r.	1274
Wheat Pool Act Amendment (No. 3), Council's message	1274
Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment, Council's message	1274
Fire Brigades Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	1274
Annual Estimates, Com. of Supply, general debate	1274

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Abolition of Permits for Small Homes.*

Mr. SHEARN asked the Minister for Housing :

(1) In view of a recent public statement made by the Hon. Nelson Lemmon (Commonwealth Minister for Housing) to the effect that Western Australia was maintaining the most restrictive building permit system of any State in the Commonwealth, will the Government give early favourable consideration to abolishing permits for the erection of homes with a total floor area not exceeding 10 squares, and thus enable people, particularly young couples, suffering hardship conditions and frustration, an opportunity to build a small home ?

(2) If not, will he fully state the reason, or reasons ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for Housing) replied :

(1) This matter has been constantly under review by the Government and the State Housing Commission. The Housing Commission has established an enviable record for ensuring that houses for which permits are issued are completed within a reasonable time. There are many instances in other States where houses have stood for months half completed. The Commission is carefully considering the position with a view to deciding whether any modification of the present system is practicable, but it has to ensure that releases from the present system to the degree suggested by the hon. member, or in a lesser degree, would not result in the concession becoming a mere sham, particularly as a result of increased material supply difficulties of the recent strike period.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(b) *As to Number of Applications.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing :

(1) What was the grand total of outstanding applications for houses and all other types of buildings as at the 31st July, 1949 ?

(2) What was the number under each of the various headings at that time ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for Housing) replied :

(1) and (2) The figures for Commonwealth-State rental homes and McNess homes were supplied in answer to a question by the member for Fremantle two days ago.

There are 4,533 war service homes applications and 1,160 for State houses. For other types of buildings the following applications were outstanding :—

Flats and flat conversions	79
Hotels and guest houses	93
Shops	188
Offices and banks	31
Warehouses	17
Stores	18
Factories	218
Public garages	24
Churches	12
Schools and orphanages	39
Halls, theatres and clubs	52
Hospitals	15
Sewerage	82
Rural Industrial	182

Out-buildings	....	....	75
Private garages	....	....	16
All other, including railway build- ings, bus depots and air port facilities	....	....	54

It is known that a large number of applicants now applying for homes are reasonably housed but are desirous of new homes, and many applicants apply under two or more housing sections. Therefore, the number of applications held by the Commission cannot be accepted as representing the number of applicants actually to be dealt with.

COAL.

As to Imports from Eastern States.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines :

What were the total importations of coal from the Eastern States as used by all W.A. Government Departments for the following years :—1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948 ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied :
W.A. Government
Departments.

			Tons.
1938	....	....	15,980
1939	....	....	15,714
1940	....	....	11,743
1941	....	....	12,751
1942	....	....	12,639
1943	....	....	23,527
1944	....	....	30,701
1945	....	....	54,045
1946	....	....	23,219
1947	....	....	9,218
1948	....	....	11,340

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Pipes for Wittenoom Gorge.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for Works :

As there are now 300 people at Wittenoom Gorge with only a temporary water supply main to the permanent storage tank just completed, and as it is doubtful whether sufficient water can be supplied during the coming summer, can he state when sufficient pipes will be available for construction of the permanent water main ?

The MINISTER replied :

30,000 lineal feet of 4-inch diameter steel main are required.

Contract was let in February, 1948, but contractors have not been able to obtain the necessary steel plate.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

As to Effect of Adoption of Model Bylaws.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Health :

(1) Does adoption of the model bylaws prepared by direction of His Excellency the Governor in Council for local governing authorities exempt a local governing authority from the provisions of Subsection (2) of Section 99 of the Health Act ?

(2) Is there any provision in such model bylaws to exempt a local governing authority from the necessity of notifying an owner of property where no bathing or laundry facilities are provided, that such facilities must be installed, if such omission is brought to the notice of the local governing authority ?

The MINISTER replied :

(1) No.

(2) No.

STATE TRANSPORT BOARD.

As to Constitution.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Acting Premier :

(1) Has the Government taken any steps to obtain outside legal opinion regarding the legality of the temporary appointments of members of the Transport Board ?

(2) Have the lawyers in the Government studied the matter ? If so, which Ministers ?

(3) Is the Government completely satisfied that the board is legally constituted and empowered to administer the State Transport Co-ordination Act ?

The ACTING PREMIER replied :

(1) No.

(2) I have already in debate expressed the opinion that legal advice should be obtained by all Ministers from the law officers on the staff of the Crown Law Department who have the latest information and a full reference library at their disposal and who are fully qualified to advise. For the information of the hon. member, however, I have personally given the matter some study and have formed the opinion that the view of the Solicitor General is correct.

(3) Yes.

EDUCATION.

As to Glendalough School Site.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Education :

(1) Has any land been acquired by the Government for school purposes in the

vicinity of Glendalough Estate or west of Monger's Lake ?

(2) If so, what is the location and area of such property ?

The MINISTER replied :

(1) The Department is negotiating for the purchase of a school site on the Glendalough Estate.

(2) Survey is not yet complete and approximately 10 acres at the north-east corner of Harborne and Dodd Streets have been selected by the Sites Committee.

SEWERAGE.

(a) *As to Works in Progress.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Works :

What sewerage construction works are now in progress in the metropolitan area ?

The MINISTER replied :

Sewerage works are in progress at Midland Junction, North Fremantle, Victoria Park, South Perth, Claremont, Nedlands, Cottesloe and Bayswater.

(b) *As to Plans for Joondanna Heights, etc.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Works :

(1) Have any plans yet been drawn up for sewerage construction in Joondanna Heights, Tuart Hill and Osborne Park districts ?

(2) Can he give any indication as to when a commencement is likely to be made on sewerage works in these districts ?

The MINISTER replied :

(1) No designs have been prepared in regard to sewerage construction in Tuart Hill and Osborne Park districts.

Survey work is in progress in respect of the Joondanna Heights district.

(2) Not in regard to Tuart Hill and Osborne Park.

Joondanna Heights possibly in two years from now.

PRICES CONTROL.

As to Excessive Charges for Meat.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General :

(1) Is he yet aware that some consumers are being charged in excess of the fixed price for meat ?

(2) If not, will he make immediate inquiries into the matter ?

(3) Is he aware that representatives of the Government Statistician periodically obtain from retailers a list of the retail prices of meat ?

(4) Is he aware that retailers quote the fixed prices ?

(5) Does he realise that the figures thus supplied have a direct bearing on retail index figures supplied to the Arbitration Court by the Government Statistician and consequently on the basic wage ?

(6) Are the circumstances surrounding these index figures such that the basic wage is lower than it should be ?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied :

(1) and (2) Inspectors of the Prices Branch have reported that some charges have been made in excess of the fixed prices of meat, and prosecutions are being launched in those cases.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) Yes.

(6) No.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION) (No. 2).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd August.

HON. A. A. M. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [4.42] : In my opinion this Bill, though not large, is very important as it proposes to effect amendments to three different sections of the Fisheries Act. While I believe it is essential to increase and define the amounts chargeable as license fees for both fishing boats and fishermen, I am unable to agree with the measure in its present form, because it seems to be a Bill for government by regulation. It proposes to permit the Fisheries Department, subject to the Minister, to decide the fee to be paid for fishermen's licenses and fishing boat licenses. My objection is that the fees should be stipulated in the legislation instead of being provided for by regulation.

Of course the Minister, when replying, will say that the regulations have to be tabled and that members will have the right to object and suggest amendments, and so on, but it must be remembered that in the course of perhaps another month this session will end, and then regulations may be brought down and it will be many months before members will have opportunity to object to them. For a period of perhaps eight months they will have the force of law. We must bear in mind that those who will have to submit to the regulations are the people earning a livelihood from the fishing industry and supplying the State with a necessary food.

It would not be hard for the Minister or the department to have the suggested increases in license fees included in the measure so that members would know what they were voting for, and would be able to express their opinions as to whether or not the increases were excessive. I am therefore not prepared to support the passing of the Bill in its present form, and I feel the Minister would be well advised to give an assurance that he is prepared to move or accept amendments to that effect when the Bill is in the Committee stage. Believing that the licenses need revising, I do not propose to oppose the second reading, because I feel that in the interests of both the department and the fishermen there is need for revision of the licenses; but I hope this House will not agree to government by regulation to the extent of affecting the business and livelihood of that large section of our people engaged in the fishing industry. The Minister would be well advised to have a schedule of the proposed charges placed in the measure when the Bill is in the Committee stage.

The second major amendment embodied in the Bill is to permit the Fisheries Department to gather statistics from the fishermen, as is done at present. This proposes to give further authority to the department to collect the statistical information and I propose to support that provision. The next major amendment contained in the Bill also has to do with regulations but on this occasion, though I may be accused of being inconsistent, I am not strongly opposed to the provision. It proposes to give greater authority to the trout fishing societies of Western Australia. As members know, the trout fisheries are controlled

by local committees composed of people who have the interests of local trout fishing at heart and who act in an honorary capacity. It is necessary for them to have certain powers for the control of those fisheries. They are not likely to do anything that would discourage tourists from visiting the areas with which they are concerned, nor to suggest excessive licensing or fishing fees.

If the Pemberton Trout Fishing Society, for instance, decided to increase its membership fees, I do not think it would make a foolish suggestion to increase the fee from £1 ls. to £10 10s., because that would frighten away the visitors for whom the society caters. There is a vast difference between a regulation controlling those people and their license fees and one controlling the licenses of professional fishermen. I think that those who take part in trout fishing are mainly people who do it for sport and amusement. If they considered it was quite in order to pay £5 5s. instead of £1 ls. to take part in what I understand is an extremely intricate sport, I do not think it would be our place to prohibit them paying extra fees. I strongly object to the clause referred to, from the point of view of the professional fisherman. We have three amendments to deal with in this Bill, and the first is the one to which I strongly object. When we reach the Committee stage, I hope we shall be able to place the suggested amount of increase in the measure so that people will know where they stand.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [4.51]: Any amendments to the Fisheries Act aimed at improving or making the Act wiser or more balanced should receive the full support of this House. During the past decade, there has been a vast change in the entire fishing industry. There has been marked development in salmon processing, both as to its capture and canning. The export of crayfish tails has increased by leaps and bounds. There has been much improvement in the appearance of the pack and canning methods generally. The development of snap-freezing has been rapid and an extremely creditable product is now available to the public of this State. On present indications, it could quite possibly join the number of goods exported from this State. As far as we can learn, shark capture and the treatment and use of shark meat and shark liver have assumed a very important position.

Whilst on that subject, may I digress slightly, Mr. Speaker? One aspect of shark fishing to which the department should direct attention is the more recent and prevalent practice of setting net lines along our immediate coast. That will have a detrimental effect on some of our fine beaches if the practice is allowed to continue. It should be nipped in the bud because it is now possible to go to positions quite adjacent to some of our popular beaches when many thousands of swimmers are present and find many people who use boats running them across the set shark lines. I hope the department will prevent this becoming a regular feature on our coast. Use of fish offal as a fertiliser is coming into more commercial favour and looks like having a great future.

More attention is being directed to conservation generally and fish husbandry has leapt into prominence in recent years from a scientific and practical point of view. Better equipment, the type used by our fishermen, is gradually becoming available, and it is pleasing to note that many fishermen are taking the opportunity of using this type of gear. The same applies to the use of bigger and better types of craft. A few years ago, any old cockleshell was used by those engaged on a fishing venture. A much better craft is being used today, and that is having a marked effect on the industry. It is only natural that changing circumstances will be followed by revision of the parent Act from time to time. Again, it will be necessary annually for more allowances to be made in Budgets to meet the requirements of the industry. Like many other industries, however, it must itself provide some of the finance if it is to prosper.

More inspectors are badly needed, but finance is again the problem. Because this Bill aims at increasing the license fees, the Fisheries Department should be called upon to make more facilities available, especially slipways, because a recent visit to many parts of the State clearly shows an acute lack of such facilities. This is an urgent problem. Inspectors, too, must be supplied with more up to date and reliable craft, thoroughly equipped with the best gear available so that their jobs may be carried out to the best advantage. As part of their equipment, research apparatus should be supplied. Many of our inspectors could be more profitably em-

ployed, if given the necessary equipment and assistance, by producing more data than they can do at present.

Research and control of the right kind can bring about an even greater improvement than has been apparent to date. Of course, it is imperative that sufficient funds be made available to the department. Whether those funds come entirely through the Budget or whether the fishing industry is to supply a reasonable amount itself forms part of the discussion that must take place on the amendments now before the House. This Bill seeks to increase the license fees payable both on the boats and those permitting fishermen to operate. I agree with the member for Kimberley that this method of raising the amount payable for licenses by regulation is entirely wrong. That is perhaps the weakest feature of these amendments and could be termed the only really weak feature. In the circumstances, I am not enamoured of a policy that aims at governing by regulation, because I feel we would be taking a dangerous step.

This House should no longer entertain the principle of government by regulation, except when absolutely necessary. Every session a vast amount of time is wasted in the House on motions seeking the disallowance of regulations. Parliament should accept full responsibility for determining the fees that fishermen will be called upon to pay under this measure. The existing fees are undoubtedly ridiculously low and, to my way of thinking, represent merely a token payment. I think the minimum fee is £1 and the maximum £2. Professional fishermen's and domestic licenses are only 10s., which is but a fraction of the license fees payable in almost every other industry. For instance, in the goldmining industry the fee for holding a lease is roughly £1 per acre. A man holding 12 acres would pay £12 per annum and another holding 24 acres would pay £24 per annum. Further, the holders of those leases must restrict their operations to the land that is leased to them. That does not apply to the fishing industry, as a fisherman is not restricted as to where he shall fish. Stockraisers pay heavy fees for grazing land.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But they have the sole right to the land. That is not so in the fishing industry.

Mr. KELLY: The fisherman has, as it were, a roving commission. He can fish

in any of the waters adjacent to the coast and he is under very little control. Carriers, in addition to paying the ordinary carriage fee, have also to pay fees for the right to transport goods. Auctioneers are called upon to pay a heavy fee, especially when one takes into consideration that, although the license covers the whole year, they may not use it for the greater part of the year. I think an auctioneer's license fee at present is about £10. The fishermen should be charged a fee consistent with the possibilities and opportunities offering in the industry; but my opinion is that this House should determine the fees for both boat and fishermen's licenses. It would be dangerous to adopt the method proposed in one of the amendments included in the Bill.

Boats owned by professional fishermen should be classified and licensed under two headings—dinghies and boats. Many fishermen owning major craft also own several dinghies, according to the grounds in which they fish. I suggest that the basis of the fee for the dinghies should be, roughly, 1s. per foot. A 10 ft. dinghy license fee would be 10s. per year and so on with dinghies up to 16 ft. and 18 ft., when they would cease to be in that class. Boats should be licensed at the rate of £1 per ton per annum, with a maximum fee to be decided by Parliament. Fishermen would then know where they stood and the department would be receiving adequate revenue for the work it did. If my suggestion were adopted, fishing craft would be taxed on their potential, as, under a graduated scale, there would be no unfairness and no hardship. But let this House decide upon the amount.

Every professional fisherman should be required to hold a license whether he be an employer or an employee. This may sound revolutionary, but I have in mind many fishermen who are much better off than others engaged in the industry. The charge for the license should be higher than it is at present. I suggest it should be about £2 per annum. That would place all fishermen on a common basis; it would not matter whether they were in a small or a large way; all would pay the same fee. An employer should be required to pay a fee of 5s. per head, or some other agreed amount, for the men employed by him. Thus the fisherman in a small way would not be penalised by having to pay

a high license fee, while the fisherman in a big way, who is able to employ labour, would have the advantage of a larger turnover and greater possibilities. He should therefore pay a heavier rate. The license fee should be on a flat basis of £2.

Mr. Marshall: You mean the minimum rate should be £2.

Mr. KELLY: A fixed rate of £2.

Mr. Marshall: You said a flat rate.

Mr. KELLY: The fee for a fishing license in the past has been 10s. and it was payable by a person whether he was a professional fisherman or merely held the license for domestic purposes. Possibly 10s. is a reasonable amount and I intend to tell the House why I think so. The department could do much with respect to boats held by private persons. There is only one way in which we can minimise the number of fatalities that occur annually in our rivers and in the waters adjacent to our beaches. The department could control the type of boat to be licensed. The fee should be a nominal one; I suggest about 2s. 6d. per boat. That would inflict no hardship on the owners, while the department would have the right to exercise the necessary supervision which must ultimately be undertaken if we are to make the river safer for the people who use it every summer. The conditions should be in a prescribed form.

The Minister for Fisheries: What would you call these licenses?

Mr. KELLY: Domestic boat licenses. The holders would have no right to fish except by handline. In many cases boats owned by private persons are in a faulty condition and there is much overloading. Two fatalities occurred last year in the vicinity of Canning Bridge which never would have occurred had not the craft been badly overloaded. If the department had control, those dangers could be minimised. Certainly we shall always have people foolhardy enough to undertake hazardous trips on the river who will be caught by squalls or storms. If they are not good swimmers they will be likely to lose their lives as well as endanger the lives of people who attempt to rescue them. The imposition of a nominal fee for a license and the granting of a license would be a step welcomed by many people.

The Minister for Fisheries: Did you say that conditions should be prescribed?

Mr. KELLY : They should be printed on the license form.

The Minister for Fisheries : On a prescribed form ?

Mr. KELLY : Yes. The boat should be subject to inspection and no license should be granted until the inspection is made. That is why I stated that I disagreed with the proposal in the Bill to raise the charges. I realise that extra work will be thrown on the department and that some charge should be made to cover it, as it is very necessary. In my opinion it is possible for inspectors to examine a craft prior to issuing a license for it. The license should have printed on it the number of persons the boat is licensed to carry. Even under such conditions there could be overloading. A craft might be licensed to carry four persons, but they may be people of huge dimensions and it is likely that overloading would occur in such a case.

If my suggestion were adopted, it would have the effect of minimising accidents such as we have had in the past, as all boats would be under the supervision of the department. We can do nothing about inexperienced people handling boats. It is almost impossible to prevent them from going on the river. We find every day we go out in a boat that numbers of people do not see any danger although it is lurking there practically all the time. After a boat has been licensed, if there is any serious breach it should be dealt with as severely as any other breach. The only way to bring this sort of malpractice to heel is to withhold the license until the particular craft complies with the regulations.

I am of the opinion that the issue of net licenses in the present indiscriminate manner is unwise unless a periodical inspection is made of the nets by the department. We frequently find that they have been added to and so do not comply with the terms of the license. Quite often wings are added. I feel that a great amount of harm is being done because of that sort of thing. There is little supervision of a net after a license has been granted to a domestic user. This type of person does more harm to our fisheries than does the professional fisherman who has his livelihood to consider. Unless a professional man is unscrupulous, or just a seasonal fisherman, he will not do anything detrimental to his own interests.

I said awhile ago that I thought 10s. was sufficient—that is the existing domestic license fee. My reason for saying that is that although between 400 and 500 licenses are issued annually, not 25 of them would be effective by the use of the nets which are licensed. The department, however, is getting revenue from the total number, and the present fee should be sufficient to cover the domestic license. Those who do not make much use of their nets would in all probability think twice before renewing their license if the fee were raised. From a revenue point of view, the State department would be best served by a continuation of the fee of 10s.

Mr. Marshall : What do you mean by a domestic license ?

Mr. KELLY : One allowing a person to use 50 yards of net of the regulation size in the prescribed area.

The Minister for Fisheries : Do you suggest we should have different license fees for different lengths and types of nets ?

Mr. KELLY : No. We would not be wise to allow domestic users to have more net than they are permitted at present.

The Minister for Fisheries : I was wondering whether you were suggesting that professional fishermen who use long nets should pay an additional fee.

