

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [4.36]: At the outset I would like to compliment the new member for Nelson on the very fine address he delivered on the occasion of his maiden speech to this House. While it may be unusual I desire, too, to welcome the new member for Avon, who has had the rather uncommon experience of having been elected twice before assuming his seat in the Chamber. We can trust that the contributions to the deliberations of this Chamber of those two members, together with those of the new members for Mt. Marshall and Swan, will be of advantage to the interests of this State. As is probably known to very many members, the former member for Swan, the late Mr. R. S. Sampson, was for many years closely associated with my father, particularly in matters pertaining to local government. It is somewhat a sad stroke of fate that within a few months of each other both of them, who had for so long been associated in important work, departed from this life. So for the electorate of Swan there is a new member who, like myself, was formerly engaged in the State Public Service. We were then known as civil servants and I suppose in the order of modern language we were both bureaucrats. That, however, we have now ceased to be.

The Government is to be congratulated on the fact that after a term of ten years of office it has been returned to this Chamber with an increased membership. That, without any question, makes history as far as Parliaments of Western Australia are concerned. I suggest, however, that having achieved a majority is no ground for complacency or a feeling of self-satisfaction with regard to a job well done. Here, as in other parts of Australia, is a growing insistence on the need for change and reform in our economic set-up. Rightly or wrongly, the people of Australia at present look to the Labour Party as being the most likely party to institute those reforms for which all are clamouring. Time will tell whether or not their hopes are justified, but I feel that they will be.

A matter was mentioned, particularly by the member for West Perth, which reminded

me of the old query as to which came first, the chicken or the egg. Exactly the same query arises as to which comes first, industries or population. Possibly there will have to be a similar amount of energy expended in the scratching of the head to determine that problem. The two phases are closely related to each other. I regard population as a vital matter. I feel—I consider it is commonly accepted, too—that the greatest contribution to the solution of the problem will come from the natural increase in our population. It may be objected that that procedure is too slow and certainly statistics bear out that contention with respect to Australia. I appreciate the fact that economic circumstances have a great deal to do with the limitation or discouragement of families, but I believe there is another factor, one which is usually disregarded or contemptuously thrust aside with the assertion that parents are selfish. Personally, I do not believe that is so.

I believe that the rearing of a family imposes, in many instances, too great a hardship on parents and that, in consequence, inconveniences and disabilities are suffered that are out of all proportion. I consider that our attention should be devoted to making the responsibilities and difficulties of married couples less than they are today. The system of child endowment is a humble step in the right direction. I am strongly in favour of the provision of marriage allowances. Such a scheme would not mean the breaking of new ground because the system has been adopted with success in other countries.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Where?

Mr. GRAHAM: I could mention Italy as one country where it has been put into operation.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What has happened to Italy now?

Mr. GRAHAM: I am referring to a somewhat different question altogether from that suggested by the member for Subiaco. It may be mentioned that the scheme of subsidising married couples more than paid for itself. I am unaware of the figures involved but I know that an advance was made to the couple after marriage. During the first few years no repayments or interest charges were required and the capital was reduced with the arrival of each successive child.

After the first preliminary years, a small interest charge was levied. Members will appreciate that such an innovation, if adopted here, would have much to commend it and would certainly have a very important bearing on the economic side. Under the system operating at present far too many couples, unfortunately, have to wait until economic circumstances dictate the time for marriage, rather than the obeying of the natural urge. As a consequence all sorts of other problems are created. It was found in Italy, for instance, that because the marriage allowance was made available, the tendency was for couples to marry far earlier. Because the money happened to be made available by the Government, the young people were able to set themselves up in house and home. The goods they purchased in the way of furnishings and chattels generally created a demand on the market which in turn increased the volume of employment available. A certain number of women were withdrawn from the labour market, which offered some relief to the Treasury of the State. The fact that the principal advanced was reduced with the arrival of each child meant something in the nature of a bribe or encouragement inducing parents to have families, without imposing any economic sacrifice on the part of the parents and earlier children of the marriages.

