

I now refer to transport and the set-up of the Transport Board. I believe the board was formed principally, not for the co-ordination of road transport, but for the protection of the railway system. Areas in my electorate which are not served by railways concern me. In the Toodyay electorate there are two transport systems. One is the railway on the extreme east; and the other, the privately-owned Midland railway, from Gingin northwards. People living in the area which is not served by any railway system are being unnecessarily burdened with Transport Board fees and regulations. If I thought there was any possibility that such fees would be credited to railway revenue I might have a different conception; but they are not.

At present an area within 20 miles of the G.P.O. Perth is free of road transport restrictions. That area can be extended by another 15 miles, to a total of 35 miles, at the discretion of the Transport Board. This virtually means there is a free limit of 35 miles. Outside of that area the farmer is required to meet the costs imposed by the Transport Board. I consider some extension of that limit should be made. I go so far as to advocate the complete exemption from those regulations of areas not served by the railway system.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. CRAIG: There are only two more matters to which I wish to refer, the first being roads. I consider the roads are very good and this reflects great credit on our Main Roads Department. I was very pleased, as were also the residents of Toodyay, when the Minister announced that he had made sufficient funds available for the completion of the Toodyay-Red Hill road. This decision will be appreciated by the many users of that highway.

I would also like to draw attention to the work being done by the Main Roads Department on what I consider experimental roads to Lancelin Island. That type of construction is unique in this State, and I believe it is unique in Australia. If it proves successful at the conclusion of our coming winter season, prospects will be opened up for a cheap form of road construction in our outer areas that will be appreciated by the people from those districts.

I want to make a brief reference to the Swan valley because I feel it is a very important part of my electorate, and in no small way is a contributor to our State's economy. It is only an area of some 5,000 to 6,000 acres, and yet from that confined portion has come over £1,000,000 worth of produce annually. Most of this originates from the vines; and in addition to that there are the three largest wineries operating in the State.

We have built up substantial export markets, mainly with the United States and Canada, and also with our exports of grapes to Singapore and Colombo. Unfortunately, this last season, on account of bad setting of the crop, the value of production from that area has been halved. Representations have already been made to the Government for some form of assistance to these vignerons. There are over 600 registered, and I think that some form of help is absolutely necessary if they are to survive and continue to play their part in assisting in the State's economy.

I do appreciate the forbearance of members in listening so patiently to me, and I will not prevail any longer upon their generosity. I will conclude by expressing my best wishes to the Premier and his Government for a very successful term of office; and I cannot help but add that I feel quite confident that it will be for many years yet.

MR. FLETCHER (Fremantle) [7.34]: May I, Sir, as a brand new member—not as a new Brand member—offer you my congratulations on your appointment to your new high office. May I also ask your indulgence for any small transgression of which, as a new member, I may be guilty. I do not ask for the indulgence of my political opponents for I will have difficulty, quite frankly, in not being controversial.

First I would like to pay a tribute to the man I succeed in this House—The Hon. J. B. Sleeman. I hope that with the passing of time, I shall merit the respect that this good man earned in this House and in his electorate. He has always been a man devoid of affectation; he was also a man of the people, and one who fought for the people and for the man in the street. He did not fight for any narrow section of the public. He was not here to amass a fortune or retain one on behalf of anyone else; but he retired having gained something far more precious—and that was a good name. May he live long to enjoy it!

In my electorate, I gained more than twice the total number of votes of my two political opponents in a very stormy campaign. Despite all that was said against me, and the fact that I was alleged to have doubtful affiliations with all sorts of parties; and despite the fact that I was opposed by a member of the D.L.P. and a member of the Communist Party, I polled more than twice the aggregate number of votes of my two opponents. Because I have an industrial background, I feel that anything I have to say here is likely to be controversial. I make no apologies in regard to anything I might say in criticism of members opposite.

