

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Tenth Day—Conclusion*

Debate resumed from the 30th July.

MR. LEWIS (Moore) [4.45]: May I commence my modest contribution to this Address-in-reply, Sir, by adding my congratulations to those of earlier speakers on your accession to the exalted office of Speaker of this House. I have no doubt that you will continue to maintain the high standard set by your predecessor.

By turning over the record that has been played so frequently in recent debates, I want to say how very proud I am to be associated with this side of the House, and in support of the present Government. Wherever I go around the country and in the city, I hear on all sides that this Government has adopted a refreshing down-to-earth policy.

Hon. members: Hear, hear!

The **SPEAKER**: Order!

MR. LEWIS: From the "Hear, hears" from the Opposition side, I know they agree.

MR. HAWKE: They were boos!

MR. LEWIS: On all sides we hear that there is a new look about this Government. Up to a few months ago people used to say that it did not matter what Government was in power because the same policy, more or less, was adopted. Therefore it did not matter whether the Labour or Liberal-Country Party was in power because everything went along much the same as it did before. It has come as a refreshing surprise to many people—and it is said that this has proved the old theory to be wrong—to find that we now have a Government which seems to be dealing with matters in a practical way.

MR. GRAHAM: Sacking workers deliberately!

MR. HAWKE: Wait till the Government puts up the railway freights!

MR. LEWIS: I have listened to every speaker on this Address-in-reply, and many remarks made by members of the Opposition have reminded me of the days when I used to go to see the circus. In the afternoon preceding the opening we would see the labourers around the circus with their bare chests and brawny arms, driving in the tent pegs, with heavy mallets, to hold down the big top. I could not help but think that the same performance was carried out by members of the Opposition, commencing with the Leader of the Opposition who set the tempo. Instead of driving the pegs that hold the tent down, however, they tried to drive in a wedge to separate the members of this Government. But the wedge seems to have become sadly blunted over the years and the result of it all has been exactly nil.

We have had the spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition devoting quite some considerable space in *Hansard* to flirting with your affections, Mr. Speaker—if I might put it that way.

MR. HAWKE: That is more than the Country Party did a few weeks ago.

MR. LEWIS: I cannot help but feel that in the old days the Leader of the Opposition must have been a Romeo of no mean order.

MR. GRAHAM: He still is.

MR. LEWIS: The Leader of the Opposition concluded on that note by saying that your half-nod showed that you approved of his remarks. I think it was a half-nod, not of approval, but of amusement. The Leader of the Opposition turned his attention then to the member for Avon Valley, who was much wider awake on that occasion than he is now; and he did not neglect the Independents.

We, on this side of the House, are quite happy with this partnership and feel that it is going along very well indeed. The fact that there is a partnership shows that there is a difference of opinion, in some measure, on the objectives to be attained or the methods by which they should be attained. If there were not that difference of opinion, there would be no excuse for the continued existence of the Liberal Party, because its members would all be at one with the Country Party.

However, we respect the fact that there is a partnership, and know that it will continue so long as either of the parties to it considers it in the best interests of this State. I believe that, like many other partnerships of a similar nature that have existed in this State and in the Federal sphere, this one is in for a long and fruitful existence.

MR. GRAHAM: This was what could be called a shotgun marriage.

MR. LEWIS: In reviewing the Speech with which His Excellency opened this Parliament, we appreciate the fact that with so many subjects touched on there could only be limited space allotted to each one; but I feel that there are a couple of matters that should be mentioned. In regard to the wool clip which, as we know, is Australia's biggest item of export—amounting to some £290,000,000 per annum—I would point out that it received exactly two lines of space in His Excellency's Speech.

For the information of honourable members who might get the impression that the wool industry is fairly buoyant at present and able to battle along reasonably well, I might mention that I made some inquiries as to the price per lb. received for wool in Western Australia over the last three years.

Those figures show that for the year ended June, 1957, the average price per lb. received for wool in this State was 73.92d. For the year ended June, 1958, the price was 60.39d.; for the year ended June, 1959,

the average price was 45.7d. per lb., and that was quite a considerable reduction—a 25 per cent. reduction on the price received in the previous year. There was some slight increase in the last sale in June of this year, when the price was 49.11d. per lb.

