

we as a State have a right to secede from the Commonwealth, the North-West has a right by its own vote to determine whether it shall remain a part of Western Australia or establish a new State.

**MR. WARNER** (Mt. Marshall) [8.3]: I have already conveyed my congratulations to you, Sir, upon your accession to the high office of Speaker. I will now deal with a few items which I think should be looked into by the Government before we can bring about a rehabilitation of the wheat and wool industries. As I have been returned as the representative of the chief wheat-growing constituency of Western Australia, I trust some notice will be taken of my remarks. There is great suffering, it will be admitted, amongst primary producers. The greatest problem the Government have to tackle is that of the farmers' debts. Until this is solved, the farming industry will not function smoothly. Whilst it remains in its present unsatisfactory condition, the whole State must suffer too. It is of national importance that this problem should be solved, and I trust the Government will look upon it in that light. Due to the fall in the price of primary products, the producer has lost all power to meet his obligations. His assets have depreciated to such an alarming degree that he is forced to view his property more as a liability than as an asset. His equity has disappeared. He has not received sufficient for his products to enable him to pay his way. If something is not done in the near future to relieve the situation, the whole industry will be engulfed. In my view a board of inquiry should be constituted, free from Government, debtor or creditor influences, so that unbiassed recommendations may be made to Cabinet. In all cases of accrued debt there should be a writing down to manageable proportions. Every case should be thoroughly investigated, compound interest should be stopped, and interest in general should be brought down to the lowest possible level. It should be the aim of the Government to enable primary production to compete on the basis of world's parity prices. To bring this about the cost of production must come down. The writing down or freezing of debts or liabilities would greatly assist to this end. There should be fewer charges

against the crop. If this were brought about, the farmer would have greater heart to proceed with future cropping. He would make every endeavour to retrieve the position, and would have his heart in his work. The result would be better crops to the acre. Something must be done to assist along these lines. When that happens it will mean that the industry will be put on a payable basis, and once we arrive at that stage we shall be taking the first step out of our troubles. The farmer, too, must have greater security of tenure. He is passing through times unparalleled in history, and is the victim of circumstances over which he had no control. He has the haunting fear of being dispossessed of his property. That is confronting nearly every farmer, and must be removed. It is a harmful factor against good work being done on the farm. Whilst he faces that we can never expect him to carry on and do good work. He does not know from month to month whether he is going to remain on his farm or be obliged to accept the dole. It is not enough to tell him, as he was told by Ministers in the last Government, that whilst he does his best and plays the game, he has nothing to fear. Bitter experience has taught him otherwise. That is not sufficient protection for him. He was told that the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act and the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act would give him all the security he wanted, but he finds that is not so. The Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act will not assist him. Once a creditor has decided there is no further advantage in carrying on a farmer, the stay order is allowed to lapse, the law is allowed to take its ordinary course, and he is thrown upon the goodwill of the creditors. Some security must be given to the farmers. If his debts are frozen he will have that much security. In most of the holdings the farmers have invested their life savings, and put in years of hard work. In many cases they have carved out a national asset from the virgin bush. It is the moral right of them all to demand security of tenure, and I hope consideration will be given to that matter. A man must have a reasonable living allowance from the products of his labour. It has been the age-long right of a man to participate in the fruits of his labour. No farmers should be denied this. Why



should a man, knowing that his product is the life blood of commerce, give it away without retaining sufficient to provide food for himself, his wife and his family? There is no law on the statute-book to permit it. If the creditors have a lien against the crop, they can take the whole of it, and very often do so, having been assisted by the Government through the statutory lien. Many farmers have been left without any food on their farms, and no wheat with which to carry on. They have had to leave their holdings and join the unemployed in Perth. If they had been treated in the same way that stock is treated, they would have been afforded protection. There is nothing to protect the farmer from starvation and yet there is an Act which provides that the farmer must feed his horses, his sheep and his pigs. Apparently the farmer and his family are of less value than his stock. After fighting for years the farmer has seen his wife grow old and his children wedded to hard toil. Each year he has expected to advance sufficiently to enable him to send his family away to be educated. He has been prevented from doing that because soulless institutions desire to take away the whole of his products. The farmer must be relieved of interest charges so that he may be able to keep sufficient food for himself and his family. It is a God-given right to a man that he should participate in the fruits of his labour, and he should never have been denied that right. We know that merchants supply super, seed and bags, and receive payment, but the man who grows the nation's corn is often left without any food. He must have sufficient to enable him to discharge his duties to his wife and children. Where have our farmers' friends in Parliament been for many years to permit such a state of affairs? The producers have been led to believe that something would be done for them, but nothing has been done. We talk about British justice, but all the justice that has been done to them amounts to shame and iniquity. To think that a Government can live on the exports of primary production while the producer himself, his wife and children are starving! I trust the present Government will take a different view of the situation, and see that more reasonable consideration is given to the man on the land.