Mr. KELLY : I have not given any consideration to that. If the fisherman's efforts are controlled by a license to him, plus a license fee for each employee, every contingency in respect of nets would be covered. Departmental vigilance in respect of domestic nets is most important. Another part of the Bill aims at giving authority to the department to obtain statistical information so as to control the fishing ground. That is a very fine addition to the measure except that it says, "If so directed by the Minister." The amendment will have the advantage of ensuring that the grounds are worked properly so as to avoid depletion. But I feel that the approval or direction of the Minister is redundant and unnecessary. The wording of the clause is not sufficiently definite.

Returns of particulars, instead of being sought in the manner provided in the Bill, should be made compulsory. The aim in the last decade has been to improve the industry, and improvement can be brought about only if full data is made readily available to the department. We are paying a

huge sum of money from a national point of view, and individually as taxpayers, in the upkeep of the C.S.I.R.O. The more that organisation can be assisted, the better for the industry. Therefore, by making this request obligatory instead of, as it is now, at the Minister's discretion, a great advantage would be gained. When in Committee I intend to move several amendments in the form of deletions, additions and substitutions which I feel will have a beneficial effect on the measure.

To the clause which provides that a return shall be compulsory, there are five or six subclauses. I consider there should be a further one to make it necessary that not only will the information suggested in the measure be given to the department, but that it will be the fisherman's responsibility to disclose the locality in which various types and quantities are taken. This information should be accurate and continuous if the department is to receive the benefit that is intended here. In the same clause we find that neglect to supply the necessary information will be an offence. The penalties under the clause are at the discretion of the Minister, but I think we should be definite as to the fines that should be applicable. Rather than leave this matter to be dealt with by regulation, we should state the amount to be paid according to the offence committed. I am in perfect accord with the clause dealing with trout. The Second Schedule in the parent Act is to be repealed and replaced by what is in the Bill. There appears to be very little difference between the two except that a couple of extra conditions have been added. I suppose they are necessary.

The first item in the Second Schedule deals with bream. I know the Minister has had quite an amount of correspondence in connection with bream in the Swan River. I brought the matter to his attention towards the end of last year, and, in a jocular manner, in the early part of the present sittings. The schedule provides that bream of 9½ inches can be taken from the river. I venture to say that if the Minister goes to any of the leading spots on the Swan River he will find bream from four inches upwards. They are not being taken casually, but in their dozens, and it has been going on for a long time. After a lull of about six weeks I find that the same trouble is again apparent with a new lot of young fish. The Minister has no need to put the

responsibility on my shoulders as he did on the last occasion when I complained to him. At that time he asked me to submit the names of the offenders.

I do not think it is the prerogative of any member of this Chamber to have to make a detective of himself. When we report breaches of the law, particularly where they affect fish husbandry, the department should be very active to satisfy itself that either we are giving wrong information, or the breaches actually occur. I particularly ask the Minister to make it his business to inspect the bags of the grown-ups, many of whom are just as serious offenders as the boys and, in some cases, girls. If he or his inspectors cannot find people with three and four dozen of these small fish, I will be surprised. One man who, although not a professional fisherman from the department's point of view, is really a professional inasmuch as he sells his catch, frequently has a greater number of undersized fish in his bag than fish of 9½ inches. So I ask the Minister to make a feature of endeavouring to stop the taking of so many small fish from the Swan River. This is the first year that there has been a decent quantity of fish in the river for some time, and it is up to the department to take steps to endeavour to conserve them.

Bream is a natural inhabitant of the darker and deeper waters of the Swan River and this fish should be preserved. Provision is made in the Bill to reduce the size of garfish caught from nine inches to seven. In my opinion it was a waste of a certain amount of ink and space to put such a provision in the Bill because the amount of garfish caught in the river would not be of any consequence, even if there is a provision in the Schedule that they should not be caught under two, three or four inches.

Another matter which now appears in the Second Schedule to the Act, and which did not appear previously, concerns what are termed manna crabs. That provision has been honoured in the breach rather than in the observance up to now. However, I am wondering why the department has not taken some remedial action to prevent the spoiling of crabs over the early portion of the season. Most of the destruction of young crabs takes place in the early part of the year and that is the time when the department, having instituted a 5½ inch minimum, ought to be active. Particularly last year, and the year before, a great number

of these small crabs were taken from the river and in the later portion of the season, at the beginning of the new year—from January onwards—there should have been plenty of crabs available to the people. However, that was not so because of the destruction that took place in the early part of the season, and if this continues the supply will become smaller and smaller.

Mr. Marshall : What sort of destruction takes place ?

Mr. KELLY : The destruction takes place mainly in the early part of the year when the water on the banks is warm and the small crabs congregate there in their hundreds. It would be no exaggeration, in a normal season, to say that one could go on to almost all banks frequented by crabs, and take them out in thousands. During the early part of the year—usually about the middle of November, and sometimes a little earlier—because they are forming, and because there is such a huge number of them, it is quite easy to scoop four or five in the net at once. It is great sport from a juvenile point of view to scoop them up in their hundreds. They are too small to be of any food value and are usually thrown on the beach, fed to fowls, used for super. compost, or buried. Whilst we have a minimum size in the Act, it should be policed, especially during the months when destruction can and is taking place to a very great degree. In the main I agree to the measure and if the Minister is amenable to reason he will allow some of the amendments that will come forward during the Committee stage.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [5.35] : One would have thought that the Minister would have waited until he received the report of the Honorary Royal Commission on fish, before he did anything further to interfere with the present Fisheries Act. The Commission went to a good deal of trouble and visited every port in the State. A great amount of evidence was taken and the Commission collected a lot of data. I suppose we can take it that as the Minister has brought down this measure, he does not intend to do anything at all with the report of the Commission. In fact he opposed the appointment of it. Therefore it seems to me to be a waste of time and energy, and expense to the Government, to appoint commissions to travel all over the

State, take evidence, and then when the reports are presented to Parliament to do nothing about them.

The Acting Premier : We have not received it yet.

Mr. FOX : I take it, by this action of introducing an amending Bill, that when the Commission's report is laid on the Table of the House, that will be the end of it and nothing further will be done. The Commission may have made several useful recommendations which might have made some of the provisions in this Bill unnecessary. However, I suppose the Bill will not do a great deal of harm although it is another irritant to fishermen.

We have heard talk of men leaving the land because of the uncongenial conditions. However, the fishing industry is one of the most trying callings that could be found anywhere. The men engaged in it have to go out in all sorts of weather, in very small boats and put up with all sorts of inconveniences. During certain times of the year they cannot go out at all, and consequently it is not a very inviting occupation. That is one of the reasons why the majority of those engaged in the industry are men who have come from other countries and were engaged in those industries before they arrived here. If it were not so uncongenial there would be a far greater number of people employed in this industry.

It is only over the last couple of years that there has been any good financial return for the labour involved. Crayfishing has produced large returns due to the high price obtaining for crayfish in America. Had it not been for that, the fishing industry would have been a very drab one. Very few Britishers take on the work because of the inconveniences, the long hours they have to work and the small returns available. Added to that there are many hardships involved.

The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie mentioned something about fines. I think fishermen are the most heavily taxed workers in the world, or in Western Australia at least, as far as their industry is concerned. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and myself, not when this Government was in office but during the reign of another Government, stressed the fact that too many fines were being inflicted on fishermen. High fines were inflicted and the nets and fishing gear confiscated. I know of no other trade,

anywhere in the world, where a man's tools of trade are confiscated when he is convicted of an offence.

Mr. Marshall : The tools of a safebreaker are confiscated.

Mr. FOX : That is about the only other one. If dairymen water their milk, they are fined a couple of pounds, but nothing else is done. That practice is injurious to the health of a community and the young children. If a butcher gives short weight he is fined a small sum but nothing else happens to him. All these fines are small in comparison with the fines inflicted on fishermen. Therefore I consider that we should be told the amount of the fine that the Government intends to inflict upon these men.

The Minister for Fisheries : We are not talking about fines.

Mr. FOX : They will be inflicted under this Bill.

The Minister for Fisheries : There is no provision for fines at all. They have nothing to do with the Bill and you know it.

Mr. FOX : I am not sure that the Minister would know whether there was or not. There is one provision in the Bill which states that the servant of a boatowner is to be held responsible for anything that takes place while he is in charge of the boat. We had this provision before in another Bill, and to me it seems ridiculous to put the responsibility on the employee. Is it not sufficient to make the master responsible for the deeds of his servant ? Surely that is sufficient ! We could get at the master that way instead of prosecuting the servant and then expecting the servant to prosecute the master afterwards to recoup himself for his out-of-pocket expenses. That is ridiculous and I hope when the Bill reaches the Committee stage that particular provision will be struck out.

Another provision in the Bill with which I am not in agreement is that which states that the fees for licenses shall be fixed by regulation. I consider that the House should know what the fee is to be. I believe that at present fishermen who own boats would not object to some slight increase in their license fees provided they received something in return. Governments have done very little for fishermen in the past. They have done nothing to increase the supply of fish in the sea, as fish are produced by nature. I do not know of anything that any Government has done to increase the supply of fish other

than the restrictions that are placed on fishing at certain times of the year. Those restrictions are calculated to increase the supply of fish by protecting them if they are under a certain length. In a few moments I intend to read an article written by a man who knows something about fish and it will refute that argument. If the Government would do something in the way of providing slipways in some of our principal ports—

The Minister for Fisheries : We provided three you know.

Mr. FOX : The Minister has not provided one in Fremantle and that is one of the principal fishing harbours in the State.

The Minister for Fisheries : There is a slipway at Fremantle.

Mr. FOX : There are more fishing boats in the Fremantle harbour than in any other port in Western Australia and it is very awkward for owners to slip their boats. There is one slipway round in the Swan River at the entrance to the heads, but another one should be provided at the fish jetty. I know the Minister has done something to provide a road to run from the fish markets to the jetty but unfortunately, as I pointed out at the time, it has not proved particularly suitable. I do not set myself up as a professional road-maker, and though the authorities concerned made a fairly good road last year, owing to the high seas which came right over the wall this year the road was completely washed out. Concrete is the only commodity that can be used in a place such as that. If concrete is not used then it must be some other material that cannot be washed away. Some of the rocks weighed a couple of tons and they were shifted by the heavy seas.

I hope that something will be done to repair that road in the near future because the trucks cannot get out to the end of the jetty to take water and return with a load of fish. The only way they can do that is by putting down a roadway that is incapable of being washed away by the high seas that break over that bank every year. There should also be an extension to the breakwater. The winds and seas from the southwest are extremely boisterous and not many years pass without our seeing fishing boats being blown on to the beach and destroyed. In some of the blows that are experienced it is almost impossible to put down sufficient anchors to hold these vessels. I do not think

it matters a great deal as to the size of fish caught, but my views would not be worth twopence as I am only an amateur fisherman.

The Minister for Fisheries: Would they be of greater value than those of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie?

Mr. FOX: He would have a little more experience. As I may not have another opportunity I will now read Dr. Serventy's comments on this question. He quotes from an article in the "Canadian Fisherman" in which Dr. G. A. Huntman of the Canadian Fisheries Research Board says—

For the last two years the Fisheries Research Board has had a committee on depletion which has not yet been able to find for this continent a clear, documented case of under-replacement of stock through over-fishing. Illustrating the difficulty of exterminating a natural fish population by destruction of individuals, he cites the following case: "The Fisheries Research Board tried in 1939 to kill with derris powder all the fish in Potter's Lake, New Brunswick, which has an area of 130 acres, finding it to contain about 25,000 fish of various kinds. Two years later they tried again and found a population of more than 90,000 fish including only about 600 fish old enough to have escaped the first poisoning. At the present time there is even developing a school of thought among marine biologists that regulation of the marine fisheries at all is quite unnecessary because man's efforts are insignificant in comparison with the normal fluctuations in the environment. These latter are considered to be of greater importance than fishing effort in limiting the stocks of fish.

That shows how difficult it is to exterminate fish.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He ought to know something about it.

Mr. Kelly: You should read something about the North Sea.

Mr. FOX: That is a very sensible suggestion. We could not expect all the spawn that is put into the sea to reach maturity. If it did the sea would be overstocked. The law of nature will find a balance and I think, no matter what is done, supplies of fish will be unlimited.

Mr. Marshall: What do you think of the increased license fees?

Mr. FOX: I have already said that those fishermen in possession of boats would be quite prepared to pay increased license fees provided the Government did something to make more slipways available and improve roads and other amenities.

MR. HILL (Albany) [5.49]: It is being realised throughout the world today that people must look to the fish of the seas for their food supplies. Japan, the biggest

fishing country in the world, is not the only one that is pushing ahead with fishing research and investigation. The "Fisheries Newsletter" tells us that they are now using modern trawlers, fitted with an echo sounding device. That is an instrument which strikes a hammer at the bottom of the ship and the time is noted from the moment the sound goes down to the sea bottom until it echoes back. This machine, by a simple calculation, records the depth on a graph on the bridge. Trawlers have found that they strike what they term "phantom bottoms" and from these a slight echo returns apart from the echo that goes to the bottom. These phantom bottoms are caused by shoals of fish at some depth and are often spread over an area of some square miles.

The fishermen on the trawlers set to work to investigate these phantom bottoms and send down cameras to take photographs. They have found that the phantom bottoms are caused by untold millions of cod. We in Western Australia have not realised the immense value of fish around our coast. When I say "we," I include myself. When a canning factory at Albany was mooted I was not at all optimistic, but last year the turnover at Hunt's factory at Albany was over £130,000. Mr. Hunt has supplied me with some figures which I think will be of interest to the House. The information is as follows:—

Albany—	£
Value of fish purchased by factory during 1949 season 23rd February, 1949, to 16th April, 1949	23,369
(Average 100 men)	
Wages paid to factory staff, 1st July, 1948, to 30th June, 1949	30,000
Freight paid to W.A.G.R. for year ended 30th June, 1949	3,000
Hopetoun fishermen—	
Value of fish caught:	
2nd June, 1948, to 31st October, 1948	11,321
23rd June, 1949, to 20th July, 1949	2,461
Hopetoun factory—	
Wages paid to factory staff, 1st July, 1948, to 30th June, 1949	8,500
(Staff at Hopetoun is now increased to 40 hands).	
Freight paid to W.A.G.R., 1st July, 1948, to 30th June, 1949	1,800
Esperance factory—	
Wages paid to Esperance Canning Co. staff during year ended 30th June, 1949	5,780
(Staff when factory closed down—34 hands, Fishermen—9).	

Those figures are fairly large.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And there is still plenty of fish left.

Mr. HILL: We are only playing with the industry. Already Mr. Hunt has spent £3,000 to permit his manager to conduct an investigation into the sardine canning methods in America and on the Continent, £5,500 for a net, and some thousands for a boat. Mr. Hunt has not yet started his operations with sardine canning. There are great possibilities not only with sardines but also with herring and tuna. There are some tuna down south. I was talking to some of the fisheries research men during the war. They had chartered a plane, under the auspices of the C.S.I.R.O. and the pilot had been engaged in tuna fishing in America. As they were flying over our North-West coasts this pilot remarked, "Well, guys, we have schools of tuna in our country but you have them here by the square mile."

To catch tuna I understand a great deal of money is necessary both for the purchase of the boats and to pay the wages of the crew. Tuna are not caught by net but several men are employed aboard a ship which contains quantities of small live fish for bait. When the men observe a school of tuna they steam into the fish, throw over some bait, and catch them with rods and barbless hooks. Tuna bite at anything and they are jerked aboard by the crew. It will therefore be seen that a venture into tuna fishing would mean large capital expenditure for the boat and the maintenance of the men. Then again we have whales. That is going to the other extreme but Councillor Martin, of the Albany Municipal Council, makes the statement that it is estimated that 2,000 whales have been seen passing Eclipse Island since last April. Each whale is worth somewhere in the neighbourhood of £1,000.

As fishing is now becoming an industry it must be properly regulated and controlled. Our present Act, especially in regard to the licensing of fishing boats, is hopelessly out-of-date. I agree with the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that we must have graduated license fees. As with previous speakers, I do not like government by regulation, but surely we can trust our Fisheries Department to graduate the license fees for the various fishing craft to suit the value of the catch they make during the year. I think that would be the fairest way for the license fee to be

assessed. At present there are two trawlers approaching very close to our Western Australian shores to conduct trawling operations and they will be based on Albany.

Another matter referred to in the Bill relates to statistics. It is absolutely essential that reliable statistics shall be available for the information of the Government, Parliament and the Fisheries Department. At the same time those obtained from individuals should be regarded as confidential. Some of these people will be in competition with each other, and it would certainly not be fair to allow the business concerns of one individual to be made available to his competitors. However, I do not see that there need be any difficulty in that respect. On the other hand, aggregate statistics are for public information. There is not much more that I can say regarding the fishing industry but I feel it is one that we should foster. It will prove of great value to Western Australia. From whales to sardines, we should not neglect any section of the wealth of the seas along our coast-line, and by that means we shall find employment for a great many men in this State and bring more money into the country.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.56]: I agree with much that the member for South Fremantle has said. In my opinion the fisherman's life is about the hardest that can be imagined. That is one reason why there are not more Australians working in the industry. Not only is the life hard but the fishermen themselves are probably persecuted more than any other section of the community. I agree with the member for Albany when he refers to the factories at Esperance, Hopetoun and Albany in respect of which thousands of pounds had been paid for fish supplies. I also agree that after 12 months' operations, the fish are more plentiful in the coastal waters than they were before. I do not know whether the Bill represents one means by which the Minister for Fisheries, who is also the Minister for Prices Control, intends to deal with prices and whether he considers that the course proposed will reduce the price of fish commodities to the public. Wherever we look, the tendency seems to be in the opposite direction.

For years past every Bill introduced, irrespective of who may have comprised the Government of the day, has had for its

object increased charges or the curtailment of the rights and privileges of the public. The people have been told that they cannot do this or cannot do that. The stage has arrived when two Bills should be introduced, one to tell the people what they can do without being interfered with, and the other for the purpose of reducing the price of something, whatever it might be. Ever since I entered this House in 1924, Governments, whether they were Labour, Liberal or Coalition Governments, have done the same thing. Bills have been brought in time after time restricting the rights of people in this or that direction.

We talk about being a free people! It is time we gave the people a little of the freedom about which we hear so much. In this instance, it is the fishermen that are to be affected. It is said that the regulations that are to be promulgated will be reasonable. Under the existing ones fishermen are fined for having underweight fish in their possession, and the punishment inflicted upon them is often more than the fine imposed upon the individual who drives a motorcar when intoxicated. Is it under reasonable conditions that the fishermen are being persecuted as they are now and these fines inflicted upon them? It is ridiculous, and I think the time has arrived when fair play should be extended to them.

I am not in favour of letting the officials of the Fisheries Department or any other Government Department frame regulations to run this country. We know what happens when Government officials do that. They try to get their own way and they go as far as they can. It is not their job but it should be the job of Parliament to say what the law shall be. The Minister should accept the responsibility equally with Parliament in that direction. We should decide what we will do with regard to the fishermen and their industry and not leave it to civil servants to decide. I will not agree to anything of the sort. When the Minister replies I hope he will deal with some of these points. Then again I notice that, the following appears in the Bill—

Where the provisions of any bylaw made under this section relate to the same subject matter as or are in conflict with the provisions of this Act, or of the regulations or of any bylaw made under the Road Districts Act, 1919-48, the latter provision shall prevail.

Which, Mr. Speaker, with your legal mind, do you think, in the light of that provision, will prevail? Possibly that provision is an

endeavour to find an easy way out of a difficulty. If the Minister knows what it means, I hope he will tell the House. At any rate, I trust he will give the people a little more freedom and provide for fewer restrictions in every shape or form.

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth— in reply) [6.0]: I am glad that the Bill has attracted a great deal of interest on the part of members and I appreciate that a lot of useful material has been placed before the House. I say that, although I think some of the matter discussed could have been brought forward at a more appropriate stage. In the circumstances, I do not propose to comment in detail upon all the subjects referred to. I have particularly in mind the remarks of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie. Although his comments regarding the fishing industry were interesting, I think he could have discussed the subject more appropriately on the Estimates. There are, however, some points that I would like to deal with. I agree that it is advisable that set lines should not be used near bathing beaches. Provision has already been made to ensure that that will not be allowed and that set lines will be prohibited in certain prescribed areas within a certain distance of bathing places. Regulations to that effect will come into force almost immediately.

