

The MINISTER replied:

1, (a) 931, (b) 1,207.

2, The number is estimated at 50.

3, (a) The number of teacher trainees is being greatly increased; (b) the Government will use its best endeavours to provide the necessary accommodation.

MILK.

As to Contracts Between Dairymen and Treatment Licensees.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

As the action of the Milk Board in refusing to approve of contracts except as between dairymen and holders of treatment licenses is not (according to the Minister's statement) in pursuance of a scheme, or part of a scheme for the improvement of the supply, delivery or distribution of milk for consumers, what are the reasons for the Board's action?

The MINISTER replied:

The action of the Milk Board is in accordance with its powers under section 26 of the Milk Act.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is an evasion of the question.

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION.

As to Engagement of Protector from Northern Territory.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (on notice) asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

1, Is it a fact that a Protector of Natives from the Northern Territory has been engaged for service with the Department of Native Affairs of this State?

2, If so, is the appointment permanent or of a temporary nature?

3, If permanent, what official position will he fulfil?

4, If a temporary position, what is the special duty for which he is engaged?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (for the Minister for Native Affairs) replied:

1, No such engagement has yet been made but such an engagement is under consideration. The gentleman mentioned is a West Australian who was a protector of natives in the Northern Territory and has had experience of natives in Western Australia.

2, Any such appointment, if made, would be to the temporary staff.

3, Answered by No. 2.

4, If an appointment is made, the officer will carry out duties as a protector of natives as assigned to him.

SCHOOL OF MINES, KALGOORLIE.

As to Appointment of Director.

Mr. STYANTS (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary, representing the Minister for Mines:

Will he lay on the Table of the House the file dealing with the recent appointment of Director of the School of Mines, Kalgoorlie?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

In answer to the hon. member's question, yes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

The Premier and Private Houses Built.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [4.42]: I wish to make a personal explanation, Mr. Speaker, regarding a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition on the 5th August. In answer to his question, I informed him that the number of houses dealt with by private ownership completed in Western Australia for the month of March, 1947, was 205. I regret that a mistake was made in the information supplied to me. The figure 205 was the number applicable to the quarter ended March, 1947. The figures for the month of March are not yet separately available.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the 7th August.

MR. GRAYDEN (Middle Swan) [4.44]: At the outset today, Mr. Speaker, I should join with other members in paying tribute to you upon your elevation to the Speaker's Chair. However, as a newcomer to this Assembly, I hesitate to do this. Such felicitations, I feel, are more rightly and properly the privilege of others in this august Assembly—others whose achievements of service to the people of this State I cannot hope to emulate. For me, as a newcomer, to offer you my congratulations would possibly savour of presumption on my part. In this House, which is the quintessence of

democracy, yours is the obligation to direct to the best advantage the efforts of those of us who stand on the floor of the Chamber seeking, as we do in our small way, to contribute to the welfare of the people of Western Australia and humanity as a whole. I will not presume to offer you congratulations, or to suggest that my feelings as to your great ability to carry out your task could be of any consequence. Rather I shall simply express the wish that you may have a long and enjoyable term of office and that the duration of that term may be marked by the greater welfare of the people of this State.

I take this opportunity of congratulating the member for York on his election as Chairman of Committees. I wish also on this occasion to thank the people of Middle Swan for having elected me as their representative in this House. I assure them that I will lose no opportunity of doing anything that may be of benefit to that district, and that in all other respects I shall do everything possible to justify their confidence in me. If I can do this and make a contribution—however small may be my ability to do so—to the progress and happiness of the people of this State, that is all I ask. If I can on some occasions in this House direct the attention of members to iniquities existing in our society, to cases of hardship and want, and ways and means of increasing the health and happiness of our people, I shall feel justified in having the confidence of my electors.

I do not propose to take up the time of the House this afternoon by touching on more than a few aspects of the matters dealt with by His Excellency in his Speech, nor do I propose to comment in great detail on those matters. I will simply put them before members as their urgency requires. I will add that those matters are some that it will be my privilege to emphasise on every possible occasion in the future, at greater length, while I remain a member of this Assembly. I will deal first with our attitude, in this State, towards our coloured and slightly coloured people. Although only a small proportion of our population is affected, and most of them do not have the right to vote, their conditions by all standards of humanity are such that their plight becomes a matter of great urgency. I had occasion recently to help a slightly coloured family living close to Perth. The treatment

they had received was typical of our attitude to such people in Western Australia.