Mr. Raphael: You are bringing blushes to the cheeks of the Opposition.

Mr. WARNER: Amongst these men we have many who proved their pluck oversea, and they have proved it again by hanging on as they have done in the last two or three years. I have the fear that these noble spirits will be broken, because no man will stand the strain too long when he sees the suffering of those who are dear to him, his wife and children whom he loves. He has had to put up with worse than he met with at the fighting front. It has been said, when requests were made by farmers to be allowed to retain sufficient of their products to keep themselves and their families, that this would spoil credit. Where has credit been given to any farmer by any of the institutions, except through a lien over the crop? This matter demands immediate attention, otherwise men will leave their farms, drift into the city and be added to the army of unemployed.

Mr. Raphael: Blame the previous Government.

Mr. WARNER: I believe this is about the first time anyone has been audacious enough to put these problems to the House. I have been returned as a farmers' representative, without any ties, and I am going to endeavour to be their friend without being obstructive to the Government. During the past two or three years I have been fighting for the good of the farmer. I have seen a great deal of suffering on the part of the man on the land. I heard the member for Maylands say that while visiting the groups a little while ago, he saw men sleeping on super bags. In many parts of the wheat belt, where they have been obliged to sell their good bags in order to buy food, they have only the torn ones upon which to sleep. Imagine the position of the man who knows one wheat crop will supply enough flour to keep him for a lifetime, and yet cannot buy two loaves of bread! I feel keenly regarding the position of those settlers for I have seen their suffering. I have pleaded for consideration for them when I have approached many of the soulless institutions in the city, but I have received none. The time will come when the farmers will realise that so long as they remain quiet, the boot will be put into them. They are showing indications of waking up, and unless the Government do something to assist them, they will perchance do something for themselves. Men will not be



beaten for very long without turning, and when these courageous men do turn, there will be bad times ahead for this State. I plead with the Government to do something in the interests of the farming community, more than has been attempted in the past. I also feel keenly regarding the unemployment problem, which is one of the most momentous confronting the Government to-day. I trust they will be able to place the men back at work, but certainly not on sustenance or on the dole. They should be employed on reproductive work and be paid the basic rate of wage. They must be put back at work before we can emerge from our troubles. It cannot be denied that the presence of so many men out of employment has a hampering effect upon industry. Normally they are the purchasers of goods produced by our various industries but, being out of work, they represent so much less spending power in the community. On many occasions we have heard it stated that there is over-production. I will not admit that for one moment. In my opinion the trouble is not over-production but under-consumption. Men in my constituency are in need of food and clothing. I could load up the heaviest wagon in Perth with working trousers, shirts, boots, and other requirements and by the time I had reached the top end of my electorate I would have an empty truck. There is something wrong somewhere. In the "West Australian" we sometimes read of the enormous quantities of food and clothing held in store in various countries, and in the same issue we may also read of people eating human flesh because they cannot purchase food supplies. In the face of that, how can it be argued that the world is suffering from over-production? Another peculiar matter is that we read announcements that America holds a sufficient surplus of wheat to provide for her requirements for two or three years, and yet when her current crop is supposed to be a partial failure, we read of the price of wheat going up so much per bushel. If gambling on food supplies is going on to that extent, why should we not dispose of the surplus wheat to people who require it and are faced with starvation? In my opinion, the monetary system has failed lamentably and that is the root of the whole trouble.

Mr. Moloney: Hear, Hear! Come over here.