With regard to prosecutions arising out of the sale or possession of small fish, I am quite sympathetic with the object of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that fish of that size should not be caught or disposed of; but I think he will agree that with the limited staff available it is very difficult to police adequately the provisions of the Fisheries Act. I hope I have not suggested in anything I have said that he should attempt to police it. That is certainly not his duty, but at the same time any assistance he can render in that respect would be greatly appreciated by the department. As Minister for Fisheries I agree that the appointment of more inspectors is most desirable, and I would certainly like to secure more officers. Unfortunately, there is the Treasurer and his views and those of the Minister for Fisheries in this particular matter do not always coincide. It is purely a question of the available finance and members will agree that each department can have only its reasonable share of the public funds available.

I emphasise that the Bill does not imply government by regulation; the regulations will merely serve to give effect to the details of the policy outlined in the Bill. It is not usual for matters of detail to be determined in an Act of Parliament, seeing that they may have to be varied from time to time. I certainly feel that many of the matters mentioned by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie could be better dealt with by way of regulations.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The trouble is that we have too many regulations, and it is time the practice stopped.

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: The Bill has been favourably commented upon by members and I appreciate that fact.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Returned from the Council with amendments.

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Assembly subject to further amendments.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendment made by the Assembly.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th August.

HON. A. A. M. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [6.8]: This is a simple Bill which has been well explained by the Attorney General. So simple is it that it merely seeks the

alteration of one word, the substitution of "eight" for "five." The amendment will have the effect of increasing the remuneration of the president and members of the board from £500 to £800 a year. As these men do an exceptionally good job for the benefit of the State, I do not think any member will hesitate to agree to the Bill immediately. Country members of fire brigades devote a considerable part of their time to attending meetings in the metropolitan area, and their remuneration hitherto has been so small that I wonder the Minister has made no attempt to increase it long since. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1949-50.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 16th August on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,524:

MR. MANN (Beverley) [8.11]: This session is the last before the elections and those of us who come back will no doubt see an almost entirely new Chamber.

Mr. Fox: Is this your swan song?

Mr. MANN: I do not think it will be my swan song. I think I shall come back irrespective of my two opponents.

Member: Three.

Mr. MANN: I shall be here next year.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: On which side will you be sitting?

Mr. MANN: I am sorry that we did not have an Address-in-reply debate this year. The Government was ill-advised to drop it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: I am sorry because members are becoming more and more subject to Cabinet control. This remark applies to both sides of the Chamber.

Opposition members: No.

Mr. MANN: I have been a member of this Chamber for some 19 or 20 years and have seen Parliament becoming subject more and more to a dictatorship. However,

we private members represent the people as much as do Ministers. We probably have a greater knowledge of the public because a Minister of the Crown is more or less confined to his office and becomes more concerned with the affairs of his department. Consequently, he loses touch with the common people. No doubt Ministers appreciate occasional visits to the country and meeting people in order to discuss problems, but they miss the personal touch which private members have with their constituents. How can the Government carry on without the assistance of the rank and file members? Private members have great power. They can keep a Government in power; but sometimes it seems to me that they are like the characters in the book entitled "The Dead End." Nevertheless, as I said, we possess the power to keep the Government in office. I have seen the worthy Leader of the Opposition in his quiet way controlling the members of his Party. Passing from that subject, I wish to say that in my opinion private members should have more freedom of speech.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MANN: With regard to Parliamentary procedure, I feel very much inclined to move a motion before the session ceases that will give rank and file members an opportunity to express an opinion on our system of government. It is time a change took place in our ideas of parliamentary government. I have here an extract from "Hansard" of the remarks made by the present Acting Premier on a motion I submitted to the House for the appointment of a public works committee. I shall not read all of it, but these points struck me as being important. The hon. gentleman said—

I, too, feel that the responsibilities that are imposed upon members of Parliament are not sufficient. They, having been elected by the people in precisely the same way as the members of the Government are entitled to a great deal more consideration from the Government than it has been the practice to give them in recent years. In the last five or six years there have been four or five motions that had some relation to the subject now before this House.

Mr. Rodoreda: Why do you not wait till the Acting Premier comes back to the Chamber?

Mr. MANN: I am sorry he is not here, but I feel I am just as important.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: This might be one of your last chances.

Mr. MANN: You never know! The extract continues—

They have regularly been opposed by the Government in office during that period: . . . Am I to assume that the Government does not like the idea of persons, who are equally elected as representatives of the people, having anything whatever to do—except in the limited and restricted manner in which they are able to have something to do with them in this House—with the public works propositions that come up for the development of the State, or am I to assume that the Government regards itself as so far superior to the collective ability of the remainder of the Legislature that it considers it has no need to accept advice from any except departmental officers?

I think it is quite time that a motion was moved whereby we could discuss the whole question of parliamentary procedure. I have always desired that we might follow the system of the House of Commons which has eight parliamentary Ministers and eight parliamentary Under Secretaries. Even in the Commonwealth Parliament the majority of members are appointed to various committees.

Mr. Rodoreda: And paid for it.

Mr. MANN: Yes, I agree they should be paid. I do not believe in honorary jobs. I had the experience of being a member of the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation, and after six months' work I received £5, while my colleagues were paid up to £150 for their labours. I got £5 because I was only a member of Parliament! If we want better government for the people—

Member: Change the Government!

Mr. MANN: No. I think that the Labour Party was in office far too long. What happens? An election takes place and the Party with the majority takes ministerial rank. Thereafter we might just as well—except for the fact that we do small jobs for our electors, which is what puts us into Parliament—tell those not chosen for ministerial office to go back to their homes, and have no Parliament at all. We are all human beings and the human aspect enters into parliamentary affairs. I suppose I would be the same as others if I were a Minister. They are jealous of their colleagues who might know too much, much more than I. I have been here 19 years and I know what takes place. But we come here as members of Parliament to legislate for the welfare of this country and not for our own personal interests.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: I appeal that to both sides of the House.

Mr. Fox: To the other House, too?

Mr. MANN: I will not speak about the other House. If I did so, the Chairman would stop me. The whole situation is wrong and I hope to move a motion as a result of which a full dress debate will take place on this matter. It may have the effect of altering our procedure if members are agreed.

Mr. Reynolds: Why did you not do it before? You have been here for 19 years. Are you just waking up?

Mr. MANN: The reason I have not done it before is that I felt that with a new Government there might be a change of ideas and a more enlightened outlook. I listened to remarks by the member for Pilbara and the member for Fremantle on the subject of the organisation of a new Party on this side of the House. There seemed to be a desire to vilify that Party. I think we are entitled to have whatever Party we like. We have never tried to belittle the Labour Party. The member for Pilbara seems to have a great obsession about the Liberal Party and the Press, especially "The West Australian." I will say of the Press that it is "to our faults a little blind and to our virtues very kind." I think that both sides have had a good spin from "The West Australian." I do not intend to deal at length with the organisation to which I and my colleagues belong, because that is our business and nobody else's. The public at the next election will decide whether we are right or wrong.

In the Federal sphere we find that our Premier, as was the case with the Leader of the Opposition when he was Premier—is forced to go, cap in hand, appealing to the Prime Minister for money to carry on. The Prime Minister decides whether we shall have it or not. I think that in that respect there is a dictatorship by the Prime Minister of Australia. He is responsible for finance and for the imposition of taxation. I think that parties on both sides of this House are very relieved that they do not have to impose taxation, because no Government likes to tax the people. Ours seems to be a menial position in respect to financing our State. I do not think the day can be far distant when State Parliaments will cease to exist unless—

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are selling out quickly!

Mr. MANN: I do not think so, but Parliaments will cease to exist unless the States are prepared to fight for their independence.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are selling out.

Mr. MANN: We are not selling out at all, but the States are in the unenviable position of having to appeal to the Prime Minister for money to carry on. I pay a tribute to our Premier whose genial personality, I believe, has been responsible for the considerably increased amount of money that has been provided for Western Australia. We know the true type of man the Prime Minister is. He is well versed in Labour.

Mr. Reynolds: He is upright and honourable.

Mr. MANN: I am not doubting his honesty. I think he is a man of determination and courage and I admire him for it, but I do think he has met in our State Premier a particularly fine type of man from the soil of Western Australia, who has outlined the position with a great deal of honesty and sincerity, so that the Prime Minister, in the goodness of his heart has said, "I will not let you down." I am proud of the success achieved by the Premier. He is an honest person, and is very worried about deficits. We have always said that we condemned John Willcock because he would balance his Budget. We were all for deficits. I do not care if the Government has a deficit so long as it does something to the advantage of the State. Western Australia presents the opportunity for the greatest advancement of any State in Australia with sound and wise government.

Mr. Triat: Wise government is not bad.

Mr. MANN: I am certain we shall move towards bigger things. Our greatest disability is lack of population. When Mr. Calwell spoke over the air on Sunday from the Capitol Theatre what struck me most about him was—

Mr. Reynolds: His sincerity.

Mr. MANN: I am not doubting that, but he has a definite city complex. His idea is mostly to employ migrants for industrial development.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is just what he has not done.

Mr. MANN: Yes, he has. They are going to the factories in the cities. We have been warned both by England and America of a recession and possible over-production. The most important thing for Australia, and this State in particular, is labour to develop our farming areas. Ours is a rural State and will be for many years. The labour position is acute today. The people coming here are not used to farm life. We cannot produce a farm hand in six months. The officers Mr. Calwell sent home to select immigrants are definitely city men. I would reverse that policy. The men who selected the immigrants in the early days knew our country and told the people on the other side of the world the truth about the conditions here. They sent out people to try to develop our rural areas. The Minister for Lands can tell us how many migrants are going on to farming properties. Most of them are going to the Eastern States to work in metropolitan factories.

Anyone who says that the present prices will hold is talking rot. There must be a fall, and when it happens it will affect the country. We on the land do not boom ourselves that we are the salt of the earth, but if primary production declines there will be a lot of unemployment, and social service will not help. There is a tendency towards inflation and rising costs. It is possible, as some members have said, that the basic wage in six or 12 months will be £10 a week. I hope when the Minister for Immigration returns to Canberra he will impress upon the Commonwealth Parliament the great importance of rural immigration.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Where would you put 20,000 immigrants in the country at the moment?

Mr. MANN: We could at the very least take 10,000 farm hands in Western Australia. There are many vacant buildings on farms today. The farmer is going to curtail operations because he cannot get labour. We are paying £6 18s. per week, the basic rate, for rural farm hands. Not only that, but many of them are receiving that amount plus board and taxes.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Where are you going to get farmer-immigrants? England is looking for them herself.

Mr. MANN: The immigrants from these foreign countries do not all come from cities.

Mr. Nalder: Some hundreds are arriving in a few days' time.

Mr. Reynolds: He would not know that.

Mr. MANN: I heard a lot of comment from the other side of the Chamber on the question of price-fixing. I hope it will go out. I do not say it should happen immediately, but I would like it to go out before very long. The more control there is, the greater the blackmarket. If we continue to have price-fixing we shall raise the cost of commodities. I have discussed the question of decontrolling meat.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Pig-meat, I bet.

Mr. MANN: No. I do not say we should decontrol it today, but by the middle of October there should be a lot of stock coming into the market. Meat should then be decontrolled so as to put the butcher on a competitive basis. He has no trouble because the price is fixed for him and he passes it on. It is worth while to test decontrolling meat. I think the position would right itself. I was with a stock firm and I am now a farmer. I know the prices being paid. It is gruelling for the housewives to have to pay 1s. a lb.

Mr. Reynolds: A shilling!

Mr. MANN: The butcher is paying that.

Mr. Reynolds: You would ruin the State; you would have a revolution.

Mr. MANN: I now want to deal with the question of water. We have had some exceptionally wet years, but the last few years have been rather dry, and though stock feed has been sufficient the water position has been acute. The Minister for Railways will tell us that many engines have been required to cart water supplies. In the Avon Valley, millions of gallons of water a year run to waste. No Government has yet made any attempt to control the waters in those streams. In the Avon Valley there are large rock catchment areas. I hope that some day the State will produce a Minister with sufficient vision not only to prevent these millions of gallons of water going to waste, but to use them in some irrigation scheme. I believe that if the water catchments of the Avon Valley were properly utilised and the water conserved it would be possible to irrigate large areas and by that means we could increase our production and population immensely.

The Government should have included in the Estimates a sum of perhaps £50,000 for such a scheme of water conservation. At

least that sum could well be spent in an endeavour to utilise the rock catchments of the Avon Valley. If the work done on a man's property was successful he could pay for it and, if it was unsuccessful, the State could bear the cost. I believe such a policy would be well worth while because if it was successful the Avon Valley might easily become a dairying area. We are assured by competent authorities that the whole world will be short of meat foods for many years to come and, with the increase in stock-carrying capacity following on the successful conservation of the millions of gallons of water that now run to waste, our meat production would rise enormously. However, we seem to have no men of vision among our leaders today. If we had we could learn a great deal from what has been done in America and other countries in recent years, and I still hope that this Government will do something on the lines I have suggested.

I have endeavoured to discuss matters of this kind with the Government but my words have fallen on deaf ears. Today we are beginning to reap the reward of the greatest industrial upheaval ever experienced in this country. Supplies of vital materials will be thrown back by anything from six to twelve months, as it will be anything up to six months before all our industries are able to get back into their stride. Certainly the Prime Minister froze the coal miners' funds and eventually put troops to work the mines and open-cuts, but I think a better plan would have been to do away with union control and put other labour into the mines instead of using the Military. If we are forced to tolerate dictation by the unions, why not let them take charge of the country entirely?

If we continue to shirk our responsibilities Australia will find itself faced with revolution. However, when the Prime Minister put the troops to the task of winning coal they produced more than had the miners, in spite of the fact that they were inexperienced men. When the Collie miners went on strike the Government of this State should have taken charge and put men in to work the mines and open-cuts.

Mr. Hoar: Be careful; there are a lot of unionists in York!

Mr. MANN: I will not be afraid to say on the hustings what I am saying in this Chamber tonight. I will tell the people what I believe to be the truth. We all

know it was not right to put the troops to work in the mines and open-cuts when the job could have been done by other labour. If Australia is to continue under the domination of the coalminers, God help us all! It has been announced that the Commonwealth Government had a victory in the settlement of the coal strike. Far from that, it has been a victory for the communist party. They have gained the victory, not the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Reynolds: Rot!

Mr. MANN: They have held up all our industry, at a cost to Australia of £150,000,000, and for the time being they are quite satisfied. Their leaders will easily purge their contempt and will then be released from gaol. It will not be long before we find them at work again. If the communists are able to disrupt industry and eventually bring on another depression they will gain many thousands more supporters.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And yet big business backs them. Who bought Marx House for them?

Mr. MANN: Shortly after this Government was returned to power I appealed to it for a Select Committee with the powers of a Royal Commission to investigate the activities of the communist party, but the Government jibbed, because it was afraid. I also wanted to have legislation brought down to provide for a secret ballot, but again the Government was afraid to do anything. Had it appointed a Royal Commission it could have obtained evidence about the activities of the communist party from an authoritative source in this State—evidence more damning than that disclosed by Sharpley. That evidence would have given a warning to our younger generation and would have shown the State just what the communist party is doing.

During last session members on the other side of the House seemed keen to discuss communism, but now they have gone cold on it. Mr. Menzies was the first man to ban the communist party and he gaoled some communists, but when Dr. Evatt was returned to power he released them. In view of what happened recently I wonder how long it will be before we have another industrial upheaval. Until we do pass legislation effectively to handle the communists our troubles will continue. I am glad to see that the R.S.L. is preaching against the communist movement at the present time, as are the churches also, but

all this is in many respects futile. The only way in which communism can be dealt with effectively is through Parliament itself, but Parliament lacks the guts to take any effective steps. Surely we should be prepared to say, "Parliament is supreme and the law shall prevail," but we do not do that. We have recently had our first taste of what industrial communism can do. The leaders of the communist party are now in gaol but it will not be long before they have purged their contempt and are freed again. Then they will reorganise.

Mr. Bovell: Do you not think universal military training would have had some effect?

Mr. MANN: Yes. We know what the teachings of the communists are—

Mr. Hoar: Would you ban them?

Mr. MANN: Yes, if I had my way. I know the reply will be that that would drive them underground, but perhaps we could control them better underground than above the ground. We should have legislation providing for the deportation of foreign-born communists and long gaol terms for Australian-born communists. That would do a great deal towards curbing them. But instead of that we seem content to go on in a haphazard way, and if we continue along those lines the time will not be long before communism grows in strength in this country. As soon as there is a depression the communist party attracts a greater following. But this Government is not prepared to do anything about it. Why are Governments not willing to do anything? Is it because they are afraid of losing votes? I think the people of Australia today are asking all the Parliaments in Australia at least to have the strength to try to clean up the country and get rid of this disruptive element. That seems to be our trouble. No Government will do anything about it. Our main concern seems to be the question of votes. They seem to be the important things these days. There is very little more I have to say—

Mr. May: That is something at least.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MANN: I do not mind if I am here for another two hours.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Beverley should address the Chair.

Mr. MANN: There is one other question concerning transport. The people in the farming areas today are very concerned

about transport generally. The trains are completely hopeless and are going from bad to worse. So serious is the position that we have adopted the system of wheat carting by road and the roads are in a deplorable state. I can see no future in our railways—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think you should have been christened Jeremiah and not Isaac.

Mr. MANN: I do not know what the new Commissioner is like, but the Minister has complete control over him by virtue of a Bill which was passed in this House. The argument has been raised that we have 50 extra engines. I do not think 50 engines will alter the position very much. The whole Railway Department has become decadent and is dead from the toes up. It must be revitalised in some way. What are we going to do about it? We still have 4,000 miles of railway and we still try to maintain it. I say that the Government should scrap a thousand miles of that railway and concentrate on road transport for those outer areas and discard the spur lines. We now have haulage trucks which are capable of handling 20 or 30 tons. After scrapping that one thousand miles we should concentrate on re-laying the main lines with 120 lb. rails.

That is the first step towards improving the system, but what do we find? The haulage of wheat and super. has had to be carried out, in the main, by road transport. Where will it end? No attempt has been made to re-vitalise the railway system up to date and now the Government has decided to increase freights. That is not a very happy thing for the farmers.

Mr. Hoar: Your Government did it.

Mr. MANN: I know all about that. The farmers today are in a position to pay these increased freights. I admit that. But when there is a fall in prices, that will not be so. In 12 months' time whoever is Treasurer of this State will want another increase of 25 per cent. The system has become hopeless and each year it is getting worse. With an eventual increase of 250 per cent in freights, the position will become worse and the farmers will not be able to stand it. There has been no attempt to reorganise the system. Not a scrap of reorganisation has taken place. The new Commissioner may be able to do something and I do not

know whether he has started to make any moves in that direction, but something will have to be done.

I was at a large meeting at Narrogin and was very sorry to hear the Minister for Works say that the Democratic Party was not responsible for these increased freights. He stated that the Liberal Party was responsible, but my view is that the whole Government is responsible for it.

Mr. Fox: Which is the Democratic Party?

Mr. MANN: I am not concerned with the hon. member's interjection but the Minister for Works stated that his Party was not responsible for it. It is the responsibility of the whole Government and not just one Party. This is not a side-show and therefore it cannot be the responsibility of one section of the Government. I make that statement here in order to clear the atmosphere because I could not do so at that meeting. I make the statement in this Chamber because the Government is here.

Mr. Hegney: Do you say that the Country Party was not responsible?