As the D.L.P. was very active in the campaign in opposition to me I want to mention how strangely quiet it has been since achieving its object of having the L.C.L. elected to the Government.



I am very proud of the fact that I am a member of the Labour Party, and I hope to make it proud of me. Irrespective of whether a person in my electorate voted for me or not, I represent each one of them with equal impartiality. I do not ask a person's politics or religion. That was my stand as a trades union representative, and I come here straight from that capacity.

My attitude as a trades union representative will be reflected here as a parliamentary representative. As I have said, Fremantle is a predominantly trade union town, and the behaviour of the members is frequently misrepresented. We have seen a recent example of this where the trade unionists on the waterfront said they would hold a 24-hour stop-work meeting, despite the fact that work was so scarce that I saw on that morning, out of 1,700 men who reported for work, approximately 700 go home after having received only the attendance money of 24s., which they had fought so hard to obtain. This stop-work meeting was held on a matter of principle but was subsequently misrepresented.

The fact was that they were hauling steel out of the hold of a ship and it was customary for the winchman to be seated and to have a man opposite on top to guide the steel out of the hold. The winchman in this instance was instructed to carry on without a top man. He refused and was suspended. His fellow workers, despite the fact that work was scarce, deliberately stuck to that man who was suspended. Another man was subsequently put there and they stuck to him when he was suspended. Where would anyone find such solidarity as that? I give that example to illustrate the atmosphere of the working class in the electorate which I represent.

Since the Government took office, as many as half the working force in Fremantle have gone home from the waterfront with only attendance money. That is not an exaggeration. The situation is now further aggravated by the displaced persons from the State Engineering Works and other Government jobs. Many of those men are wandering the streets of Fremantle looking for jobs.

I met a member of the Chamber of Commerce at a recent function—I will not say where, because it might cause embarrassment to a certain businessman—who expressed concern quite forcibly, not only to me but to other people, about what was happening as the result of the unemployment in that area. He expressed the opinion of, I believe, the business community of the Fremantle area; and rightly so, because it is a fact that as the men are out of work they have no money to buy the articles they need.

Prior to the election, the present Government stated that it did not intend to fire these people, and yet that is exactly the situation that has arisen. There is growing unemployment in the Fremantle area; and, on behalf of the people of Fremantle, I ask the Government to commence work forthwith on some public projects in my electorate. In this way a lot of the unemployed would be absorbed. There are urgent projects needed, such as the groyne at South Beach, which is a very vital work that our Government intended undertaking. I would like also to see the extension made to the mole at the fishermen's jetty. The anchorage behind this mole is already overcrowded. That extension would be appreciated by the fishing fleet. If these works were commenced, employment would be created.

All the boats cannot now anchor under the lee of the mole, because the area is overcrowded, although the Labour Government could not be blamed for that. The position is due simply to the fact that there is now insufficient space in the anchorage. It is urgently necessary that the present Government should extend the mole; and it should also get on with the work on the bridge at Fremantle, as that would employ many more men in the area.

I congratulate my predecessor on his success in having the proposed site of the bridge changed to its present and correct position alongside the existing structure; because it will not now cut North Fremantle in half, as was originally intended. The residents of North Fremantle, also, are to be congratulated on the determined way in which they opposed the siting of the upstream bridge.

I invite representatives of the Government to come to Fremantle, which is the gateway of the City of Perth, of the State, and of Australia as a whole. Fremantle has one of the most hospitable mayors that I know of; and both he and his councillors would be pleased to welcome any representatives of the Government to that area and show them around. Irrespective of whether they agree with my politics, I represent that area, and the mayor and councillors of Fremantle will do all they can to benefit their district. It is still not too late to redeem the name which the Government is at present in the process of losing in the Fremantle area. Such a visit might also enhance the Government's shares in that area to such an extent—I offer this as a bribe—that it could stand a Liberal opponent against me at the next election.