The family of which I speak had been living for several months in a tent, within four miles of the G.P.O., on the Guildford-road. The tent had no fly, and was not rain-proof. Its sole furniture was a small table and a bed. On that bed, four or five feet wide, slept a man, his wife and their four children, the eldest of whom was about seven years of age. Members will understand their plight; a family of six spending these wet and windy months in a dilapidated and leaking tent, all of them sleeping at night in a rain-sodden bed. Under those conditions, the woman collapsed. She was taken to the King Edward Hospital where her baby was born two months prematurely. She was almost blind as a result of her experiences. She would have been much worse had not some neighbour sent for an ambulance. The neighbour was in a position to take advantage of these services in our society which, to all intents and purposes, are there for anyone to enjoy but to which most coloured people in this State would not presume to feel they had a right.

This man was wondering where to take his family. Forced by the complaints of people who lived anywhere near the vacant expanse of land where this man had his tent, and who simply passed it on their way to and from the city, the road board eventually had to intervene and enforce its by-laws. That morning, while the man was away at work, a representative of the local authority called and informed his mother, who had come from the country to look after the children while the man's wife was in hospital, that the tent would be pulled down that evening. The mother had to send the youngest child, seven years of age, to East Perth where the father was working to tell him of what had happened. The man informed me that he had never been in a court, but that if it was a case of pulling down his tent in those circumstances, then he would go into court. There was no animosity in his tone, no martyrdom in his make-up; he simply said he would not take his young children further into the bush. He had not had an opportunity to educate them himself and was determined that they should receive education.

I mention this simply to emphasise the difficulties in which it is possible for some

families in this apparently civilised and organised community to find themselves. I mention it also to point out that the slightly coloured people of this State have an inferiority complex and that we do nothing to make their lot easier. Instead, we add to their burden. It is not the Government that inspires that feeling in these people; it is to individuals we must look. The biggest thing we can do for the coloured people and the slightly coloured people does not cost the State one penny. The biggest thing we can do for them is to judge them by their worth and not by the colour of their skin. It does not lie within the power of Governments to direct the attitude of individuals towards these people. That is determined by the individuals themselves. The reflection is on the individuals of this State that they should have inculcated into those people the inferiority complex that they have, and it is a sad and sorry commentary on this State that they treat with such abandon a person who is down.

I have outlined the difficulties of one family in our community—the difficulties of a man striving to keep his family. I mention this only because it is typical of what a coloured man can expect in this State without the sympathy and understanding which should not be denied any man, simply because his skin is coloured. Eventually I was able to put this family into two back rooms in an unused ex-R.A.A.F. hall. It was surrounded by trees and scrub and was quite apart from the other hut dwellers in the vicinity. Yet some of those individuals complained; they complained that the man was slightly coloured and at the fact that he had been given a home. Yet I have it on the word of the school mistress that, even while the family was living in the tent, the two children attending school were amongst the cleanest and best-dressed of all the scholars.

Before I leave this subject there is one other point I wish to mention and it should be as refreshing to the people of this State as it was to me. I refer to the sympathetic consideration given to and action taken by the Premier, showing that even the smallest matter receives his attention. Although the Premier's time is fully occupied on larger matters affecting the State, he did not hesitate a moment to give his time and energies to ensuring that the plight of this particular family was relieved. I think it

worth recording that the Premier, while directing the affairs of the State, could yet make time to help an individual family such as this, a family previously unknown to him.

Now I should like to touch briefly on the housing situation. There is no need for me to stress its gravity; there is no need to embellish a problem that has become as acute as this one has. It has reached what amounts to a national emergency in Australia. We in this State are fortunate in having many of the raw materials for housing, much more fortunate in this respect than are the people in the sister state of South Australia. To build houses in our State is primarily a matter of obtaining material and skilled labour, and there is no reason why our organisation should not be brought to the very peak of efficiency. I do not intend to deal with this subject in any great detail. The time is short and the matter will be dealt with to a large extent by other members during the Address-in-reply. At the moment I wish to emphasise only one point. Granted that as much as possibly can be done is being done to speed up the supply of materials, to make the best use of the skilled labour available and ensure the maximum efficiency of our organisation; granted all this, the salient point that remains is to ensure that the homes are allocated where they are most necessary.

