

**COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.**

On motions by the Minister for Railways, sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

*Standing Orders.*—The Hon. E. M. Davies, the Hon. L. C. Diver and the Hon. H. K. Watson.

*Library.*—The Hon. J. G. Hislop and the Hon. R. F. Hutchison.

*House.*—The Hon. W. R. Hall, the Hon. E. M. Heenan, the Hon. A. R. Jones and the Hon. J. Murray.

*Printing.*—The Hon. G. Bennetts and the Hon. J. McL. Thomson.

**SUPPLY BILL (No. 1), £21,000,000.***Standing Orders Suspension.*

On motion of the Minister for Railways, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to pass through all its stages at any one sitting; and the aforesaid Bill to be dealt with before the Address-in-Reply is adopted.

*First Reading.*

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** (The Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.43] in moving the second reading said:

This is the first of the Supply Bills introduced for the purpose of enabling the services of the State to be carried on pending the preparation of the Estimates and their being agreed to in another place. The same amount of money is requested in this Bill as was provided by the first Supply Act of last session. This sum of £21,000,000 is, and was last year, made up as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	15,000,000
General Loan Fund	4,000,000
Advance to Treasurer	2,000,000

Every effort is being made to have the Budget submitted to Parliament as early as possible, the sole hampering influence being that the Grants Commission has not resolved on the amount of the grant which it will recommend that the Commonwealth Government should make to Western Australia for the current financial year. When details of the amount of this grant are received by the State Government, the Budget can be finalised and submitted to Parliament.

During the last financial year a deficit of £2,664,000 was estimated, the actual deficit being £1,123,000. This reduction was caused mainly through an increase of £315,000, by way of special Commonwealth assistance, and an increase of £229,000 over the railway revenue estimate.

A most potent factor was the reduction by £842,000 in the railway expenditure estimate. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. A. F. Griffith, debate adjourned.

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.***Third Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE HON. C. R. ABBEY** (Central) [4.47]: I would first like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, sir, on your election as President of the Council. I, as a new member, feel that you have carried out your duties in the House to such an extent that we all have the greatest faith in you; and I add my congratulations to those that have already been expressed by other hon. members. I would like to say that during my term here, my purpose will be to take a general interest in matters affecting the State, and I hope that at no time will my outlook be narrow or to the prejudice of any section of this great State of ours.

First of all, I, as a country member, wish to refer to the primary industries of Western Australia. As you know, Sir, I am a farmer and have a vital interest in these industries. Wool, of course, is at present causing a great deal of concern. It concerns everyone in the State, I think, and it is something we have to watch carefully. We have the spectacle of woolgrowers, because of their concern at the low prices, seeking plans to stabilise the industry, and possibly their efforts may be successful. I hope they are because should they be successful and bring about stabilisation to any degree, it must be to the benefit of the State and to the members of the community generally.

I feel that at the present time the decline in income of rural residents—farmers particularly—is causing a considerable decline in development by way of clearing, fencing and so forth, and that is having quite a serious effect, but I hope it will not snowball in the future. We must take some steps to arrest this decline; perhaps particularly by encouraging the banks to allot further credit for this purpose. I know that there are many demands made on trading banks and they feel that sometimes they cannot allow the credit that is necessary for this purpose, but it is something that we need and that everyone, particularly the farmers, desires.

During my travels, when I was on my campaign and at other times, I particularly noted that in the rural communities, on the outer fringes of settlement, the people felt they were being left out on a limb. They have, of course, protested strongly against some of the rail closures.

I feel that they would not have felt the effects of those rail closures so greatly had the initial service been much better than it was, and should have been, and had the costs been kept more within reason. I have had quoted to me a case at Wialki where a settler is now paying 15s. a ton more than he was previously for the transport of his super to the farm. That is a big difference and means quite a large sum of money; I take it that is not an isolated case.

In this instance the super is railed to Mukinbudin, instead of Koorda, which is further away, and then transported by road. These increased charges have meant a considerable lift in this man's costs of production; possibly, like others in the district, he will eventually find it will pay him to move from that area and attempt to buy another property in a more favoured locality. That sort of thing is happening every day.

Only two days ago I was told of a farmer who bought a property in the Bencubbin district for £2 10s. and a large farm of 4,000 acres probably £5 to £6 an acre to develop. I am not blaming the closure for the owner of the property leaving his farm; but it was a contributing factor. In my view the subsidy paid at present is inadequate, and, instead of its being reduced, it should be increased to a stage where the settlers in all areas—not only in Wialki but also throughout the rest of the State—would be able to transport their produce at a reasonable cost, thereby helping them to stay on their properties and develop further land.

In the first place the subsidy was granted because certain areas were not served by the railways; and now a subsidy has been granted in certain cases where the rail services have been taken away. That is quite all right, if it can be justified; but I do not think it can be justified. The subsidy to pay is not the yardstick because a much variation takes place from farm to farm. The settler who is just starting to develop his property in such an area must find it extremely difficult to carry on if there is any increase in costs because, as most members know, the present price of wool is at an uneconomic level. In the outer areas people are not growing grain as much as they used to but are turning to the production of wool in an effort to reduce costs. Probably that is successful to a degree.

I know that by good farming methods many of these people have developed their properties, and will continue to develop them further, so that their families can carry on. But in the north-eastern part of Bencubbin a few years ago there were 13 settlers, and that number has now dropped to four. The four remaining farmers have bought out adjoining properties and we now have the spectacle of

farms of 8,000 to 10,000 acres—not a very pretty prospect. Although the climatic conditions in those areas are fairly severe, I feel sure that more people would go there if encouragement were given; and we must provide that encouragement. For instance, it must be disheartening to the lady of the house to develop a good garden, and then see the grasshoppers strip it bare in five minutes, as sometimes happens.

