

wards this pension fund? I think a Bill should be brought before Parliament each time such a contribution is necessary.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Ordinarily I might agree that such a contribution should be subject to parliamentary review, but circumstances here are different. Owing to rising costs generally, the pensions paid from this fund have been increased from time to time and while both the owners and employees contribute to the benefits received by the pensioners, no contribution is made by those who have ceased to contribute and are now drawing pensions.

From time to time an actuary studies the fund and recommends the contribution that should be made by the Government to keep the fund solvent. On that recommendation the Government makes a payment to the fund. It was therefore thought that if the required sum were included in the Estimates, and brought before Parliament for review, the position would be met. Failing that a separate Bill would be required on each occasion to deal with the actuary's recommendation.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I agree with the explanation of the Minister up to a point, but I think members should have the same right to debate this question as have members of another place.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I thought last evening that any Government in power could increase pensions and then call for an extra contribution from Consolidated Revenue to bridge the gap, but apparently all that can be done is to pay into the fund the amount necessary to enable it to meet its obligations. I therefore no longer have that objection to the provision.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had disagreed to the Council's amendment.

House adjourned at 4.18 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Friday, 30th November, 1951.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

(a) As to Zone Rationing.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is any system for the zone rationing of superphosphate contemplated?

(2) If so, can he give any details in connection therewith?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by (1).

(b) As to Action for Allocating Supplies.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is it intended to introduce legislation this session to ensure a fair and reasonable distribution of available superphosphate supplies?

(2) If not, what steps does the Government propose to take to ensure a reasonable distribution, especially to smaller farmers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) No.

(2) The matter is in the hands of a distribution committee representative of the Farmers' Union, superphosphate manufacturers and the Department of Agriculture.

It has always been the wish of the Department of Agriculture that small farmers get fair treatment.

HOUSING.*(a) As to Evictions and Emergency Dwellings.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many applications by landlords for the eviction of tenants have been granted—

(a) by the Perth court, and

(b) by the Fremantle court, since the 30th September this year?

(2) In how many such cases have warrants for eviction been actually issued?

(3) In how many such cases have warrants been executed?

(4) What is the approximate time taken to erect emergency dwellings similar to the type which have been built at Naval Base?

(5) How many unoccupied emergency dwellings are available at present to house evictees?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Perth—128; Fremantle—36.

(2) 109.

(3) 103.

(4) This is dependent upon the number of men engaged on the work, but the 150 dwellings at South Guildford and Naval Base were built at the rate of seven per week.

(5) At noon today, two keys were on hand. The position varies from day to day.

(b) As to Restriction on Material Supplies, Collie.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is he aware that all permits issued for building at Collie expressly state that no bricks are to be obtained from the metropolitan area?

(2) Further, is he aware that supplies of cement have been greatly restricted in country areas?

(3) In view of this situation, how does he expect the Government's policy on housing at Collie to be put into operation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) All permits issued for building at Collie do not expressly state that no bricks are to be obtained from the metropolitan area.

(2) Yes, supplies of local cement have been restricted in all areas, because production is insufficient to meet increasing demands.

(3) Special consideration has been given to building at Collie and the housing programme is proceeding satisfactorily.

(c) As to Wembley Camp Flats.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many flats at the Wembley camp—

(a) became vacant during the past fortnight;

(b) will become vacant during the next week?

(2) How many of these flats have been allocated to persons recently evicted?

(3) How many are being held in reserve for persons who are likely to be evicted?

(4) How many have been, or will be, allocated to persons who have been granted an emergency priority?

(5) Does he agree that a family which was granted an emergency priority three months ago should be granted one of these flats?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) 11.

(b) 6.

(2) Seven.

(3) Four at present.

(4) This depends on circumstances.

(5) Yes, if circumstances warrant such action.

SWAN RIVER CRABS.*As to Season's Prospects and Prosecutions for Offences.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) What is the forecast of Fisheries Department officers as to the supply of crabs in the Swan River for the present season?

(2) As large quantities of undersized crabs are being taken from the river at present, does he contemplate making a genuine effort to enforce observance of the Act, by not allowing the destruction of crabs under the regulation carapace measurement?