I have no wish to cast any reflection upon the Housing Commission. I realise, as everyone does, that its members are overwhelmed with applications for homes. Including rental homes, they have something like 10,000 or more applications. In these circumstances, cases are bound to occur where people, who are not quite as much in need of housing as others may be, are allocated homes. The Commission, of course, has to rely on the reports of inspectors, to a large extent, in determining priority. I say, however, that the people who should be getting homes are not getting them to the extent they should. They are not getting them to anywhere near the extent they should. Where the trouble lies I do not know, but I do know that we could find out. I am pleased at the Government's announcement that just as soon as the necessary amendment can be made to the Act, a woman will be appointed to the Housing Commission. I feel that in a mat-

ter as important as this, however, we can go very much further to ensure that these homes are allotted to the people in most urgent need of them.

I had intended this afternoon to outline one or two ways in which our machinery for allocating homes could be drastically improved; but on further consideration I am convinced that there are so many ways in which this could be accomplished that to outline any one aspect, or one or two aspects, would be pointless. The whole system needs a complete and thorough overhaul. I feel sure, if I were waiting for a home in the same circumstances as are thousands in this State, I would be much easier in my enforced wait if I realised that my case was being deferred only because some more deserving than my own were being attended to. I feel, too, that members of the Housing Commission would welcome such an overhaul. It would allay much ill-directed criticism of that Commission in the minds of all home-seekers and others. To reiterate, we must ensure that available homes are allocated to those most urgently in need of them. To do this, we must improve the efficiency of the machinery responsible for the allocation. This it is the bounden duty of the Government to do.

There are in this State thousands of families who will never be prepared to go into a workers' home with the object of spending the remainder of their lives paying off the tremendous cost of such a home, that is, if ever they do have the opportunity to complete the purchase of it. Workers' homes built by the Government in these days run into £1,100 or more, which means 20 or 30 years of a working man's life in paying for something which was completed in a few weeks. The scale of values is hopelessly wrong. If we can do anything about that, it will at least ensure that the man who wants to own his home ought to be able to pay for it within a reasonable space of time. We must arrive at a solution of this problem without very much further delay. Possibly the solution will be found in the cottage type of home. With such homes the working man can clear himself of debt within a reasonable space of time. The completed dwelling runs into half the cost of the worker's homes built by the Government.

I know many people living in the cottage type of home who are very satisfied. The

brother of a former Premier of this State lives in one, and his daughter in another, and they cannot speak too highly of them. Therefore, there can be no real objection to them. There is another aspect of housing I would like to touch upon, an aspect that I feel has not been sufficiently stressed in the past, and that is the matter of building two-roomed cottages with the object of completing the remaining two rooms at a later day. We should investigate thoroughly the possibility of building such cottages in this State, with a view to adding the further two rooms when the supply of materials makes it possible. Such cottages can be erected in an amazingly short space of time.

Not very long ago in Guildford I witnessed a trial demonstration. At 7.30 a.m. four men commenced building. At 5 p.m. that day the building was completed. Since that time, at the invitation of the builders, thousands of people have viewed this home. We could place 50 of them for families in Guildford alone. But I do not want to labour this aspect or the housing situation generally. I have merely singled out three aspects of the tremendous housing problem which confronts the people of the State. Hundreds of other factors affect the position. I shall leave them, secure in the knowledge that other members will deal with them at a later stage. May I add one thing? Already the new Government has taken some steps in regard to housing. It has formed a housing panel comprised of representatives of all the industries concerned to advise the Government upon ways and means of stepping up the housing programme in this State.