It can, therefore, be suggested that if such a scheme can work successfully in another part of the world, it deserves serious consideration with a view to encouraging an increase in our population. I feel it would have that result and that it would also have a beneficial effect on the morality of the community. With the deferment of marriage many complex problems are raised. If people could follow the tendencies that Nature ordains and were married in accordance with their desires, there would be far fewer illicit love affairs than are embarked upon at present. I have made some study of the subject and my enquiries suggest that the years of greatest fertility in the female sex are between those of 18 and 38. Notwithstanding that fact, because of the economic restraint placed upon those who otherwise would have embarked upon marriage, possibly 50 per cent. of the most fertile period of the average woman's life is wasted. Thus it is because of economic circumstances

and not because of any desire on the part of the people concerned. I mention that as another angle when considering matters affecting our population and have mentioned economic circumstances, and the general question of immorality.

I am concerned, too, with regard to the question of electoral enrolments. There is a great deal of confusion which could easily be overcome in Western Australia. Members will know that there are electors who are prepared to swear by all that is holy that they had filled in claim cards and received their acknowledgments and yet, possibly because of confusion in view of impending elections, they found they had been enrolled on the Commonwealth lists instead of on those for the State. Accordingly, I suggest that in Western Australia we should adopt the procedure followed in all the other States with the exception of Queensland. The proposed procedure is that the Commonwealth electoral officer shall be responsible for all enrolments within the State, and for compilation of electoral rolls, whereupon of course the State electoral machinery comes into play as regards elections themselves. I appreciate that this matter has already received attention repeatedly. A Royal Commission investigated the subject in, I believe, 1935, and came to certain conclusions. It determined, amongst other things, that not until such time as the boundaries of State electorates and Federal electorates or subdivisions were co-terminous, further consideration should be given to the proposal for a central enrolling authority.

As the result of inquiries, I have learned that there are 52 Federal subdivisions in West Australia. There being 50 electorates for the Assembly, it occurs to me that there should be no great difficulty in arriving, by negotiation and consequently by compromise, at a position of affairs under which the subdivisional boundaries of Federal divisions could be made to conform to State electoral boundaries. Then we would not have persons who reside in, say, the East Perth electorate finding themselves in the North Perth Federal subdivision. They would, instead, be in the State electorate of East Perth and in the East Perth Federal subdivision. Close consideration should be given to the question, because many thousands of persons are put to all kinds of needless inconvenience, and

moreover many of them are debarred from exercising the franchise by reason of the confusion which the present arrangements create. I believe, as I mentioned earlier, that the proposed system works satisfactorily in the four States which have adopted it.

If there should be a suggestion that the change might cost a few more pounds than the prevailing system—which I greatly doubt—under a democratic system the first consideration should be for the electors and a little additional expenditure should not operate as a bar in so important a matter as this. I believe that a certain amount of opposition to the proposal emanated from the State Electoral Office, probably because of a feeling that if the change were effected certain of the senior positions in the State Electoral Office might become less necessary; and of course the first instinct of man is self-preservation. I understand, however, that those circumstances do not obtain at present, and so there should be no great difficulty. Furthermore, if the change did mean dispensing with certain members of the staff, I would urge that there is no more appropriate time than the present for effecting the change, because there would be available to surplus officers alternate positions in the Government service or in private employment. If the democratic system is to function it is essential, first of all, that the people should be enrolled. This suggests to me that the postman is possibly the most effective agent for checking up on people's addresses and keeping the rolls generally in order.

At present there is to some extent chaos owing to the fact that different systems are in vogue as regards postal, absentee, and sick votes. The State electoral rolls, too, should be brought into conformity with the Federal rolls in order that the confusion now existing may be overcome. Because of existing differences, many people do not know in which electorate they reside. A man may have his home in the State electorate of East Perth and in the North Perth subdivision of the Federal division of Perth, and as a ratepayer he may reside in a ward of the Perth City Council called by yet another name. These things add greatly to the confusion. The postman is paid by the Commonwealth, and the proposal I have urged means merely that the information that official now obtains would

be made available for State electoral purposes as well as Federal. Then the matter of electors having to go through the present procedure of filling in two or more cards would be obviated.

Now as regards amenities and canteen services in Government departments and establishments! Of these work-places there are many in my electorate. I may mention the electric power station, the East Perth locomotive running sheds, and the tramways car-barn. I suggest that the time is more than ripe when men who are engaged working in dirty and uncongenial occupations should be enabled to have some short respite in decent surroundings from their labours. As regards the East Perth locomotive running sheds, some of the quarters in which the men are compelled to house themselves are an utter disgrace to any employer; and the Government should be an employer setting an example in that respect. One of the dingy little hovels, as I may term them, which I have inspected in that locality would not be passed as a place fit for milking a cow in—I know something of cows, having originally come from a farm myself. I suggest in especial to the Minister in charge of labour matters and the Minister for Railways that serious attention must be given to these problems. At present grave dissatisfaction exists in Government departments on account of the condition of affairs existing.

