

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 24th August, 1955.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions: Poison 1080, conditions of availability to farmers	262
Employment of natives, effect of new Act on permit holders	262
Moora hospital, nurses' quarters	262
Geraldton harbour, (a) effect of existing maximum draught for ships	263
(b) hydrographic survey report	263
State Insurance Office, new building	263
Address-in-reply, sixth day	263
Speakers on Address—	
Hon. A. R. Jones	263
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	273
Hon. N. E. Baxter	277

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

POISON 1080.

Conditions of availability to farmers.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is he aware, with regard to the poison 1080, that in South Australia—

- (a) the poison is now available to farmers in prepared form;
- (b) all stock agents have been approved as distributors;
- (c) an application endorsed by the Department of Agriculture enables farmers with more than 10 acres to be issued with a permit from the Department of Public Health;
- (d) for safety reasons the oats used in the preparation are coloured purple and that an emetic is included in every tin;
- (e) the preparation is sold in 25lb. tins?

(2) In view of the success obtained in South Australia with poison 1080, will he make this poison available to farmers in this State under similar conditions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is known that a scheme of this nature is under consideration in South Australia but no advice of its implementation has yet been received.

(2) No success in South Australia has yet been notified, but preliminary inquiries have already been made as to the possibilities of and problems associated with initiating a similar scheme in this State.

EMPLOYMENT OF NATIVES.

Effect of New Act on Permit Holders.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) How many permits to employ natives were still current as at the 20th May, 1955?

(2) What is the Crown Law officers' opinion of the effect on the insurance cover provided to permit holders, by the proclamation of the Native Welfare Act, 1954?

(3) If such opinion is to the effect that the validity of such permits ceased on the proclamation of the amending Act, what steps were taken to advise permit holders whose permits were current after the 20th May, 1955?

(4) If no such steps were taken, does he not think that a claim arising after the 20th May and before the expiry date of the permit ought to be paid by the department; and, if not, why not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) All permits to employ natives were automatically revoked by the proclamation of the Native Welfare Act on the 20th May, 1955. Immediately prior to this date 669 current permits existed.

(2) The Crown Law officers' opinion was that the duty of the department to pay medical and hospital expenses under Section 37 (1) (b) of the Native Administration Act would cease on the proclamation of the new Act, as would also the duty to indemnify the employers for possible liability for such expenses.

(3) On the 18th May, 1955, the commissioner gave a three-page statement to the following:—"The West Australian," the "Daily News," the "Sunday Times" and the "A.B.C." A lengthy article was published in "The West Australian" on the 21st May, 1955. The proclamation of the Native Welfare Act was printed in the "Government Gazette" dated the 20th May, 1955.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

MOORA HOSPITAL.

Nurses' Quarters.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Why is it that the building of nurses' quarters for the Moora Hospital first promised in 1951, again in 1952, and 1953, and as late as February, 1955, has not become an accomplished fact?

(2) Is this project, which carries a very high priority, to be commenced this financial year; and, if not, why not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) This is due to shortage of Loan Funds.

(2) This is being considered, and it is possible that construction will commence this financial year.

GERALDTON HARBOUR.**(a) Effect of Existing Maximum Draught for Ships.**

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Has he seen the report in the "Geraldton Guardian" of Thursday the 18th August, which stated that the m.v. "Cape St. David," carrying a cargo of 5,000 tons of phosphate rock, was diverted from Geraldton to Fremantle on account of its deep draught?

(2) Does the maximum draught of 27ft. still apply to the Geraldton harbour?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is in the affirmative, is he of the opinion that this is detrimental to Geraldton as a port?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes.

(3) In comparison with all other outer ports, no.

(b) Hydrographic Survey Report.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What steps have been taken to deepen the channel in Geraldton harbour since the hydrographic survey was made in 1952?

(2) Will he make the hydrographic survey report available to the House?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) None.

(2) In view of the complicated aspects involved in the outer approach to Geraldton, it is suggested that it would be better for interested parties to view the plans in the office of either the Minister for Works or the Director of Works.

STATE INSURANCE OFFICE.**New Building.**

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

In connection with the new building for the State Insurance Office will he inform the House—

(1) What is the floor area of the building?

(2) On what date did building commence?

(3) Has any time been lost on construction; and if so, what amount?

(4) What has been the increase in building costs since the original estimate was made?

(5) When is it anticipated that the building will be completed and occupied?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 92,100 sq. ft.

(2) The 1st February, 1954.

(3) Yes, with delivery of structural steel. When the steel is completely delivered, it will be seven months behind contract time.

(4) The architects' approximate estimate for the work is £390,000. This was prepared in March, 1953, since when there has been an increase in building costs of approximately 10 per cent.

(5) August, 1956.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.**Sixth Day.**

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [4.37]: I would like to offer congratulations to you, Sir, on the work that has been done in this House and in the grounds of Parliament in the past 12 months. What has been done by you and your Committee is very noticeable indeed; and I give credit, in the main, to you for the lead you have taken. Particularly I am pleased to know that, as the result of a concerted effort led by yourself, something will be done for the staff of Parliament House in the very near future. A plan has been submitted and a building programme drawn up to cover a five-year period, at the end of which there will be quite an addition to our parliamentary building, and sufficient to house our staff in good quarters, so that they can work in comfort during both summer and winter. I offer my congratulations to you for the lead you took in bringing this to pass.

While speaking on House matters, another subject I would like to mention is that of prayers. Whether it is laid down in the Constitution or simply covered by the rules of the House in our book, I do not know, but each day we meet we have prayers, and it does seem to me that it is rather farcical for prayers to be said here and members not to regard them reverently. If we are not going to have reverence for them, they should be abandoned. That is just a suggestion I put forward. At times much scuffling goes on, papers being read and movement generally taking place while the prayers are read, so that to my mind sufficient interest is not taken in what is said in those few minutes. So I offer to the committee, for its consideration, the suggestion that it might be desirable to have a change so that we may observe the prayers more deeply.

I wish now to speak on the development of agriculture as against that of secondary industry. I do not want it thought that I am against the development of secondary industry, because I am not; but I do believe the development of our agriculture should come first, and that as it progresses secondary industry should follow. I believe we have more or less reached the position where our economy is in jeopardy. In my opinion the main work-producing

industry is the wheat industry, because there is no enterprise which enables more people to find employment than does the production of wheat.

When we look at the wheat position, we are rather fearful of the future, because we have an over-production of that commodity. All our storage bins are full, and Co-operative Bulk Handling will be sorely pressed to build sufficient storage accommodation for the crop we expect this year. It does not seem as though price is the answer. Some people say, "Why not reduce the price of wheat and so create sales?" After a thorough investigation, it seems as though price is not the answer, because countries that are offering wheat at a lower price than has so far prevailed, are still not obtaining the rise in sales that they desire. It appears that wheat is so over-produced in the world that it is just a matter of over-production and nothing else.

What can be done about the position in Australia, I cannot suggest, but it does seem that something should be undertaken on a Commonwealth basis. It is useless to do anything in Western Australia, because if we made the first move to reduce acreage or deliveries in any way, we would jeopardise any possibility of our coming into a scheme on an equitable basis with the Eastern States. So I am very pleased, at long last, to see the president of the wheatgrowers' section of the Farmers' Union urging that something be done on a Commonwealth basis.

Just what Governments can do, I do not know. It is necessary for a Government to encourage production. I cannot see any Federal Government, irrespective of its colour, saying to the farmer, "Grow less wheat," because Governments are dependent on the produce of this country to make sufficient funds available so that they can carry on trading in other parts of the world. Wheat at the moment is in a precarious position, and we must give great consideration to what is going to happen. Are we going to let it drift into the doldrums, or are we, on all sides, going to try to help the wheat industry in two ways?

I believe that the farmers should be encouraged to grow more produce per acre—I do not necessarily mean wheat—at less expense. That seems to be the only way by which the farmer, generally, can carry on. We have other grains, such as barley and oats, which are eagerly sought by overseas countries; but the position with those grains never seems to remain stable. While wheat is in such abundant supply, there is a possibility that it will take the place of oats or barley, for food purposes, and so reduce the price of those grains. So, although we are enjoying a good price for them at the moment, there is no telling what is around the corner next year.

The meat position is not as good as it was 12 months ago. We have finished with Government-to-Government trading in meat; and while we do enjoy what is in my opinion some doubtful protection or guarantee from the English Government in respect to price, it applies in the main to beef. As far as I can gather, the price for frozen lamb on the English or overseas market for the coming season will be something like 4d. to 5d. down on last year's figure. Whilst last year the price ranged up to 28d. per lb., I am led to believe that we will be fortunate if we receive 22d. per lb. this coming year. We cannot say that, apart from beef, our meat industry is in a stable position.

I come then to dairy products, the chief of which are eggs and butter. There is no need to tell members how the dairy industry is placed at the present time. We have all read and been told about it. We have read the evidence tendered to the Royal Commission inquiring into egg marketing, and this supports the fact that the egg industry is not a very bright one either.

Apart from these enterprises, which produce a great amount of wealth, we have gold. When all other production—such as wheat, meat and wool—are on the decline, gold comes to the aid of Western Australia, and the goldmining industry is one which all Governments recognise must be supported so that it can carry on and be here for the time when we need it. At the moment gold is playing its part by producing big figures and employing many people.

The only item which remains, and which we can say is hanging in the balance, is wool. We are fortunate that the price of wool has been well above the actual cost of production; but gradually the decline in wool has come to the point where the price is now very little more, if it is more, than the actual cost of production all over the Commonwealth. It is possible that the general farmer who produces wheat, other grains and wool, produces wool at a figure lower than that set down by the bureau when it struck the average cost of production figure throughout Australia; but it is doubtful whether the pastoralists produce their wool at a profit, or will do so from now on.