We know that the wool industry is meeting with increasing competition from synthetics, the manufacturers of which are spending millions of pounds per year on research, compared with which the wool-grower spends a meagre sum of about one farthing per lb., which is totally inadequate, despite the fact that it is supplemented by Federal Government funds. I consider there is a field there in which the wool-grower could spend much more money, in defence of his own industry; and there is no doubt that it has to be defended against the severe competition of synthetics.

We know that the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation has done and is doing considerable research into the problem of producing better woollen fabrics; and of recent months the Australian Wool Bureau has also shown a livelier interest in wool promotion. Here I wish to pay tribute to the work done this year by the Country Women's Association in Western Australia. This is the only State in the Commonwealth where, up to date, that organisation has embarked on a wool promotion campaign and has organised competitions, at least in the agricultural areas throughout the State, to encourage the use of wool. I hope that example will be followed by similar bodies in the other States, and that a similar programme will be followed in this State next year.

We must redouble our efforts in regard to wool promotion. I feel that there is a great field for research, not only into the production of wool, but also into the manufacture of woollen goods; because we have to make the price cheaper, from the time the manufacturer receives the wool until the fabric appears on the customer's back. There is too great a difference between the price received by the wool-grower and what the customer has to pay for the manufactured article.

Mr. Evans: Blame the Liberals; the middlemen.

Mr. LEWIS: I do not altogether blame the middleman. I think there is a considerable need for technical advice in this regard; and, just as the woolgrower has received and will continue to receive such advice, so I believe it is necessary that the manufacturer should have it. I do not think he is making such a great deal of money out of the wool that he handles; but we must see that the money he does receive is used to better advantage, so that the consumer may be enabled to buy woollen goods at a lower price than obtains today.

His Excellency also made reference to last year's crop, and said that the excellent growing conditions during 1958 resulted in record yields of wheat, oats, and barley. That is all the Speech says about cereals. I have here some figures which I will supply to the House. They show that for the year 1955-56 this State delivered to the sidings 49,500,000 bushels of wheat. In 1956-57, that fell to 28,250,000 bushels; and in 1957-58, the figure went to 29,250,000. In 1958-59, a record harvest of 53,250,000 bushels of wheat was delivered.

It is interesting to look at the figures for oats, where the delivery was 6,000,000 bushels in 1955-1956; 2,000,000 bushels in 1956-57; 2,500,000 bushels in 1957-58; and 10,500,000 bushels in 1958-59. The figures for barley in those years, respectively, were 2,500,000 bushels, 1,500,000 bushels, and 1,250,000 bushels; and, last season, 3,250,000 bushels. From these three grains this State, last harvest, received altogether a record quantity of 67,000,000 bushels. While it is unfortunately true that much of our wheat is still in store, because sales have been very difficult to achieve, all of our oats and barley—despite the fact that 13,750,000 bushels were received—have been satisfactory disposed of.

That speaks volumes for the quality of the grain—in the case of oats it is second to none in Australia, being eagerly sought after by our European customers—and reflects credit on the selling authorities. In this State the Trustees of the Wheat Pool have the selling of the oats, and are also the managers for the barley.

The performance of that body in disposing of our crop has been the envy of similar organisations in the Eastern States. In those States, on the last information I received, almost half of the barley crop remains unsold; whereas the growers in Western Australia will receive satisfactory prices. Prices are now on the down-grade, but fortunately the whole of our crop has already been sold. Unfortunately it has not all been delivered, owing to shipping difficulties and other reasons, and will not be delivered until later this year.

A forecast of a 15 per cent. increase in the acreage of this season's forthcoming crop was also made in the Governor's Speech. However, I doubt whether that increase will be made owing to the ravages of web-worm, red-legged earth mite, and lucerne flea. They do not affect the wheat crops so much.

Mr. Rowberry: What about the basic wage?