(3) How many prosecutions for non-observance of the Act were effected, and convictions and fines recorded during the 1950-51 season?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is impossible to make any forecast which would be accurate.

(2) The department is policing the catching of undersized fish and crabs throughout the State to the fullest extent possible with the staff at its disposal.

(3) The following are the figures for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1951—

(a) Prosecutions—75.

(b) Convictions—70.

(c) Fines imposed—£350.

SWAN RIVER POLLUTION.

As to Action by Government.

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is the Government taking any positive steps to reduce the pollution of the river?

(2) If so, what is the nature of these steps?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Trade wastes from 64 industrial establishments, which previously discharged into the river through stormwater drains, have been diverted to the sewers.

Owners of 24 other establishments have been instructed to divert their wastes, and this work is receiving attention.

Arrangements have been made with local governing authorities for the removal of algae and debris from foreshores, the State agreeing to bear half the cost.

An ejector station and rising main have been installed at the East Perth Gas Works to improve the position regarding effluents from these works.

Regular inspections and tests are carried out to ensure that the river is kept in satisfactory condition.

PRICES CONTROL.

As to Flour and Mill Offal.

Mr. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Attorney General:

As consumers of stock foods are anxiously watching the situation with regard to stock food wheat and the new price for mill offal, will he give an undertaking that he will direct the Prices Commissioner to expedite the declaration of the new price for mill offal, and to take steps to ensure the availability of supplies more quickly?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

The Prices Commissioners of Australia discussed the position that they knew would arise from the new price for wheat

supplied to flour millers which would occur in respect of new season's wheat and would, I understand, date from the 1st December. The discussions resulted in an arrangement for the allocation of a certain proportion of the increased cost to mill offal and, of course, a certain increase to flour. Until the actual amount of the new season's wheat was decided upon, it was impossible to reach finality respecting the exact prices. It was only yesterday that the Prices Commissioner in Western Australia was able officially to ascertain the exact price, but rumour had it that it would be from 9s. 7d. to something over 10s. Immediate steps will be taken to make the necessary computations to ascertain the prices for flour and mill offal.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

As to Tabling Annual Report.

Hon. E. NULSEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

When will he lay on the Table of the House the report of the State Electricity Commission in accordance with the provisions of the Act?

Mr. Marshall: It has been.

Hon. E. NULSEN: We have only had the report from the manager of the Commission as submitted to the Commission, but not a report from the Commission.

The MINISTER replied:

I will make investigations and inform the hon. member at the next sitting of the House.

FORESTS.

As to Report of Royal Commission.

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

When will the report of the Royal Commission on Forestry be available for the information of this House?

The PREMIER replied:

I do not know because I have not yet received the report.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Electoral Districts Act Amendment. Introduced by the Attorney General.

2, Hospital Benefits Agreement. Introduced by the Minister for Health.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Trustees Act Amendment.
With amendments.
- 2, Prices Control Act Amendment
(No. 2).
With an amendment.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LICENSING (PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATE) ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [2.43]: There would not be much sense in endeavouring to force people to build if at the same time we made it impossible for them to do so by restricting the use of materials. As we know it will be some considerable time before it will be possible to make necessary materials available for the erection of hotels, we have to be reasonable in the matter and protect those who have provisional licenses and give them reasonable time to proceed with the erection of buildings.

We on this side have no objection to the Bill, which is for the purpose of extending the period for a further five years, during which it will be possible for the holders of provisional certificates to make the necessary arrangements for their buildings to be erected. Of course, there is always the danger that people with provisional certificates might be induced to hawk them around to persons desirous of taking advantage of them, and it would not be right if by this extension we made that sort of thing possible or facilitated it to any degree. However, I do not think that is likely to happen.

I understand that the provisional certificates which have already been granted are with respect to genuine cases and there is not much likelihood of their being hawked about. But I agree that we must make provision for those certificates to be safeguarded in view of the fact that it is not possible under existing circumstances for buildings to be erected. Whether five years is the right period or not is difficult to say. Things might improve in a shorter period; on the other hand, they might get worse and it might be necessary to extend the period again. However, I believe the Bill is necessary and desirable, and I propose to support it. I would have liked to have some figures from the Minister as to how many certificates were involved. That would have helped us in the consideration of this measure. It is not absolutely vital that we should have that information, however, and I do not propose to hold up the Bill because of that.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.*Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Hill in the Chair; the Minister for Housing in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—

Clause 4. Page 2—Delete the words "or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both fine and imprisonment" in lines 19 to 21.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Council's amendment provides for striking out the reference to punishment by imprisonment or by fine and imprisonment.