From the general trend of events, and judging by the talk of those who should know, the price of wool will not be any higher during the coming year than it has been during the year which has just passed. If one looks at the figures for the sales in England, and reads articles which have been written in other parts of the world, it would seem that the price will depreciate in the coming season. However, we have not long to wait, because the Perth sales start at the beginning of next month, and the prices obtained there will be a good guide.

While we have read in the paper from time to time that there has been only a 2½ per cent, or a 5 per cent, drop, or rise, in the price of wool at various markets, those articles have never conveyed the true position; and to illustrate to members who do not know the actual circumstances and facts, I would like to quote my own figures. There has been a drop of 15 per cent. in the price from one year to the other over the last five years. In other words, from 1950 and 1951, when prices were high, there has been a gradual tapering off until at present the average price of wool is about 70d. a lb. If there is another whittling away of 5, 10 or 15 per cent., the price of wool will be back to its cost of production. If we took an overall picture of our agricultural industry and looked at the overseas prices and the effect they have on the economy of this Commonwealth, we would be blind if we did not see that a radical change is certain to take place over the next 12 months.

As I said previously, I think the only suggestion to be made to our primary producers—and I always tell them when I have the opportunity—is for a greater return per acre by improved methods and a lower cost of production. I believe there are many ways in which we can obtain a greater return per acre; but the Government must assist in some form or other. In addition, producers must receive the assistance of all workers throughout the country in an effort to help lower the costs of production of agricultural machinery, phosphates, freights and so on.

I will try to illustrate my points as I go. Our dairy farms, poultry farms—about which we hear so much these days—wheat farms and mixed properties which have not yet reached the stage of full production, must be brought to a standard where the farmers can produce at a lower cost, and so provide the maximum production for an economic unit, as recently established by the Bureau of Agriculture Economics. In this regard we must look to the Government to render assistance. I believe that in the dairying industry it is considered a property must have 40 cows or more to be classed as an economic unit. So I think it is incumbent upon the Government to devise a plan to assist farmers to bring that about; otherwise the dairying industry will be around our necks as it has been for a number of years, and we will be pouring money away in subsidies. To my mind that is one of the worst things for the economy of any country, unless it is required to tide an industry over for a short period until it can get back on to its feet.

It seems that many poultry farms are not being run as they should be, and few farmers are using the latest methods. So assistance must be rendered to the small farmers whose properties are now undercapitalised and under-developed. If help

is given, it will enable them to get on with the job and bring their properties up to a stage where they can become useful producing units, or at least to the stage recommended by the authorities.

I would like to discuss the settlers who have taken up new holdings, such as those on the light lands near Esperance, and those who have taken up properties west of the Midland Railway line. Many of those settlers have spent all their available money and have not yet fully developed their properties. Assistance must be given to them, and I suggest that it be rendered through the Rural & Industries Bank. A system such as we had many years ago with the Agricultural Bank could be devised to assist these farmers.

It seems that little is being done at present. At the beginning of the session I asked the Minister if the Government was aware—I knew that it was aware—of the extent to which primary production was our main source of income, in comparison with our secondary industries. The reply I received did not give any indication of how much the Government was aware of the fact, or of the amount of assistance given to secondary industries as compared with primary industries. It was a non-committal answer; and I will try to find out, by way of further questions, how much money was paid to secondary industries to assist them last year, and how much was paid to primary industries. In my opinion, insufficient money is made available to primary producers to help them develop their farms. The Minister in charge must stress to the other members of Cabinet the importance of our agricultural industry, particularly in relation to secondary industries; because, unless our agricultural industry increases, we will not have anything to support our secondary industries.

As regards the established farmer, the Government can render great assistance through the Department of Agriculture. I do not refer to cash payments; but, if greater production per acre is required, the Department of Agriculture can render much assistance and advice through its officers. To do this, those officers must be aware of the latest scientific information so that they can advise farmers. For instance, much of our land is deficient in minerals; and unless our departmental officers give a lead, farmers will never know much about this important aspect of farming.

A certain amount of work has been done, but it is not enough. We do not know whether different parts of the State are deficient in one or more minerals, and at present it is a matter of guesswork. Sometimes we hear that certain areas are deficient in copper, cobalt, zinc, or perhaps a combination of those or more minerals. But nobody knows much about it; and so I believe the departmental officers have a big field in which to experiment by taking

samples from various areas and individual farms and, indeed, from various parts of individual farms, so that we can analyse the soils and so obtain a greater production. We know, too, that although soil in one place may be deficient in a certain mineral—say, copper—200 yards away the soil may have some other mineral deficiency. Until we train our officers in these various scientific fields, we will not be able to do much about improving the production of our farms.

The second way the department could help those farmers who are already established is in animal husbandry. At present, we have a great number of farmers who could assist in the production of stock, but might quite possibly do so along wrong lines in the type of country they select. While we do have stockmen, for sheep and cattle, who are going around the country advising the farmer, to my mind not nearly sufficient attention is paid to the type of sheep or cattle, or both, that should be run in particular areas; nor are sufficient advice and assistance given to the farmers generally. Some people, of course, do not need that assistance; they have sufficient knowledge of their own and they are able to build up their flocks and determine what is best for them, and the best way to do it. It is also well known that while some men may be very good wheat farmers, they fall down on stock management.

Accordingly, there is no doubt that the field is wide open, and this matter should be followed up by the Government and assistance given to men on the stock side of animal husbandry in this State. That would, of course, entail the appointment of more veterinary officers. We have very few at present; and how they are able to do their jobs properly, I do not know. A country like ours, which is crying out for development, has to plod along with the few officers we have at the present time. I urge the Minister to stress on his colleagues the importance of the Department of Agriculture and the necessity for that department to take greater steps. We must increase our yields and reduce our costs if we are to hold stable the economy of this country.

I believe the same must be the case for the soil conservation commission. A commission was set up not many years ago. It has gone so far, and has so much machinery at the present time, and so many officers; and work has been done over a small portion of the State. Wherever the officers have been they have certainly done an excellent job. There is no doubt that at very little cost they have saved wastage of land from erosion in many instances. They have arrested serious problems where the water runs off rapidly. I believe that in "Tipperary," which is near Northam, they have done an excellent job in arresting the erosion

that is taking place there. They have proved conclusively that, given the manpower and the machinery, they could prevent a lot of the topsoil from running down the river every time there is a flood in the country. Nor does there necessarily have to be a flood for this topsoil to be carried away; it is carried away by quite normal rains, and many thousand tons of good topsoil is lost.

The Minister for the North-West: Cannot the farmers follow that pattern?

Hon. A. R. JONES: They do. They are alive to the question; but at present the small department we have dealing with the matter is so busy in the small project areas it has under review that it cannot possibly attend to the large sections it would like to deal with. There are several areas that are not declared under the Soil Conservation Act. Until we have personnel available to the department to enable it to handle the job it will not be possible for the whole of Western Australia to be attended to for quite a long time. The department feels that it cannot declare an area and lay down a policy for that area unless it has the manpower and the machinery to police it and help the farmer, and give him advice and instruction where necessary before the work is commenced.

There is no doubt that when a farmer is approached and told that if he does not do something about a particular area it will become worse and be non-productive in time; when he is told that there is a remedy, he is only too willing to co-operate with the departmental men; and apart from asking them to peg the necessary lines which involve the banking system, he does not request anything more. He is prepared to find the machinery in order to carry out the programme suggested.

I feel sure that it is only a matter of equipping the department with sufficient men and machinery to enable it to do the job properly. We are spending something less than £1,000,000 on the Department of Agriculture. To my mind we should be spending at least £2,000,000 on the Soil Conservation Commission, if we are to reap the benefit from this great State of ours, which holds so many possibilities. Unless we have guidance in this matter, quite an appreciable amount of damage will develop from now on in these lighter soils.

Another method by which we can help those people who are struggling to commence farming, and those who are struggling to carry on farming in the light land areas far removed from the railways, is to provide them with at least good roads. The policy adopted by this Government is to that end; but, unfortunately, we do not get sufficient funds; or, if we do get sufficient funds, we do not make

them go far enough. I believe we will have something in the vicinity of £2,000,000 available for road work—I think it is more than that.

We should not ask our small road boards, to spend the portion of the money available to them. We should call contracts and decide which roads are most urgent and get those jobs done in 200-mile or 300-mile sweeps rather than adopt the procedure of the Main Roads Department in doing 10-mile or 15-mile stretches here or there according to the whims of members of Parliament who may have approached the Minister about their particular requirements. I believe a committee should be set up to say which roads were most important, and what it would cost to attend to them. The roads should be treated according to their priority of urgency.

A further method by which we could encourage the development of our agriculture would be to give the private individual with money more incentive to go ahead and develop certain areas. There is a particular instance of a man who is prepared to go out 70 miles from the railway and develop part of the State known as Jurien Bay. He is being given only a certain amount of land, and is being permitted to develop only a certain acreage. It seems wrong to me that the Act should be so tight as to allow a man only a certain acreage to develop, particularly when it is in an area not sought after by the general public because of its being far removed from transport. Accordingly I think the Act could be amended to allow private individuals or companies to develop as much land as they can possibly develop within reasonable limits.

We have people asking why one person should be allowed to develop 50,000 acres when he cannot use it all; and saying that it would be possible to place ten farmers on that area. When we have so much land available to us in the State, I do not think it matters who develops it as long as it is developed. We have properties like the Ben Ord estate in the south which is supporting a number of families; the Tootra estate at Bindi Bindi, which is today supporting 26 farmers; and the Liebe estate at Carnamah which has been subdivided into 19 farms. If a man with money develops 50,000 or 60,000 acres, the property does not necessarily remain in the family indefinitely; the time comes when there are no further dependants, and the place is sold. As I have said, it does not matter who develops the country as long as it is developed.