All these things make it harder for the people in those districts; they find that they have to travel 200 or 300 miles to the metropolitan area for their holidays. They see that conditions are not so good and if possible they shift to a more favoured area. We must do something to help these people and make their conditions more pleasant.

The efforts of the Commissioner of Railways to improve the service have been favourably received by the people in all country areas. I have been present at meetings conducted by railway officers and they have been most helpful in their approach to local problems. I congratulate the Minister for instituting those inquiries, and I hope that he will press them further. I have had some discussions with the heads of departments in the railways, and I know that they are making a genuine effort to overcome all the problems that are brought forward to them. In my view we will see some results from that attitude in the future.

I hope, too, that the question of stock transport will receive more attention. Although there have been some improvements many more could be instituted, and I feel certain that people in the areas further out would make greater use of the railways if they were sure that their stock would arrive at the market in good condition. I am a farmer and I live in an area fairly close to the market. I realise what a difference it makes if stock arrive at the markets in poor condition and there is a probable drop of 5s. a head in the price as a result. If stock can be carted quickly it makes a great deal of difference to their condition, and a difference of 5s. a head on a couple of hundred sheep is considerable; it means the loss of the cream to the farmer.

As a genuine effort is being made by the heads of the department, and the Commissioner himself, to improve the services, I hope all railway employees will back up that effort. In the past we have felt that many railway employees did not realise that they were supplying a service to the community. Generally the community appreciates a good service, and if the attitude of the employees improves I am certain it will meet with a good reception.

I would like to draw the Minister's attention to articles which appeared in the "Farmers' Weekly" on the 7th August, 1958, on pages 4 and 20, regarding the effects of the extra costs of transport in the lakes district and other areas. The effect is

fairly general, and the alarm felt by the settlers in those areas should be of concern to us all. In future years the subsidy now paid will be reduced, and I feel that it would be a wise move on the Government's part if it reviewed its present attitude and decided to restore the original subsidies instead of reducing them any further. After all, it would not be a great expense to the State, especially considering the saving which has supposedly been made because of the closing of certain rail services. I feel sure that if that were done it would be most helpful to the people concerned.

I would like to congratulate the Government for the way in which it has tackled the native housing problem, by means of its experiment at Narrogin. I am sure this will be of great assistance to our native population. As we all know, they are a nomadic people, and they will move about. But it will help them no end if they have an incentive, and know that they can live in close proximity to the town and be supplied with small dwellings and ablution blocks, which they cannot unduly damage. It is a most constructive move and a step in the right direction.

My province probably has a greater native problem than others, and we feel that this move is something that should be accelerated. The natives would be very much happier, as would the residents of the towns, if the former were provided with small dwellings, ablution blocks and other facilities necessary to civilised living. By this means the natives would not cause the nuisance which they sometimes do at present, and which is more often than not brought about by their living in unhygienic dwellings, and in miasmas when they are camped in close proximity to the towns.

I think we are all very pleased to hear about the provision of finance to improve the Avon Valley water supply and the outer areas of the State. This scheme should be pushed along very quickly. The populations of most towns are increasing rapidly, because we find that members of the rural community are retiring more to the country towns, where they are known and have their families, rather than to the coastal areas and the cities. As I have said, this water supply scheme is a very good thing. It will help decentralisation to a degree because of the fact that more building will take place. The provision of water supplies must help the position.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members of this House for the manner in which they have received me, and for their friendly attitude towards me. As a new member it has been most pleasing for me to come here and be received in this friendly fashion. It amazed me. I felt that being a stranger I would find it difficult to fit in. But that has not been the case and accordingly I thank you, Mr.

President, and all the members of this Chamber for the kind way in which I have been received.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: We are noted for our hospitality.

**THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland [5.4]:** Firstly, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your elevation to the position you now hold. You have given long years of service to this State and the Commonwealth, and I feel you richly deserve your reward. I would also like to congratulate those members who were fortunate enough to be elected unopposed, and also those of us who have been re-elected by the people in the areas we represent. I offer my congratulations to Mr. Abbey for having been elected, although I must say that I feel very sad at the loss of one of my personal friends, namely, Mr. Baxter. But it is the will of the people, and I do congratulate Mr. Abbey on his victory.

Like Mr. Griffiths, I also deplore the fact that the Chief Secretary, Mr. Fraser, is still so ill that he is not able to attend the sittings of the House; and I, too, hope that the time is not far distant when he will be back again amongst us. I am sure we will all miss the rather snappy way he had of conducting the business of the House. I would like to revert for a moment, and to offer my congratulations again to Mr. Abbey on his initial speech this afternoon. I think hon. members will agree that he acquitted himself very well indeed. I do not know whether he was afflicted with butterflies or not, but he certainly showed no signs of nervousness; and it all augurs well for the future when Bills come before us for debate.

I do not think we can let this opportunity pass without offering our thanks to Mr. Loton, not only because he served this Chamber as President for four years, but for the work he was able to perform within the precincts of this Chamber and Parliament House itself; not the least of which is the start that has been made in an effort to complete the building of Parliament House. I know that Mr. Loton was only one of a committee, but I believe that, as Chairman of the House Committee, most of the drive and most of the suggestions come from him.

One of the improvements he was instrumental in gaining for us was the upholstering of the seats in this Chamber. From that time on he was on the alert in an effort to find ways of improving facilities for members in this House. I think we will all agree that during the last occasion when Parliament was opened, the arrangements for serving afternoon tea were greatly improved; and this was due to Mr. Loton's efforts, and the assistance he received from the staff. He did away with all the congestion with which we had to