Mr. WARNER: I believe that all sections of the House should assist the Government in getting our people back to work, and that those men should receive the basic wage. Another phase of the matter requires attention. I refer to the point of view of people who have been out of work for so long. Some of those individuals are the most loyal we have in the country and yet they are talking Bolshevism, Communism and so forth, believing that they will secure some benefit from such doctrines. That section represents a hotbed for the breeding of such theories. On the other hand, give those people work with sufficient pay to enable them to buy the necessities of life, and, having secured their rights as citizens again, they will have no concern whatever for the view of preachers of strife. It may be that some are "unemployables" but that cannot be said of the boys and girls who have left school during the last few years. They have not had any opportunity, and what outlook is there for them in life? The only prospect for them is the dole. If they are to regard themselves as so much human debris, they will develop into a menace unless something is done to prevent a continuance of their unenviable position. I will help the Government in every direction to provide work for such unfortunate people. Another matter that will require much attention relates to the bulk handling of wheat. I have been a member of a board of inquiry on that subject and I believe the installation of that system will save to the farmer at least 2d. or 3d. per bushel. I expect that question will be dealt with later on, and I trust that whatever system is adopted with the aid of Government assistance, it will be one that will ultimately be owned and controlled by the growers themselves. I also trust that when the scheme is paid for and handed over to the farmers it will not amount to a worn-out contraption.

Member: Is it not true that bulk handling is responsible for your appearance here?

Mr. WARNER: The Government should consider the advisability of dealing with the marketing question, and should appoint an officer to go into marketing matters at this stage. In the near future, when Western Australia will become a dominion, it will be necessary to find our natural markets in the Near East. It would recompense the Gov-

ernment if they were to appoint an officer who could advise the producers of world parity prices of wheat instead of the farmers having to rely on merchants to provide them with the desired information. I told my electors that I was strongly in favour of a reduction in the number of members of Parliament, and I am sincere in my views. I believe that there should be representation of areas equally with that of numbers of people. I trust that this reform will apply not only to the Legislative Assembly but to the Legislative Council as well.

Mr. Raphael: Wipe out the Legislative Council!

Mr. WARNER: I would wipe out 10 per cent. of the members. At the same time I believe that the greater reduction in the numbers should affect the metropolitan constituencies and that the country representation should not be so drastically affected. Much has been said regarding the public works to be carried out. I realise that work will have to be found for the unemployed, but I trust that the work undertaken will be reproductive wherever possible. There are many works in my constituency that would be reproductive if undertaken and would employ a large number of men. A water supply scheme is required at Koorda and if a reasonable sum of money were provided for work on the rock catchment in that vicinity, a large number of men could be employed. The whole of the money would be spent on materials procured locally and on wages. An extension of the water scheme at Kodj-Kodjin could also be undertaken with advantage. Most of the money required for that work would be spent on labour and those who would benefit by the extension of the water supply are engaged on reproductive work. Regarding railway matters, I am opposed to the extension of our railway facilities except so far as promises have been made to farmers that lines would be constructed past their holdings within a reasonable time after they had taken them up. One line that should be constructed is the Kalannie northwards railway. That work was promised four years ago and has been side-tracked ever since. There are two or three other railways that could receive attention.

Mr. Griffiths: What about the Yarramony line?

Mr. WARNER: I believe that line is the hon. member's long suit and I shall support him in his advocacy of it. If that line is to be side-tracked because it is too close to railways on either side, I hope the Government will consider the advisableness of constructing roads for road trains. I understand an inquiry is to be undertaken regarding the Agricultural Bank, and I trust the outcome will be the writing-down of existing debts of the bank's clients. The institution should be converted into a rural bank and operated on proper banking lines. In that event, men who are assisted but cannot keep solvent, should be allowed to fall by the wayside. I am sure that if the debts of the settlers are written down they will be able to carry on successfully. The secession issue has been decided by the people and I hope the Government will not attempt to evade their mandate. I trust that before long, endeavours will be made to separate this State from the rest of the Commonwealth, which has kept us in poverty too long. In conclusion, I desire to indicate my intention to assist the Government wherever possible, and I shall at all times endeavour to do my best while I am a member of this Chamber.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [8.28]: In common, with other members who have spoken, I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on being elected to your present position. I also desire to voice my appreciation of the appointment by His Majesty the King of Sir James Mitchell, one of the stalwart sons of Western Australia, to the position of Lieut.-Governor. I regard the appointment as a fitting reward for His Excellency's past services, irrespective of what our views may be regarding the method by which the appointment was made. I am indeed glad that Sir James Mitchell had that honour conferred upon him. I do not intend to embark upon a mass of details to-night, but I have prepared certain matters to place before the Premier because they will be of assistance to him. A more fitting opportunity to discuss them will be provided when we are dealing with the Estimates.

The Premier: You had better let me have the information early.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The member for Mt. Marshall (Mr. Warner) mentioned various matters affecting the farming industry such