The Labour Government intended to do the work to which I have referred, and gave an undertaking to that effect; and the present Government has now been long enough in office to have made a start on some of that work which should be carried out in the Fremantle area.



I regret the critical nature of my speech; but I am not trying to take advantage of members opposite or hide behind the immunity from criticism which is usually accorded to a new member. I think we can be too bound by protocol, and I feel that there is an emergency existing today owing to unemployment. It is so grave a position that something must be done about it in a hurry.

A while ago I mentioned the alarm felt in the Fremantle area as a result of the falling off in the spending ability of the wage earners in the district. That effect is snowballing. I understand that Mills & Wares have given dismissal notices to 60 of their employees. That is the information I received from one of the fellows who was given notice; and, though it is possible that the report is exaggerated, I repeat it as an illustration of how depressions begin.

The shelves of Mills & Wares biscuit factory are lined with produce which is stored there, because people in the area are losing their spending power. It is no wonder that the Chamber of Commerce, business people, and the workers are all feeling concerned at the present state of affairs; and many workers are now in tragic circumstances. It has been alleged that members on this side of the House have indulged in crocodile tears; but I know of many men who have come to me at the Trades Hall—I expect some of them have gone to members opposite—to see what can be done to help them. I refer, for instance, to men living at Kwinana—and it will be conceded that there is only one avenue of employment there.

A man living at Kwinana is in a hopeless position if he becomes unemployed, as he cannot find other work there. He must either seek social service payments—particularly if he has children—and remain unemployed, endeavouring to keep a roof over his head and find food for his children, or else pay 5s. per day to go from Kwinana to Fremantle or elsewhere in a search for work that does not exist. I say that the Government is responsible for that situation and is aggravating the position that exists in the Kwinana area.

One man that I can mention as a typical case is a welder—a tradesman who should be able to get employment. He has five children—some members will say that is his own responsibility, but there are many others who have children and who, unfortunately, are receiving social service payments and look like being in that position indefinitely—and the fact that the labour market has been swamped by employees put off from the State Engineering Works and other Government instrumentalities, has created a position in which this man is looking for work that does not exist. If work were started on the projects I have mentioned in the Fremantle area, the position would be relieved.

A dock in the Fremantle area is an absolute must, from the point of view of the strategic security of this State. I can think of no more logical place for such a dock than the Naval Base area in the Fremantle locality. The coastline there lends itself splendidly to excavation and the sea faces cliffs, so that there would be the natural land on either side of the dock. It has been alleged that the cost of a dock would be out of all proportion to the revenue that it would bring in, but my party has approached our Federal member, who in turn has approached the Federal Government on the matter, and I ask the Government of this State to join with us in the objective of obtaining a dock for the Fremantle area.

A dock at Fremantle would be useful not only for naval purposes, as there have been many breakdowns of vessels recently in the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean, in the vicinity of Western Australia. All that repair work could have been done at Fremantle had the necessary facilities been available. I am not necessarily advocating the cause of employers at Fremantle, but there are many shipping repair firms there which employ tradesmen who could be given work on such repair jobs, with benefit to the State and the safety of Australia.

The question of a dock has been taken up at various levels within my party and with the Fremantle City Council. The Lord Mayor of Fremantle is interested in the matter and I ask the Government to assist us in the worthy project of obtaining a dock in the Fremantle area.

I will deal now with other points raised by previous speakers in relation to the amendment. I would have liked to speak to the amendment, but perhaps I would not then have been shown the tolerance that is now being accorded to me. I repeat that I am here to criticise the Government and to pick holes in anything that I think worthy of criticism. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned plasterboard, and that reminded me of a matter that was reported to our union and subsequently to the Fremantle District Council of the A.L.P. This man, a close friend of mine, got several tenders for plasterboard for his house, and one of them was at variance with the others, being much cheaper.