Mr. MANN: I will have a lot to say, when the time comes, on the various items in the Estimates. There are a number of people today who think we are living in a paradise or, as the Prime Minister said, we are in the Golden Age. But that no longer exists. We realise that ourselves. Possibly if the member for Murchison was a member of the Federal House, and the Federal Treasurer, he would solve the whole economic problem with his fiscal policy. However, I do not profess to have any knowledge of finance but, when we realise the burden of debt as pointed out by that hon. member, it makes us wonder what will happen. The hon. member, the other evening, mentioned that the burden of debt in this country must be relieved. It can only be relieved by hard work and increased production. The 40-hour week is an absolute fallacy and it is no good saying otherwise. This State and indeed the whole of Australia, must get down to earth, work harder and produce more. The people of England are forced to work harder so that they can produce the goods.

Mr. May: You nigger driver!

Mr. MANN: I know this is an easy life, but I think the member for Leederville will agree with me that deep in his heart the worker today is rather ashamed of his production.

Hon. A. H. Panton: How many hours a week would you suggest?

Mr. MANN: I consider we should go back to 48 hours a week. Then we would get maximum production again. It is difficult to foresee what the position will be in this State in three years' time or just what the future holds. The next few years will not be easy because we are passing through an extraordinary period. The war has destroyed the ambition of many young men and it is quite possible that we may pass through a depression at any time. I cannot agree with the Prime Minister's idea that by holding large sums of money in reserve he will cushion the effects of depression. If there is a depression in America, it will strike us. Nothing is surer than that. This is a good country and we should all be prepared to work. Since the war we have had endless industrial troubles, not so much here, but in the Eastern States—especially in the mining and shipping industries.

It should be the responsibility of all Governments, which have sufficient guts, to say that these are our laws and that everybody shall abide by them. As politicians we should be prepared to face up to the issue but most of us seem to be more concerned about votes. That practice seems to be increasing over the years. When I look back at the time when I first came to this Chamber and remember the marvellous Labour Party bench, and the men who composed the other Parties, it makes me wonder where we are going. In those days progress was made but we have not produced a Forrest, a Mitchell or a Collier in recent years. What we want in this country are members with sufficient backbone and determination to carry on for the welfare of this country. That, in my view, would prove our salvation.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [8.9]: When I listened to the Premier delivering his Budget speech the other evening I thought of the 13 or 14 others that had been delivered by Treasurers from time to time during the period that I have been in this Chamber. The introduction of this Budget was the saddest story that has ever been told to this Assembly as far as the finances of this State are concerned. We appear to be slipping deeper and deeper into a financial morass and there does not seem to be even one bright spot in the future, if one cares

closely to analyse the Budget as delivered by the Premier. In reading over the Premier's Budget speech I thought it was rather fortunate that we had the Commonwealth Government which has, since assuming the State's rights of taxation, funded the enormous deficits from the various States which are increasing from year to year.

It is rather alarming when we find that of the total expected revenue obtained from this State we are to receive 42 per cent. of it from the Commonwealth Government. In special grants alone we have received £3,600,000 from the Federal authorities and this is the third highest item in the Budget as described by the Premier. The other two include the railways at £5,161,218 and the reimbursement from income tax of £4,494,632. The Premier made a feature of the latest earnings of the railways, but I do not think he was particularly candid in stating the reasons why there was such a falling off in those earnings. It would have been much better had he admitted that for climatic reasons quite out of the Government's control, it was necessary to use 25 per cent. of the available tractive power for hauling water. With that percentage of the tractive power being used on unremunerative services, such as hauling water, it logically follows that there will be a serious falling off in the hauling capacity of the railways.

Mr. May: Did the people served pay for those services?

Mr. STYANTS: I am just wondering whether the service that was rendered to those people was paid for by them and whether they paid the full cost of the railway freights for hauling water, because I have in mind the unfavourable position the railways are in while serving the primary industries which have been on the crest of the wave of prosperity for the last four or five years. These industries have not paid even a portion of the costs for the railway services rendered to them. I asked the Minister for Railways some questions as to what had been the actual loss sustained by the railways in hauling super. for the primary industries for the past 12 months up to the 21st June. The answer was that it had resulted in a loss of £315,000 to the Railway Department.

I asked the Premier what amount had been paid out by the Treasury in subsidising the road transport of super. for primary

industries and he said that up to the 21st June of this year it had cost £116,000 and he expected that to the end of June it would cost a further £9,000. So in order to get super. to the primary industries we have paid out as an actual loss to the revenue of the State a subsidy of £125,000 for road transport and £315,000 for rail transport. When we come to consider that the Commonwealth subsidises the production of super. by £3 per ton and that the primary industries have for the past four or five years received fabulous prices for their products, I do not consider it is fair to the other sections of the population that such a state of affairs should be allowed to continue.

The Government's treatment of primary industries is in striking contrast to that meted out to the goldmining industry. However, before I reach that question I wish to point out that, even with the increased rates that recently took place, every ton of super. that is carted out to the primary industries and every ton of wheat that is shifted down to the port occasions a loss to the Railway Department and a loss to that department is, of course, a loss to the State's revenue.

Mr. Ackland: How much does it represent?

Mr. STYANTS: It represented £315,000 for super. alone. I will give the hon. member some idea how much it will cost the State still further when I point out that, according to the Minister for Railways, there are 280,000 tons of wheat still in the country. Under the old freight rates of 1948, super. cost 5s. 1d. per ton for haulage over 100 miles. That works out to a little over a ¼d. a ton per mile or .59d. a ton per mile. The actual cost of general haulage on our railways is 3.06d. per ton mile. I realise that carting super. and wheat is not quite so expensive and would not quite reach the haulage rate for general cargo because they both form heavy compact loads, and with a full engine load there is less dead weight than with an engine loaded with ordinary cargo. So I have not worked on the average cost of haulage per ton mile at 3.06d. but have averaged the rate at 2½d. per ton mile.

For super. on a 150 mile haulage, which would be the average haulage for the State, it will be seen that if it costs 2½d. a ton per mile to the railways—that is the actual cost and we are receiving .59d. a ton per

mile—there is going to be a substantial loss. It works out at about 25s. a ton which represents a loss to the Railway Department on every ton of super. that is carted an average distance of 150 miles. On a 300-mile haulage the freight rate is 9s. 9d. a ton or 2/5ths of a penny a ton per mile. That is because of the greater distance hauled, so the loss there for every mile hauled is about £2 12s. 6d. a ton.

Hon. A. H. Panton : It has been going on for years.

Mr. STYANTS : Of course it has. I raised no objection to that when primary producers were receiving poorer prices. I believe that now in the heyday of their prosperity they should at least pay the cost of the haulage of their products. If not, I would say that a good case could be made out for them to come under the same conditions and to be placed in the same category as the remainder of the industries of the State, so that when the Railway Department performs a service for them they should pay not only the actual cost but also something in addition, and thus enable the department to meet its huge interest bill.

Mr. Ackland : How would you approach the subject of their giving you a subsidy ?

Mr. STYANTS : On the subject of wheat, I think according to the figures given to the House in answer to a question asked by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie a fortnight ago, there were 288,000 tons of wheat still remaining in the country. When I approached the Chief Traffic Manager's office to protest against the cutting out of two passenger trains a week to the Goldfields, he said that it was necessary, on account of engine power, to cut out those passenger trains to enable the department to shift goods traffic. I said to the officer, "There are 288,000 tons of wheat in the country and it does not seem to me to be sound financial policy to cancel payable passenger trains in order to haul wheat on which the department will lose about 18s. 6d. on every ton it hauls." That will be the case.

Wheat is carried at a preferential rate. In 1948, for a haulage of 150 miles, the charge for wheat was 16s. 5d. a ton, or 1½d. per ton mile. I repeat that that is just about half what it costs the department to haul the wheat. Allowing for a reduction from 3-06d. per ton mile to 2½d.

per ton mile, we find it is just 100 per cent. less than it actually costs the Railway Department to move it. It is even worse on a 300-mile haulage. The freight charge is 23s. 2d. per ton mile, but it costs 2½d. per ton to haul the wheat. Therefore, when wheat is hauled for a distance of 300 miles the department's loss is 35s. a ton. Even the increased rates that have been imposed—they are almost double—will, so far as wheat is concerned, show a substantial loss to the department.

The new rate to operate for super. hauled for 150 miles is 13s. 3d., or 1d. per ton mile. The actual cost of the haulage is 2½d., so that the average for the 150-mile haulage for every ton of super will be 18s. 9d. For the longer distances, that is, 300 miles, the rate on a graduated scale comes down to 5/6d. per ton mile, so that means additional loss to the department. The new charge for hauling wheat 150 miles will bring it to about 1½d. per ton per mile, or ½d. a ton per mile less than the actual cost of haulage. I worked out the loss roughly and may be £1,000 out one way or the other. Even with the increased charges, the shifting of the 288,000 tons of wheat from the country, with an average haulage of 150 miles, will show a deficit on operational costs of £230,000. No wonder the department's finances are not in a healthy state !

I think the new Commissioner of Railways was justified in the observation he made about the financial position of the department. He said the department would have to cease to be treated as a charitable institution. So far as the freight charges on the two items I have mentioned are concerned, the department certainly is being used as a charitable institution. We know that the department provides many services either at cost or considerably less than cost and that in many instances it makes no charge at all. When we consider that super. and wheat are 30 per cent. of the ton mileage which is run by the railways we get some idea what amount they are losing ; anything from 18s. 6d. to 35s. a ton for those items alone. We also get some idea of the colossal amount that is being debited to the railways and why they are showing such a loss.

To the casual observer it might appear, on going through the Premier's Budget that the State was expecting to get considerably increased revenue, but I think

it will be found that no greater volume of business is being done. The increased revenue that is being received is derived from the additional charges now being made by every Government department. Public utilities are shown as likely to return £981,000 more than last year, but they are not giving £981,000 worth of additional service. The figures have reached that great height because of the increased charges being made. It is very deceiving to quote revenue in terms of money in order to show that industrial output is greater or that primary production has increased, because for each a greatly enhanced price is being received. Therefore, to state production in monetary terms is fallacious. It does not give a true indication of the output or production. Export prices are up about 25 per cent. and there has been a considerable increase in wholesale and retail prices.

A matter that will give us increasing concern during the next few years is the international harvesting of wheat. From the information we are able to glean it appears that wheat production in the countries which have a large exportable surplus is likely to be increased and consequently more of it will be available for export. I can remember the position of the wheat industry in 1937, 1938 and 1939 when it was not a question of getting a payable price, when it was not a question of getting 3s. a bushel, but when it was a question of getting somebody to buy the wheat at any price. While I do not anticipate that the wheat market will fall to such low levels for the next few years, I certainly think that the days when the farmer received upwards of 17s. 6d. a bushel have gone. That is going to have serious repercussions on the State.

I believe that when the overseas prices of our primary produce reach something approaching the pre-war level there will be a day of reckoning for Australia. I noticed in the figures supplied by the Premier that wool had averaged 4s. and, I think, one halfpenny a lb. for the last 12 months compared with 3s. 3d. for the previous year. That is one of our staple products, which returned, I think, some £22,000,000 to Australia over the last 12 months. While I feel that the market for wool is more assured than that for wheat, I still do not think we will receive an average of 4s. a lb. for many years to come.

I was very pleased to see that Albany is to get some special consideration. I was glad to learn that it is proposed to establish super. works there and to install bulk-handling facilities. I hope that this is not a promise, like many others that the Government made at the last election, that will not materialise for many years to come, because I realise that the port of Albany has had a fairly raw deal in the past. As one of the members of the Royal Commission which inquired into the better use of our outports, I realised that much of the wheat being produced in the Albany zone was being taken to Bunbury because there were no bulk-handling facilities at Albany.

Mr. Hill: Not "much," but all of it!

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, I believe all the bulk wheat would have gone to Bunbury because there were no facilities at Albany, and any wheat that the port got from its own zone would have been bagged-wheat. I think it would be of advantage to the Railway Department if super. works were established at Albany because there would be many miles less haulage and consequently less loss upon every ton of super. carted by the department. I was also pleased to know that it is proposed to give Albany some wharfage facilities in place of the present jetty.

The opinion I formed as a result of the expert evidence tendered to the Outports Royal Commission was that jetties are out of date and that the modern type of berthing is preferable, alongside wharves with sheds with vehicular traffic on one side, so that goods come out of the ship on to the wharf, through the sheds and on to railway trucks or road transport on the other side. So I am particularly pleased to see that Albany is to receive some consideration; and I repeat that I hope these things will materialise in the very near future, and that this will not be like many other increased facilities which the Government promised at the last election but which up to date it has not even been able to start, let alone provide in entirety.

I noticed an announcement in the newspaper that the Premier intends to press the Commonwealth Government for assistance for the goldmining industry. It appears to me that the Premier is still pursuing the old game of passing the buck. It is true the State has not the finances that the Commonwealth Government has to assist

the industry, but the reverse of assistance has been given to the industry in that the Government has done almost everything in its power to intensify the difficulties being faced. In addition to increased railway freights there have been increases in the charges for all Government services; and if there is one way to hamper a big industry like that of goldmining in a time of financial stress, that way is by increasing railway charges.

In respect of not only the goldmining industry but any industry that has to depend upon a great length of railway line as a means of obtaining the supplies necessary to carry on, the surest way to place additional burdens upon it is to increase railway freights. The Chamber of Mines informed me that when the first 20 per cent. increase was imposed, prior to the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the 20 per cent. which has now been levied—making about 30 per cent. in all—they expected that the increase would impose an additional burden of £30,000 on the industry. They were not so concerned about that as about the indirect burden placed on the industry, inasmuch as the increased railway freights were certain to lead to a rise in the cost of living in the Goldfields area, consequent upon which there would be an increase in the basic wage. It was considered that the increased basic wage of 3s. 8d.—that is, prior to the last one of 6s. 1d. a week—would cost the goldmining industry £52,000. As a result of the further rise of 6s. 1d., caused to a considerable extent by the increased railway freights, it appears that an additional £150,000 cost has been added to the goldmining industry.

Mr. Ackland: Who should have carried that expense?

Mr. STYANTS: My guess is as good as the hon. member's! Probably the same people who have been carrying it for the primary producers in this State for the last four or five years, during which there has been £315,000 actual loss on the railways for the cartage of super.; about £500,000 in respect of the cartage of wheat; and £125,000 on a road subsidy for the cartage of super.

Mr. Needham: That is what is called socialism.

Mr. STYANTS: It is socialism for one section of the community; but, as a Goldfields representative, I am very resentful of the preferential treatment being shown to

other producers in the State as against that shown to an industry which has on at least two occasions saved this State from financial disaster. Now we find that we are in difficulties and instead of the Government saying, "We will give you some assistance because we realise you are in financial trouble," it heaps further difficulties on the industry at every turn.

Yet the Premier goes to the Eastern States and makes the statement that he will press the Commonwealth Government for assistance for the goldmining industry. There might be some method in that; because if he can obtain a subsidy for the industry he will then be able to increase his railway freights further and still get a greater amount than he is getting from the Commonwealth, only by an indirect method. If there is a recession in the goldmining industry in this State Western Australia will feel it. I do not say this in any derogatory spirit so far as the importance of the industry is concerned, but if its activities fall 50 per cent., this State will face a calamity. So far as the rest of Australia is concerned, I do not suppose it would feel the repercussions to any great extent, certainly not to anything like the extent that Western Australia would.

The Premier did not think the rise of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in railway freights that he recently imposed would seriously affect the goldmining industry. If it had been only $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. above the pre-war charges, it might not have seriously affected it, although it would have cost some thousands of pounds annually. But we have to remember that there was a 20 per cent. rise in railway freights plus the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. which makes a 30 per cent. increase. He said he would help the mines that were in difficulty. That is a most extraordinary statement. How does he expect to segregate particular mines so as to assist them with railway freights? How is he to find the true financial position of an individual mine? When I suggested, at the time the 20 per cent. increase took place, that the Government should postpone its application to the Goldfields for a limited period, until the industry got out of the financial crisis it was in, I was told it was quite impracticable. Well, I say it was not impracticable. It was quite practicable if there had been the will to do it on the part

of the Government. It is, however, impracticable to do what the Premier now suggests, namely, assist individual mines which are in financial difficulties.

I am alarmed at the chaotic condition of the finances of the Railway Department. It is not many years since the department's finances were in a not unhealthy state. It is true that because we are paying interest on materials that were used in the very early railways and that have disappeared through the years, we are paying a huge amount annually. Prior to the war it was 6s. 6d. in each £1 of earnings by the Railway Department. We find, nevertheless, that the department on occasions was able to pay £1,000,000 interest and still show a surplus.

Prior to the last two years I cannot recall the finances of the department being in such a state that it was not able to meet operational costs. But the Premier told the House the other night that despite the increase of approximately 30 per cent. in freights, the best he can hope for from the railways is about a £3,500,000 deficit. That is a truly alarming position. He said that even with the increased earnings the railway finances would show a deficit of £1,050,000, being the difference between normal working expenses and revenue. For a small State, and a railway system in which only £27,000,000 has been invested, that is very distressing. Most of us know that because of the system that has operated over the years in assessing railway finances we have paid something like £35,000,000 in interest on a £27,000,000 capital. The future prospects do not look at all reassuring.

I want to touch briefly on the subject of housing because of a news item that came over the air tonight. It was alarming indeed. We were told that an increase in the price of timber products had been granted as from last Monday. So, the increase that has been permitted in the cost of building materials has been made retrospective. We were told that the details had not been worked out, but it looked like scantling for buildings going up 5s. 8d. per 100 super ft. and joinery perhaps 5 per cent. When we consider that those increases are additional to the rises that have occurred since the 1st January, we wonder just where we are going to finish.

Mr. Needham: Where will the working man get a home?

Mr. STYANTS: He will not. A brick house with a tile roof costs from £130 to £180 per square compared with the 1942 price—and that was not pre-war—of £70 a square. That gives some idea of the impossibility of a working man, or even a man earning £12 a week, ever owning a home. Not only have the costs of building materials gone sky-high, but there is the question of the price of furniture.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Did the Minister approve of the price increases you have mentioned?

Mr. STYANTS: I take it the Minister was not personally consulted, but the Prices Branch has approved of the increase. I asked the Minister for Housing some questions dealing with the increase in costs of certain building materials since the 1st January last. Bricks, guttering, etc., have all gone up since then.

The Attorney General: All of which is due to labour.

Mr. STYANTS: It is not so much a question of labour as the rake-off that occurs from the time the goods leave the producer till they are acquired by the ultimate owner.

The Attorney General: The rake-off has not increased.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister for Housing said that scantling had increased by 6½ per cent. from the 1st January. It has gone up another 5 per cent. since then. T. & g. flooring went up 7½ per cent. plus the 5 per cent. Joinery went up 5 per cent. after the 1st January and has now gone up another 5 per cent. If that is not going to bring about discontent among the people, I do not know what is. A working man has no chance of getting a decent house unless he becomes a tenant in one of the Commonwealth-State rental homes.

The Minister for Lands: That possibility disappeared 10 or 12 years ago.

Mr. STYANTS: It is quite impossible now. A house that cost £950, pre-war, was a very nice home, and any building artisan or tradesman on a substantial margin of £2 or £3 a week would have been proud to own it. But today the same home would cost at least £2,250 without the land. By the time the barest of furnishings are

provided the cost would be increased by another £250 to £300. That shows just how impossible it is for a working man to get something which, in my opinion, makes more for contentment among the people than any other half dozen things we can suggest—that is the right of home ownership. I believe nothing gives a man a greater sense of stability and interest in his community and country than knowing that the house he lives in is his own or that it is in the course of becoming his property. It is deplorable to think that with the present cost of building materials the only hope of the worker nowadays of getting into a decent home is to become a tenant in one of the Commonwealth-State homes.

I wish now, to deal with immigration and the need for increasing the population of this State and of Australia as a whole. Closely linked with that subject is the White Australia policy. That policy has an unfortunate title. I think we should change the name while retaining the essentials of the policy. It could be given a title that would not infer an inferiority complex, or some insult or challenge to the coloured races. It must be remembered that before India was granted self-government there were only 71,000,000 whites in the British Commonwealth of Nations and about 460,000,000 coloured people. Just to the north of Australia, within easy travelling distance of the machines of modern warfare, there are 1,000,000,000 coloured people, and the white population of Australia is only 7,500,000 and that of New Zealand about 2,000,000. We must also bear in mind that scores of thousands of coloured people just to the north of Australia have recently been taught the efficient use of modern weapons.