The Act should be amended to allow a person to select more country than he is permitted to select at the present time. I understand that at present no person can get more than 5,000 acres to develop. In the coastal areas or in the sandplain, 5,000 acres is not a great deal of country

to develop when one considers the machinery, etc. that is necessary for the development of the area. It would cost thousands of pounds, and it is only reasonable to suggest that the person with money, who is prepared to buy land and machinery, should be permitted to develop it and should not be held up because of a few laws. The Act should be amended.

As I have already said, I am not against the development of secondary industry at all. It is my belief, however, that we should pay greater attention to the growth of our primary industries, and allow the secondary industries to come along and grow. I think manufactured goods should be absorbed at a cost competitive with that for which we can buy them outside. If any industry could do that I would welcome it with open arms. But when we have industries set up in Western Australia, and all over Australia—but particularly in Western Australia where we have a few—which are calling on the Government's purse, and the people's purse, to enable them to remain in existence; and when we believe they are not well managed, it is certainly not a good thing. When money is poured into that sort of enterprise and a subsidy is paid by the taxpayer for the production of tractors in Australia, it is not good for the country and should not be encouraged.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The more secondary industries we have, the more people we have working and the greater is primary production.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is logical. But what is the good of pushing the prices of our products up if we are unable to sell them? At the moment we are depending on countries overseas to buying our produce. We cannot compete with the rest of the world with prices as high as they are at the moment. Let us get down to competitive trading. Let firms produce electrical equipment, refrigerators, washing machines, and so on, by all means, because these can be mass-produced in this country, and they can compete with overseas products. But when we consider that a tractor produced here costs about £2,000 and the taxpayers are probably paying £280 on every tractor produced in Australia, there is surely something wrong, especially when a similar article can be purchased overseas at a much lower price. Take the harvesting machinery manufactured in Australia by McKay & Massey Harris. The position is that the cost of labour and production is so high that locally produced headers of a modern type cost something like £2,000, while a better machine with ball bearings can be landed from Germany at something like £1,700.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: How would you meet the overseas price without exporting more wheat?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Unfortunately, the hon. member was not in his seat when I commenced my speech, but I pointed out that we must reduce the cost of production as much as possible. If we are going to continue encouraging secondary industries at such a price, we shall never get down our costs of production.

The Minister for the North-West: That applies to wheat farming also, does it not?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Yes, I said so. I have told our people that we must increase our earning capacity per acre and reduce our costs. Failing this, the economy of the State will become absolutely topsyturvy because we are so largely dependent on primary production.

I should like to touch on the subject of decentralisation because it is bound up with the cost of primary production and the development of the country areas. Decentralisation is something to which all parties subscribe. The Labour Party, the Liberal Party and the Country Party have it on their platforms; they believe in decentralisation, but I do not think that anyone has given it much more than lip service.

I consider that we have to thank Professor Stephenson for coming here and advising us on town planning and telling us of the wonderful city that Perth will be some day. In his report, he stated that by the year 2000, the metropolitan area would have a population of 1,400,000 people; and that, at most the rest of the State from the far north to the far south would have a population of no more than 400,000 people. I believe that a lot of good will result from the plan he has submitted, and I feel grateful to him for awaking us to the fact of what will happen if we continue to drift along as we have been drifting in past years. I repeat that we have given nothing more than lip service to the matter of decentralisation.

The Minister for the North-West: How would you implement it?

Hon. A. R. JONES: It will be a tragedy if we do not accept the challenge laid down in Professor Stephenson's report and do not get down to quick and serious action. I do not mind if there is a population of 1,400,000 people in the metropolitan area by the year 2000 provided we have something in the country areas to back it up and that the population there is commensurate with it; but I cannot see that we shall be able to play a very important part in the economy of the Empire if we have nearly three-fourths of our population concentrated in 30 square miles of the metropolitan area.

I have been asked how decentralisation could be brought about. I would say that, in the first instance, we need some body such as a rural planning authority,

because at the moment we have no authority whatever that can go into the country and advise what industries and towns and ports should be developed and could be maintained. While we allow things to drift without taking any steps to check the drift, Perth will continue to grow, but I believe we could so plan as to make it possible for other places to grow and give people sound reasons why they should go to live in those places. If we could do this, we should have accomplished something. Unless we can give the people in the outlying districts supplies of water and power, then decentralisation will never become an accomplished fact.

The Minister for the North-West: They will need land as well.

Hon. A. R. JONES: There is plenty of land available. If we could provide some of the districts with water and power, farmers would be able to develop their properties and increase the carrying capacity. This in itself would provide for a growth of population even if properties were not subdivided because, after the development had taken place there would be more work in the handling of stock on the farms.

It is necessary from the point of view of populating the country that power as well as water be provided, because power plays a very important part in the carrying on of small industries. If a resident of Mullewa wants a tank, water trough or some other small article, he has to send to Perth for it. If water and power were made available in the country, small industries could be set up to supply such requirements. Given power and water, these country places would be in a fair way to holding and increasing their population, and they would be much better places to live in. Many farmers on retiring come to the city to live, but much could be done to hold them in the districts where they have resided if they had a plentiful supply of water and could interest themselves in gardening. So I say that the provision of water would go a long way towards bringing about decentralisation.

It must be borne in mind that power is available at towns like Bunbury, Geraldton, Albany, Northam and Kalgoorlie. Those towns could be built up to the point where they would carry a population of 50,000 people and possibly even 100,000. A town on the coast of New South Wales only 80 miles from Sydney has a population of about 160,000 people. Therefore I say that by increasing our production and planning, there is no reason why we cannot at least double or treble the population of the country in the next 20 years.

To attract people to live in the country, we must have better education facilities and better hospital facilities. Those amenities would come with increased population. If a person living north of Geraldton becomes violently ill, he cannot be treated in the Geraldton hospital but

has to be brought to Perth. That sort of thing would not be necessary if we planned properly and provided hospitals capable of meeting any emergency that might arise. Of course, there might be odd cases when patients would have to be brought from Albany, Geraldton or other places to be treated in Perth, but this should not be necessary to the extent that it is today.

We have the spectacle of lack of accommodation at the Moora hospital, 120 miles from Perth, where a case that needs surgical treatment has to be brought to Perth because that hospital is not up to date. I have made inquiries why it is not brought up to date, and the answer given was that there are not sufficient funds available. If this sort of thing is permitted to continue, I do not know where we shall end. There does not seem to be any lack of money to continue with the extensions to the Royal Perth Hospital. Let me say that I consider the Royal Perth Hospital is necessary, but there is also a crying need for increased accommodation at Fremantle and other places; and if we are going to limit what we can do in the matter of hospitalisation for our people to the amount of funds available, our needs are not likely to be met in a hundred years' time.

The Minister for the North-West: There will be no diseases then.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not sure of that. Another factor that plays a big part is that of education. When a family contemplates moving from one part of the State to another, the husband and wife cannot be blamed for discussing the problem of the education of the children or for declining to live in a place where there is no post-primary education available. Until high schools can be established in various centres so that children may continue their education beyond the primary stage, we shall not encourage people to settle in the country.

This was clearly illustrated at a delegation which I took recently to the Minister for Water Supplies, when making an approach for a comprehensive water scheme for the northern areas. We took with us the chairmen of the various boards, and each spoke his piece at the delegation. The chairman of the Moora board—at Moora there is an adequate supply of water for the township—illustrated and emphasised how much better it was for all concerned when it was possible to obtain a good type of staff and have people willing to remain in the township because there was water available and they could go ahead establishing their gardens, lawns, tennis courts, bowling greens, and so on.

He gave a good picture of what water can mean to a country town or district, and of the cultural benefits which follow as a natural consequence of a rise in population under circumstances, such as I have

mentioned. In some of our country districts the residents are lucky if there is a dance once a fortnight, and the only organisation providing any social life is the junior farmers' movement, which I commend strongly for the excellent job it is doing in country areas. Apart from that, there is very little life for the younger people in rural areas, and naturally they look towards the city lights in the hope of a little more enjoyment than is available to them at present.

I wish to deal briefly with the subject of transport, and will mention first the use of road transport vehicles by the owners of those vehicles. I often wonder why we have passed Acts, and amendments to them, prohibiting people from using their own vehicles to cart their own goods wherever they wish in Western Australia. Anybody who shifts some goods around, unless he happens to reside in a particular area, is subjected to the indignity of having to go cap in hand to seek a permit; and unless he is a primary producer, he not allowed to cart anything from one place to another, because he cannot receive a permit.

I feel that we should examine the Act closely with the idea of amending it so that any person owning a truck, car or utility, might use it to transport his own goods, whether bought or produced by him, from one place to another without the necessity of obtaining a permit. I agree that we cannot allow open competition with the railways in a vast State like this, where we rely on that form of transport so much to cart heavy freight such as wheat, super and so on, which cannot be handled economically by road, owing to the condition of our roads generally throughout the State being such that road trains cannot be run over them—and in my opinion it would require the use of a heavy road train before the transport of heavy goods could be achieved economically by road.

The Minister for the North-West: In America they solved the problem by carting the loaded road trucks on flat-tops on the railways.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I will not enter into any controversy as to what could or should be done in regard to the railways, but would point out that while travelling in other States—particularly in South Australia where I travelled on the State railways extensively—I noticed that the passenger trains carrying some goods such as eggs, cream and other items of dairy produce, never stopped at a station for more than a couple of minutes. When the train pulled in, the station-master or porters and guards hustled around, loaded or unloaded whatever was necessary, and allowed the train to take off again in a very short time.