Naturally this man accepted the cheapest tender; but within two hours the fellow who had given the cheapest quote got in touch with him and said "I am sorry, but it is the original figure". The five or six other tenderers had all quoted an identical figure. Hon. members may say they have only my word to depend on in this regard, but the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was present one night when



this case was submitted, and can substantiate what I say. When the man concerned asked the representative of the firm how it was that he had previously given a cheaper quote, the representative finally admitted—a scandalous state of affairs—that he had quoted under the others; and he said quite frankly, “You have a union, and so have we. Had that work been done at the price quoted we would be out of gypsum in a month or six weeks.”

The implication of the foregoing, of course, was that the firm supplying the gypsum had the position so tied up that the suppliers of the plasterboard would lose their supplies of gypsum for under-quotting the ring which exists. Under the penal clauses of the legislation that exists, members of the trade union movement, if they indulged in such collusive tactics, would be liable to all sorts of penalties and would be fined under section 30 and so of the law. Why is it that retailers can get away with such malpractices, when a trade unionist is denied the right to join with his fellows and agree on a minimum price at which to sell his labour?

Where is the justice or equity of the position if a businessman can agree with his colleagues on a price at which an article may be sold, while if the trade union movement decides to increase its wages commensurately with the prices charged for the necessities of life, that is considered to be in the nature of a strike?

I can remember when I first met the member for Murray, Sir Ross McLarty. When I was introduced to him here, I said “Yes, I met you before or, rather, I had a bird’s eye view of you from the gallery.” I said then that I would tell him about it from the floor of the House, and this is my opportunity. It was when he and his Government were introducing the very legislation to which I have referred, and which still exists to the detriment of the trade union movement.

I am not saying this merely because there is an audience in the gallery tonight. I have said the same at work and elsewhere. It is unfair that this legislation is in existence, clamping down, as it does, on the trade unionist who is endeavouring to improve his working conditions. When such an endeavour is made the Government tells him, “You can appeal to the Arbitration Court.”

There could be a concerted movement among the workers who can see ahead their objective for better conditions; but once such a movement is put in train, the Government immediately introduces legislation such as I have mentioned. The workers, after entering into negotiation with representatives of the employers, return to work without any improvement in their conditions.

Another indignity is that whilst that filthy legislation remains on the statute book the Government is desirous of repealing the unfair trading legislation. That Act was objected to by members of the business community; and, in fact, in our election speeches it was mentioned that it was not the large businessman who supported that legislation but the man who conducted the small store. Despite the fact that legislation is in existence to restrict the trade unionists, the Government wants to repeal legislation to throw the door wide open for unscrupulous businessmen to help themselves from the pockets of the workers by charging prices that are beyond the ability of consumers to pay.

The Government would not be justified in taking this step, because its members represent the minority of the population in this State. The same position exists in the Commonwealth sphere. The interests of the few are represented by members opposite to the detriment of the majority of the people. I would like to know what has happened since the Government has been elected. It has made many excuses as to its intentions and its objects. Despite those excuses, I consider the Government is in the process of wrecking the State.

The record of the previous Government showed that many State enterprises were placed on a sound footing, and they are operating well today. I cite the State Engineering Works in particular. There were—and still are—many skilled men working there. However, work was taken away from that State concern and given to private undertakings. The men employed at the works were standing at their workbenches for three weeks with little work and they knew full well that the axe was going to fall. In effect, they were told that if they did not have the decency to find other jobs their services would be dispensed with in any case.

Although members opposite contend that they believe in private enterprise, they are liberal in name only, because their attitude is Tory and Conservative. The only liberality that they show is for the benefit of the big businessmen they represent. The skilled tradesmen who are being dismissed from various Government concerns are the backbone not only of this State but also of the Commonwealth. Despite this, they are being ruthlessly thrown on the scrap-heap.