Mr. Marshall: What is the fine in that provision?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Five hundred pounds. When the Bill was originally before this House I spoke definitely in favour of the increase in penalty, and I am still of the opinion that the only way to stamp out these practices is to make the penalty such that people will not infringe. However, another place has agreed to the £500 fine, and the mandatory provision imposing on the offender a penalty equal in amount to the cost of the building material involved. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am sorry the Minister is going to cave in so easily, as imprisonment is the only penalty that will provide equality of punishment for both rich and poor people. Some very wealthy people are prepared to risk the cost of a fine as part of the price they have to pay for the building operations they desire to carry out. We had a case in this State where a wealthy man deliberately built many squares above his permit and then informed on himself. He, his builder and his architect were each fined £500 but, whereas that did not worry him, the certainty of imprisonment would, I am sure, have been sufficient to stop him breaking the law.

The Premier: How much did it cost him?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He, his builder and architect were each fined £500.

The Premier: Probably the owner paid the lot.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think they were all three fined the same amount, but the owner, being wealthy, would not worry about that. There have been other cases where wealthy men have deliberately flouted the law. During the years of shortage of housing and building materials I have heard of many cases where wealthy people have taken the risk, and have been quite prepared to pay a fine in order to get what they wanted. A single day's imprisonment would be sufficient deterrent to many such people, whereas a fine of £1,000 would not worry them. Such people regard the fine as part of the cost of building, and in many cases it has paid them because they have been able to take advantage of the high ruling market price of houses.

A fine of £500 might mean ruin to a poor man or one in moderate circumstances and so would be a sufficient deterrent. Some months ago the Housing Commission sent officers out to tell a builder to stop the work of reconditioning some flats, but he told them he had no intention of stopping, and did not. When imposing a penalty the magistrate, in addition to a fine, imposed a term of imprisonment. If we place in the legislation power for magistrates to impose a penalty of imprisonment we will have an excellent chance of preventing wealthy men breaking the law, and the penalty for the offence will be equal for rich and poor. I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Mr. MARSHALL: I understand that under the Police Act anyone in default as to payment of a fine is liable to imprisonment to the extent of one day for each £3 of the fine, or something of that nature. A £50 fine could be an enormous burden to a poor man and, if he could not find the money, he would be imprisoned under the present law. Such a person could, irrespective of this amendment, be sent to gaol if he could not raise the money to pay his fine, whereas the wealthy man, who could pay on the spot, would run no risk at all of imprisonment. We must do something to overcome this anomaly. If the Minister agrees to the Council's amendment there will be no possibility of the rich man going to gaol at all, but every possibility of the poor man being imprisoned because, being unable to pay his fine, he will have to sacrifice his liberty by being imprisoned for three days for every £1 he is unable to pay.

I know of one man who committed a breach by using controlled materials without a permit and he was fined £50. Being unable to pay the money himself he had to call for a tarpaulin muster among the members of his family to collect the £50, and to avoid going to gaol. The law has always been against the poor man because