I am appreciative of the fact that there is an industrial disturbance at the present moment causing great inconvenience to the general public. While there is a particular issue involved, nevertheless I feel that this disturbance is possibly the climax of the very many inconveniences and causes of dissatisfaction experienced and endured by workers not only in the vocation to which I have referred but in very many other vocations as well. In the interests of decency and of what workers have a right to expect, I ask the Government to extend more consideration and better treatment to those working in such establishments as I have enumerated. The Government might well pattern itself upon the conveniences that have been provided by the Commonwealth Government, and moreover have been insisted upon by the Commonwealth Government in certain private establishments undertaking important defence work.

I am perturbed regarding the position that apparently exists in connection with the Railway Department and the Commissioner of Railways. I have scanned the Government Railways Act, but have been unable to ascertain exactly what the Commissioner's powers are and what is his relationship to the Minister. From actual experience I have found that I, as a member of Parliament, can make no representations to the Commissioner of Railways. I do suggest that there is something wrong when such a system exists. I have been told by the Commissioner himself—who was very nice about it—that I could not wait upon him. After all, we as members of Parliament are responsible to our electors who place us in this Assembly. We are expected to act as go-betweens in making representations on behalf of those whom we represent. It does seem to me absolutely wrong that it should be impossible for us to approach the departmental head of so important an instrumentality as the Department of Railways and Tramways. Anyhow, that was my experience.

Mr. Marshall: And that is not the only department!

Mr. GRAHAM: No, I am aware of that. Transport difficulties have been accentuated very considerably during the past few years because of the war, and consequently this question obtrudes itself to a higher degree than might otherwise have been the case. I have found that the only course to pursue is to make representations to the Minister, and I pay this tribute to him, that he makes himself available at every opportunity and treats deputations with the greatest courtesy imaginable. My experience has been that the Minister appears to be thoroughly convinced.

Mr. Thorn: But do you get what you want?

Mr. GRAHAM: That is the whole point. The matter is then referred to the Commissioner of Railways, or to some person on the administrative staff, with the result that a blank refusal is given to the request made. If the Commissioner is to have the final say in these matters I submit that we should be able to make representations direct to him. Personal contact may convince him of the validity of a request and the necessity for complying with it.

The Minister for Lands: Have you heard the story, "You are telling me"?

Mr. GRAHAM: I say that that may be the result. No one knows better than those

immediately concerned that it is not possible to obtain that direct approach and therefore some very extraordinary things are done. Other members besides myself are interested in a bus service which has one terminus near the Beaufort-street Bridge and the other at Kathleen-avenue, Maylands. It serves a more or less isolated community.

Mr. Marshall: Morley Park?

Mr. GRAHAM: No. It is not the Morley Park bus service. The extraordinary thing about this service is that, except for the first few hundred yards more or less, its entire journey is along a tramline. As a matter of fact, the petrol-driven buses belonging to this service are wearing out their tyres on the steel tram rails. I contend it is absolutely ridiculous that that service should be allowed to continue. A suggestion has been made by some members—particularly the member for Maylands—that a deviation should be made to serve other people who are not so well catered for at present. I, too, have made representations for a deviation to be made on the other side of the Mt. Lawley subway in order to provide transport for a number of people in East Perth, who are practically isolated and find great difficulty in obtaining transport of any kind. But I have been met with a blank refusal by—I take it—the Commissioner of Railways through the Minister for Railways. I wish it to be understood that I am not now pressing any claim for a particular route, but I do suggest that these petrol-driven buses should no longer be allowed to travel along a tram track, even though that tram service is not as frequent as the people along its route might desire. Bus services should be reserved for people who have no other transport facilities.

I made some inquiries with respect to this bus service and was astounded to note the number of passengers who patronised the buses at the peak period. The result of the inquiries demonstrates the lack of the necessity for the service. For one week—not a picked week—and excluding peak periods the maximum number of passengers in the bus leaving Perth was 13, while the maximum load carried into Perth was nine passengers. The service is dealing merely with a handful of passengers.

Mr. Cross: We will have it in South Perth next week if you like.