There are, of course, many improvements which have yet to be effected, but their accomplishment demands a certain amount of time. The Government is to be congratulated on the steps that it has already taken and also on the open mind it has on this subject, looking always, as it does, for new ways of increasing the efficiency of the building organisation in this State for the accomplishment of one of its primary objectives, which is to put roofs over the heads of those families which are so urgently in need of homes and of whose plight the Government is so well aware and whose condition the Government is so earnestly concerned about alleviating. To summarise briefly before I part from this subject, let us

make sure that homes in this State are going to those who need them most; and let us not burden a man with a home of tremendous cost, as the walls of that home will enslave him as surely as the walls of any gaol.

This afternoon I desire, Mr. Speaker, to speak particularly of Middle Swan. I want to outline to the House the boundaries of this electorate, and to emphasise that the residents of this area have received a shoddy deal in the past. I want to emphasise this and to express the hope that the Government will not allow that state of affairs to continue. I will do everything in my power to achieve that desire. Parochialism involves a narrow outlook at any time. The needs of the State must come before any one section of it; but there is no excuse for neglecting one portion to benefit another. Middle Swan is an example of a district being sacrificed to political expediency. The boundaries of the electorate were determined for political reasons and the people of Middle Swan have suffered ever since.

Hon. P. Collier: Who determined the boundaries?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I think the best thing we can do in Middle Swan is to divide it in two. The Swan River forms the natural dividing line. The interests of the people of Belmont and that side of the river are very different from the interests of those in the Bayswater area. In the past the interests of the people of Belmont and of the people in that area have been to some extent neglected, as the bulk of the population is on the western side of the river. I do not want to give the impression that Bayswater has fared well. It has not. The size of the electorate has been a contributing factor to the general neglect. The present boundary line of Middle Swan is through Welshpool, through and beyond Greenmount; it then encompasses Caversham, Beechboro, Hampton Park, Morley Park and Bedford Park and runs through Inglewood, Maylands, across the river up and through Rivervale and Carlisle and thence to Welshpool. As can be seen, it encompasses Bayswater and Belmont. In the very centre of the electorate there is another electorate, Guildford-Midland.

We have four main worries in Middle Swan. They are housing, drainage, transport and education. I have dealt at some

length with housing and do not intend to touch more than the surface of the other three matters, which have been so thoroughly aired with the Government departments and the Minister responsible that to do more than touch on them today would not achieve any useful object. The circumstances of these matters are well known to all. The main problem in connection with them is, of course, lack of money. Shortages in both labour and materials also have to be overcome. In regard to drainage, I would point out that certain areas in close proximity to Perth are extremely low-lying. In some cases these low-lying areas run across what may be considered main roads. The result is that when these areas become flooded, as they do periodically, the roads are impassable to traffic and large numbers of the residents for whom these roads provide the only outlet suffer considerable hardship.

These areas that are unfortunate in respect of flooding should receive some assistance from the Government because, as they receive less revenue than the higher areas, they cannot hope to develop to the same extent. Local authorities in these areas are in many cases completely unable to cope with the draining of land, the flooding of which affects the roads and the properties of the settlers within their boundaries. I know that in Middle Swan and in adjacent areas the drainage problem is very acute. The Minister for Works and Water Supply has visited various places where drainage is particularly urgent and has already seen fit to embark on drainage projects within those areas in order to improve the plight of the residents affected. I wish to emphasise that we are not asking for excessive amounts. We simply consider that this matter of drainage should be given a high priority in public expenditure and we want to ensure that that priority amounts to something. We do not want to see other works which have not the same degree of urgency or value to the State being proceeded with while areas in our district, upon which the livelihood and health of the residents depend, are flooded.

I do not intend to say much about the transport position. The matter is in the able hands of the Minister for Transport, and the Government is doing its best to remedy the existing state of affairs and to

put transport in the position that it should hold in this State, that is, in the very forefront of progress, not trailing dismally—very dismally—in the rear. Middle Swan, as I have said, has been shamefully neglected in the past; but in no respect has it been more shamefully neglected than in the matter of transport. That has been the greatest stumbling block to the progress of the district with which the residents have had to contend or possibly ever will have to contend. We want more transport; we want better transport and we want it as soon as it can be given. It has been a matter for gratification to us in Middle Swan that already the Minister for Transport has inspected the area and outlined certain tentative plans to us which mean that this difficulty will be overcome, to the very great benefit of the district generally.