Those facts should make us realise how essential it is that we increase our population. I believe the basis of our White Australia policy is economic rather than racial, but the coloured races, possibly because of its unfortunate title, consider that policy a challenge and an insult in the racial sense. There are in Australia some well-meaning but misguided people who advocate appeasement in the application of the White Australia policy. They say we should adopt the quota system, which they think would remove some of the offence that is felt by our coloured neighbours in the islands adjacent to Australia. I do

not think a quota system would have that effect at all. Rather would it be taken as a sign of wavering or weakness.

The quota for Chinese entering America as permanent residents is 105 per annum—105 per annum to enter a country with a population of about 140,000,000. If we apply that ratio to our population of 7,500,000 it gives a quota of five or six Chinese to be allowed into Australia per year under that system. If we listened to the misguided advocates of a quota system we would only intensify our problem, because each year our coloured neighbours would clamour for a liberalisation of the quota, until in the end they would be entering our country in hordes. Other well-meaning people say that we could easily assimilate a certain number of coloured people into our population. They say we could easily absorb our own aborigines, but if we ask them how the coloured folk are to be assimilated the answer is "By marriage."

They say that the white blood is predominant and that we could breed out the black blood in four generations. If we then ask how they would like to see one of their close relatives married to a coloured person we find they would not relish it at all. It is always someone else's son or daughter that they think should do the breeding out of coloured blood. If we were to allow large numbers of our coloured neighbours to enter this country we would find them settling in small colonies, and we would soon be faced with something of the difficulty that has been one of America's greatest problems for many years.

During the war I became friendly with an American officer who was stationed in Perth. When he knew that I was a member of the State Parliament he implored me, on at least a dozen occasions, never to depart from the White Australia policy. He said the problem of her coloured citizens has been one of America's greatest difficulties for many years. They have about 18,000,000 negroes, whose birth-rate is twice that of the whites, and there is constant and increasing friction between the white and coloured citizens in America. However, it must not be thought that we totally debar the entry of coloured people into Australia. There are many reasons for which they may be allowed into this

country temporarily, and we have no objection to that. We allow them in as traders, and for educational purposes and other reasons on a temporary basis.

Many people say our policy will eventually lead to war. We all abhor the thought of war and hope it will never come to that, but should it be necessary to fight I think the White Australia policy would possibly be much more worthwhile fighting for than some of the causes for which the British Empire has gone to war during the last couple of centuries. The White Australia policy does not admit of any degrees. It is a clear-cut law that has operated since the first session of the Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. There cannot be flexibility within a rigid law and it cannot admit of degree. We must either support a White Australia policy or else a piebald Australia policy, or something of that sort. If we want to retain the fundamentals of a White Australia, then we must fight against the adoption of any quota system. Those who are agitating for a repeal of the White Australia policy obviously have not the relationships of the coloured people or the Australian people at heart. The very people who are agitating for a breaking down of this policy are the financial interests and the newspapers backing those financial interests in Australia.

One has to go to the Eastern States to realise the campaign that is taking place in the newspapers. These newspapers are the mouthpieces of vested interests in the Eastern States. In Western Australia the Press has not, to any great extent, advocated a breaking down of the White Australia policy. However, it is very definite in the Eastern States and the only paper which I read during the six weeks I was in Sydney that did not advocate a breaking down or a watering down of the policy was the Sydney "Truth." All the other papers, without exception, favoured either a total abolition of the White Australia policy or the adoption of a quota system. Most of them advocated the quota system because they realised that a total abolition of the policy would be entirely repugnant to the people of Australia and would get very little support. I believe that the real reason behind the campaign of the financial interests and the newspapers, is the hope of getting cheap labour.

Mr. Marshall: No other.

Mr. STYANTS: I have a cutting from one of the society papers in Sydney which I thought worth keeping. I intend to read it to the Committee as a matter of interest. It is headed "The Town is simply awful." The article states—

Nice people were shunning Australians in Singapore because of Immigration Minister Calwell's enforcement of the White Australia policy, said "Rada Shierlaw."

Mrs. Shierlaw, formerly socialite Rada Penfold-Hyland, is just back from Singapore.

"Personally I don't know what to say about it. Think of all the coloured servants we could have in this vast continent of ours."

"Of course, intermarriage is a frightful thing, but Mr. Calwell ought to let the coloured people in to do a little work for us."

"They are such wonderful workers, quite lazy, of course, but they do respect the quality of leadership in their bosses and they obey."

"I don't know what's happened to the town (Sydney), in the two years I have been in Singapore."

"Quite deserted. It's simply awful."

"In Singapore things are demoralisingly easy, quite sinful in fact."

"All the social life there is club life. There are simply masses of clubs to belong to."

"Really after a time, you begin to feel a bit like a white mouse in a cage."

"From Mondays to Fridays you entertain in your own home or are entertained by your friends. Really, most of the business is done after 6 o'clock I always say."

"In Singapore, of course, you just don't have to do a thing for yourself. The servants do everything."

"Everyone has a car and a chauffeur. Alcohol is easy to obtain and this makes hospitality simple to dispense."

"Of course, there's the Communist problem. These awful people are trying to infiltrate into Singapore itself."

"With most of my friends away I shall have plenty of time for my favourite occupation. Reading a nice book."

That is a lady who is now back and who comes from one of the very wealthy families of Australia—a socialite from Sydney. Probably the same reasons are behind the campaign to break down the White Australia policy. These people want cheap labour and they do not mind how brutal they are in their attempts to eliminate the White Australia policy. If a white woman marries a coloured man, she does it with her eyes open. She knows all the implications attached to it. Strangely enough, the communists are in league with the vested interests in Eastern Australia in endeavouring to break down the White Australia policy. Possibly the communists think that the polyglot offspring of these coloured people, and the degenerate whites of Australia, would be more willing slaves

for their system than would the white Australians. Consequently, the communists are hand in hand with vested interests in Sydney in an agitation to allow quotas of coloured people into Australia.

While dealing with the question of communist activities, I would mention that I saw quite a lot when I was in Newcastle just prior to the strike. The Labour people in New South Wales realised that a showdown was coming although they did not think it would be quite so soon. I saw a good deal of the outward activities of the communist party around the coalmines of New South Wales, and therefore I was not surprised when a showdown had to be taken by the Australian Commonwealth Labour Government and the Labour Government of New South Wales. One night, either this week or last week, the member for Boulder informed the House of the backing which the communist party received from certain financial institutions for the purchase of the Green Coupon building in George street, Sydney. It is quite evident that the communist party in Australia, with its comparatively small numbers, could not finance the purchase of such a magnificent building. Evidence as to the comparatively small numbers of communists can be gauged on every occasion when they put up a political candidate. In almost every case each candidate loses his deposit.

The Minister for Lands: Who did the member for Boulder say financed them?

Mr. STYANTS: He said the A.M.P. Society took out a mortgage for £13,000 and he mentioned some other institution which took out a second mortgage. If the owners of the Green Coupon building had been patriotic Australians and been alive to the interests of Australia, they would have refused to sell, because there was no camouflage about the transaction. The ironworkers' organisation, which is controlled by communists, was the purchaser and that organisation did not attempt to conceal the fact in any shape or form.

The Minister for Lands: Did not the A.M.P. Society take over the transfer of the mortgage?

Mr. STYANTS: I understand the building was owned by a wealthy firm in Sydney and it was purchased by the Ironworkers' Union which received backing from the A.M.P. Society as well as from another financial

institution. In addition to that, I have been informed from a reliable authority, that the building in which the communist party is housed in Adelaide is owned by an anti-Labour member of the Legislative Council in South Australia. He is finding the office accommodation. We are always having the taunt thrown at us that if we are not communists, then we are at least what are called fellow-travellers of the communist party. When I say "we" I mean members on this side of the House and those representing the trade union movement. The communist party was refused accommodation in the Adelaide Trades Hall and that party is now being housed in a building owned by an anti-Labour member of the Legislative Council of that State.

From a casual observation, I think that the Liberal Party has adopted a good deal of the technique of the communist party in Australia. I was reading the evidence of Sharpley before the Royal Commission in Victoria and he said that for a number of years it has been the policy of the communist party to have schools of instruction, where they could inculcate into their followers the principles of communism. I find that in quite recent years the Liberal Party in this State has adopted the same tactics as the communists.

The Minister for Lands: Similar to those of the Young Labour Party.

Mr. STYANTS: The Liberal Party has a school, which I think lasts a week or a fortnight, for the teaching of its philosophy. I would not be at all surprised if they followed the example set by the communists in educating their followers in their principles—if one can use that word in connection with communism.

Mr. Grayden: You fellows have certainly made a swing against communism recently.

Mr. STYANTS: There is another striking comparison between the L.C.L. and the communist party, and that is in relation to the number of aliases under which they masquerade. Members on this side of the House have always been proud to work under the same title they have worked under since the inception of their Party. We find that the Liberal Party and its ancillary organisations have masqueraded under numerous aliases, and that is the technique adopted by the communist party in Australia over the past 30 years. Also, when

broadcasting we find the L.C.L. and the anti-Labour forces always using a number of aliases.

Men are very proud to retain the name that was given to them by their parents at their baptism. Of course, females change their name when they get married. It always appears to me to be exceptionally suspicious when an individual or an organisation is constantly desirous of changing his or its name. I am not unduly suspicious, but one cannot be blamed for suspicion when the L.C.L. desires, from time to time, to alter its name by which it has been known for a number of years to the Australian public as a political organisation. Why be ashamed of it? Why be ashamed of the fact that John Henry Austral and other people are working for the L.C.L. in ancillary organisations under numerous aliases? Why not work as the Labour Party does? When we open a branch of our Party, we open it under the name of the Australian Labour Party.

I now wish to deal with the question of population and immigration. It is recognised in many countries of the world that it would be extremely desirable if there were a reduction in the birthrate. Recently, I read in a newspaper that there are over 40,000 new mouths for breakfast each morning. Whilst we are getting on very well with the food requirements and necessities of life, with the exception of housing—we can get them at a price—in other countries, particularly Asiatic countries, dire starvation is their lot from day to day. If they could reduce the birthrate and adopt some restrictive measures to prevent the rapid increases they experience in their birthrates—300 per cent. in excess of ours—it would be an advantage to those people and the world in general. We must consider that in Australia we have at present a population of about $7\frac{1}{2}$ million. We have 3,000,000 square miles of land and a coastline of approximately 12,000 miles, and that works out at about $2\frac{1}{2}$ people to every square mile of territory. We must remember that much of the land is situated in an area with an average rainfall of less than ten inches.

Increase of our population by immigration and natural methods is one of the great problems that Australia is facing today. One of the greatest handicaps against successfully achieving an increase in population is the lack of suitable housing. We

cannot ask women to come to Australia from overseas and live in tents, or apart from their husbands, as many in this State and also in other portions of Australia are doing now. We cannot expect women to bear children when there are not sufficient maternity hospitals to accommodate them. Therefore our great problem, in conjunction with that of immigration, is that of providing adequate housing facilities when those people arrive here, and not only those people but also the people who are already living in Australia in deplorable housing conditions.

I remember listening to a debate—I think it was the "Forum of the Air"—when one of the speakers said that we could increase the population of Australia by twenty millions in twenty years. I think that is an utter impossibility, and is purely wishful thinking. The population absorption of any expanding country is considered to be in the vicinity of two per cent., and while I heard the Minister for Immigration when in Western Australia recently say that in this year of grace there will be an addition to the population of Australia of 250,000, I feel somewhat sceptical about the realisation of his hopes, or Australia's hopes, of that number of immigrants and the natural increase being absorbed in Australia this year.

The Minister for Lands: He included 100,000 births over deaths in that figure.

Mr. STYANTS: One reason for Australia's birthrate not increasing is the housing shortage, but on our present birthrate the natural increase in Australia, that is, births over deaths, is 70,000 a year, which is approximately one per cent. of our population of 7,000,000.

The Minister for Lands: I think you will find that in the last three years it has been over 100,000.

Mr. STYANTS: No, I am quite certain it is not. On figures I have received from a reliable source, the average is one per cent., which is 70,000 births over deaths. If we got a further increase of 70,000 a year into Australia by immigration, we will reach two per cent. The authority from which I obtained these figures is unimpeachable. The increase of population in the United States and the Argentine during the last half century, that is, in the period from 1895 to 1946, is 5.2 per cent. Over the same period, Brazil absorbed a 3.8 increase. The United States, from 1900

to 1920, absorbed two per cent. each year, and from 1920 to 1943 the increase there from all sources had dropped to 1·2 per cent. In the Commonwealth Year Book, the increases in Australia are shown in quinquennial periods, as follows :—

From 1901 to 1906	....	1·38 per cent.
From 1906 to 1911	....	2·0 per cent.
From 1911 to 1915	....	1·87 per cent.
From 1915 to 1921	....	2·07 per cent.
From 1921 to 1926	....	2·11 per cent.
From 1926 to 1931	....	1·50 per cent.
From 1931 to 1936	....	·76 per cent.

Of course, the worst of the depression years were experienced during the last period. I think it can be reasonably expected that Australia can absorb 140,000 migrants in a year. I realise that the Minister for Immigration, Mr. Calwell, will have a much better idea of what this country can absorb than I, but it will be very interesting to me to see what the condition of these people will be if we endeavour to increase our population at the rate of 250,000 a year. It will mean, of course, that if we can absorb newcomers at that annual rate, in 25 years we shall have doubled our present population. Not only that, but we will have had to double our public services such as railways, air services and so forth. Thus, if we prove capable of successfully absorbing such a large number of people, it will be a magnificent achievement much greater than that accomplished in any other country throughout the whole world over a similar lengthy period.

Professor Giblin has expressed the opinion that Australia cannot absorb more than 100,000 people and he said that to bring in 20,000,000 people, which was the theme of a debate on "The Forum of the Air," would cost Australia £8,000,000,000 and that it was just impossible for the Commonwealth either to absorb such a vast number or to find the money necessary to pay for steamer fares, the cost of upkeep after arrival and the provision of facilities that naturally go with an increase of population, such as additional hospitals and so on. It appears to me that Australia may probably have another 25 years in which to increase its population to at least double the present figure if we are to hold the country for the white races.

The coloured people in the islands adjacent to Australia are beginning to be educated and to demand a greater share in the various commodities they produce. Their education and general standards will improve very

considerably in the course of the next 25 years, and whether we can retain the White Australia policy or whether we will have to adopt some other title for it, the fact remains that the country is still sparsely populated and at present has only 2·5 people to every square mile of territory. Unless that state of affairs is altered, it will be open to the coloured races in neighbouring islands to invade the country, and our only hope of saving the Commonwealth for the white races and for our children's children, will be to encourage people of the white races to settle here in the shortest time and in the greatest numbers it is possible to absorb under decent conditions.

The question arises : Where we are likely to secure all these millions of people, for we certainly shall not get them from England ? I should say the most that we can expect to get from the Motherland during the next five years will be 150,000 migrants. It is true there are many people clamouring at Australia House in London for assistance to come to Australia, but I should think the limit in that respect would be 50,000 a year. Even if they were to come here, we would find it fairly difficult to absorb them at present. Naturally they are not being encouraged by the British Government to leave England because their services are required there.

It is of great importance to Australia that England should be built up again as regards both its population and its economy. That is so because England prior to the war was one of the best customers Australia had for the disposal of our primary products. At any rate, I do not think we will be able to get any more than 150,000 immigrants from England in the course of the next five years. Naturally, that is the country to which we would first look to secure additional population. Probably we would get a limited number from the Baltic countries and also a number of displaced persons.

It must be remembered, too, that there is keen competition from every part of the world for people of that type and, unless we can overcome the housing difficulty and make other necessary and adequate provisions, we shall not be able to secure the most desirable of these people—the young men and women with their young families. We shall lose them and other countries will get in ahead of us by securing the greater proportion of them. I do not think we will get more than a very few French people, but we might get

a limited number of young Germans, particularly those who have not had the Nazi philosophy drilled into them. Germans have always proved themselves good colonists and they have increased the population of Australia, particularly in South Australia, in large numbers. We can hardly expect many from the devastated countries of Europe, but I think we may anticipate quite a lot from Southern Europe.

We have had many such people in years gone by and we know that they created a lot of racial animosity and hatred on the Goldfields, and much trouble in the timber industry and in connection with clearing contracts in the agricultural areas. Whether it would be fair to bring that type of migrant here in large numbers, to a country which has not been particularly anxious to receive them and has not extended to them any very cordial welcome, is very doubtful. I believe they are coming here now in greater numbers than is advisable. It is not fair to the people themselves that they should be encouraged to migrate to a country where they will not receive any appreciable welcome. It is not fair to the people who are already here and many would resent their arriving in large numbers.

The main trouble respecting these Southern Europeans is that they tend to concentrate in small cantons or communities. They do not mix freely with Australians, which is not always the fault of the people themselves. The fault is largely that of Australians who have been exceedingly slow to fraternise with them, and this has more or less driven the newcomers into small colonies.

On the Eastern Goldfields we find that the Australian-born children of Southern Europeans are indistinguishable from Australians. When such children are born here, go to school locally and learn the Australian customs and ways of life, they are indistinguishable from the ordinary Australian child born of British parents, and were it not for their surnames it would not be known that they were of foreign origin. They could only be regarded as good Australians. They are in fact good Australians and very estimable citizens and compare well with Australians born of English parents.

As for the immigration policy generally, if the Commonwealth is to attract people from overseas countries in large numbers, Australians will have to alter their attitude

towards what we now designate, "New Australians." I remember that after the 1914-18 war when many thousands of people were coming from the Mother Country, they were scathingly referred to as "pom-mies," while Southern Europeans were called "dingbats" and many other unsavoury epithets were applied to them. We know that subsequently there were racial riots on the Goldfields and we certainly did not extend the hand of welcome to them to any appreciable degree. If we are to make a success of the immigration policy, we shall have very considerably to alter our attitude towards the people who will be arriving here. They are coming here on the one hand to get away perhaps from persecution and oppression and in order to better their conditions. We, on the other hand, should welcome them, as I believe they are essential for the protection and progress of Australia. If we extend to them a welcome, teach them the fundamentals of the Australian temperament and the Australian way of life, we probably can get a sufficient number of them so that in about 25 years our population will be doubled.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [9.30]: It is not my intention to speak at length tonight on the general debate, but I intend to deal with the new electricity costs which, by and large, affect all the people in the metropolitan area. Before doing so, I will touch briefly on some of the matters that have already been mentioned. First, there is the deficit of £865,000 which the Premier anticipated for the year. Every member in this Chamber knows that I have always maintained that Western Australia, with its huge area and small population, could never even attempt to balance the budget with the revenue it was receiving. I therefore have no complaint about the Premier anticipating a deficit of over £750,000. Fortunately, as members are aware from today's "West Australian," the Premier is lucky. He has a Santa Claus, a Father Christmas. He is in trouble and the Commonwealth Treasurer puts at his disposal a sum of money this year greater than has been received by the State in past years.

The Acting Premier: If you analyse that carefully, you may not be so pleased about it.

Mr. TRIAT: Without analysing it carefully, I know that during wartime the Government did not have two shillings to spend ;

now it can spend over £2,000,000. I do not object to the Treasurer spending huge sums of money provided it is spent wisely and good results are obtained. I shall prove to the Committee tonight that I see nothing in the Budget, or anything in the attitude of the Government since it has been in office, that convinces me the people of Western Australia will benefit by way of increased production, rehabilitation or anything else. I was astounded tonight when the member for Kalgoorlie told me that an order had been made approving of an increase in the price of timber produced in Western Australia. Can the Government, or the people responsible for the increase, say that it is due to the 40-hour week? Surely that bugbear is dead by now!