Mr. GRAHAM: I daresay the member for Canning would not object to inconveniencing

East Perth residents by having the service transferred to South Perth.

Mr. Thorn: Look at the influence he has got!

Mr. GRAHAM: There are portents of an early victory and an early peace. It is a great consolation to all of us, because we all have members of our families or our friends engaged in this bitter struggle, to learn that the war is taking this favourable turn. Mr. Winston Churchill has said that we may expect a far earlier termination of hostilities than we had a right to expect some few months ago. This will place upon all representatives of the people a serious task and responsibility. We shall have to set about preparing at the earliest possible moment for the post-war years. There is hardly need for me to emphasise the necessity for us to do everything possible to avoid a repetition of the terrible days we experienced before this war. There is an incessant clamour and demand that there shall be a new order, that there shall be a better distribution of the products of industry, that there shall not be the extremes of riches and poverty, that there shall be security for all in their native land and that there shall be freedom from fear of aggression.

We should particularly devote our attention to problems within our own borders. In that respect the most important matter so far as regards the welfare of Australia will be settled by our masters—the masters of all members of Parliament—on the 19th August. If the powers sought by the Commonwealth are not granted by the people we have several alternatives. One is that the States should be entrusted with the tremendous task of finding work for 1,500,000 people whose employment—if I may use the word—will be terminated: I refer to those engaged in the Fighting Services and in our war factories. These people represent approximately one-half of the working population of Australia and that will give members some idea of the magnitude of the problem that will have to be dealt with. Personally, I feel that the task will be too great for the States. I say so because the States were unable to deal with a far smaller problem during the depression years. Even during what some people call the boom years immediately prior to the war approximately 250,000 Australian workmen were idle. Employment was then a responsibility of the

State. During the depression years I can say that practically everybody was insisting that employment was a Commonwealth responsibility. The Commonwealth Parliament is prepared to assume that responsibility on the conclusion of hostilities. As we were so insistent in that demand some 12 or 14 years ago, I see no reason why we should now wish the States to deal with the question, especially as they were unable to do so during the depression years.

Mr. Thorn: Whatever happens, the States will carry out the work. You know that.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not.

Mr. Thorn: Well, you will know.

Mr. GRAHAM: Apart altogether from the question of employing all these persons, it is necessary that the work upon which they are to be engaged should be of some real value to the country. I am reminded of a problem which now confronts Australia and which is the direct result of State policies. I refer to railway gauges. It does not require me to lecture the older members of this Chamber on that matter. I realise, of course, that I am citing an extreme case, but it indicates that there are differences of outlook on the part of the various States, which seem to resort to all kinds of practices out of harmony with adjoining States. I believe there is no place for these differences in a country like Australia. Many people are suggesting that some of what they refer to as the fourteen points should not be granted. I would like to have it suggested to me which exactly of the fourteen points are not necessary for post-war reconstruction. It is all very well to speak of these matters in a general way. I have invited or challenged thousands of people to tell me which of the powers should be omitted, but so far not one suggestion has been forthcoming.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Conscription of labour.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is not one of the issues, as every member of this Chamber knows very well.

Mr. Thorn: We do not know.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: We know we are going to be conscripted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: These 14 points, as they are called, mean in effect the transference of certain powers at present possessed by

the States, but some cannot be used by the States. If members of the Opposition suggest that there might or will be industrial conscription by the Commonwealth Parliament after these powers are transferred, then equally if the powers are retained by the State Parliaments the State Governments could embark upon a policy of industrial conscription. No greater powers are being given to the Federal authorities under the heading of employment and unemployment than are at present reposed in the States. That is one alternative. I feel that history has revealed that the States are incapable of dealing with these problems.

Mr. Marshall: How much better off was New Zealand after the last war with only one Government!

Mr. GRAHAM: The question is not whether State Parliaments should be abolished, but one for a temporary transfer of certain powers for the purpose of post-war reconstruction. I have my own ideas as to how many Parliaments should exist in Australia, but I do not intend to cloud the issue with that point at the moment. The second alternative is that the Commonwealth Government, in conjunction with the States, should undertake this task. That, to a degree, will be done if these additional powers are transferred. I think the classic example of the impossibility of relying too much upon co-operation is given us by the convention held in Canberra towards the end of 1942. Notwithstanding the agreements arrived at and the undertakings given, within the course of a few months practically every one of the States arrived at a different decision on the question as to whether they would pass the entire 14 points or reject them entirely, or agree to them with certain amendments, which, to my mind, completely emasculated them and made them innocuous if the Commonwealth Government was to undertake the responsibility of post-war reconstruction.