Mr. LEWIS: That will not affect the crops that have been put in, either; but the dry season may affect a number of men who can earn the basic wage, if the harvest is far below the average.

Mr. Brady: What about bank finance?

Mr. LEWIS: I do not think bank finance will be forthcoming unless one deserves it. Because we had an expected carry-over at the end of November of 24,000,000 bushels of wheat, the storage position in this State could become rather sticky if the anticipated acreage is sown; and even allowing for the expected yield to be reduced to 15 bushels an acre—remembering that it was 18.4 bushels per acre last season—we could have a total yield of 50,000,000 bushels. If we add to that some 10,000,000 bushels of oats and barley, the storage facilities will be rather strained. There again the total production of oats and barley will depend on the feed position. It does not follow that the acreage sown this season will produce the same crop as was grown last season.

With the anticipated receipt of 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, making a total of 60,000,000 bushels, and with a carry-over of 24,000,000 bushels, we will have 84,000,000 bushels to be stored somewhere during this coming harvest. Our bulk-storage facilities at the moment are capable of storing only 60,000,000 bushels after allowing, perhaps for some elbow room to handle each of those separate grains. Therefore, Co-operative Bulk Handling Pty. Ltd. will have to deal with the problem of finding additional storage facilities either with or without some other assistance.

Before I leave the production of cereals, there is one other problem that calls for increasing financial assistance: that is, soil research. As members know, for several years the growers of grain have contributed $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a bushel towards the cost of soil research. They have shown their willingness and eagerness to do something that will ultimately benefit themselves.

This question of soil research and, more recently, research into soil microbiology, means that more finance—more speedy finance—than has obtained in the past will be required if this State is to save itself considerable economic loss. In many of our new areas settlers have large tracts of light soil, and there are many problems of clover mortality. The settlers are even finding difficulty in getting clover to germinate in some instances, and this calls for research into the bacteria that are in the soil.

As the member for Murray mentioned the other evening, there are some beneficial worms, and there are some that are not so beneficial; and evidently the same applies to the bacteria that are in the soil. Research must be conducted so as to ascertain which bacteria are beneficial and which are not. Investigations should also be made into the sprays that are being used at present and those that will be used in the future to increase the fertility of our soils to overcome this mortality problem.

In that regard, Professor Underwood, at the Institute of Agriculture of Western Australian University, is doing a wonderful

job. In fact, for some years he has performed excellent work in evolving, for example, improved strains of legumes and other grasses; and he is continuing his research at the University into soil problems. However, more rooms and more buildings are needed so that this work may be continued; and despite the research that has already been done from the money obtained from the $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a bushel collected from the growers, more finance is needed, and I would urge the Government to contribute generously towards the cost of this work at the University.

I am quite satisfied that any money spent in that direction will be returned manyfold as the result of extra primary production from this State. In addition to the $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a bushel that is levied upon the growers, the Wheat Pool has contributed a sum of £5,000 for that research to be continued. I have mentioned that for the purpose of demonstrating how eager the growers themselves are to make their contributions towards the cost of this worthy cause.

There are one or two other matters concerning my electorate on which I would like to speak. The housing problem is still acute in many of our country towns. Local business people are finding great difficulty in attracting sufficient labour from the city and other places to those towns because naturally the first question the prospective employee asks is: What about accommodation? And when the only accommodation offering is the local hotel—where there is a local hotel—the potential employee is not at all interested.

Schoolteachers, also, are faced with this problem of accommodation. Whilst it has been the practice over the years to supply a house for the headmaster, in most cases his assistants are not provided with accommodation. The ordinary teacher has always had great difficulty in finding suitable accommodation in a country town. The hotel is too expensive, and private board is not easy to get, particularly when houses are in short supply. Therefore, I again urge the Government to give attention to this question of providing houses, wherever possible, for schoolteachers in country centres.

Further, where there is an electricity supply in the town, early consideration should be given to having the lines connected to the teacher's quarters. In some towns the schoolteacher is the only resident who does not enjoy the benefit of electricity. Often he has to do his great volume of homework with the aid of a kerosene lamp; and in this year of 1959, such lighting is entirely inadequate and unsuitable.