There is only one point I wish to emphasise when dealing with transport on this occasion. It is that at Middle Swan we are at present in a worse state than are many other electorates in the metropolitan area so far as transport is concerned. I want to repeat that we are gratified indeed at the sympathetic consideration already shown to us by the Minister for Transport in this problem. We know that we will continue to get this consideration from him. We also know—and this is more important—that from him we will get the best transport it is possible to give us. With education, with particular emphasis on improvements and extensions to schools, we come to the final one of what I consider to be the four stock problems of Middle Swan. As with the problems of housing, drainage and transport, I do not wish to say much about this matter now. With the housing position being as it has been in the past, and from which we have not yet recovered and are not likely to for some time, we are faced with the alternative—schools or homes.

Many parents and public-spirited citizens are devoting their time and energies to organisations to develop their districts and improve the welfare of their children. Naturally they feel aggrieved when improvements to schools are delayed, but when they realise the true position they will agree that the Government has made the only possible choice in the circumstances. I, and everyone else, would like to see this Government embark on an ambitious school-building programme, but I would first prefer to see home-

less families housed. From the contact I have made with the departments concerned, and with members of the Government, I want to say that I have every confidence in the Minister for Education. I am sure that in his hands education in this State will, when it becomes possible, be given a new deal which will be the greatest thing that will have happened in our history.

There are many public undertakings which we, in Middle Swan, are anxious that the Government should commence as soon as the State's finances, and the labour and materials position allow. The most important of them, as far as we in Middle Swan are concerned, is the reclamation of the Swan River between Perth and Guildford. This reclamation will give to the State another stretch of river as beautiful as that below Perth. Then, too, there is the tremendous advantage that access to the areas involved would be to the residents in the cramped areas of Bayswater, Maylands, and East Perth. This is a task which should hold a high priority requiring, as it does, no equipment which cannot be spared from other projects, and very little labour. A matter of surprise, to those who are not familiar with it, is the comparatively low cost at which so much of our river has already been reclaimed and this reclamation has added considerably to the beauty of our city. We should take the first opportunity to reclaim the river from Bayswater to Guildford and thus extend its natural beauty while at the same time making the playing fields which could be constructed on its bank available to all, and, as I have already mentioned, particularly to the people in the crowded areas of Maylands, East Perth and Bayswater.

The plight of the old age pensioners in this State is another matter, to which, for a few moments I would claim the attention of the House. I do not refer to pensions, which is the concern of the Commonwealth, but to the accommodation provided by the State for these people. In the past we have felt that our obligations to the elderly people have been discharged so long as we have provided security of life—that is, a roof over their heads and the bare means to sustain life. Our attitude to this question typifies the showiness of our conception of helping those who need our aid. But the extent of our showiness in this matter does not end with the elderly people

who, as a last resort, move into these so-called homes provided by the State for old age pensioners. It extends to the thousands who are without relatives, or who for other reasons live in their own lonely homes rather than accept the rations and living quarters doled out to them in the existing State homes. I do not want to labour this point but simply to stress that the plea of other obligations is no excuse for allowing the present state of affairs to continue.

The time is long overdue for the building of homes and cottages to which our elderly people could retire in circumstances fitting to their dignity and needs. They should have homes where their wants would be attended to by a staff sufficiently large for the purpose. I am pleased to know that the home being constructed in the foothills is being built with this object in mind. I express the hope that the time is not far distant when our old people will be able to retire in circumstances that will be fitting to the lives of service to the State and to humanity that many of them have so unselfishly rendered and for which, up to the present, they have received such scant recognition. At an earlier stage this evening I mentioned parochialism in connection with dwelling too much on the needs of Middle Swan. I want to say that parochialism can extend much further.

The State itself can be parochial, and I believe we ourselves are to a great extent, parochial. When I say that I do not mean in regard to our relations with the other States, but in connection with the living conditions of the vast numbers of people very close to our shores. Only about 400 miles or so from the north of this State, commences a series of populated islands the inhabitants of which are part of a vast race which stretches right across that area. Many people in this State do not conceive of the number of people so close to our shores. Their attitude to life is such that many of them die annually from starvation and from sicknesses which could be avoided and cured with the most elementary medical care. I point this out merely to emphasise that our sole object in Australia must not always be confined to helping ourselves. We are in a position to do something actively in the way of assisting those less fortunate peoples, and it behoves every Australian to do so. The States and the Commonwealth should, at an early date,

evolve some way by which we could contribute, even if at present it is only a token contribution in the form of medical supplies, to the welfare of the peoples close to our shores, who are not in a position to help themselves.