In that respect the Leader of the Opposition in this State can, I suggest, be charged with having somersaulted on the attitude he adopted at that convention. I have read the report of those proceedings very closely. I find that in the opening addresses of the representatives of the States—and these speeches which I classify largely as window-dressing—very definite objections were raised by the Leader of the Opposition of this State. But the 14 points were unanimously accepted, after compromise I dare say, by the Premiers of each of the six

States, together with the representatives of the Commonwealth. When those 14 points were discussed by the full convention the Leader of the Opposition of Western Australia sought an amendment to one of the 14 points dealing with employment and unemployment, but he was not successful. I suggest in this instance that the representatives of the Labour Party are, perhaps, the best able to judge whether or not these powers are likely to be of advantage or disadvantage to the workers. The only other point on which the Leader of the Opposition spoke was that dealing with companies. His only comment then was that it seemed to him extraordinary that such a power should be limited to a period of five years.

Apart from those two utterances no word of criticism or opposition appears in the official record of that convention. I realise that opposition is now being expressed by many people, apparently following that lead. Grave doubts are expressed with regard to the section relating to marketing, and the effects that Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution may have in limiting the provisions of measures designed to implement and assist orderly marketing in accordance with that particular point. Strangely enough the limiting effect of Section 92 was mentioned in this Chamber when these powers were being discussed by the State Parliament. Whilst in the past, as everyone is aware, that limitation applied, nevertheless that point, as applying to certain primary products, was passed by this Parliament. It was submitted by a member of the Opposition and was confined to certain commodities or primary products. No concern was then expressed about the limitations that might be imposed by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. It seems, therefore, that a new argument is being found now in order to discount what might obtain from the benefits accruing from a greater measure of transference of powers than from the limited amount under the measure passed by this Chamber.

Mr. Thorn: What is your view of Section 92?

Mr. GRAHAM: I am not a constitutional lawyer. I accept guidance from those who are versed in the law. An opinion has been expressed by the Attorney General of the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Biased!

Mr. GRAHAM: It cannot be suggested that there is any bias because the Attorney

General's record so far as legal matters are concerned—forgetting politics for the moment altogether—stands him in very good stead. I suggest that it is possible to deal with this question in a satisfactory way notwithstanding any limitations that may be imposed as a result of Section 92.

The Minister for Lands: You are not even a bush lawyer.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not profess to be even that. Great play is made of the question of rights, or the sovereign rights of the State. I am by no means impressed by such empty words. I might be prepared to regard these things more kindly if I believed that the people of Western Australia had any such rights.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Have they not any?

Mr. GRAHAM: The people of Western Australia have not. I am pleased that His Excellency has intimated that a measure will be brought forward to deal with the liberalising of the franchise as it affects the Legislative Council. We are continuing to debar free exercise of true democracy in Western Australia because approximately one-third of the electors of Western Australia are entitled to be enrolled for that Chamber.

Mr. J. Hegney: Only about one-quarter of those vote.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is so. A most remarkable state of affairs exists. Notwithstanding the fact that the people of Western Australia have, for 17 out of the last 20 years, declared that in their opinion a Labour Government should occupy the Treasury Benches in Western Australia and that such a Government should have the power to implement its platform and the policy submitted to the electors, it has been possible for a group of persons elected by a selected group of people completely to frustrate any such measures submitted as being the will of the people.

Mr. North: Do you not think the enrolment is very poor? The rent, 10s., is a very small amount to entitle people to get on the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM: I admit that. People who are boarding and old-age pensioners who occupy a humble room would not be voting for those who comprise the majority in that Chamber at present. Furthermore, those of the property class who are married are able to put a little property in the names of the members of their family, whereas in the case

of working-class families where the husband pays the rent, he gets the vote. The wife has no vote and neither have the adult members of the family who are residing with him. Under a democratic system all who were over the age of 21 would be entitled to vote, and Labour would be their choice.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: If they were keen on the Labour Party would they not enrol?