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Government blames the strike now.

Mr. TRIAT: I suppose so, but will the people tolerate any longer these continual increases in the costs of their commodities, consumable and otherwise? I well remember the recent prices referendum. I myself have not referred to it before, but much has been said about it in this Chamber and I feel like referring to it now. I was of the opinion at the time that the Commonwealth should continue to control prices, and I advocated a Yes vote at the referendum. I considered that the Commonwealth Government was the only Government that could successfully control prices. I listened carefully to the speeches by members on the opposite side, because I believe that from a multiplicity of opinions one can arrive at a right conclusion, and I say this for members opposite, that they adduced some convincing arguments. They said that we had on our own statute book an Act for the purpose of controlling prices. They said that they could control prices and would guarantee to do so. And they were successful in getting the people to vote against the continuance of price control by the Commonwealth Government.

To show the extent to which members opposite went to secure a No vote and how they tried to mislead the people by popular catch cries, I point out that they used a famous Admiral's signal calling upon his men to do their duty. It was a great slogan and carried much weight. The Liberal Party used it, however, to win a paltry referendum, but altered it to read—

W.A. expects that this day every man and woman will do his or her duty and vote No.

But what a difference in results! One man won a battle for his country; the Liberal Party members lost everything for the people they represent. Another slogan, authorised by Mr. Palmer, was "Keep down rents and prices and vote No." Now, that is disgusting. What do we find today? That the prices for scantlings and joinery have been increased by 5 per cent. That was the announced increase, but it will be found the increase will be greater, as I shall prove. In an endeavour to obtain material for my speech tonight, I asked the Minister for Works a small question and one which anybody in authority could answer quite easily, in my opinion. My question was—

Can he advise the loss shown by the Government on the electric current supplied by them to the Perth City Council for the year ended the 31st October, 1947?

This is 1949. I was not asking for late figures, but for figures that should have been well known to the department, figures two years old.

The Minister for Works: You might not have been in the House when I explained the delay.

Mr. TRIAT: I heard the Minister's explanation. He said that one officer was away.

The Minister for Works: Yes, the officer who deals with the figures.

Mr. TRIAT: Does the Minister mean to tell me that no-one else could give the information?

The Minister for Works: I have no doubt about that. However, it is this one man's responsibility. Nobody loses much by waiting an extra day.

Mr. TRIAT: Obviously, it is no use to supply me with the information tomorrow, as I wish to use it tonight.

The Minister for Works: Had you told me privately, I would have given you the information.

Mr. TRIAT: The Auditor General's report is on the Table and I thought I would get the information there. What do we find in the report? I quote from Section "B" for the year ended the 30th June, 1948. The Auditor General says—

With the exception of the State Electricity Commission all the required statements of accounts have now been received for the year 1947-48, and this report (Section "B") has been prepared. The report could have been made available earlier had all the statements of accounts included in this report been submitted within a reasonable period after the close of the financial year. Some statements were received only in April, 1949.

The State Electricity Commission commenced operating in March, 1946. The financial statements of the Commission for the period ended 30th June, 1947, were received in the Audit Office in August, 1948, but following the audit examination, were returned in February, 1949, for revision, and at date of this report, had not been re-submitted. The Commission's statements for the year 1947-48 also have not yet been received.

So the officer referred to by the Minister for Works must have been ill then, too! Who is running the country, the Government or a few officers who are not available at the time members ask for information?

The Minister for Works: I could not give you the information on the spur of the moment.

Mr. TRIAT: I know the Minister could not, but I was asking for information that should have been easily obtainable. Had I been asking for information relating to a later date, there would be something in what the Minister says.

The Minister for Works: You could have told me the day before.

Mr. TRIAT: I did not think there was any occasion for me to do so. Anyhow, the information has not been obtainable. So we have to go back and depend on reports in the Press, which I presume are reasonably correct. The report with which I would like to deal relates to a statement by Mr. Dumas, Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, concerning the price of electricity in Western Australia when this enterprise was first taken over by the Government. Mr. Dumas is a man of great standing in Western Australia and a pretty capable gentleman. Whether he depends on his own knowledge for the information he gives to the people or upon departmental officers I do not know. But when members read very carefully what appeared in the Press and analyse what has occurred since, they will arrive at the same conclusion I have reached, namely, that this statement was made upon information that was not from a very correct source. The newspaper item to which I refer was published in "The West Australian" on the 11th May under the heading "Rise in Price of Electricity" and it begins—

The prices for electricity to all consumers supplied by the State Electricity Commission would be increased from June 1 the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission (Mr. R. J. Dumas) said yesterday. The additional cost to the average householder would be less than 1s. per week.

That sounds quite definite. Since then the Electricity Commission has operated for a certain period, and accounts have come in

as a result of which the people are proving conclusively that the cost is not 1s. per week extra, but shillings per week. There has been an enormous increase. So the information submitted cannot have been correct. By some strange coincidence "The West Australian," which has always to make excuses for the Government, came out with a sub-leader on the same day, from which I will quote. It said in part—

Once again it has been the unhappy lot of the McLarty-Watts Government to have to increase the revenue of a public utility.

Once again! It must have occurred frequently before that particular date, because "The West Australian" was perturbed that this Government "once again" had to increase the cost to the people of a public utility. I presume that tomorrow morning there will be not a sub-leader but a full leading article on the further unfortunate circumstance that this Government has again had to increase the cost to the consumers of something produced from a public utility, this time the State Saw Mills. So the position is getting out of hand, but excuses continue to be made. The sub-leader went on to say, having made a reference to the imposition of higher railway freights and fares, that—

There is, however, the difference that while railway rehabilitation will take years to accomplish the Commission hopes to have the first section of the South Fremantle station in operation next year.

What good will that be to the people except that they will have a little more power? It will not reduce costs, because costs are increasing. Anyway, the project in South Fremantle is a child of the Labour Government, and if it were not for that Government's activity there would be very little advancement in the establishment of the new station. The present Government has gone on with the project. The sub-leader continues—

Loan capital invested in electricity undertakings naturally have been growing steadily. In 1947-48 it stood at £3,023,000, when, after charging £89,719 for interest, the loss was £238,196, compared with a loss of £195,156 for the previous year. The Commission is feeling the effects of higher all-round costs, and, as a result of the Government's purchase of the Perth City Council's electricity and gas undertakings it will also have an annual liability of £60,000 for 50 years.

That is nice in figures. The Government will have to pay to the Perth City Council £60,000 for 50 years and is getting no profits out of the undertaking. Did the

Perth City Council, during the period it conducted the electricity and gas undertakings, show a loss or a profit for 1947? That is what I would have desired the Minister to be able to tell me in reply to my question. As the Minister was not able to procure the information, I had to obtain it myself, and I did so from the report of the Lord Mayor for 1947-48. In that report the profits were shown as £106,193 2s. 4d. and they were obtained after the Perth City Council had paid high wages, depreciation, and superannuation and had met all the other liabilities which such a utility has to face.

The Minister for Works: Mention the figure they paid for the current in bulk.

Mr. TRIAT: I will tell the Minister what they paid for current in bulk and what profits they made. The Government claims to suffer an enormous disability in having to operate under a 40-hour week, but I will prove that that is pure hokey! The Perth City Council showed a profit of £106,000. The State Government purchased the undertaking and it is committed to pay £60,000 a year. But it now participates in the profit that these people were making of £106,000 a year at a rate of consumption 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. lower than what the Government is charging today. Can you believe it! The Government buys a public utility and the moment it takes that utility over from an organisation which made a big profit after paying high rates and charges and working under a 40-hour week and providing long service leave and superannuation for its employees, it immediately increases the cost from 30 to 100 per cent. That is the increased cost to the consumers of Western Australia and there is not one word of outcry. This paper has not said anything about it. It regretted the new charge but gave no reason for it; nor have the people that represent the citizens of Perth—the Lord Mayor and his councillors—raised any outcry; and there is one of the councillors in this Chamber. They do not care what the people pay for electric current.

Mr. Read: It is your baby; we have sold it.

Mr. TRIAT: There is no doubt about it—it was an unfortunate and unwanted baby. I believe that this purchase of a trading concern was a good move. I have no grouse against that, but I complain

that when the Government purchased it, without any cause or reason, without any increase in wages having occurred or any reduction of working hours, it immediately increased the cost to the consumer, whereas the City Council was showing a profit of £106,000 a year after allowing for depreciation and paying high salaries. There is something wrong somewhere. The Minister asked me to mention the cost of the purchase of material. I will, but I would like first to say that I am surprised the City Council has not, on behalf of the ratepayers it represents, taken up with the Government very strongly the matter of this over-charging of the people of Western Australia. Unfortunately for the people of Perth, the Lord Mayor is too busy having social engagements. I call them social engagements, but the lady member for Subiaco would not. She would call them guzzling engagements. I do not say that: I say "social engagements."

The Minister for Works: You have gone into both sides of this question, have you?

Mr. TRIAT: I hope so.

The Minister for Works: You are not too sure.

Mr. TRIAT: I will quote both sides. The Lord Mayor was very careful to protect the Perth City Council from being overcharged, because the agreement with the Government states that for a period of 15 years the Electricity Department shall not charge the Perth City Council for street lighting anything in excess of the cost at the time the agreement was made. He knew what was going to occur. He was quite aware that the cost to the consumer would be increased. I will read the pronouncement made by him on that occasion. It is to be found at page 24 of the Lord Mayor's report for 1947-48. He said—

That street lighting be continued under the existing scale of charges for a period of fifteen years, after which the terms of such lighting may be reviewed.

So, with a full knowledge in his mind at that time of increased costs to the consumer, he protected his council but made no endeavour to protect the ratepayers, whom he represents, of the city. I suppose it is not hard to find out the reason. It is well known—it has been announced in the Press—that the Lord Mayor is a candidate of the L.C.L. Would it be to his advantage to denounce the Government for whom he is going to be a candidate at the next

elections? Of course not! So he remains quiescent. He is voiceless as far as the consumers of electric current are concerned. But he is not the only one. Everybody is. Everyone in authority makes excuses for the Government. I am going to try to prove that the Government was not entitled to increase the costs.

Before dealing with that point I would like to advise members that electricity was sold by the department to the City Council at less than the cost of production. The existing agreement was to run for 50 years, and to terminate in, I think, 1963. Electricity was sold to the Perth City Council for .75d. per unit. We find that today the Electricity Commission is selling electric power to a consumer—the Subiaco Municipal Council—at less than 1d. per unit. So the loss to the power house, during the period of the agreement with the City Council, could not have been very heavy. To prove the figure I have just mentioned I will quote the figures submitted to me by the State Electricity Commission. The new rate to Subiaco—it is slightly higher than the old one—is as follows:—

First 50,000 units	....	1·1d. per unit.
Next 200,000 units	....	1·0d. per unit.
All over 250,000 units		·9d. per unit.

Those are the figures, yet when electricity was sold to the Perth City Council the loss was so great that the Government could not sustain it much longer and so decided to terminate the agreement with the council. We shall find out how much was sold to the Perth City Council and what was paid for it. In the year 1948 the council purchased 121,107,497 units at .75d. per unit. It sold to the public 112,845,966 units. These figures are to be found at page 22 of the Lord Mayor's report. So there was a difference between the amount of electricity purchased and that sold to consumers. Everyone knows that electricity cannot be stored. It cannot be corked up in a bottle or put in a box. So we presume that the Perth City Council lost 8,261,531 units in that particular year as a result of leakages and other means. That works out at £25,000, and yet the City Council was able to show a profit in that year of £106,000. So, it must be a profitable undertaking. But when the Government steps in, it does not lose 8½ million units, because it does not supply except through its own lines. It is the producer and distributor.

The Attorney General: It is using the same lines, and it would still have the same losses.

Mr. TRIAT: The City Council paid £25,000 which it could not recover, and still showed a profit of £106,000. Mr. Dumas had to make some excuses, of course, to the people of Western Australia for increasing the costs, and I come to the important part of his announcement. In the report of the 11th May, 1949, he says—

The costs of all commodities had largely increased, Mr. Dumas said. Coal, one of the principal commodities used by the Commission had risen materially in price over the years. Labour costs had also risen sharply.

Mr. Styants: Why did not the Minister give that explanation?

Mr. TRIAT: I have no idea.

The Attorney General: The department is in control, that is why.

Mr. TRIAT: This report goes on—

The Commission was only now beginning to feel the effect of the 40-hour week on its operations.

The old bugbear is trotted out in 1949. On every occasion that there has been an increase in costs the 40-hour week has been brought out.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It occurred with the old 44 hours, too.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. We have here a set of figures certified to by an auditor of the Perth City Council, and on the other hand we have the statement of the Government as to losses and increased costs. I am trying to find where the mistake is, and who is at fault. The actual facts are that the City Council purchased 121,000,000 units at .75d. per unit, but it lost 8½ million units. It never sold them. That was a total loss which amounted to £25,000. If we add £25,000 to the amount paid to the power house, £378,476, we find that the actual amount paid was £403,476. As I said before, the Perth City Council engaged all its employees at arbitration rates of wages and hours. The 40-hour week has been operating since the department agreed to it, through the Arbitration Court, which was some time ago. The council paid depreciation on electric plant amounting to £37,000 last year. In addition it paid all expenses, superannuation, maintenance of lines, etc., and showed a profit of £106,193. When the Government takes over, it does not lose £25,000 because of leakages.

The Attorney General: Why not?

Mr. TRIAT: Why should it?

The Attorney General: Because the electricity is still lost.

Mr. TRIAT: It is not always lost.

The Attorney General: The Government is using exactly the same lines and equipment.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes, but it is not paying for the loss. It is generating the electricity. It does not cost the Government any more.

The Attorney General: Of course it does.

Mr. TRIAT: It does not. The Government is not being charged for $8\frac{1}{2}$ million units that are being lost. The City Council paid for that electricity in actual cash. Yet, when the Government comes into operation what happens? It cannot make a profit on the prices charged.

The Attorney General: You think Mr. Dumas is incompetent.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not think he is incompetent.

The Attorney General: I am glad to hear that.

Mr. TRIAT: I think the people of Western Australia have for some reason been blinded and not told the truth. If the Government and its officers were competent, why should the price of electricity be increased 100 per cent.?

The Minister for Works: Do you say it has been increased 100 per cent.?

Mr. TRIAT: Yes.

The Minister for Works: You make that assertion?

Mr. TRIAT: Yes.

The Attorney General: You are sure of it?

Mr. TRIAT: Yes, and I hope the Minister will take up my challenge and get his engineers together so that they can work out the actual cost of the 40-hour week and the extra wages. He could let us know the result and not blind us with reports from the Auditor General's Department. Let us have the facts, and do not give them in generalised fashion. Give them separately and independently so that they may be analysed.

The Minister for Works: Did you speak to the Bill?

Mr. TRIAT: I did not think we would be treated in this way. I thought we would receive fair treatment. I will quote now

the facts concerning the new costs to consumers of electricity in the metropolitan area. I will deal first with the lighting rates. Under the Perth City Council, current for lighting was charged at the rate of 3d. per unit for the first 10 units per month, $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit for the next 500, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit for the next 500. The next 3,990 were at 2d. and anything over 5,000 units was charged at $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. We will take it up to the maximum, 3,990, plus 50, plus 50, plus 10. That gives 2s. 6d. for the first ten units and £5 12s. $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the next 490. The next 500 costs £5 14s. $9\frac{1}{2}$ d., and 5,000 units, £44 8s. 3d.

Under the new Government system, 100 units per month cost 4d. per unit, the next 500 cost $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit, and 4,400 above that cost 3d. per unit. All over 5,000 units, $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit. That gives £1 13s. 4d. for 100 units, £5 16s. 8d. for 400 units, £7 10s. for 500 units, and £63 19s. 2d. for 5,000 units. So, for 5,000 units the cost under the new scheme has increased by £19 12s. 11d., or $44\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Those are the actual figures for current used for lighting. I come now to power for industrial consumers. The Perth City Council rates were as follows:—

First 40 units per month	2 pence
Under 5,000 units per month	1 penny
Over 5,000 units and under 10,000	.95 pence
Total consumption over 10,000 units	.9 pence

Example.

40 units—2 pence	£0 6 8
4,000 units—1 pence	£16 13 4
4,040 units—£17.	
6,000 units—.95 pence—£23 18s. 6d.	

The new State Electricity Commission rates are as follows:—

First 200 units	$2\frac{1}{2}$ pence
Next 4,800 units	2 pence
Next 50,000 units	$1\frac{1}{2}$ pence
All over 55,000 units	.9 pence

Example.

200 units— $2\frac{1}{2}$ pence	£2 1 8
3,840 units—2 pence	£32 0 0
4,040 units—£34 1s. 8d.	
6,000 units—mean 2 pence—£48 6s. 8d.	

For 4,040 units per month the increase is £17 1s. 8d. or 100 per cent. For 6,000 units per month, the increase is £24 8s. 2d. or 100 per cent. Those figures are not guess-work, and they are not like the figures supplied by Mr. Dumas. If one asks for details at the Electricity Commission, one is told that they do not segregate the accounts and that it is impossible to tell

what this or that costs. That is the reply I have received. My experience has been that one can get very little in the way of a satisfactory reply from that department.

The other day I rang the department and asked how many gas consumers there were in the metropolitan area. The young lady who answered the telephone inquired what I wanted, and eventually a gentleman answered me. He asked who I was, what I wanted and what I wanted it for. I told him, and after a while he said I would have to write in, because he could not give the figures over the telephone. When I asked him why he could not do that, he said, "I cannot tell you why, but you will have to write in." I asked could he get me the figures by the following Tuesday, but he said he could not. It is a fine state of affairs when a member of Parliament cannot get information from a Government-controlled department, because there is too much secrecy about it.

I believe there is something wrong, because when we find such secrecy we can be sure that there is something dangerous about the information. They are frightened to let it out because it might escape to the public and do the department some damage. The information is being deliberately hidden. The people of the metropolitan area have made some noise about it, but the Press has not been very active in announcing the moans and groans of the public. However, the "Daily News" of the 27th July last published a number of articles from people who were disgruntled at the new costs. Whether the Minister read those articles or not I do not know, but the information contained in them has never been refuted. For that reason, and for the benefit of the Committee, I will quote two short articles. The first reads as follows:—

Electricity accounts for the first quarter of the new power rates are now dropping into letterboxes. Close on the postman's whistle is following a rising chorus of protest. One householder brought his account to the "Daily News" with previous accounts for comparison.

He did not take the risk of going along with only his new account. He took both old and new accounts for comparison. The article continues—

His Electricity bill for July to October last year—normally the month of highest power consumption—was £1 13s. 1d. His bill for the last quarter came to £2 14s. When compared with what the power would have cost under the old rates, it fell short of the promise made when the rates were increased. The promise was that the increase would cost the

average consumer less than a 1s. a week. This householder estimated an increase of 60 per cent. in his bill and a more than 1s. per week increase. A survey of industry revealed that the high bills were being received with dismay. Hatcheries were particularly hard hit. One hatchery owner found that his power bill increased 30 per cent. even with periods of alternate power supply. Another proprietor was budgeting for 100 per cent. increase in power costs. He said that the public had better start budgeting for an increase in the price of eggs.

That shows how the dog chases its tail and on this occasion the first to start an increase in the price of eggs, according to this man, is the Government, through its increase in the price of electricity. That is another factor in the rise of the cost of living. I presume that as the new regulations come into force for an increase in the price of timber, that will help to put the price of everything else up again. There is another heading, and the article continues—

Staggering New High.

At a city tearooms the monthly electricity bill leapt from last month's highest ever of £6 10s. 3d. to a staggering new high of £12 19s.

An analysis of the two accounts showed—Last month: e.l. 10 at 3d., 2s. 6d.; 138 at 2½d., £1 11s. 8d.; power, 40 at 2d., 6s. 8d.; 1,073 at 1d., £4 9s. 5d.; total £6 10s. 3d. This month—e.l. 100 at 4d., £1 13s. 4d.; 51 at 3½d., 14s. 10d.; power, 200 at 2½d., £2 1s. 8d.; 1,015 at 2d., £8 9s. 2d.; total £12 19s. If this month's account had been calculated at the old rates it would have totalled £6 19s. 5d.