in the majority of cases he cannot afford the excessive cost of litigation today, whereas a person who is affluent can smile at the law because any monetary penalty would have no effect on him. The amendment is not fair at all and I hope the Committee will disagree with it. If we are sincere we should frame our legislation in order that it will be as equitable as possible upon all members of the community.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The Minister, in agreeing to the amendment, has weakened his position, because he agreed to the penalties provided in the clause as it left this Chamber. I know of many people who, if they can obtain the necessary materials, will complete the job without worrying about a permit. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, the payment of a fine is only a slight deterrent to a rich man compared with what it would be to a poor man. A man who intends to put up a building worth £300 or £400, and is anxious to have the job completed, will take any risk. I do not think we should rescind our previous decision by agreeing to the amendment. Even if we could provide for a penalty of imprisonment for 12 months, instead of the two years as originally set down in the Bill, it would be better to proceed along those lines rather than to capitulate to the Legislative Council which requests that a fine only should be imposed. I am surprised at the Minister agreeing to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When the Bill was in Committee previously in this Chamber many members were bitterly opposed to the clause providing imprisonment as a penalty, because only a short time before the case of Doran had been heard and as a result he was gaoled. After reading "Hansard" I noted that some members bitterly opposed imprisonment as a penalty, one even citing the case of a man using a bag of cement illegally. There was great criticism in another place against this provision and, though I know I am weak in agreeing to the Council's amendment, why should I be like the ostrich and keep my head in the sand? If I stick out against the amendment and should it come to a question of a manager's conference, we might lose the Bill? I would point out that this is most important legislation.

Mr. Styants: This clause does provide for imprisonment, does it not?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, not now. The Legislative Council struck out the provision for imprisonment of two years as a penalty.

Mr. Styants: But we agreed to the clause providing for imprisonment for two years.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Another place has struck out the words providing for a term of imprisonment. Therefore, if we desire this legislation and, knowing the tenor of another place, I hope the Committee will agree to the amend-

ment in order that the legislation may be placed on the statute book because, if we do not agree we run the risk of losing the Bill altogether.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I want to correct an error that I made when speaking previously. I mentioned that one man who had committed a breach of this regulation had been fined £500, but it was not £500 but £100. In this case the Housing Commission had granted a permit to this man to erect a house of 18.78 squares. That is a large house. He built a house of 24.89 squares, so he built six squares in excess of that allowed by the permit. When the case went to court the owner was fined £100, the builder £100 and the architect £100. The total fine of £300 to the owner would, to him, be like losing a button off his shirt, because he has plenty of money. However, if the punishment imposed had been one of imprisonment, it is pretty evident that he would not have taken that risk.

Mr. May: He would merely put the fine on to the cost of the house.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: A fine, such as that, would not prevent a man with thousands of pounds from breaking the law, but it would be a deterrent to a poor man, especially if, as the member for Murchison has stated, he was unable to pay the fine and in default would be imprisoned for three days for every pound defaulted. He could be in gaol for a long time. After all, what we are trying to do is to stop people from breaking the law by using materials that could be made available to other people. If we are genuine in our desire to prevent these breaches we should impose a penalty of imprisonment which would be a real deterrent.

We cannot go on being intimidated by the Legislative Council as to what it might or might not do. We have to take the risk as to what it might do and do what is right, irrespective of the big stick that another place wields. If we are to trim every Bill that comes before this Chamber in order to please the Legislative Council very little legislation will be put through. We should disregard the Legislative Council, as if it were non-existent, and do what we consider to be the correct thing. If it does not accept this, we can then take it up on the matter. I would be prepared to meet the Council at a conference on this matter. Why do not its members come out into the open and say that they represent one particular section of the community, and do not wish wealthy people to go to gaol?

Mr. Griffith: What if you lose the Bill as a result?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We would have to take that hurdle when we came to it, but for the time being we should see that this legislation leaves this Chamber in the form in which we desire it. We must get equality with regard to these penalties so that they

will prove sufficient deterrents. Our object is not to punish people after they have broken the law; it is to prevent their breaking it, in the interests of other people who are playing the game; those who are flagrantly using materials they have no right to use, to the detriment of others who are keeping within the law. The Minister's desire was to leave the penalties in the Bill to stop these practices; it was not to punish people, but to prevent them from breaking the law.