There is only one other matter to which I wish to refer this afternoon, and before doing so I want to say that it was not my original intention, or my wish, to include any criticism not of a constructive character on this the first occasion that I have had the opportunity of addressing the House. The matter to which I refer was the unprovoked, unwarranted and vicious derision directed by a former Minister of the Crown in this House at the great principle of soldier preference. We had the spectacle of his deriding the principle of soldier preference, in a manner calculated to arouse the anger and the contempt of any one of us who has the intelligence and the human feeling to comprehend the suffering which was willingly endured for Australia and for all of humanity, including the likes of the member for Leederville who, I feel sure, was very dependent upon their protection and who now so contemptuously spurns and derides the sacrifices they made.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is a lie. When you can produce two sons who did their bit for their father you can talk.

Mr. GRAYDEN: The hon. member derided the principle of soldier preference.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I ask for those words to be withdrawn. I did nothing of the sort. I take exception to them.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is asked to withdraw the statement.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I withdraw.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You ought to talk about a man dependent on soldiers!

Mr. GRAYDEN: If the hon. member wants to make a speech he will, I presume, get an opportunity later.

Mr. Marshall: He will make a better one than you are attempting.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I must thank the House for its indulgence this afternoon.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You have every right to.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I want to pay a tribute to the new Government. Without exception,

the Ministers of this Government strive to do what they consider to be in the best interests of the people of the State.

Mr. Rodoreda: You ought to be a pretty good judge.

Mr. GRAYDEN: No matter is so large but that they approach it with new ideas, a new outlook and an open mind. No matter is too small for the Government to give it full consideration. In its sincerity, its new breath and its open mind, we have, in a few words, the basic qualities characteristic of the present Government. At any rate, they are a few of the basic qualities with which the present Government has proved to be richly endowed and which will distinguish it throughout its term of office to the very great benefit of the people of Western Australia. I want to emphasise those qualities, for they bring a breath of fresh air to a State struggling for breath. Members opposite have many times during the current debate referred to cobwebs, which characterised the term of office of the Labour Government and enshrouded the Government benches during the period. For 14 long years insincerity, sectional interests and lip-service to the public weal prevailed. With the advent of the new Government, the cobwebs have already gone.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But the spiders are there.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And the Government members are now tangled in the webs.

Mr. GRAYDEN: They have been swept from the Government benches. The cobwebs of insincerity, the cobwebs of sectional interests, the cobwebs of prevarication, the cobwebs of hypocrisy—all have gone. Members opposite still see cobwebs before them, and they look through a mirage of cobwebs.

Mr. Marshall: We look to the cobwebs on the other side of the House.

Mr. GRAYDEN: They will continue to see cobwebs. Habits of 14 long years are not swept away so soon. Labour members will continue to see cobwebs although they have already gone from the State's activities. They will continue to see cobwebs, in which they themselves are enmeshed.

Mr. Marshall: What forest did you find them in?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I felt earlier that it was my bounden duty to refer to the unprovoked,

vicious and quite unwarranted attack made by a member opposite on the principle of soldier preference.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I would advise you not to come back at that!

Mr. GRAYDEN: I felt bound, on behalf of the ex-servicemen of this State, to emphasise to members opposite just how his feelings in this matter were regarded by ex-servicemen.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will take a long time to convince the soldiers of this State on that point.

Mr. GRAYDEN: We had the spectacle of a former Minister of the Crown deriding the principle of soldier preference in a manner calculated to arouse the anger and contempt of any one of us who—

Hon. A. H. Panton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is repeating a statement he made earlier.

Mr. Marshall: Let him go!

Hon. A. H. Panton: I will not let him go. I have already asked for a withdrawal of a similar statement. You, Mr. Speaker, directed it to be withdrawn and now it has been repeated. I take exception to that, and I ask that the statement be withdrawn.