When the member for Melville raised the position of apprentices employed by the Government, the Minister for Works denied that their employment was in jeopardy. However, what will happen to them after they have served their indentures, should they go to work for private enterprise voluntarily or otherwise? Their future will certainly not be secure. The concern

felt by most members surrounds those young apprentices who have just entered upon their apprenticeships; and who, in fact, are still on probation. The parents of those lads thought that their futures were assured, and they have made great sacrifices by putting these lads into various trades.

I ask members on both sides of the House: What incentive is there for parents to put a lad to a trade when such insecurity of employment has been created by the Government? I would point out to the House that if it were not for many of those tradesmen we would not be enjoying the illumination in this Chamber. Furthermore, we would not have the electric power to run the various large business enterprises that are conducted either by members opposite or those they represent.

I consider I am qualified to speak on the question of relationship of tradesmen to industry. I have worked alongside them; and, in fact, I have not yet removed the grease and dirt from my hands. But I am proud of that. I am aware of the manner in which working men think. I worked in the power house, and not in the glamorous sections that are shown to visitors by the Minister when he makes a visit. I worked on top of a boiler until only recently, where the tools were too hot for a tradesman to handle and they had to be kept in a bucket of water to cool them down. I am sure that members opposite do not understand what I am talking about. Some of them may have been brought up the hard way, and I sincerely hope that they have not forgotten their background.

In any industry where the workmen are subjected to extreme changes of temperature, their health is seriously affected. Despite this, the men are allowed only five days a year sick pay, and they are entitled to only ten days' annual leave in which to recuperate from their exhausting labours.

I take this opportunity to point out that the same business interests that exploit the workers also exploit the farmers by way of advancing loans at high rates of interest; selling items of equipment on hire-purchase at exorbitant prices; and by the imposition of excessive shipping freights. Although I notice that the member for Nedlands is busily occupied when I mention the subject of hire-purchase, I am sure that he knows what I am alluding to. There is no doubt that the same element which is fleecing the general public is also fleecing the small farmers. The larger farmer will probably not be affected because no doubt he would be part and parcel of the racket.

I cannot understand how the Country Party representatives of the small farmers can reconcile their association with the representatives of big business. Theirs is

an unnatural affiliation; and it is dominated, as I have said before, by big business interests.

In my opinion the two Independents should be loyal to the electors who voted for them and be opposed to the forces that tried to drag them down. Even the Press went to the extent of publishing a photograph of a Mr. Barrass because it was hoped that he would defeat the present member for Mt. Lawley. Because the votes of those two members have been given in support of the parties opposite, I would not like to be in their shoes. If they do not support us in opposing the sacking of the men from the Public Works Department, or any subsequent sackings, they are likely to suffer the consequences at any future election.

In opposition to the contention put forward by members opposite that private enterprise works satisfactorily, I would point out that the South Fremantle power station was built and machinery installed in it on a cost-plus basis. Tonight I asked the Minister concerned what the installation costs were. I have been given many figures, but they are extremely inconclusive. In support of my contention, I would point out that the contractors who built the power house, and those who installed the machinery did not care how long the work took because they were on a 10 per cent. margin on what it cost.

As a result, I do not blame the employees who were engaged on that work for slacking. I have seen many of them inside boiler drums playing cards because of the lack of supervision; but the contractors who, as I have said, were on a cost-plus basis, did not care. On the same terms I am sure that private enterprise would want to engage in other projects that previously were performed by State enterprise, including the State Engineering Works.

The South Fremantle power station was built during the regime of the McLarty-Watts Government, and contracts were let to persons who did not care how the costs mounted. The power house cost the taxpayers plenty, and probably millions more than it should have.

Where did that money go to? It went into the pockets of big business interests that installed the machinery. I also know of one case of a contractor who had dealings with cement. I paid 28s. a bag for cement at that time; and one firm which was using a lot of cement during that period—cement that was paid for by the taxpayer—did not put all that cement into the power house. The truck would come in through the gate, and would go out towards another building in the process of construction by the same contractor who was building the power house. That cement would be used for building for private enterprise. The cement was off-loaded from the truck on to the utility associated with the particular firm.