In Western Australia it is common to see a train standing in the station yard for half an hour at some country centre

before chugging on again. It seems to me that our rail travel could be speeded up and a better service given to the users of the railways. If that were done, it would encourage the public to give a lot more business to the railways than is the case at present.

Another question which baffles me is why trains have to leave Perth, Albany or Kalgoorlie, as the case may be, in the evening and travel all night. This means that the unfortunate people at intervening stations have to leave or arrive at some ungodly hour of the night or morning, which would, of course, be unnecessary if the trains ran during the day. I trust that the Minister will take notice of what I have said and inquire why a better service cannot be given to the people in this regard. They are entitled to expect it, as the railways are supposed to be run for the benefit of the users and not for the benefit of the employees of that department. At the moment it strikes me that the railways are run for the benefit of the employees more than that of the public.

On the question of the cost of maintenance of tracks and so on, I would point out that recently, while going to and from a place on the York-rd., I have called a number of times at Chidloes and have watched the growth there of a shelter shed which consists of two uprights at either end and a cantilever roof, with a seat down the centre. The overall dimensions would be no more than 10ft. wide by 16ft. long.

For a month, as I called in each week, I saw that structure grow, and never at any time did I see fewer than two or three men working on it. If we are to be up against that sort of thing in the building of a small convenience for the public, it would be better if it were not built, because even now it is open at both ends, and a strong wind would blow the rain from one end of it to the other. This shelter was under construction for a month, and I am convinced that one good carpenter with an offsider on the job could have put it up in four days.

I have levelled some criticism at the Midland Junction Workshops, at Mr. Chamberlain and at the Minister himself; and I have had many letters written to me and have been approached by people, working in the Midland Junction Workshops, who have said I was not severe enough. Recently I spoke with a man who is employed there and who told me he works only three hours per day because, for the rest of the time, there is no work for him to do. We cannot blame a man when there is no work provided for him, but I say there is something wrong with the administration when such a state of affairs persists.

While I cannot pinpoint anything in particular, I believe a position has been reached when, although the railways have been rehabilitated to a great extent and we are gradually getting the diesel engines

into service in place of the steam engines—to the detriment of the Colliie miners, who to my mind were partly instrumental in working themselves out of a job; and certainly in the Eastern States a point was reached where the miners made it so expensive to get a ton of coal out of the ground that the Governments concerned had to put diesels on, thus throwing the coal miners out of work—there should be a committee appointed to inquire into the existing state of affairs. If a man supposed to be working seven hours a day is given work only for three hours he cannot be blamed, but apparently some of those who are in charge should not remain in their jobs.

Mention has been made of various aspects of the traffic situation in Western Australia, and the metropolitan area in particular. Although he is not present at the moment I would like to draw the Minister's attention to what I consider one of the most menacing factors of our road traffic, and here I refer to the slow-moving vehicle which will persist in sticking to the middle of the road—

The Minister for the North-West: The Minister is here.

Hon. A. R. JONES: — and I think action should be taken by the police to make such vehicles keep to the left. I do not care how slow an old vehicle may be, because, within reason, the slower it goes the safer it is—but I think we should encourage a quick flow of traffic so as to have it moving as fast as the limits of the law will allow. I repeat that drivers of vehicles who will travel slowly should be punished if they refuse to keep to the left-hand side of the road.

Some three years ago I suggested that pedestrian crossings over highways should have a ribbon of light focussed on them so as to make them easily discernible by motorists approaching from either direction and silhouette clearly any crossing pedestrians. I discussed this question with one of the makers of fluorescent lighting, and he felt it would be possible to erect a light of the kind I have mentioned, either fixed on poles at each side of the road or suspended overhead, so that anyone using the crosswalk would be shown up clearly at night.

I believe the cost would not be great, and I would like to see an experiment carried out in this direction, as there is no doubt that one of the greatest road hazards today is the pedestrian in dark clothing crossing a highway at night; because, as the headlights of a vehicle must be kept down to a fairly low level, even at 25 miles an hour, there is always a chance that one might run down a pedestrian without even seeing him. I believe the authorities should have an experiment conducted in this regard, because there is evidence already outside one of the theatres

in Stirling Highway where there are lights on either side of the road which show up the crosswalk clearly. This is a great improvement over the non-lighted crosswalks that are so common in the metropolitan area today.

Another impediment to the free flow of traffic is the fact that many motorists will use trolley or bus stops for parking areas. A bus driver who lives next door to me said that the stage has now been reached where bus stops are often cluttered up with parked vehicles, with the result that the bus drivers do not attempt to pull in to the kerb but stop the vehicle in the roadway. If the police come along, the driver tells them that he cannot possibly get into the kerb, on account of the vehicles parked there. I know the Minister is a very busy man, but I think he could attend to these matters that I have mentioned, as they are some of the greatest traffic menaces today.

Another traffic matter I wish to mention concerns stop signs. Apparently, some officer was given 1,200 or 1,300 of them and was told, "Put them up somewhere," for that is exactly how it appears they came to be erected at various points. There is no doubt that there are stop signs in some places where they are not necessary; and in other places where they would be most desirable there are none. I appeal to the Minister to make investigations to ascertain whether some of the signs could be resited at intersections where they would be of some use.

There is a glaring instance of a stop sign being misplaced not far from this House, where any driver travelling along Thomas-st. has to give way to the vehicle on his right. On the right-hand side there is a blind corner, and yet a driver is not supposed to stop at the intersection; whereas a driver travelling the other way has to obey the stop sign placed at the point of intersection. It seems all wrong to me. If every driver obeyed the stop sign as he should, the traffic would never get anywhere at all.

There are another two examples in Nedlands—one in Princess-rd. and the other in Melvista Avenue. In one street there is a stop sign at an intersection where there is very little traffic; and in the other the sign is placed at the corner of the through-road. Therefore, I repeat that the person responsible for placing them apparently was given several hundred signs and told to put them anywhere.

Another traffic regulation which concerns me is that governing the issue of bicycle licences. It costs 2s. to license a bicycle, and each time the owner is given a new number-plate to place on the machine. I do not think that many of the plates are fitted. I bought two last year; they are still in my workshop, and the old licence-plate is still on the bicycle. I am sure that must happen with many other

people; and although a cycle is licensed, in most instances the current number-plate is not attached.

My objection is to taking out a new number-plate every time the bicycle is registered. When a motor-vehicle is registered each year a new number-plate is not issued for it. So, as they must cost a great deal of money, why issue new number-plates for cycles every year especially when, as I have said, in most instances they are never fitted to the bicycles? I would like the Minister to investigate that matter and at least give us a reason for the existing regulation.

There is another matter which disturbs me greatly, and which resulted from a conversation I had with two builders—one a carpenter and the other a plumber. For the past 20 years they have both been indenturing apprentices. The subject arose after I had spoken to one of them to whom I had recommended a young man who wanted to be an apprentice carpenter. During a conversation with this builder I asked, "How is young so-and-so coming along?" and he replied, "I wish I had never seen him." I said, "Why? You told me only a few months ago that he was doing all right"; and he said, "He is not now." He went on to say that in the past few years he had had 20 apprentices indentured to him and that 11 were tradesmen in their own right and the other nine were leading hands with other tradesmen. He said that he took a pride in turning out good tradesmen, which was one of the reasons why I had recommended this young man to him. He went on to say, "I have three apprentices now, but God forbid that I ever put on another one! Not only myself but also other contractors will not have any more apprentices in the carpentry trade."

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: It is a bad outlook for the building industry.

Hon. A. R. JONES: To the plumber who was on the job, and who I knew was not happy about the position, I said, "How do you get on with apprentices?" He said, "I have two who will finish their time in 12 months, and another one who has a little while to go, and after that I am not going to put on any more." I asked, "Why?" and he replied, "They will not give you a go; nor will they give themselves a go." He went on to say that they wagged it from their trade classes at the technical school; and, in one instance, when he made some inquiries, regarding an apprentice, he found that the lad had absented himself on four consecutive days from the technical school he should have attended. The position, therefore, is very serious; but what can be done, I do not know. All I can suggest is that perhaps our Labour friends could do something through the unions. I do not know whether it is because the boys are wrongly advised, or whether it is the attitude that young men adopt today.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: That is more to the point.

Hon. A. R. JONES: These builders said that they have to put up with a lot of cheek from their apprentices. One man told me that he had a lad who came from Kalgoorlie and who walked off the job regularly at 4.30 p.m. When spoken to, he replied, "I have my football practice to consider." On another occasion he did not turn up for work on a Tuesday; and when he reported on the following day, his boss said to him, "Where were you yesterday?"; and he replied, "My club played a football match at Bunbury, and I went with it." If that is the attitude apprentices adopt, someone will have to teach them a lesson.

This man gave his apprentice a good talking-to. He told me that he is prepared to do all he can for an apprentice if he can get co-operation from him; but if he cannot do so, he will hand him on to someone else. Unfortunately, however, no other tradesman will take an apprentice now unless, of course, he can be absorbed in the Government workshops. I pass the matter on to those members who may have enough influence to effect a remedy. It will be very serious if tradesmen will not accept apprentices in the future.

Another builder expressed the view that there is not sufficient supervision at the technical schools. These schools come under the Department of Education; and although I have not made any inquiries in regard to this complaint, I intend to find out whether that is the position. It is suggested that the instructors are quite competent, and will do their utmost for a boy who is prepared to learn; but they are not prepared to do anything for lads who are wayward, and who show a tendency to wag it from the school. In such instances the instructors do not use any pressure to bring them to heel, but I suppose one cannot blame them for that.