Mr. Marshall: And for an apology.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The rat-bag! Why bother about him?

Mr. SPEAKER: To what does the hon. member object?

Hon. A. H. Panton: I object to the statement that I derided the work of returned soldiers in this State on the question of preference. I did nothing of the sort. The fact is that I put up a fight for a returned soldier and opposed the appointment of a non-retained soldier. I ask that the statement be withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Leederville has taken exception to a statement made by the hon. member and has requested that the statement be withdrawn.

Hon. P. Collier: And not repeated.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has heard the request. Does he withdraw the statement?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I withdraw the statement.

Hon. P. Collier: You should not have repeated it.

Mr. GRAYDEN: There is one other matter I desire to say in conclusion, and it is that I am very pleased indeed to have the privilege, of which I am very proud, of being associated with my colleagues on the Government side of the House.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The seeming political corkscrew has spoken.

Mr. Marshall: Did he not stand as an independent once?

MR. MAY (Collie) [5.36]: At the outset I desire to offer you, Mr. Speaker, my congratulations upon your appointment to your high office. I trust that during the period you occupy the Chair, while I have a seat in this Chamber I shall do, and say, nothing to cause you any alarm or concern. I am deeply conscious of the fact that I follow in the footsteps of a man who set a very high standard in public life. It has been very pleasing to me, on being elected to this House and mixing with my fellow members, to note the love and affection that all had for my predecessor. I trust I shall do nothing to lower the standard set by the former member for Collie. In common with the member for Murchison, I regret that the portfolio of Mines is not held by a Minister in this Chamber. However, I feel in the circumstances that we must accept the position as we find it. In the Lieut.-Governor's Speech reference is made to the forthcoming season and the anticipation of a successful harvest is mentioned. I am pleased to note that.

In view of the fact that we may anticipate a bumper harvest I shall deal with a basic requirement associated with a prosperous season. I refer to the question of coal supplies. In view of the emergency that arose about two years ago, it was decided that the open-cut system should be adopted in conjunction with deep coalmining. I am of the opinion that the open-cut as against deep-mining method should be regarded purely as an emergency measure. Coal that is easily obtained close to the surface is of a very immature nature and is often mixed with foreign matter such as gravel, which makes the use of open-cut coal very undesirable, particularly from the point of view of the consumer. Therefore I say that the open-cut method should be regarded only in the light of an emergency measure.

This brings me to the point regarding the development of the coalmines at Collie. I regret to have to admit that, for a very long period, more attention has been paid to winning coal quickly than to the future life and development of the mines, and I deem it my duty to direct the attention of the Government to the position at Collie. The matter, I feel, needs investigation and would, if attended to, have a far more beneficial effect than anything else on the output of coal.

I wish to say a few words regarding the distribution of coal. Under the National Emergency Regulations, it was considered advisable—and I think it was—to set up a committee charged with the duty of ensuring a proper distribution of the coal that was available. The committee was set up by the Commonwealth. During the period of the war it might have been very desirable for the Commonwealth to take that action, but now, two years after the close of the war and at a time when we are on the road to rehabilitation, I feel that the distribution of the output at Collie should devolve upon the State authorities. I shall give my reasons for this belief.

On the 26th June last, a conference of goldmining and coalmining interests was held at Kalgoorlie with the object of ascertaining what the Goldfields' requirements of coal were and whether the Goldfields people were prepared to use it. The conference assembled and one of the first questions asked by the Goldfields people was why the supply of coal had been stopped. I admit quite candidly that the coal representatives had no idea that the 500 or 600 tons of coal that had been sent to Kalgoorlie had been stopped. I made further inquiries and found that the reason why Kalgoorlie had not received its quota, as it had been receiving over a long period, was that the bunkering trade at Fremantle had to be supplied. I do not contend for a moment that shipping is not of vast importance. It is, but I maintain also that the future prosperity of the coalmining industry is also important.

I refer to the time just before the recent war when the Collie miners were working only two or three shifts a week. They were not getting enough to live on. This was due to the fact that the shipping companies in those days were using Newcastle coal. At present, however, they are not able to get Newcastle coal so easily, and conse-