Heavy fines will not stop wealthy people from breaking the law if their minds are made up, because they are prepared to pay fines. But the poor man cannot do that. If the fine is substantial, he takes the risk of imprisonment because he is not able to pay it. Even if the term of imprisonment is reduced to two months, it will be better than nothing at all. The idea of this measure is not to get money for the Treasury or to punish people severely for breaking the law; it is to provide a sufficient deterrent. There have been many arguments in regard to capital punishment; but it has prevailed in spite of them because people find the thought of going to the scaffold a sufficient deterrent. That is why over the years various countries have held to the supreme penalty; it is not because it is the type of punishment they want to mete out, as that is repugnant to most of us; it is because it is a deterrent. I submit we should not agree to the amendment. Even if we do not insist on two years' imprisonment we ought to insist on some imprisonment, and this could quite easily be adjusted at a conference. But at this stage we should indicate to the Council that the amendment it has made is not fair.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister has just indicated that during the second reading debate on this Bill there were quite a few members who were opposed to imprisonment. I took part in the debate and was opposed to imprisonment because no minimum term was provided. That was the burden of our song; we amended the Bill accordingly, and the Minister agreed with us. The Minister said that the previous fines were not doing the job properly and he brought down a Bill providing savage penalties. I would like the Minister to inform us whether he thinks the Bill as amended by the Council will do the job. I say it will not. I cannot understand why he brought the Bill down at all if he is not prepared to go on with it. The Minister heard a few members in another place protecting the people they represent by deleting the provision for imprisonment. I am fed to the teeth with this domination by the Legislative Council, and particularly the Government's subservience to it. When the matter goes to a conference, that is the time to compromise; not now. If we object to this amendment, the Bill will still come back to us and we shall have another chance

to decide. We had the Minister's admission on the rent Bill that it must be drafted so that the Council will agree to it.

The Minister for Housing: We lost the rent Bill.

Mr. Griffith: You had to have another session.

Mr. RODOREDA: We could have another session if we lost this Bill. Let us put up some sort of fight. It is nonsense that all the legislation we put through should be done with a view to appeasing the Council. Have we not our own opinions? By increasing the fines in the Bill we do not compel magistrates to increase the penalties and, as we know, magistrates will not impose anything like the maximum fines provided. We ought to fight the Council on this and on every other measure on which we decide. I hope the Minister will revise his ideas.

Mr. STYANTS: I would rather see this Bill lost than agree to the Council's amendment. In my opinion, if it is accepted it will mean a lesser degree of punishment than exists under the present Act. The Minister said, and we agreed with him, that there should be severe penalties for breaches, particularly flagrant breaches, of the Act. I contended on the second reading, and that is still my view, that ample penalties are provided under the Act at present if magistrates will only use them. The present penalty is a fine of £200 and forfeiture of any material concerned; also imprisonment for six months. Any one of those penalties—or they could be used cumulatively—would be sufficient. But we find that the average fine for a breach of the Act has been in the vicinity of £45 or £50 when there is a maximum of £200 provided.

While we leave it to the discretion of the magistrate to inflict punishment, we shall find that the penalty will still be in the vicinity of £45 or £50 in spite of the fact that the maximum has been increased from £200 to £500. If we accept the Council's amendment, the penalties that will be provided will be infinitely less than under the present Act. I would certainly be prepared to let this matter go to a conference and, if the Legislative Council does not agree to the provision of a term of imprisonment, I would much rather see the Bill lost. Let us stick to the penalty of a term of imprisonment which appears in the present Act.

The Premier: You agree with the present penalty of £500 and two years?

Mr. STYANTS: They are both the maximum.

The Premier: Yes, they can be given.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But they have chopped that out.

The Premier: No.

Mr. STYANTS: They have taken out the imprisonment provision. I think it was only on one occasion that a magistrate took advantage of the provision to impose a term of imprisonment. Nevertheless, if it were exercised, the term of six months' imprisonment would be a safe penalty. Even if the penalty were made a term of one month's imprisonment, it would be a much greater deterrent than a fine of £500. The Bill proposed a penalty equivalent to the value of the excess materials used, but practically the same penalty is provided in the existing Act, namely, the forfeiture of any material involved in the offence. Therefore, if we accept the Council's amendment, the penalty, instead of being increased, will be reduced. That is contrary to the expressed intention of the Minister and in opposition to the wishes of this Chamber. The Minister intended to provide heavier penalties. In my opinion, it is unnecessary to provide a term of imprisonment for two years. Provision for six months imprisonment would be ample and would be a sufficient deterrent.

Question put and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: There was no call on behalf of the "ayes".

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: None at all.

Mr. Marshall: If there were no calls for the ayes, you cannot have a division.