Is there any denying that the Government which has taken over a profitable concern showing a profit of £106,000 a year, deliberately increased the cost to the consumer by 60 per cent. to 100 per cent. It had no occasion to do that.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What did the Lord Mayor say to that?

Mr. TRIAT: He is quiescent because he is a member of the Liberal Party. If it had been a Labour Government in office he would have had plenty to say.

Mr. Marshall: What would the member for Subiaco say?

Mr. TRIAT: What would everybody else have said? The unfortunate position is that the people are definitely being robbed when they have no right to be. I do not mind people paying for something when they receive goods for it, but I object to people not receiving goods when they are paying an exorbitant price, whether the tradesman is a Government, a normal trader, or a municipality.

Mr. Marshall: They could have fixed their own price, but they did not do that.

Mr. TRIAT: Going a little further with this extract—it is worth listening to, in my opinion, because it is very important—it states—

"There is only one thing for it," the proprietor said. "All my prices must go up." He said that he had had his account checked. It was stated to be correct.

He had been helped out with auxiliary power during the strike but power used had been added to his meter total and charged for at the ruling rate.

The Minister for Works: Have you made any inquiries as to whether that is correct? Also did you make inquiries as to whether that man actually put up the price of his eggs?

Mr. TRIAT: I am leaving it for the Minister to make inquiries.

The Minister for Works: No, it is your business.

Mr. TRIAT: I am giving the Minister a chance to dispute it. However, he cannot do that.

Mr. Marshall: They cannot even control the price of their own commodities. That is the trouble.

Mr. TRIAT: I want members to listen to this extract from the same article to see what the Government is doing for hospitals. The article states—

Hospitals were also hard hit. One hospital's bill for June was £58 16s. 8d. Calculated at the old rates the bill would have been £36 6s. 3d. This represented an increase of £22 10s. 5d. or 62 per cent.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: No wonder hospitals are closing down.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: And the Minister doesn't even bat an eyelid.

Mr. TRIAT: No, the Minister does not even bat an eyelid. If I had been the Minister in charge of the department and a charge like that was made, I would call for the man responsible for it.

The Minister for Works: If I thought there was any truth in it, I would do that.

Mr. TRIAT: Can the Minister dispute it?

The Minister for Works: I do not believe everything that I read in the paper or everything that is told to me.

Mr. TRIAT: There is really no occasion for one to go on talking. They are actual facts. The Government first of all bought a business undertaking that was one of the best profit-making businesses possessed by the Perth City Council. It showed an

actual profit, over all other costs, of £106,000. The Government bought that business and did not lose anything from the distribution or sale of electricity. Yet without any hesitation, or without seeking any cause or reason, it increased the cost of electricity from a 30 per cent. minimum up to 100 per cent. Those are the actual increases. And yet this Government has the audacity, through its departmental officers, to tell the consumers that the increases will be less than 1s. per week to the ordinary consumer.

When it was found that the increases would be more than 1s. per week, it should have been the Minister's responsibility to say to his departmental officers, "Let us get down to the job and find out just what are the facts, and see what is the cause of this increase." If the Government cannot show a profit on a concern, which was already running at a profit, then there seems to be something wrong. The same men are employed—there is no change of staff at all. It is exactly the same. There have been a few salary increases for some of the staff. The big fish, of course, got a big increase. The manager, in his own opinion, was entitled to an increase, so he took it before the change-over. He received a further £500 a year, but even his salary would not make that much difference to a unit of electricity. It would not have the slightest effect really. Yet the Government permits itself to be utilised by somebody, or for somebody else, for the purpose of increasing costs. That is a reflection on the Government and I sincerely hope that when the Premier replies to the Budget he will mention something about it. The Premier is not here this evening but his Ministers are and I trust that some response will be made to the charges I have laid against the Government. There has been an exorbitant increase in the cost of electricity and there is no need for it.

It is after 10 o'clock and as I propose to discuss the general items of the Estimates when the time comes, I will not keep the Committee any longer. However, I sincerely hope that members on the other side of the Chamber will take heed of what I have said and endeavour to give the people of Western Australia some redress against these electricity costs. They are exorbitant and should not be permitted to continue. I ask the Minister to confer with Mr. Dumas and Mr. Edmondson, and

obtain the real figures so that they may be given to this Committee because electricity charges in Western Australia have increased by as much as 100 per cent.

MR. PERKINS (York) [10.16]: I have listened with a good deal of interest to what previous speakers have had to say on these general Estimates. I was particularly interested in the remarks of the member for Kalgoorlie. Some of the statements which the hon. member made in regard to the charges levied against primary producers for the cartage of their goods, may lead members to think that those charges can be further increased without having serious effect on our economy. There has been a very startling increase in those charges in recent times. Most primary producers realise that some increases are inevitable because charges for other goods have been increased and therefore primary producers could not hope to escape an extra charge on the transport of their produce. They realise that other costs in the production of their goods had been increasing.

But if members take the trouble to look at the figures quoted in this House by the Minister for Railways, in answer to a question of mine a week or so ago, they will note that the increases in the rates for the haulage of wheat have been 50 per cent. and more. The original rate in 1947, for hauling wheat over 100 miles—that is bulk wheat—represented 4d. per bushel and the present price is 6d. The cost over 150 miles, in 1947, was 4½d. and the present rate is 7½d.; over 200 miles the 1947 rate was 5d. and the present rate is 8½d.; over 250 miles the previous rate was 5½d. and the new rate 9½d.; over 300 miles the old rate was 6½d. and the new rate is 10½d.; over 400 miles the original rate was 8d. and the present rate is 1s. per bushel.

Mr. Marshall: Where would you be hauling wheat over 400 miles?

Mr. PERKINS: Those are the rates given by the Railway Department.

Mr. Marshall: For big hauls, for a start.

Mr. PERKINS: The point is that those are the latest figures that are quoted, and it is possible to find areas in this State where it is necessary to haul wheat that distance under certain circumstances.

Mr. Marshall: No, it is not. Kalgoorlie is only 375 miles distant and there is no wheat hauled beyond that centre.

The Minister for Works: What about Ravensthorpe?

Mr. PERKINS: There is wheat hauled from around the Esperance district.

Mr. Marshall: That would go to the port of Esperance.

Mr. PERKINS: In certain circumstances the wheat would be hauled back. In any case, I have quoted those figures to the Committee and the increase has been considerable indeed. The member for Kalgoorlie has indicated that that policy, if carried into effect, will have far-reaching implications on the economy of this State. I do not know whether members have examined the latest census statistics, but if they do they will find food for thought when they compare them with the census statistics for 1933. Notwithstanding the considerable prosperity which is enjoyed in our wheatgrowing districts at present, I quote the following figures of the population of local authority areas for 1947 as compared with 1933. The 1947 figure appears first with the 1933 figure following, taking them in alphabetical order. They are—

	1947.	1933.
Beverley	1,680	1,992
Bruce Rock	1,897	2,498
Corrigin	1,444	1,845
Dalwallinu	1,703	2,228
Dowerin	1,145	1,474
Goomalling	1,220	1,803
Kellerberrin	2,074	2,412
Kondinin	886	1,269
Kulin	875	1,274
Lake Grace	1,153	1,466
Narembeen	997	1,471
Perenjori	957	1,275
Morawa	943	1,141
Quairading	1,425	1,754
Wagin	807	1,118
Wongan-Ballidu	1,713	1,581
York	1,045	1,243

Those are representative areas taken right through from the southern portions up to the northern sections of the wheat-belt. Those decreases indicate the general trend throughout those districts. The only exception I have been able to find in those statistics is the Wongan Hills area where there has been an increase from 1581 to 1713, which represents a rise of about 150. I think the member for Irwin-Moore will agree with me that that can be attributed to the utilisation of light land in

that area which was previously unused. That decrease of population in the wheat-growing area is taking place during a period when the population of the State as a whole has increased from 438,952 in 1933 to 502,731 in 1947—an increase of almost 64,000.

It must be clear to members that for some reason or another life in our wheat-growing districts, notwithstanding the present wave of prosperity is unattractive to the greater number of residents of this State. I have here an extract from "The National Bank Review" which refers to this matter as well as to production. It says—

**The Paradox of Rural Prosperity.
Production Fails to Increase.**

Generally, the production story of the last decade is disquieting. To take some examples: production of wool was lower in 1947-48 than the average for the five-year pre-war period, and was only slightly higher in 1948-49. The number of sheep averaged over 111 millions in the five-year pre-war period, and is now around 105 millions. During the last two years bountiful seasons have increased the wheat crop substantially above the pre-war average. But the acreage in 1948-49, 13 millions, was no greater than the average sown for the five years up to 1939. The number of dairy cattle in Australia in March, 1948, was no higher than the pre-war average, the production of butter in 1947-48, at 162,000 tons, was considerably below the 195,000 tons average in the pre-war five-year period, though the production of cheese and processed milk has risen.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What a blight this Government has cast on the country!

Mr. PERKINS: This article refers to Australia as a whole. To continue—

Production of sugar in 1947 was below the pre-war average, though last year there was a record crop, chiefly as a result of an excellent season. At March last year the number of beef cattle was very little above the pre-war average, and consequently,—

Mr. Bovell: The production of butter for the year ended the 30th June, 1948, was the highest on record in Western Australia.

Mr. PERKINS: Continuing—

Production of beef and veal was only fractionally higher. There has been a marked decline in the production of lamb and mutton, with the result that the total production of meat of all kinds fell, from 966,000 tons in 1938-39 to 942,000 tons in 1947-48.

It is probably true that the total volume of primary production has now regained pre-war levels. But not much satisfaction can be felt at a mere restoration of production to pre-war levels, for much of this restoration has resulted from the extremely favourable seasonal conditions which have ruled, generally, from 1947 up to the present.

Meanwhile, the Australian population has grown from around 6,960,000 in June, 1939, to about 7,710,000 in the middle of 1948. There are now about three-quarters of a million more people to feed and clothe at home, not to mention the extreme need of Great Britain and Western Europe for food-stuffs and other vital primary products during recent years. Powerful reasons can be found for this notable failure to expand Australian primary production, even at a rate commensurate with the growth in population. In the first place, despite the huge increase in farm income over recent years and the establishment of more secure marketing conditions for many of the more important primary products, the extraordinary fact emerges that the number of people engaged in rural occupations has actually declined.

Then there follow figures showing that decline which are more or less in line with the census figures I have just quoted from the Commonwealth Year Book.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Those figures would include farm labourers.

Mr. PERKINS: They are all-embracing.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It does not say that the number of farmers has declined.

Mr. PERKINS: It shows the number of people in our rural areas.

Mr. Marshall: Which becomes less with the progress of civilisation.

Mr. PERKINS: Continuing to quote—

On top of this severe loss of people from the land, bringing as it has a well-nigh critical shortage of labour in the primary industries, for years they have been confronted with a severe shortage of materials essential to their efficient conduct. Also, any incentive among those on the land to engage in the strenuous task of greatly expanding production against heavy odds on all sides has been seriously damaged by the corrosive influence of heavy taxation.

One of the most disturbing results of these heavy obstacles has been a failure to overcome, fully, the deterioration in the capital assets of primary industry, a tendency well recognised even in the early war years as one that would build up difficulties and dangers in the future. In all these circumstances it can be stated with truth that those who have remained on the land have done very well to keep production levels where they are. But the future of Australia's great primary industries cannot be permitted to rest upon the slim foundation of abnormally good seasons and abnormally high world prices for some of the main products.

That article has been written for a bank that has no interest in making the position any better or any worse than it actually is. I think we have every reason to take serious heed of some of the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is a most unusual action for a bank. Which bank is it?

Mr. PERKINS: The National Bank. I do not know whether members carefully read "The West Australian" this morning. If they did they probably noticed a statement by Dr. Colin Clark, an economist employed by the Queensland Government.

Mr. Reynolds: And a good man too.

Mr. PERKINS: Dr. Clark is an economist of world-wide repute and I propose to read an extract from what he is reported to have said in connection with his work on behalf of the World Food and Agriculture Organisation. In the course of his statement he said—

The chronic cause of the world food shortage was lack of labour rather than shortage of land. Dr. Colin Clark, the Australian economist, told the World Resources Conference. He said that the remedy for labour shortage in agriculture was to allow agricultural prices to rise to a point where they offered the farmer an income sufficient to induce him and his children to remain on the land.

Dr. Clark, who is at present engaged on a special commodity survey for the Food and Agriculture Organisation, said he was hopeful that the world could keep pace with its growing demand for food. Modern man had shown himself capable of scientific improvement of agricultural technique to raise the output per man by 1½ per cent. yearly. With the world's population increasing at a rate of 1 per cent. yearly the problem was by no means insoluble.

"In nearly every country a flight from the land has been taking place and shows every sign of continuing and accelerating," Dr. Clark said. "Up till now we have been fed by the underpaid labour of peasants and farm labourers. A new generation of countrymen is growing up throughout the world who are not prepared to remain at their work unless they can see in it economic opportunities comparable to those of the urban population."

Dr. Clark said that food prices would have to rise substantially, relative to industrial prices, to induce labour to remain in agriculture. Prices would have to continue rising for 20 or 30 years to a level about 70 per cent. above present-day prices.

Those words are uttered by an economist of world-wide repute and it is well for members to realise their implication.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You had better show them to the Premier.

Mr. PERKINS: When I heard the member for Kalgoorlie advocate additional imposts upon primary industries, I wondered if he had ever read or had taken any heed of the advice of economists, such as Dr. Colin Clark.

Mr. Styants: I did not refer to any additional imposts. I want them to pay the full cost of services they are getting.

Mr. PERKINS: That means an additional impost upon what they are paying now.

If increased burdens are placed upon the farming community, there can be but one result.

Mr. Brady: They cannot go round in their flash cars.

Mr. PERKINS: It can only result in expansion of the industry not taking place. I have heard members quote the incomes of various wealthy farmers. That is merely furnishing a very partial view of the situation. There are men in the industry who need every penny of income they receive at present.

Mr. May: Some of them do not know what to do with their money.

Mr. PERKINS: We find that in most country districts there has been an expansion, notwithstanding the severe labour shortage referred to in the article I have quoted. Nevertheless, the industry cannot expand with regard to the poorer quality land which has to be built up with the expenditure of capital, heavy dosing with fertilisers and by means of a great deal of work and research on the part of those in control of property, unless they are to receive an adequate return for their labour. Obviously if prices are to fall, as some members have suggested, and added imposts have to be borne as well, we shall reach the stage where we cannot possibly expect the volume of production from primary industries to increase.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Do you agree with Dr. Colin Clark on the question of the price of farm products?

Mr. PERKINS: I have quoted such figures on previous occasions. I quoted from the views of one associated with the International Food Organisation, Sir John Boyd Orr, who takes a very gloomy view of the food resources of the world.

Mr. Reynolds: You have too many pessimists!

Mr. PERKINS: I have quoted the views of men in highly responsible positions whose duty it is to make inquiries into matters respecting which the International Food Organisation has been set up to deal with. Members ought not to scoff at organisations that have employed such men.

Mr. Hegney: Your Government said it would keep prices down.

Mr. PERKINS: After making the necessary inquiries, these authorities have issued a warning that we must get to work if we are to maintain production on the pre-war level, and we must realise, too, that the population of the world is increasing very rapidly. Speaking from memory, I think the world's population has increased by 150,000,000 since 1938. Surprising as it may seem, even despite the great loss of life in Europe during the war, the population there actually increased during the war years. There are many implications of which we must take heed.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: In your view, the farmers are having a very bad time.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not say that. I say we have to shape our policies in line with what knowledgeable people tell us of the world situation. Obviously if we are to meet that situation, it is necessary to increase food supplies. If there is a possibility, such as I have outlined, wherein between the period of the census in 1933 and that taken in 1947 the wheatgrowing districts have actually lost population, then I consider that we, as a Parliament, should give serious thought to the situation.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You are really advocating an increase in the prices of primary products.

Mr. PERKINS: I am afraid the member for North-East Fremantle is leading me astray. I am not dealing with that particular aspect.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I thought you were.

Mr. PERKINS: I am endeavouring to suggest remedies for the situation, and I will deal with them as I proceed. I do not believe that the actual money income is necessarily the most important or the only factor to be taken into consideration in dealing with this question. In our agricultural districts we have people located on farms and in country towns, but all these persons take their part in the running of the local community and so contribute their share in the production of the district.

What concerns me is the fact that the policies we are now pursuing are not designed to encourage growth of population in country districts. I now refer to the housing policy. The Housing Commission has been very sympathetic indeed to the

farming community. It has done whatever has been possible to help the farming community to improve its general housing standard. Naturally, there are many physical difficulties in the way. It is exceedingly difficult to induce labour to leave the metropolitan area and accept work on isolated properties. I have no criticism to offer of the Housing Commission as to its general policy in granting permits for materials to meet the housing problem in the country. But it is a different story in relation to country towns.

I suppose every country member has encountered the same problems as I have in approaching the Housing Commission. The Commission is attempting to apply to the country the basis of need in the granting of permits to build, or in the erection of rental homes under the Commonwealth-State Scheme, that applies in the metropolitan area. That is almost general. There are one or two exceptions, such as Collie, where the policy has been to build houses to meet the increasing supply of labour for the coalmining industry. I have pointed out to the Housing Commission on numerous occasions that it ought not to apply the same standards to country towns as it applies to the metropolitan area, where people live under all sorts of conditions.

Those conditions may be difficult and poor, but when they are very bad and the people can establish a case for the granting of a permit to build or for a rental home, the Housing Commission grants it. In country towns, however, only a limited number of rental homes are available and it is much more difficult for persons to make do with a room or verandah. It also takes much longer in the country to get a home erected after a permit is granted. People will not go to country towns. Many of the business concerns endeavour to employ single instead of married men.

Mr. Hegney: Do you blame the Housing Commission for that?

Mr. PERKINS: From my own experience, I know that if there were half-a-dozen or a dozen houses available in a country town, they could be let overnight to married men for whom jobs would be available. If they were, then business in the town would expand and population would automatically increase. The effect would be to make more work available in

the district, thus gradually reducing the tendency for the population to decrease. The member for Pilbara by interjection wanted to know whether I blamed the Housing Commission. I do to this extent: It is setting too high a standard of need for the granting of permits in country towns.

Mr. Hegney: Would it not amount to a matter, of Government policy in those cases?

Mr. PERKINS: To some degree. I am suggesting there is need for an alteration of the present policy, and this is the right place to suggest a better one. Another point that must be borne in mind is that a farming community is never static. As one generation gets older a younger generation takes its place. The older people retire in order to make way for their sons, or possibly for the younger people to whom they sell their properties. At present, little allowance is made by the Housing Commission for changes of that kind. I know of a number of instances where people have desired to retire and live in the local town. They have made an application for a permit to build and it has been refused because in most cases the applicants are a two-unit family. These people then buy one of the few rental homes available in the town; they wait until the tenant leaves the town to secure employment elsewhere.

Most of the private rental homes in country districts are occupied by families who shift around in the course of their employment. As soon as one of these tenants leaves a house, it may be taken by one of the families to whom I have referred and then there is one less rental home in the town. Such persons who are prepared to build homes in a country town should be given most sympathetic consideration by the Housing Commission. I am not suggesting an open go, as I realise some supervision must be exercised, but it is so difficult to have houses erected in the country that if a person is prepared to build one he should be encouraged to do so, thus making the housing position less difficult for the migratory worker. People in country areas can do many things necessary to improve their standard of living, subject of course to existing controls, such as that associated with housing.