Mr. Smith: Thousands of women cannot enrol for the Legislative Council.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: They can.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: I feel, therefore, that until such time as we have in Western Australia a democratic Parliament, it is futile to talk about democratic State rights. In order to satisfy my own conscience, if I wanted democracy to determine a particular issue, even if I were in favour of the retention of power by the States, I would, as a democrat, wholeheartedly be in favour of the transference of these powers to the Commonwealth Parliament in order to allow democracy to function. Therefore, I say again, those who believe that there should be something in the nature of sovereign State rights preserved have a duty to see that there is a democratic system of Parliament obtaining in Western Australia. I look forward with eager anticipation to the measure that is to be submitted for the consideration of members.

As I see the position, if the referendum to be submitted to the people on the 19th August is not carried, it means that Australia has decided that it wants to revert to the state of affairs in existence prior to the outbreak of this war. They will have said "No" to what to my mind is the first instalment of the new order. The Commonwealth, as one of the nations of the world, has declared that it wants a new system, a better state of affairs after the war. To enable a better state of affairs to be brought about, it is necessary that certain powers be transferred to the Parliament elected by the popular will so that every adult person may express himself. Therefore, if the referendum is not carried, it will be tantamount to the people of Australia saying, "No, we do not want these changes and innovations: we do not want something different from what we have endured in the past: we want to revert to the state of affairs that existed prior to the outbreak of war." To

those who are opposing the granting of these powers for a period of five years, I say they must be held responsible.

Mr. Berry: For five years after the signing of peace.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: That will be 15 or 20 years from now.

Mr. J. Hegney: Do not talk rot!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: It might be a matter of 15 or 20 years, but if the war lasts another 15 years the emergency powers being exercised by the Commonwealth under the Defence Act will still be exercised. Notwithstanding the efforts of certain people to prove otherwise, the proposal is to transfer these powers to the Commonwealth for a period of five years after the war. The confusion that has been caused in this connection is due not so much to muddled thinking as to deliberate distortion of facts. If these powers, which are so essential in the post-war period to enable the Commonwealth to deal with the tremendous problems that will confront Australia, are not granted, the responsibility for the consequences will rest upon those who oppose the transfer. They will have to answer for the confusion and chaos that I believe will be inevitable if the powers are not granted.

I close on that note, and express the hope that the people of Western Australia and Australia generally will answer the critics by voting solidly in support of giving greater power to the Commonwealth. That these powers will be granted I am heartened to believe by my scrutiny of the results of previous referenda, particularly in Western Australia. This State has a record second to none for affirming constitutional alterations when appeals have been made, and because the present referendum is so important and because the result must be attended by so many consequences and because dire consequences can be inflicted upon the people if the powers are not granted, I feel confident that in this instance the proposals will be carried as, in the majority of cases in years gone by, they have been carried by Western Australia.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie): It is pleasing to be able to refer to the vastly improved outlook confronting the Empire since Parliament was called together a year ago. This has made possible the considera-

tion of post-war proposals and various policies for reconstruction, and I believe that a great amount of ground has been covered during the last 12 months. The Lieut.-Governor's Speech indicates a number of avenues in which action has been taken and in which we may expect greater improvements in the years to come. I was disappointed at the very brief reference made in his Speech to one of our most important industries, namely, goldmining. There was actually no indication whatever of what the future holds for the industry. In view of the recent discussions regarding the international monetary outlook for the world, it is singular that no reference should be made to it in the Speech. These discussions have shown that gold will play a very important part in our post-war policy, and I think that some indication should have been given of the outlook for goldmining, not only from the point of view of this State but also from an Australian angle.

What mention was made of goldmining in the Speech showed that during the last 12 months the industry suffered a further decrease of 38 per cent. over the production in 1942. This is a very alarming state of affairs because the output had already declined greatly in the preceding two or three years. While it was to be expected that the outbreak of war would cause some diminution, I consider that the decline has been greater than was unavoidable, even under war conditions. I desire to make a survey of statistics covering the years 1939 to 1943. In that period the decrease in goldmining in value returned in the State has been no less than 56 per cent. Comparing the year 1942-43 with the year 1941-42, the decrease was 40 per cent. During this period the number of fine ozs. produced dropped from 1,016,000 to 602,000; the decline in the value of production represented 2.6 million pounds. That is a colossal loss to the State.

The production during the first three months of 1944 shows a decrease of more than 25 per cent. over the corresponding period of 1943. That is a remarkable decrease bearing in mind that all the States are supposed to be treated on an equal basis, and more remarkable in view of the recent announcement about the production of gold in New South Wales during the same period. During those three months an increase of