Question negatived; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

A committee consisting of Hon. J. T. Tonkin, Mr. Griffith and the Minister for Housing drew up reasons for disagreeing to the Council's amendment.

Sitting suspended from 3.35 to 3.55 p.m.

Adoption of Reasons.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have to report that the committee met, and the reason arrived at for disagreeing with the amendment of the Legislative Council is that, without imprisonment, the penalty is not a sufficient deterrent in some cases. I move—

That the reasons be adopted.

Mr. MARSHALL: I hope the Minister will not show any signs of weakness in this matter. It is marvellous how the people at the other end get to know if there are any such signs. I am sorry the Minister conceded a point at all. Once members of the Legislative Council know the Minister is weak, they will take every advantage. I am under the impression that this was put through without much consideration. I hope the Minister will stick to the Bill and be solid on it. If the Legislative Council insists on its amendment we can have a conference because I have never known the Legislative

Council, with all its past discourtesies, to refuse us a conference so there is no fear of the Bill being lost.

Question put and passed, the reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, The Perpetual Executors, Trustees and Agency Company (W.A.) Limited Act Amendment (Private).
- 2, West Australian Trustee, Executor and Agency Company Limited Act Amendment (Private).
Without amendment.

BILL—LIBRARY BOARD OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendment No. 23.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1951-52.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 21st November; Mr. Hill in the Chair.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £4,960,146 (partly considered).

Item, Adult Education Board, £1,100.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: When this item was under consideration, certain members wanted to know the value of the Adult Education Board, and what it did. Last Friday an eminent educationist was here, and pointed out the need for education to be continued in the adult stage. There is no question but that more adults than ever before are taking a keen interest in education. The board is doing a good job throughout the State, although its activities are possibly limited by the finance available. When Mr. Kim Beazley was the Leader of the Adult Education Board, under Professor Fox, he did a good deal of work in this country. The members of the board paid visits to country districts where they lectured on subjects of importance, and generally tried to diffuse knowledge amongst adults in the community. From that point of view, there is no question but that the activities of the board are quite effective.

Side by side with these operations, the board, each Christmas, runs a summer school, and people come not only from this State but other parts of Australia to attend it, and it has been a pronounced success. In this regard Western Australia has given a lead to all the other States. Many people, including teachers, come from the

hinterland to attend these summer schools and this not only refreshes their memories but also gives them a broader outlook and knowledge of other aspects of education. I hope the work of the Adult Education Board will continue and its activities increase. I am sure those activities are limited only by the small amount of money available. I think the expenditure of money on this Vote is thoroughly justified because, particularly in regard to the summer school, adults are able to gain further knowledge. In many cases those adults were prevented from being able to carry on at school in their younger days. I support this item wholeheartedly.

Item, Reforestation Fund—Special grant, £100,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want some explanation from the Premier about this item. I thought all reforestation activities were carried out by the Forests Department and that the money to be expended appeared under that heading. I want to know the reason for the special grant and to whom it is to be given, because it is a large sum of money.

The PREMIER: This is a special grant and relates to the planting of pines.

Mr. Marshall: Special grant from the Treasury?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Marshall: To whom?

The PREMIER: To the Forests Department. The grant relates to pine planting. The policy has been to encourage this work and to make special provision for it.

Mr. Marshall: That is all right.

Item, British Medical Association—Post Graduate Course, £500.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Could the Premier give us some information about this item? This sum of money will not go very far and I want to know what it is to be used for.

The PREMIER: This grant is made to the British Medical Association towards financing the expenses for post graduate training by way of lectures by overseas and interstate members of the medical profession, who happen to be attending this State and imparting knowledge to doctors in Western Australia. It is also to be used to purchase equipment and provide facilities for visiting lecturers. Some eminent doctor might come here to talk on poliomyelitis or T.B. for instance, and this special provision is to try to help towards the expenses.

Item, Grant to South-West Tourist Association, Bunbury.

Mr. GUTHRIE: A grant of £250 under this item was made last year and there does not appear to be any grant this year. Can the Premier tell me why?

The CHAIRMAN: There is no vote for it this year.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. member can make some comments on this matter under the Tourist Vote, included under the Tourist Bureau section.