The Minister for the North-West: They are misfits.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I do not know whether they are or not. The boy that I recommended for an apprenticeship is spoken of as being able to turn out good work, and is quite capable of becoming a first-class tradesman if he would only use a little commonsense and do the right thing.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: He has no sense of responsibility in his job.

The Minister for the North-West: He would make a good farm-hand.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The last subject I want to touch upon is in regard to the general disabilities suffered by this State which I believe were war-caused. If we turn our thoughts back to the commencement of the war we should all recall that the Commonwealth Government made an

appeal not only to the various State Governments but to every individual to cut down expenditure on various building programmes, and to do their utmost towards assisting the war effort. An appeal was made to this State Government to reduce expenditure on public works to a minimum, and to decrease to absolute bedrock anything that had been planned for school buildings, hospitals and so on.

Following that appeal, the Government of the day did everything possible to assist the war effort along those lines; and I believe we are suffering for it today. Not only did Western Australia assist in that direction, but it also contributed more men and women to the armed forces, in proportion to Australia's population, than any other State in Australia. So even if the Government had been in possession of the money to carry out the necessary work, it could not have done so because it lacked the requisite manpower.

Western Australia was also sadly neglected in that, in States such as New South Wales and Victoria, large industries were established to manufacture war equipment which were not established in this State. During those years we did not receive any assistance to carry out such works as sewerage, electric light installations, drainage, etc.; and, of course, our public works fell to a low level. So when in 1946 a formula was set from which we could expect Loan funds from the Commonwealth Government, the figures for the previous year were taken into consideration.

Not only are we a long way behind in our public works programme, as a result of our acceding to the wish of the Commonwealth Government, but also we are doubly suffering as the result of the expenditure not being kept at a high level during the war years. This is very well illustrated when a member asks a question of the Minister and receives a reply such as I was given this evening to the effect that finance is the stumbling-block for undertaking something that was planned four years ago; namely, the erection of nurses quarters at the Moora hospital.

Therefore, I think members should band together to put up a good case collectively. Let us all get together to request the Government, no matter what its political colour, to carry out the completion of these urgent works, such as the building of hospitals and schools which, to my mind, are paramount needs in our community today. If all members were to press the State Government in regard to these matters and it, in turn, made a further approach to the Commonwealth Government, we might achieve something.

Unless we do that we have very little chance of developing this great State or ours or even of supplying the needs of the people, especially those living in outback areas. It is quite evident that if anyone

has to suffer through a lack of finance, it is the poor individual who lives in the back-blocks. That should never be if we are going to increase and decentralise our population.

HON. R. F. HUTCHISON (Suburban) [5.59]: In making my contribution to the Address-in-reply I would like to mention that the Chamber has now a very pleasing aspect; and I pay a compliment to you, Sir, as President of this Council, for the effort you have made to renovate the House. I only hope that the seats will not make us too comfortable during future sessions.

I want to draw attention to the vast amount of work which the present Government has done since taking office. I say without fear of contradiction that today we have one of the most progressive Governments this State has ever had. It appears to me that its progressiveness has been curtailed to some extent by Bills being defeated in this House. The traditional power and prejudices still hold too much sway here. I have not had any reason to regret the comments I expressed in this House previously that prejudice still rules to a far greater extent than it should. We, as a Labour Party, hold ourselves out as a party of reform; and when legislation of the Labour Government is whittled down or defeated in the Upper House by the Opposition, we are somewhat discouraged in our efforts, year after year, to secure acceptance of Bills which are necessary for the community. If this is to be a good and progressive State, with a happy population—which after all is the test of the ability of a Government—we must alter the ways in which legislation is passed.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Would you say that our legislation is worse than that of New South Wales?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I say that our legislation could be greatly improved. I am not talking about New South Wales. In New South Wales there are in force many laws which are far in advance of those in operation in this State. The slow progress made by the Labour Government is due to the opposition met with here. While there is a Legislative Council with absolute power vested in the Opposition, the Labour Government will always be prevented from passing progressive measures for the welfare of the people and particularly the wages class.

We have not achieved all we set out to achieve. It has become the habit here to use the majority vote on a party platform basis, when that need not be the case. I would mention Bills of great moment which were defeated or whittled down during the last session of Parliament. If passed as they were introduced, they would have proved to be of great benefit to the people of this State. First there was

the Prices Control Bill which was defeated on the 20th October. Then there was the rents and tenancies Bill which was amended until its provisions meant nothing.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order! I ask the hon. member to be careful and not cast a reflection on the vote of this House.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It was not on this House.

The **PRESIDENT**: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Then there was the State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment Bill, and the Jury Act Amendment Bill, and the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: In which you got more than you asked for.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Then there was the Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill seeking to administer wage justice, which was disallowed. I want to pay credit to the Government for its housing achievements. Had it not been for the present Minister for Housing, with his very virile policy, there would have been much more hardship apparent in the community when the rents and tenancies legislation was modified, and the protection formerly given to tenants was taken away. As a result the programme of slum clearance had to be slowed down to meet more urgent needs, and the Labour Party did not get as far as it wanted in this direction. It was necessary to hold on to some of the evictee camps—a disgrace for any State to retain as housing areas.

It is a credit to the Minister that with all the hardships confronted, and with the large number of unwarranted evictions, he managed to keep a roof of some kind over the heads of those in need of accommodation. During his period of office he has even accomplished the building of houses for the native population. This is a step which must give pleasure to those who think with a progressive mind and with the cause of humanity at heart. He built houses for the natives, not in compounds or segregated on their own, but in a community of whites in which the natives are being absorbed. I have not found any objection from neighbours of the natives in all the localities I visited. The blessings of the unfortunate have been placed on the Minister's head for what he has done. In the last two years, 40 per cent. of the houses erected in this State were built by the State Housing Commission. That speaks for itself and is evidence of the creditable work which the Government has done.

In regard to prices, on which there is much talk, whenever one enters a shop one hears the shopkeeper contending that prices have gone up because the basic wage has been increased. It is evident to all that, although wages were pegged from September, 1953, the worker had to face

ever-increasing prices for the goods he needed. It is a terrible struggle for a worker and his family to make ends meet these days. In many of the large families the children are not being fed properly; it is impossible for a mother to buy all she needs when the prices of goods are what they are. It is a disgrace to those responsible for placing the burden on the shoulders of the worker. We know positively that rents have got out of hand. The other day I received a letter from a woman in the country asking me to find her a house of five rooms, costing not more than £3 a week rent.

Hon. L. C. Diver: What does the State Housing Commission want as rental for a house of that size?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: This woman required a house outside of the State Housing Commission projects. I am not speaking about the rentals charged by the State Housing Commission. I know that rents have risen since the protection given under the rents and tenancies Act was removed.

Today we have the spectacle of eggs being sold at 6d. to 6½d. each. What mother can afford to give her children eggs at that price? The result is that the children go without. Men sitting in the Opposition in this House defeated the Bills I refer to and would rather see children go without eggs. That is the true position. Butter costs 4s. 6d. a lb. today. I wonder how many aged pensioners scrape butter on their bread with butter so highly priced and pensions so low. But there is no thought of those hardships among many members here.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: What do you think the price of butter should be?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I am not saying what it should be. I contend that wages should be high enough to allow the worker to meet the cost of his necessities. I contradict the assertion that wages cause prices to rise; I contend that wages have nothing to do with the rise in the cost of living. Recently the basic wage rose by 5s. 11d.; but it did not take 24 hours for the price of commodities to go up. Soon after the rise, I walked into a shop and was told that prices had risen because wages had gone up. I told the shopkeeper that I had heard that tale before and knew how much reliance I could place on the statement. It is not true to say that prices rise because wages go up; wages were pegged from September 1953, but prices still rose in that period.

I ask those men sitting in this House who contend that the basic wage cannot be increased because the cost of living will spiral, to explain to me why prices still rose when the basic wage was pegged. We have had this spectacle in our midst since 1953, and not in some far distant country. The basic-wage worker should have received 30s. more per week to catch up with

the increased cost of living, but he and his family had to suffer a loss to the extent of 30s. worth of necessities. I declare that it is not justice; it is not Christianity in a land of plenty and a land of wealth. It is no good saying that there is no wealth in this land. When we look at the estates of deceased persons, and at the huge profits made by some companies, we cannot agree that there is no wealth.

I want some of the members here to explain the reason why prices kept rising when the basic wage was pegged. I went around the district in which I lived, and I found a difference of 5d. in the price of onions in two shops. In one place they were sold at 4d. a lb.; and in another at 9d. a lb. At the latter, the shop assistant said that they had to charge 9d. because they would be summonsed by the Onion Board if they did not. I set out to discover if that was the case, but found it to be untrue. There was nothing to prevent that shop selling onions at any price under 9d.

Rafferty rules seem to exist at the moment in regard to prices. I do not think that the retailer is getting all the profit; I do not believe the little shops are reaping the harvest. The prices are controlled long before the goods get to the shops, as most things are controlled at the source. If one goes to buy frocks of a certain kind, one finds that they are all sold at the same price in the various shops. All this talk about competition is plain rot, because there is no real competition—at least, not at the source. With every piece of clothing, a price is set and retailers are not allowed to sell under that price. This is where the trouble lies.