It might be said that I should not mention this matter, or that I should nominate the firm concerned. I do not wish to do that. But if the existing Government is to condone such practices by private enterprise, then it must be condemned for such a policy. It is often alleged that trade unionists and Government employees do not do their fair cut of work; that their record is unfavourable by comparison with what is done by employees in private enterprise. Although this is addressed to me, I would like to quote a letter I received, as an example of the type of work done by people employed in Government enterprise.

Back in 1955, during our term of office, a gantry that led from the coal hopper handling plant to the South Fremantle power station was burnt down. As a result, coal could not be obtained, and we had to resort to oil. The next day was Labour Day; and in my capacity as shop steward, and, because an emergency existed—inasmuch as power could have been cut off not only from the business firms, but also from domestic lighting and so on—it was decided that the men should work on Labour Day. And this they did. I received the following letter from the State Electricity Commission management:—

This Commission very much appreciates your loyal support when called upon to work at very short notice on Labour Day (Monday, 7th March, 1955) whereby it was possible for this Commission to maintain its services to the community irrespective of a very serious fire on the coal handling plant at South Fremantle Power Station.

The object of this note is merely to place on record the appreciation of the Commission for your efforts, which are indicative of the keen sense of responsibility experienced by the employees for the well being of the community.

That is over the signature of Mr. Edmondson, the late lamented manager of the State Electricity Commission. I mention that as indicative of the attitude of the people employed in Government service, and as a direct contradiction of the allegations made that those Government employees are not conscious of their responsibilities.

Finally, I wish to mention the subject of the 17s. 6d. The Minister concerned in this House replied to me tonight in relation to that matter. In the letter I addressed to the Minister I mentioned several points, and requested that he give urgent consideration to seeing that the people in the Fremantle area in particular—because I know of them—be given immediate assistance.

The Minister never replied to my correspondence, despite the fact that Mr. Young, who is 2 I.C. of the Child Welfare Department, intimated to me that he would reply in connection with the withdrawal of the 17s. 6d. I wrote back on the 23rd May and mentioned three cases. I admit that they were married men—deserted husbands—who were in receipt of 17s. 6d., given by our Government for the purpose of helping these fathers who were trying to keep their families together. I mentioned these three cases specifically to Mr. Young, who wrote back and said they would be considered on their merits. That was on the 23rd May.

None of those three cases has received the sympathetic consideration which it was alleged they would be given. In my correspondence I also asked the Minister for immediate assistance to the above families; and I repeat that to the Minister and ask him to give consideration to these requests. I ask him to hasten immediate assistance to those families; and, further, that his officers in Fremantle be given authority to pay the supplementary 17s. 6d. to the cases outlined, and to use their discretion in future to assist any unfortunates similarly circumstanced.

I also mentioned that the Minister's officers at Fremantle are conscientious and capable, and that I felt sure they would not abuse any such authority delegated to them. I still have not had any reply to that request; and those unfortunates have not received any assistance, as was promised by Mr. Young on behalf of the department. Would the Minister responsible inform the officers at Fremantle that they have authority to recommend cases such as I have outlined to him and others which are similarly urgent?

**MR. O'CONNOR** (North Perth) [8.22]: In this, my maiden speech, I would firstly like to thank members on both sides of the House, and also the officials and staff of Parliament, for the advice, assistance, and information they have given me since my election to the Legislative Assembly. It is very pleasing for a new member to see that, apart from any contention that might exist here, there is no animosity whatever between members on either side of the House. In fact, they mix outside this House in a manner that most people would find difficult to appreciate.

I have also noted with great interest the ability in debate that members on each side of the House possess. I appreciate the high standard set by some of these members, and I sincerely hope that in due course I will be able to attain the high standard set by them.

I do not want to touch on any contentious points tonight, because I do not wish to take advantage of the Opposition in this respect. My congratulations go to the