There are, however, some facilities which Governments must provide in country

areas and which probably are more important there than in urban areas. I refer first of all to educational facilities. We have seen a considerable improvement in recent times in the type of educational facilities available in our country districts, but there is plenty of room for something even better. In many districts, due to building difficulties, most of the plans are still only on paper, but in a number of areas great improvements have been made. Some of the new schools are a credit to the department and the Government, and I think the Minister for Education in his administration of the department has done a very good job indeed. I could quote many instances in which in years gone by people left the country areas solely because suitable educational facilities were not available for their children.

Mr. Reynolds: That is quite true.

Mr. PERKINS: Other members evidently could quote similar cases. I do not think there is any doubt about that. It is most important that there should be a continuing improvement in the educational facilities available in country districts. I hope the day is not too far distant when we shall see another high school erected in our eastern agricultural areas; because when kiddies have to be sent away to school there is sometimes a tendency for the parents, rather than be separated from their children, to come to live in the metropolitan area where the youngsters can obtain educational facilities instead of remaining isolated in the country. It is a very important question and I cannot too strongly impress on the Government the need for a continuing improvement.

Secondly, there is the question of water supplies. In many country areas, particularly the higher rainfall districts, water supplies are reasonably satisfactory but in most of our wheatbelt areas the improvement of general living conditions is absolutely dependent on satisfactory water supplies. In some parts, for one reason or another, it is impracticable for Government supplies to be established to serve those areas satisfactorily, but that does not apply to very many places. In most of our wheatbelt centres the people are looking to the Government to provide satisfactory water supplies for both the towns and the rural population. We all know that the comprehensive water scheme has been approved. That was a necessary first step. We have experimented

over the years with various types of local rock catchments, but in almost every instance in the wheatgrowing areas they have proved unsatisfactory in that they have run dry in the very years when they were most needed in the low rainfall areas. In all that eastern country, the only remedy is an extension from the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme to provide a satisfactory supply for both town and country.

The area southwards from Merredin and generally eastward of the No. 2 rabbit-proof fence is in greater need of the extension of the reticulated supply from the Goldfields main than any other portion of the State. An agitation has been going on for many years for an extension to part of the area but it has been deferred, in recent years, for one reason or another, probably because of the anticipated early commencement of the comprehensive water scheme. Naturally the people have tended to be restive at the delay. The lack of water is an absolutely limiting factor in the development of those districts. The full stocking capacities of the properties cannot be utilised, and the towns cannot satisfactorily develop unless water supplies are available.

Mr. May: They could have had them earlier.

Mr. PERKINS: How does the hon. member make that out?

Mr. May: This is not the first scheme.

Mr. PERKINS: It is the first that has been suggested for an extension into that area. I am not nearly so satisfied with Government action in regard to this matter as I have been with respect to the previous subject I mentioned. The Minister for Water Supply has not sent me an invitation to hear what he is going to say when he lays the first pipe of the Narrogin dam-scheme tomorrow, or at the public meeting to be held in the Narrogin Town Hall tomorrow night.

Mr. Hegney: You are not the only one.

Mr. May: You can be there; you do not need an invitation to attend.

Mr. PERKINS: At any rate, I shall be interested to hear what he has to say, because I believe there is greater urgency for the work being done elsewhere than in that area. I have no grouse against the Great Southern towns being supplied with water as soon as they can obtain it, but in that area it

is only the towns that are concerned; and when the comprehensive scheme was first mooted in this House, members who were here then will recall that all those representing Great Southern districts strongly opposed the extension of the scheme to serve those farming areas. It is only a question of the towns there. I know the need is very severe and should be alleviated as soon as possible, and I entirely agree with the idea of commencing the scheme as soon as practicable. I cannot, however, agree that the need is as great as in other areas where the rainfall is little more than half as much. At Narrogin, for instance, the annual rainfall is 20 inches, whereas in most of the eastern areas it is between 13 and 14 inches. The same opportunity does not exist of catching local supplies as exists in areas where the rainfall is so much greater.

I have been rather disgusted concerning the disposal of the limited supplies of steel plate coming to this State this year. In reply to questions I asked, I was informed that of the 866 tons which came in since January, 517 tons were required for work to which the Government was committed, such as repairs and so forth, and the balance of 349 tons was diverted to pipes for the Wellington Dam-Narrogin scheme. No steel at all was allotted to the section eastward to serve the Kodj Kodjin area and the other section south of Merredin. The pipeline from Wellington Dam to Narrogin, just to serve Narrogin, will require 17,300 tons of steel. The line from Merredin to serve Bruce Rock, Narembeen and on to the Kondinin dam will require only 4,155 tons, or approximately a quarter of what is needed for the pipeline from Wellington Dam to Narrogin. That line, too, would serve only Narrogin and not the other Great Southern towns which are in urgent need of water.

I hope the Minister for Water Supply will take early action to see that sufficient steel plate is imported to carry out the extensions south from Merredin at the earliest possible opportunity because, I repeat, the scheme is wanted in order to make the farms fully productive as well as to bring the living conditions in the towns up to a reasonable standard. The Minister has suggested to me that 1,000 tons are to be imported for this extension, but that is only one quarter of the steel required. So, either

steel plate should be taken from the quota available to the State from the B.H.P. supplies, or more steel ordered from overseas sources.

I know only too well that the lack of permanent water has been responsible for the curtailment of development both in the towns and on the farms in these areas. I hope the Minister will pay heed to what I am saying, and take early action to see that these eastern areas are not penalised because of his taking the first lot of piping that has become available for use at the Great Southern end, rather than for those areas for which tenders have already been called and where the Government is committed to an early start.

I want to say something about transport services. Transport is also an indispensable facility in making living conditions what they ought to be in the country districts. The general standard of our rail transport has not improved very much in the last 20 or 25 years. There have been small improvements from time to time in Government transport services, but generally speaking little difference has been shown in the period I have mentioned. The diesel rail cars did effect quite an improvement on some lines, but they are anything but satisfactory judged by modern standards. Ever since I have been here I have been pressing for a bus service for the country areas.

I am pleased that it was possible for the Railway Department to commence such a service to cover the route Perth-York-Quairading-Bruce Rock-Narembeen, a week or so ago. A tremendous number of obstacles were placed in the way. I am surprised that the Transport Board and the Minister did not see the possibilities earlier. However, we have the service now and I have no doubt it can be developed satisfactorily. I have a considerable amount of information on bus services in other parts of the world. In the U.S.A. there are the Greyhound services which operate practically all over the United States. There is a service from coast to coast. I understand that the services there are able to compete successfully with the railway systems notwithstanding that the railways are looked on as being some of the most modern in the world; and they run to a very fast timetable.

American officers who were here with the U.S. Armed Forces told some of us that if the American railroad companies had not gone in for road transport they would have been broke long ago. I understand they were able successfully to dovetail road transport in with rail transport. I am told that the Greyhound services have developed a type of partly tourist and partly ordinary passenger service whereby they have hostels along the route, so that when a person gets in at one terminal his luggage is handed over to an official, and his worries are over until he gets to his destination. The passenger is looked after at the hostels and eating places on the journey. That system has proved popular with certain types of travellers, and it obtains in a country that has a good and efficient railway service.

Mr. Reynolds: And a density of population of 45 to the square mile.

Mr. PERKINS: I understand the position is somewhat similar in England. Notwithstanding that England is a small country, and the railways are efficient and fast, there, also, it is necessary for the railway companies to run road services which secure a fair measure of patronage even in competition with the very fast trains. I think last year—this will be found at page 2663 of last year's "Hansard"—I quoted the details of a transport service operating between Damascus in Syria and Bagdad in Irak, with feeder lines. The length of the route from Damascus to Bagdad is 550 miles. They were running that service at a speed of 50 miles per hour and were competing successfully, under difficult conditions, with an airline company. The service was so reliable that they made this statement: "The company will guarantee to deliver passengers or mails etc., at the other end as per the timetable. If late, fares will be refunded." They kept about 30 minutes in reserve for eventualities on the run. Members will realise that the service must indeed be reliable if the proprietors are willing to give a guarantee such as that.

That is an illustration of what is possible in other parts of the world, but in Western Australia, unfortunately, we have a railway system that is anything but up-to-date. Over a long period of years it has deteriorated gradually until at present, in

the words of one of the Railway Royal Commissioners, it must be just about the worst service in the world.

Mr. Reynolds: It has done a wonderful job.

Mr. PERKINS: Yes, and the men running it have done excellent work with very poor materials, but it is silly to think it possible to give a modern passenger service on a system of that kind. That is why I have been agitating that we should look to other means of transport in order to give the public the passenger service to which they are entitled. There is a great deal of work to be done on our country roads in order to make them satisfactory for such a service, and in the meantime there is no reason why we should not push ahead and give good service where we can. We should extend and improve our road transport system as much as possible.

Mr. Reynolds: Be charitable to your Minister. He is trying to do a good job for you.

Mr. PERKINS: There are other reasons also why we should utilise road passenger services to as great an extent as possible. We have recently seen the extraordinary spectacle of our State railways carting passengers and light goods while at the same time heavy trucks of a gross weight of 20 tons and more have been carting by road the heaviest and bulkiest commodities that we handle. I sometimes wonder what a being from another planet would think if he could see some of the things we are doing, because I am certain they do not make sense.

Mr. Reynolds: It is easy to criticise.

Mr. PERKINS: In addition to that, the carting of wheat by road will cost farmers approximately £500,000 extra this year. Fortunately for us, being under the Australian Wheat Board, that cost is spread not over the Western Australian wheat-growers only but over those of the Commonwealth. If it was spread only over this State it would mean a cost of an extra 4d. per bushel, but spread over Australia it amounts to only about ½d. per bushel. However, that is no argument for continuing the present policy. We should not perpetuate it simply because we are able to unload the extra cost on to somebody else. We should remedy the situation as soon as we can.

The same arguments apply in some degree to the carting of super. That has cost the Government a lot of money in providing subsidies and has also cost the wheat-growers a considerable sum, as most of the super. carted by road has gone to the wheat-growing districts. That destined for wool-growing areas has been carted at a time of the year when the railways were able to handle most of it. Last year, in the more remote areas, the wheatgrowers who had their super. carted by road found it cost them at least £1 per ton extra, and in some cases considerably more than that after receiving the subsidy. From any angle the continuation of wheat and super. cartage by road is unsatisfactory. There have been a great number of complaints from local authorities that this heavy traffic has been causing severe damage to country roads.

On a previous occasion in this House I was told that if bus services were inaugurated on country roads they would be responsible for ruining the bitumen surfaces, yet the heaviest of busses weighs only 7 or 8 tons while the wheat trucks weigh anything up to 20 and more tons loaded. It is a marvel that our roads have stood up to that traffic as well as they have. We should try to avoid carting such heavy freight by road, both on the score of the extra cost to the primary producers and that of the damage done to our road system. I think the Minister and the Railway Department should give thought to taking the light traffic off the railways and carting it by road, either by means of their own trucks or by subletting it to carriers, while confining the heavier traffic such as wheat and super. to the railways.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The railways would be in a mess then. There would be a greater loss.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not think it would make any difference to the loss, and at all events someone has to foot the bill eventually.

Mr. Reynolds: You cannot juggle figures like that, in this House.

Mr. PERKINS: I am doubtful whether the financial position of the railways would be as much worse as some members imagine. I was interested in what the member for Kalgoorlie said in this regard. He realises that in carrying a lot of this goods traffic the railways are hauling dead weight

and there is a lot of waste time and engine-power. Those who travel by rail know how much time is taken up in shunting and waiting for trains to cross and so on, whereas if the railways were handling mostly one class of traffic and were picking up full train loads the limited engine-power available in the State would go much further than it does at present.

Mr. Reynolds: There are some brainy men in the railways.

Mr. PERKINS: I sometimes wonder whether there are, because I am certain that these are not the considerations that sway the Railway Department. I have made many inquiries of that department, and am convinced that the theory of the management is that they should let go to road transport only the classes of traffic that road transport cannot handle satisfactorily, so that it may get that traffic back fairly easily. It realises that if the light goods traffic is taken from the railways and a better service is provided by road transport—particularly in the case of passenger traffic—it will be almost impossible to regain that traffic for the railway system. That has already been looked at from the point of view of the men who are concerned with the system. But, when the Government looks at the situation, all these other factors that I mention have to be taken into account. The over-riding consideration is to provide a satisfactory transport system for our people who are living in these country areas.

Mr. Reynolds: Had the men of the railways had £10,000,000 or £15,000,000 made available to them 10 or 12 years ago, they would have given us a good service.

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister, in reply to a question asked by the member for Bunbury, stated that the railway bus service was showing a good profit notwithstanding that many of the establishment expenses were being charged to the expense account rather than to capital. I understand that the large type of bus which was imported from the Eastern States was a tragedy.

The Minister for Railways: That was the "Landliner."

Mr. PERKINS: I understand that that is part of the establishment expenses which have been charged to the expense account. From the way the road transport section of

the Railway Department is operating at present, I feel sure that the general set-up of the service could be considerably improved. It is more or less an appendage to the Railway Department at present and, if expert officers were obtained to put that section of the department on a proper commercial basis, it could be made more efficient than it is at the moment. I know that the men who are running it are doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances but I believe that it should have the status of a full department.

Mr. Reynolds: If wishes were fishes, the mermaid looked at me too.

Mr. PERKINS: If my ideas are correct, road transport will play a much bigger part in our transport set-up in the future. The private commercial concerns in this State have become very efficient. I recently read an article in the "Truck and Bus Transportation Journal" which gave the Metro Bus Company in this State a very good write-up. I understand that this company compares favourably with any other bus transport organisation in Australia. However, the men who are running the railway road bus service have few of the facilities which are available to the men responsible for the maintenance of such busses as those belonging to the Metro Bus Company.

The Minister would be well advised to establish a priority to obtain further new busses. If I forecast correctly, great demands will be made on the Government bus transport system. A good deal more thought could be given by the Railway Department to the efficient handling of wheat traffic. At present we see trucks coming down from the country, loaded with wheat, going to Fremantle and returning empty. Some of them could be used for carrying goods back to the country but for a great number of them it is all dead running.

Mr. Reynolds: Did you read the report of the Royal Commission on railways? You should have.

Mr. PERKINS: I am given to understand that if suitable bulk trucks were built, they could be used for the transport of wheat or coal. Such trucks could be used on a round circuit with the minimum of dead running. For instance they could come down from the eastern wheatbelt—say from Merredin—unload their wheat at Fremantle,

then proceed to Collie and pick up coal which had to be taken out to the loco. depots in the eastern wheatbelt.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you said that the heavy stuff should go by rail.

Mr. PERKINS: I said that bulkwheat trucks could be built for the carting of either wheat or coal.

The Minister for Railways: Rail or road?

Mr. PERKINS: Railway trucks. These trucks could come from Merredin to Fremantle, and then be shunted to Collie to pick up coal which had to go out to the loco. depots in the eastern wheatbelt. I mention that for what it is worth because I do not know whether it is possible for the department to give consideration to it. There is one other matter I wish to mention, and that concerns butter traffic from Boyanup. It is a very sore point indeed with a lot of the wheatgrowers in that they consider the Railway Department is carting butter from Boyanup to Perth, and apparently the butter producers do not want the department to do that. While the department is doing this, it is leaving the wheat to be carted by road and that is costing the wheat-grower a considerable sum of money.

We realise that the quantity of butter carted is not very great, but it is one of those things which irritates people who have been loaded with extra costs. That freight cannot be particularly suitable for the Railway Department, because practically all the traffic from the South-West is in this direction and the department would get very little backloading the other way. If the transport of butter were from the city to Boyanup, it would probably work in with the Railway Department's overall set-up, but that is not the case.

Mr. Reynolds: I notice that the member for Bunbury is very interested.

Mr. PERKINS: There are only two other matters that I wish to mention. The first concerns salt encroachment in our agricultural areas. This matter is not being given sufficient attention by the Government departments concerned. In reply to a question asked by the member for Greenough, I think it was, the Minister for Lands stated that the estimated area of cleared land rendered useless by encroachment was 5 per cent. I am not sure whether that was an estimate or a guess but I think it must have been a

guess. No detailed survey has been made of the lands affected by salt encroachment in all districts in the State, and obviously no officer has the necessary detailed knowledge of just how far that salt encroachment has extended.

Mr. Reynolds: It is obviously a guess. It is like that 5 per cent. of blackmarketing in land sales control.

Mr. PERKINS: What I would like to know, and what is of more interest, is just how much this salt encroachment has increased during the last 30 years. There again one can only make a guess, but from my personal knowledge of the question I would say that 30 years ago there was only an infinitesimal portion of farmlands affected by salt. Practically all this salt encroachment has taken place over the last 30 years. If there is to be as much salt encroachment in the next 30 years as there has been in the past 30 years, a great deal of attention will have to be paid by the Governments then in control of the affairs of this State to this question, though possibly when it is too late. It is comparatively easy to deal with the prevention of salt encroachment compared with dealing with it after the damage has been done.

I was responsible for convening a number of meetings of members of the Farmers' Union in our eastern area when Mr. Burvill and the soil conservation officer, Mr. Lundy, were good enough to attend, and we had some very interesting discussions. I formed the opinion that Mr. Burvill, although realising the seriousness of this question, was really afraid to admit it because of the volume of work that might be entailed in coping with it. It is necessary that we should take some action to deal with it rapidly. It is clear that the salt encroachment comes from two sources, first from the seepage of water percolating from higher levels, and secondly, from the rising water table which is the more serious of the two. That is mostly caused by flooding.

I am aware of the extremely good work that Mr. Ron Whitehead of Hine's Hill has done and he believes, if I understand his theory aright, that every drop of water should be made to penetrate the ground where it falls and flooding should be controlled by the prevention of run-off. A certain amount of work can be performed in that direction, but it is obviously impossible to deal with all the run-off. Therefore, we

have to be dealing with the question of floods. It is rather extraordinary to have to deal with the question of water supplies on the one hand and that of flooding on the other in the one area, but that is the position.

At these meetings I have impressed upon a great number of the farmers the need for some survey being made in an attempt to open up a drainage channel through that salt lake system. The departmental officers are inclined to shy away from that proposal for fear of what may be involved. But we must do something. We should make that survey and do some experimental work in order to ease the flow of water through the various salt lake systems. That is an urgent problem now and I raise it in the hope that further research on this question is undertaken in order that a survey may be conducted to see what is involved, how much water is to be handled and how much excavation is necessary to give it a trial. Further, excellent work is being done by the agricultural section of the University, with the assistance of the Wheat Pool, into research on grasses. That could be of assistance in dealing with land already affected by salt.

The only other point I wish to mention is the light land development in our wheat-belt areas. The development of these lands, particularly in the heavier rainfall districts, has been most spectacular, and it promises to be almost as spectacular in some of the lighter rainfall areas with the growing of an early strain of subterranean clover which areas for years we thought were incapable of growing such fodder. I think that in those outer wheatbelt areas experimental plants could be set up, not necessarily by the Department of Agriculture alone but by the department in cooperation with the local farmers on their individual farms, to ascertain what can be done to develop those light lands.

At present some farmers are having quite a measure of success with those light lands both in cereal growing and also with the development of pastures and I have no doubt, by careful experiments, that we could make tremendous advances in the better use of those lands. If what I said earlier in this speech is correct, then we will need all the production possible from both our rich

agricultural soil and from what may be termed the marginal soils as distinct from soils in marginal areas, the marginal soils in that sense being those of low natural fertility. We will require production from all types of soils in this State, from other States and other countries of the world if we are to feed the expanding world population.

Mr. Kelly: Places in the so-called marginal areas have the best land in the State.

Mr. PERKINS: I think all of us realise that the shortage of natural resources, shortage of food, and shortage of scope for people to expand their activities, have been responsible for more of the wars that have taken place over the centuries since our recorded history commenced than almost any other factor. I have no doubt that if the time does come when large sections of the world population cannot obtain the bare necessities of life, then that will be a cause for further conflict between the various peoples of the world. Therefore this question of using our agricultural resources to the utmost extent possible is not only one which affects our own people, but must be considered with a view to the welfare of the people of the world as a whole.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.39 p.m.