We have read what is happening in England with electrical equipment, but if we buy some in Australia, no matter where we go to, the same price is charged. I would like those things explained to me, especially by men who set themselves out to control legislation and who contend that increased wages cause prices to rise. I want to know how the combines act, and how the people have to suffer as a result of that action. The people have to be meek, because they cannot do much to alter this state of affairs, and so their children go short of food. In my opinion, price fixing is nothing short of a planned economy; stability can only be achieved by planning. That applies to any stability. A family has to plan a budget if it wishes to have stability from the weekly wage and to set aside sufficient money to buy clothing and other things.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I was saying that we should work to a plan. It seems to me that if we did plan a little and kept prices within the ambit of the masses of the people there would be

greater consumption. That would tend towards stability, and it is on stability that the health and happiness of the people of a community depend. I am not saying that State price control would be a cure-all. I know that the perfect method would be to achieve control through the Commonwealth, and we would have to extend it to overseas shipping freights as the late Mr. Chifley advocated. But certainly we should see that it is not always the man on the lower income, the family man, who suffers. After all, he is the fulcrum on which society depends, and he and his family should not always be struggling along on the bare necessities of life. It is pretty disheartening to have to be just subsisting. I have done a bit of it with a large family, and I have a great sympathy for the man who is always faced with the worry of being able to provide only the bare necessities of life. If the wages man has to go without something, it is the bare necessities that he forgoes. Therefore I think there should be some planning in this connection.

Those in big business today are all engaged in planning. Their prices are fixed and their profits are fixed; they leave themselves a good margin. I consider it is disgraceful that the balance sheet of a motor company, advertised in the paper, should reveal a profit of £10,000,000 derived from a community like ours. It is time something was done about that kind of thing. The sum of £10,000,000 spread over the wage-earners of Australia would be quite a slice to them. There is no reason why a company should be allowed to profiteer in that manner. That is not the only company which is doing so; it is going on by and large.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That is all being reinvested to provide more employment for additional wage-earners.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I have heard explanations of that sort, but it is not really so. The subject is too big and deep to go into here, but anyone who has studied economics knows quite well that that is not the answer.

I wish to touch on child welfare and to congratulate the Government on the progressive and far-reaching steps it has taken in the interest of children. It has subsidised children's homes to a very great degree. I understand it is now planning for the establishment of after-care homes for boys; and, according to an answer to a question that I asked, it proposes to provide, later on, a home for underprivileged adolescent girls. Such homes are badly needed in this State. We lag far behind the other States in this respect, and we need an after-care hostel to cater for State wards who, after growing up, have to start work under a very great handicap, with no family or home and,

at times, not too many friends. At present such young people have nowhere to go.

In Victoria there are very good homes run by the Roman Catholic people. The Brothers at Rose-Bud have a home there at which I spent a week on one occasion. The young people—of late adolescent age—who resided at the home did not have to pay anything for board until they earned 35s. per week, and then they paid increasing amounts according to their growing income. They were thus enabled to live an ordinary life at the hostel, to which they had to return at night by 11.30 p.m. It was a nicely conducted institution and was doing a major work for those whom it housed. Such homes are a real blessing to young people who, on leaving State institutions, would otherwise find themselves living under bad conditions which would have a detrimental effect upon them.

It is gratifying to know that the Government has just bought a home for mentally incurable children. This is a minority group whose interests I have fostered for years. They constitute a band of people who are the hopeless of the hopeless. Almost inevitably the mothers of the children suffer a breakdown. Sometimes they die; more often they live a life of semi-invalidism through the constant strain and worry involved in caring for such children. When they become sick, there is nowhere—or has been nowhere up to date—for them to place their children. The knowledge of this was a worry to them. Then they were troubled by the fear of what would happen to the children should they themselves die. The only institution in which it was possible to place them was the Claremont Mental Hospital, and that was not in any way desirable on account of the conditions under which it has, through circumstances, been conducted in the past.

The home which is being established for mentally retarded children is to be a place to which mothers can send their children for three months so that they themselves can have a perfect holiday, free from stress and worry. Then the constitution of the association provides that in times of sickness or acute distress mothers can place their children in the home while they themselves are recovering their health and becoming fit to take up their burden again. I am proud of the men who have made possible the establishing of this home. There was no kudos attached to it because it is a non-political, non-sectarian project, and one that was very badly needed in Western Australia. I understand the association has paid the Minister for Health the compliment of asking him to allow the home to be known as Nulsen Haven, after him; and I think that is what it will be called. It is situated

on the Great Eastern Highway. The association is composed of the parents of the children, in the main, and they will furnish the home and decorate it in pastel shades so that it will not have the usual white institutional appearance. Its establishment is a precedent for all Australia, because there is not another home in the Commonwealth which is just like it.

There is a matter to which I drew attention in this House by way of questions, and I wish to bring it forward for further consideration by the Government. I have asked that indictable childbirth cases should be heard summarily. But even if they were heard in camera for a start, I would not mind. As we move along the road of progress we should view this matter in a Christian light. We should realise that these are cases in which two people are involved, one of whom can very often not be found and gets off scot-free. On the other hand, the girl concerned—usually a girl in her teens—cannot by any means be classed as a bad person but yet has to suffer. Cases occur in which the child of such a girl is lost, and sometimes the circumstances are such as to point to what is called a criminal action. I do not feel that in these days it should be classed as criminal. Any woman knows that having a child is not an easy experience in the best of circumstances; and these unmarried mothers have to endure, in addition, a considerable amount of mental anguish, and have to suffer all the misery on their own.

A doctor told me that women of this kind could be normally quite sane but that in circumstances such as I have outlined they could be under such emotional stress that they would not be culpable for anything they might do, and should not be indicted. To take a woman who has undergone such an experience into open court before a judge and jury is horrible, and we should try to ensure that such cases are heard privately. I know it is necessary to be careful in these matters; but I am asking that a woman should not be taken into a criminal court and her life ruined, when she has already had to carry the whole burden of her mistake. If it were entirely her fault, I would not care so much. But when it is a question of a partnership, we should be merciful enough not to punish the woman all the way. I hope consideration will be given to the matter.

I would also like a larger allowance to be made by the Child Welfare Department to deserted wives. The Premier has been very good in this respect, and a much larger allowance has been granted than was formerly given. But I think that still more could be provided for those who are left with young children to care for. Such women have a hard time; they are in a hopeless position. I would like the department to study this matter and realise the

necessity for these women being given sufficient to enable them to carry on during the infancy of their children. Almost every week I have cases brought to my notice of women in this position who are struggling to make ends meet, on an insufficient amount of money.

I now wish to make reference to the jury Bill that lapsed last session. That occurred as the result of the action of the Opposition in this House in introducing a provision for the admission of women to jury service only if they were over 30 years of age. One of the planks of the Labour Party platform is full citizenship rights for women. That means citizenship rights in law, social life and industry, and in all ways. It is about time that more than lip service was given to such principles.

Women have served on juries in Great Britain since 1919. I met a couple of British women the other day who were amazed when I told them what happened to our jury Bill. I think it is about time that women were paid the compliment of being regarded as commonsense people. What is the good of saying that women must take their place in public life when they are denied fundamental privileges?

We have been told that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world; but it is only lip service, and once the baby is out of the cradle the hand that rocked it is forgotten. I thought the Opposition here was particularly destructive on that Bill. I also considered it was hypocritical, because in that instance women were asking for the right to take their place in the civil courts. We have women lawyers; so why a woman is not capable of serving on a jury, I do not know. I feel that the Bill was defeated because it was brought down, perhaps, as a party measure, and the Opposition was not big enough to put it through.

With regard to women on boards, we saw in the paper yesterday that a bachelor advocated the appointment of a woman to the Egg Board. Women have a special place on boards pertaining to food, child welfare and health, and in regard to courts and education. They have a special point of view to put forward, and I think it is about time that they were appointed to these boards. When we have a house of legislature in which these matters can be baulked by an Opposition of numbers, it is wrong. All Governments should consider the appointment of women to these boards.

With the different amenities that they have today in their homes, which enable them to get out, women, are looking for other ways of using their skill and fulfilling their lives when their families are reared. They have a special contribution to pay to society. Our Labour Party platform says, "Full civic rights for women." I will be fighting for that as long as I am in this House, anyway.

In regard to the health scheme, it is an absolute misery to a mother to know what happens when her children fall ill, because it is not cheap to pay into the medical scheme. I was amazed when I went to Queensland to learn that there a free medical plan operated. One of my relatives had to attend a cancer clinic, and she had her fare paid from Charters Towers. Then she was treated at the hospital, and her return fare was also paid. In addition, she has her fare paid when she goes to see her original doctor at Charters Towers. When she goes for a review, it does not cost her anything. I am referring to Queensland because a Labour Government is in office there, and it has no Legislative Council opposition to nullify its intentions. If Queensland has a scheme like that, it shows what could be done here. That is a pretty good medical scheme, and I thought we would have it here by now.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Who pays for it?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: What does that matter so long as everybody can get it?

Hon. A. R. Jones: It is paid for by the rich, I suppose.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: If they have enough rich.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: How many Labour members of the Senate are there from Queensland?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: We had a deputation with respect to the dust nuisance at Rivervale and Victoria Park. I am hoping that the position will be all right in the course of a few months. Some planning should be carried out so that industries which are a nuisance will not be allowed to expand in residential areas. People in the suburbs referred to cannot even put their babies out in the fresh air on account of the dust nuisance. For years we have battled with this problem, and we find this morning that something definite is to be done. I hope it will be. The members of the deputation pointed out that their places have so depreciated in value that they cannot sell them.

We have heard a lot about resuming land. I consider that industrial areas should be industrial areas, and residential areas should be used for residential purposes. It is the women who have to put up with these things. Out there they cannot wash their clothes. It is dreadful. If a motorcar is left out at night it is grey in the morning with cement that cannot be removed.