With the member for Victoria Park and the member for Claremont, I have been nominated as a member of the Road Safety Council. I would therefore point out that if any honourable member has any worthwhile suggestion to put forward with a view

to reducing the heavy loss of life that occurs on our roads—I understand about 180 persons every year are killed on our roads, and about another 4,000 are injured—I would be only too pleased—as I know the other two members would be, too—to pass that suggestion on to the Road Safety Council.

Mr. Brady: A few overways and a few subways in the eastern suburbs would be very handy.

Mr. LEWIS: The other evening I heard the honourable member's remarks concerning the provision of crosswalks, and I can assure him that these matters have already been discussed by the Road Safety Council. It has not discussed that particular question, but crosswalks generally. I think all members have been supplied with this booklet I have in front of me; and I commend it to them for their consideration and perusal, because there is a great deal of information contained in it. In the list of causes of accidents mentioned in this booklet, the poor man's motorcar—that is, the push-cycle—rates high.

The statistics in that booklet show that one in every 16 road fatalities is a push-cyclist. Any honourable member who has occasion to cross the Causeway during the peak hour cannot but be impressed with the abandon with which push-cyclists wend their way in and out of motorcars in their endeavour to get ahead whilst going over the Causeway. Many of them run the risk of losing their lives, because it is a very hazardous performance on their part.

I have also noticed a great lack of tail lights or reflectors on most of the cycles I have seen going over the Causeway. As one who has to travel to Midland Junction frequently, on my way home, I have always had to watch out for those cycles which do not have adequate tail lights. If the riders could only see the tail end of their cycles in the same way as the motorists see them, I am sure they would exercise more care and fit more suitable and more adequate tail lights to their machines.

Earlier, this debate on the Address-in-reply was punctuated by talk on the subject of contract work versus day labour, and I have noticed a great tendency to discredit private enterprise. So much emphasis is placed on the worker. I have been intrigued by the term "worker", and I have sought some legal definition of it. However, the only definition that I can find is: "One who is employed for hire or reward." In other words, an employee. At the risk of raising the wrath of members opposite, I would say that the terms are not necessarily synonymous. We know that there are workers among employees, and we know that there are good workers and bad workers, just as there are good employers and bad employers. This tendency to discredit private enterprise reminds me that this State has been developed on private enterprise right from the

first time the early settlers stepped ashore in this State and were thrown on their own resources.

Mr. Evans: Not because of it, but in spite of it.

Mr. LEWIS: No. I would say that they went out as prospectors and farmers, and have set up factories and conducted the little shops on the corners. Very often they are one-man shows. They have demonstrated their initiative, have exhibited great courage, have worked hard, have saved, and have become efficient. They have then put their savings back into their farms and their businesses, and have progressed.

Mr. Rowberry: They do not object to their way of life.

Mr. LEWIS: As the member for Warren has just interjected, they have no objection to their way of life. I have often felt that way about it before. The man who serves in the little corner shop, and the dairy farmer who works seven days a week, probably work harder than any other worker. However, because of their hard work and the savings they make, they develop and grow; and the one gets another shop, and the other improves and extends his property. The man who gets another shop may even turn his business into a company. Then, of course, he is regarded as a capitalist. I do not know why that is.

It would seem that from the very minute a man develops and starts to employ labour, he is one that should be discredited and should not belong in the community. To me it seems all wrong that there should be a discrimination between labour and capital; employer and employee; and producer and consumer, because each is complementary to the other.

While we may have the worker who does not give of his best; and while we may also have the businessman who exploits the public, I think they are rather the exceptions. Unless we continue with that system of private enterprise; and unless we encourage people to go out and develop the country, give them some incentive to greater efficiency, and encourage them to put their savings back into the development of their businesses, and so increase employment, the country will go backward, and will become the kind of police State that we know exists in some other countries of the world. Men must be given the incentive to work and to save if we are to achieve our ends.

Mr. Bickerton: Do you agree that Government work is necessary to assist private enterprise?