I pay tribute to this Government for its progressive policy in the outlying areas. For a long time out Morley Park way there was a lot of discussion about the resumptions; but I understand that now most of the people are very satisfied, and that at

last the Minister has been able to promise an immediate water scheme for the area. That will open up the country. This Government has done a major work, and it is one of the most progressive Governments we have had for many years. It has only been curtailed by the opposition of this Council.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Has any of that land been given back, do you know?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: All that was applied for. I understand there are very few who are not satisfied with the money given to them. I know that much of the land was given back, because I saw about it myself. I will close now with the hope that in this session we will see some alleviation of the suffering that is caused through the disallowance of Bills dealing with compensation, the State insurance Act, the health scheme and rents and tenancies. I hope the Opposition here will realise that very real suffering has been caused and that it will tell its own tale; because after the elections we will know what the effect has been on the community. I hope that in the coming session I will see these Bills introduced again and that some of Labour's policy will be put into effect, because once it comes into being we are not frightened that it will be taken off the statute book.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [7.55]: Before making my contribution to the debate on the Speech made to us by His Excellency the Governor, which we were most pleased to receive, I congratulate you, Sir, and the House Committee on the great job done in this Chamber. One of the most pleasing features to me is the lighting; the seating in the President's gallery also commends itself to me. The improvement there is a very good move to encourage people to come and listen to the debates in this House, because they will now be able to sit in comfort and not on the hard chairs that were previously there.

Parts of the Governor's Speech referred to the fact that Government employees were enjoying the benefits of increased margins. By the size of these margins, I should say they are enjoying a very great benefit; and they are not the only ones. A large section of the population of the State is enjoying the benefit of increased margins. His Excellency, in the Speech also referred to the serious problems of rising prices and the suspension of the quarterly basic-wage adjustments. He also said that a Bill would be introduced this session to reimpose price fixing; and I expect that another measure will be brought down directing the Arbitration Court to adjust the basic wage according to the "C" series index.

It strikes me as rather strange that in this State the recent increase in the basic wage, granted according to the "C" series as laid down by our statisticians, showed

our increases to be due mainly to rents. I would like to know how the statisticians arrived at a basis for increases in rents. To make a comprehensive study of the position to get anywhere near a sound figure in regard to rents would mean a terrific amount of research and work. We would need to know the rents of the State Housing Commission and of private landlords—or a very big cross-section of them—in order to arrive at the increase. In addition we would have to take into consideration the large number of people who do not pay rent.

It is also strange that, according to people who have visited or lived in the Eastern States, the cost of living in both Sydney and Melbourne is much higher than in Perth, yet the basic wage in New South Wales and Victoria is lower than that in Western Australia. That is a strange and unaccountable fact. As far as rents are concerned, I think the position is getting to the point that within the next six months we will see quite a big drop in rents, and that rent control will no longer be necessary. At present, quite a lot of rental accommodation is on the market and not being taken.

The Minister for the North-West: Houses?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, houses, flats and rooms. They are standing empty around the city today.

The Minister for the North-West: Too dear?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, I admit that some of them are. When the owners realise that people will not pay the rents asked, they will come down.

There is one other small item—it is not small to me, because it happens to affect my electorate—which is rather pleasing, to the effect that the Government expects to make available for settlement, between Baker's Hill and York, a tract of 45,000 acres. If that country is still in the virgin state—which I suspect it is—does the Government intend to hand it over to settlers without carrying out any work upon it, or does it intend to make some monetary assistance available to the future settlers?

At present, owing to the drop in the price of primary products and the high cost of establishing a property, a person would need at least £15,000 to £20,000 to develop a farm in country of that description. If he did not have that money, he would need some assistance. So any settler in that country would need plenty of capital or monetary help, because it would take at least three or four years for the property to be developed and show any return. It is not country that can be taken up by men who have only a small capital, and I trust that when the Government does make the land available for selection, it will bear

this thought in mind, and either provide the money to assist settlers, or allot it only to those who have a large amount of capital available to them.

When speaking to the Supply Bill recently I referred to the charcoal iron industry at Wundowie. Since then I have studied the figures relating to this project, and it is rather surprising to see the increase in unsold stocks over the last few years. For the year ended 1952, the value of unsold stocks of pig iron was £113,687, and by the end of 1953, it had increased to £227,012. The following year, 1954, the figure had increased to £269,623. I will qualify that by saying that those figures refer to the total unsold stocks at Wundowie. As near as I can calculate, the unsold stocks of pig iron at the end of 1954, according to the report, amounted to 9,257 tons. The overseas price was £17 a ton; and so the unsold stocks of pig iron, at the end of 1954, had a value of £157,369.

After calculating what timber has been sold, it appears that the balance of the unsold stocks comprises acetic acid, methanol and tar. As near as I can reckon almost all the timber has been sold and only a small stock is on hand. That does not indicate a healthy trend at Wundowie, because over the years the unsold stocks have increased so greatly.

Hon. E. M. Davies: What did the Royal Commissioner have to say about it?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Which Royal Commissioner?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Your Government appointed one.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Admittedly our Government appointed a Royal Commission; but this industry is like a lot of Government projects into which so much money has been sunk; they cannot be dropped all at once. The hon. member knows that only too well.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The Royal Commissioner knew that what you are trying to say is not correct.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: What I have said so far is correct. The figures I have given are correct; and if the hon. member studies the report, he will see that that is so. I object to so much money being spent on projects of this kind. The Government is still prepared to sink more money into what, on the surface, is a white elephant.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It did a great service to Western Australia.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Does the hon. member know that the manager of Wundowie, Mr. Considine, has been sent overseas to study charcoal iron production? At no stage, anywhere in the world, has the production of charcoal iron proved a financial success. In some countries it has been used to provide high-grade pig iron and steel for the manufacture of cutting

tools, medical instruments, etc., but it has never been a successful venture financially in any country.

The Minister for the North-West: Then it has a useful purpose.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I admit that at times it serves a useful purpose. But we are trying to conduct it as an iron-production industry in competition with other iron-producing countries. The costs of manufacturing charcoal iron are far above those incurred in the manufacturing processes in the iron-producing works of other countries and other States such as those at Newcastle, Broken Hill, Whyalla and so on. It is almost impossible to compete on the world's markets against the manufacturers of coal production iron.

I now want to discuss the citrus industry. Today the position of the citrus producer is far from happy. During the year 1948-1949 we exported from this State 38,000 cases of oranges. Our export has dropped to 12,000 cases, which is rather severe. There has been a better trend in lemons, for our export figures at the end of 1949 showed that we exported 5,000 cases, and that figure has increased to 7,000 cases which, of course, is only a small proportion of our production. The export of grapefruit has increased from 5,000 to 7,000 cases, and that of mandarins has dropped from 5,000 to 4,000 cases. In this State we produce 300,000 cases of oranges per annum, and so members can realise that it is a big industry. If that industry gets any bigger, we will have to find export markets; and, unfortunately, the competition is severe.

I think it is high time the Government took a greater interest in citrus growing and did something to establish an experimental farm, because this industry could show a big return to the State. The establishment of an experimental farm would not cost a fortune but would be of considerable benefit to the industry. It is not of much help to go to the various orchards and try to incorporate new ideas such as we do with pasture plots on individual properties. It is not a satisfactory way of experimenting, and the information required cannot be obtained in that manner as it could be if an experimental farm were established. I think that is a job for the Department of Agriculture. The department has gone a long way towards helping the grape-growing industry, and I should think the same thing could be done with great success in the citrus industry.

I received some information the other evening, but unfortunately it was too late to give it to the Royal Commissioner dealing with the marketing of eggs. It rather astounded me and refers mainly to country eggs. The information came from a very authentic source. Country eggs are forwarded to Perth, and from there they are taken by road transport to Fremantle.

From the egg floor at Fremantle they are taken to the goods sheds, and from there are re-carted by a private contractor back to the egg floor. It is rather astounding that a board should countenance that sort of additional expenditure on an industry. If the eggs were taken from Perth by road transport direct to the egg floor in Fremantle it would be quite all right; but that this sort of procedure should be adopted rather amazes me. Perhaps it is because of some railway regulation; but why it is done is beyond my comprehension.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do they go by rail?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It makes me think that the administration of the Egg Board is far from what it should be and it is time somebody woke up.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Did you say that the eggs were sent by rail from the country?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, and they are transhipped into motor transport at Perth.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Into Government trucks?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Into Government motor transport at Perth and taken to the railways at Fremantle.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What can the Egg Board do about that? It is not in charge of the transport.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mr. Baxter is making the speech.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member can work it out for himself. If it is a railway regulation, it is time somebody woke up; if not, it is time the Egg Board did something about getting the railways to agree to the eggs being taken straight to the egg floor, and not to the goods shed and then taken back by private contractor to the board's premises.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They would be consigned to the Fremantle goods?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: That is correct. It has nothing to do with the Egg Board.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member should know, because he has had a fair amount to do with the railways. But they have some weird ways of doing things, and they often involve added cost to primary industry.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That also applies to the farming industry.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Of course it does! The farmers are the ones who get the kick every time. We have heard quite a lot recently about the price of butter, and I was rather surprised tonight—

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do not spread it on too thick.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: — to see in the paper, the "News Review," of Monday, the 22nd August, a headline which stated, "The butter racket has gone far enough."

If that had been in the "Worker," or a paper of that nature, I would have understood it; but it is rather staggering to see an article of that kind in the "News Review." It went on—

The butter consumers of Australia ought to call a halt to any further spoonfeeding of inefficient dairy farmers. At 4s. 6d. lb., butter is now a luxury. Last year the Commonwealth supported the dairying industry to the tune of £15,700,000. This year it will provide £14,500,000.

It makes nice headline reading; but it is a most ridiculous article. Let us go back to 1928 or 1929 when the basic wage was about £4 14s. a week. Butter was then 1s. 6d. a lb. Today the basic wage is treble the figure it was in those days, but butter is still only 4s. 6d. a lb. and subsidised by the Commonwealth Government to the consumer. The dairy farmer does not get any part of that Commonwealth subsidy. The consumer reaps the benefit of it.

The Minister for the North-West: Do the cows eat three times as much?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: This type of article annoys those who represent the primary producers of this country. If the writer of it, or the people who grizzle about the price of butter today—

Hon. E. M. Davies: Who is the author of it?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: —were to go down and spend a few years in the dairying industry, getting up at four o'clock in the morning and slushing around in mud and working till dark to produce butter, while making a very poor living, and in a lot of instances less than the basic wage, perhaps they would have some sympathy for the farmer and say that he is entitled to an increase in the price of butter; perhaps they would then not cry out for a decrease in the price of butter as they are doing today.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I do not want a decrease in the price of butter; I want an increase in wages.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Which leads me to the point that I have heard some extraordinary remarks made tonight by Mrs. Hutchison. I thought perhaps that this being her second session in the House she might have mellowed a little.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: No fear!

Hon. E. M. Davies: You are a bit of an optimist.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Most members when they enter this House, and are new, are very enthusiastic, and during the first session they try to get things done for their electors very quickly. I think that before she is here much longer the hon. member will learn that it takes time to get what she wants for her electors.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: But it will not keep me quiet.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member's attitude in this House is designed to, and will, create more class distinction and antagonism than anything else; it certainly will not help. If she had gone about things a little differently they may perhaps have come her way a little sooner.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You have been a long time thinking about that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Such remarks as the hon. member makes would sound much better on the Esplanade on Sunday, or perhaps on the Domain in Sydney—particularly when she refers to the Opposition in this House. The hon. member should have studied what happened to prices under the Prices Commission. She would then have known how much more prices rose in those years compared with the rise in prices since the pegging of the basic wage.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: But the basic wage rose, too.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member also lost sight of the fact that the basic wage carried a prosperity loading of at least £1 a week which, of course, was put on to industry, when the prices of primary products were high on the world markets. Those prices are no longer high on the world markets, and industry, particularly primary production, is finding that it cannot carry the burden of the prosperity loading.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: That is not true; prices rose while the basic wage was pegged.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is true; but some of the prices only caught up with what they should have been prior to the pegging of the basic wage.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You cannot expect us to swallow that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member should realise that it was only catching up with the £1 a week prosperity loading.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Why should it catch up? The prosperity loading was given to make people better off.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Admittedly. When things are prosperous, industry can afford a prosperity loading; but when they are not, that prosperity loading has to disappear.

Another matter to which the hon. member referred while criticising the Opposition in this House was the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill which was brought down last year. I would point out that, in fact, the Opposition in this House—as the hon. member would term it—gave more to the workers under the amendments moved in this Chamber than was ever asked for under the Bill.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do you believe that?

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: It is not true.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I know it to be true, and the hon. member should be the first one to believe it. Mrs. Hutchison also referred to the Jury Act Amendment Bill, and I was about to say that she was speaking through her hat. She does not know what destroyed that Bill, and I can assure her that it was not the members on this side of the House. She was not one of the conference managers, and she does not know what happened, and therefore she cannot comment as to what destroyed the Bill.

If the hon. member would be a little constructive instead of critical, I would suggest to her that she ask her idols, the members of the Labour Cabinet of this State, when they are introducing their Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill—which is becoming one of our hardy annuals—to make an amendment to that Act; and that she try to get them to incorporate a suggestion in the Bill that the Arbitration Court should give the basic-wage earner the increase in the amount calculated under the "C" series index, but that it deduct from past rises, since wages were pegged, the £1 prosperity loading; and that the future increases under the "C" series index be paid as a "C" series index allowance to those on the basic wage purely and simply, and that anybody on a margin should not receive it mandatorily.

Hon. E. M. Davies: A very democratic suggestion!

The Minister for the North-West: You desire to cut margins out?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No. I desire to give the basic-wage earner a living according to the "C" series index. But if the hon. member is going to load the whole of the basic-wage increase on to industry through every person that has a margin well and truly over the basic wage, he will find prices rising quite naturally. But if he wants to keep prices down, giving people on the basic wage an allowance according to the cost of living, he should not load industry with the wages that it cannot pay. That would be something constructive for the hon. member to work on.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: We will demonstrate that to you soon. Labour will have control of this House.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That may be the hon. member's opinion, but it is not mine. I was merely pointing out something which I thought would help the hon. member to attain what she is seeking.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You know what I am looking for.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Why should a member of Parliament get the "C" series index rise simply because the basic-wage earner gets it?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is so. There is another matter with which I would like to deal. Several members have voiced their disapproval of some of the answers that have been given to questions. I do not blame the Ministers in this House, because, on a number of occasions, they are not personally responsible for the replies given; they merely pass on answers that have been supplied by the Ministers in other departments. That is often most unsatisfactory. You are no doubt aware, Mr. President, that I asked quite a number of questions—18 all told—in connection with roads in the vicinity of Shark Bay. Some of the answers I received were far from satisfactory. I was looking for information and the information I received could have been enlarged upon.

For instance, I asked the Minister whether he would agree that better results in laying the 80-mile road to which I referred would be obtained by watering and rolling to overcome much of the difficulty of transport over this section. The answer I received was just a plain straight-out "No." No reason was given why they would not; nor was the information given which the question sought. In road-making today, watering and rolling is one of the most used methods of consolidation. Perhaps it might have been expensive to take a gang up there with a roller, though I do not think it would have been any more expensive than taking them to any other part of the State. But it makes one rather annoyed when one receives that type of answer.

I also asked a question concerning sleepers, railways and timber carted for the Shark Bay jetty. I was told that 15 tons of material were carted on one truck and that there was no permit to cart over the maximum axle-ton per load. From the replies to the other questions it appeared that there had never been any policing of the regulations in that district, and the department would not have any idea of what anybody carted over that section of the road. The answer given to me was that operators did not have permits to carry over and above regulation loads, and that it was not known that the regulations were broken. Naturally it would not be known if they were not policed.

There is another matter to which I would like to refer, and that is that a certain company which had a permit was advised by the Minister for Works that on and after the end of this month the permit which it had held for three and a half years would no longer be granted. The point is that the Public Works Department had no power to advise the party concerned that the permit would not be granted this year.

The Minister for the North-West: You are not confusing it with the Main Roads Department?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No. I will read the portion of the letter concerned. It is dated the 20th July and is as follows—

Arising out of the interview which you and ——— had with me this morning, I desire to inform you that the Department of Local Government has been notified that I am prepared to agree to your Company carrying until the end of August a load of five tons on the vehicle in connection with which you have, during the past three years, had a permit to exceed the regulation axle loading.

Here is the Public Works Department advising the Local Government Department—which has the right to grant and take away the permit—that the permit had been taken away. The Department of Public Works had no power to say to anybody what he should and should not carry on that particular section of road. That is the duty of the Traffic Department and the Transport Board. It was the duty of the Minister for Transport to determine whether the permit should be renewed or cancelled.

Dealing further with the questions I asked last week, I inquired whether the entire population of Shark Bay relied upon road transport for groceries and foodstuffs, and the answer was, "Yes," but in reply to another question as to the approximate weekly tonnage of these requirements that were transported by road, I was merely informed that the information was not available. I feel that before the permit was taken away, an inquiry should have been made as to the tonnage of the commodities required. What is it going to cost the people and the industry there and could not some other arrangement be made so that these commodities might still be transported there economically?

It is not sufficient just to refuse to extend the permit without making inquiries into the possibility of getting commodities there at a reasonably cheap rate, instead of making these charges as dear as possible. But apparently nothing has been done along those lines. The questions I asked of the Minister for the North-West—questions that mainly came under his department—were answered in a very satisfactory manner, and I appreciate that very much. He gave me quite a lot of detail which was very informative, and I wish to thank him. I believe in giving a little credit where credit is due. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. W. R. Hall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 24th August, 1955.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Main Roads Department, (a) receipts, disbursements and interest	282
(b) use of Kwinana bitumen	282
Metropolitan local authorities, reason for reduction	282
Education, (a) automotive trade school, site	284
(b) Mayanup school quarters, removal, etc.	284
(c) Chowderup, cost of new quarters	284
(d) Mayanup school quarters, negotiations for sale	284
(e) Carnarvon school buildings	284
(f) technical school, Derby	284
Railways, (a) freights on timber	284
(b) minimising fire risks	285
Broken Hill Pty. Ltd., royalty on Cockatoo Island ore	285
Fishing industry, undersized nets, Shark Bay	285
Transport, private bus fares	285
Auditor General's report, tabling of Section "A," 1955	285
Rural & Industries Bank, capital from loan funds	285
Delinquent boys, Seaforth Home and Stoneville Farm School	286
Housing, land resumptions, Canning electorate	286
Address-in-reply, eighth day, conclusion	286
Speakers on Address—	
Mr. Owen	286
The Minister for Lands	292
Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver	298
Mr. Oldfield	303
The Minister for Native Welfare	306
Bills : Main Roads Act Amendment, 1r.	309
Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act Amendment, 1r.	309
Medical Act Amendment, 1r.	309
Associations Incorporation Act Amendment, 1r.	310
Electoral Districts Act Amendment, 1r.	310
Jury Act Amendment (No. 1), 1r.	310
Police Act Amendment, 1r.	310
Spear-guns Control, 1r.	310
Electoral Act Amendment, 1r.	310
University of Western Australia Act Amendment, 1r.	310
Jury Act Amendment (No. 2), 1r.	310
Free Enterprise Protection, 1r.	310

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

MAIN ROADS DEPARTMENT.

(a) *Receipts, Disbursements and Interest.*

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What proportion of the metropolitan traffic fees is paid to the Main Roads Department?