Mr. LEWIS: I believe that Government financial assistance is often a good thing. For example, I consider that the financial assistance given by the Government to Chamberlain Industries was a very good thing indeed, because at the time there was

a dire shortage of tractors and other implements. So this assistance was a step in the right direction. Being a new member, I do not know which Government it was that assisted that industry; nor do I know its political complexion. But whichever Government it was, it certainly did a very good job in rendering this assistance, no matter what its political colour.

Mr. Graham: What do you think of Government assistance for workers who are unemployed?

Mr. LEWIS: I cannot understand why, in this country, single people should be content to remain unemployed for very long, because I feel that if a single man in this country is unemployed, then it is a reflection on his desire to get out and do something for himself.

Mr. Graham: That is a shocking condemnation of honest workers!

Mr. LEWIS: I am not saying that they are dishonest at all; some of them may be as honest as the day is long. I merely say they lack initiative.

Mr. Bickerton: They may not possess initiative through no fault of their own.

Mr. LEWIS: I do not say it is their fault for having been thrown out of work; but in the transition from day labour to contract work, just as in the transition from war to peace, or vice versa—in fact in any big social revolution—there must be some disorganisation.

Mr. Graham: Why not help those unfortunates who suffer during the change?

Mr. LEWIS: I think we are going to help them.

Mr. Graham: But you are not. You have taken the 17s. 6d. a week from them.

Mr. LEWIS: I would refer the member for East Perth to the answer given to a question asked about school desks and tables, where it was shown that this State would save about £35,773 13s. 4d. which, on my calculation, is a saving of 35 per cent. on the quote supplied by the State Engineering Works. That amount could very well be expended on some public building. Indeed, I would be very happy if it were spent on the erection of extra classrooms in my electorate. That would create employment.

Mr. Graham: What happens meanwhile?

Mr. LEWIS: There is not a lot of information given us by the respective Ministers. There are a number of men who have been thrown out of work, and who have no prospect of being employed immediately.

Mr. Graham: There are more than a thousand of these people.

Mr. LEWIS: I do not know whether that is more than there were previously.

Mr. Graham: But they were getting 17s. 6d. before.

Mr. Bickerton: The Government has obligations other than merely saving money.

Mr. LEWIS: If I were a single man and I were in receipt of a benefit payment of £3 5s. a week, to which was added the sum of 17s. 6d., I would consider the amount to be most inadequate. I would get out and get myself some work, even if it meant leaving the city.

Mr. Moir: Where would you go?

Mr. LEWIS: To the country.

Mr. Moir: What would you do?

Mr. LEWIS: I have a lot of work available for a man who is not afraid of it, and who is prepared to swing an axe. The acid test in this question of day labour and contract work is: How many members of the Opposition, if they were having a house built, would have that house constructed by day labour? How many of them would call tenders?

Mr. Graham: The applicants of the Housing Commission preferred day labour.

Mr. Moir: I can show you a good job done by day labour on my house.

Mr. LEWIS: I do not think there would be too many members of the Opposition who would employ day labour if they were having a house built.

Mr. Bickerton: That is hardly the case that applies to the Government, because the average person is not able to supervise the work; whereas the Government has the necessary technical staff for this purpose.

Mr. Roberts: That was not a bad speech.

Mr. Bickerton: I got away with it.

Mr. LEWIS: I do think we should try to get away from this class attitude of considering that everything done by private enterprise is—

Mr. Graham: You had better talk to your Ministers.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LEWIS: —necessarily to the detriment of the employee. As I said earlier, I think this Government is dealing with these matters, but there is a little bit of slack that has to be taken up. I believe, however, that the Ministers concerned will meet the problem just as humanely as it would have been met by a Government of a different complexion.

MR. TOMS (Maylands) [5.22]: Though I regret the events which led up to it, I must, along with other members, add my congratulations to you, Sir, for having attained the position you now hold. I have every confidence that you will carry out the task of Speaker of this House with dignity, and with satisfaction to all members, even though you and I perhaps have not agreed as to just to what extent one