Item, Transport of superphosphate by road, £100,000.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: This is an important item and I think something should be done about it because we never know how much is going to be spent. Last year the Premier told us that he anticipated spending £180,000 and he finished up by spending £240,000 for the cartage of super. by road. That was an expenditure to help the farmers of this country who, at the moment, are not in a bad position. In 1948-49 the Premier estimated that he would spend £500 and he finished up by spending £100,000. The estimate this year is £100,000 and when we meet again he will probably tell us that he has succeeded in spending £200,000. So we do not know where we are.

If the farmers were in a bad way I would be the first to try to assist them, but that is not so. I have a cutting here which is headed, *Farmers' Profits Spent on Cars* and it reads as follows:—

An age-of-machinery survey in the farming areas of the State has revealed that more than 57 per cent. of all cars were bought during the past two years and 76 per cent. were bought after the war. The survey of cars was conducted by the Farmers' Union in conjunction with its machinery-needs' survey and results were announced yesterday by the General Secretary (Mr. A. G. Trainor). The survey covered nearly 11,000 farmers and was supervised by Dr. J. Gentili, of the University of Western Australia. A preamble to the survey stated that many manufacturers had concentrated on luxury goods after the war in preference to more necessary, but less remunerative goods—a trend noticeable among British and American makers of motor vehicles. As a result, many farmers had found that if they wanted to invest some of the profit made after the war they had to buy cars or refrigerators or similar goods.

That paper evidently thinks that the present-day farmer is in a very fair position. In the "Daily News" of the 26th November, there is a heading, "A Roar and a Whirr and the Harvest is on." The article reads—

The dull roar of tractors and the whirr of harvesters can be heard in paddocks all over the wheatbelt. The 1951 harvest has started. From York in the south to Mullewa in the north, cropping reports have so far indicated a bumper harvest—in some cases better than last year's excellent crop.

Farmers along the Perth-Geraldton road are more than satisfied with

their crops. Some—particularly in the Carnamah district—are yielding 10 to 15 bags to the acre.

On Saturday, trucks loaded with bagged wheat could be seen queued up at weighbridges near silos, waiting for them to open.

In some towns and sidings, the bins opened today.

Prosperity is the keynote of harvesting operations this year. Many farmers are using new tractors, new (power take-off) headers and new trucks to cart the wheat.

Reports from key centres from Moora to Mullewa:

Moora: Some excellent crops. Most farmers have started harvesting—others will start today. A few crops yielding up to 40 bushels an acre.

It says that with a roar and a whirr the harvest is on, but I would say that with a dash and a splash the Premier hops in and says, "Here is £100,000 for a start. We may give you up to £200,000 and it may reach £250,000." The farmers are receiving wonderful prices for their products and, if the Premier wants to help anybody, let him help the poultry or pig farmers. They are the people who want some help.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The position regarding this item is most unsatisfactory and has been for years. I have taken out the figures for each year from 1947 onwards, so that members can see how good the Treasurer really is at forecasting the expenditure under this item. If the Treasurer were to be judged as to his ability as a Treasurer on what he has done in connection with this item, he would go down in history as the worst Treasurer this State has ever had. I cannot imagine that anybody could make a worse forecast. In 1947-48 the estimate was £5,000 and the expenditure £48,669. That year attention was drawn to the amount by myself and other speakers as we considered the estimate was too low. Next year the estimate was £500 despite the fact that there had been an expenditure of roughly £48,000 the year before. The expenditure for that year was £100,000 after the Premier's making an estimate of £500. In 1949-50 the estimate was £30,000 and the expenditure £209,000, while in 1950-51 the estimate was £180,000 and the expenditure £240,000.

The figures show a completely unrealistic approach to this matter and to me it appears that the Treasurer made no genuine attempt to inform members as to the likely position. It reminds me of the game that used to be played when I went to school; one thinks of a number, doubles it, adds 1,000 to it, halves it, takes away the number first thought of and the answer is 500. That is the sort of method which would result in forecasts like this. I refuse to believe that the Treasurer is so poor at estimating his expenditure that

he really came to these conclusions. It seems to me that he put down any figure at all because he had to show some estimate.

We have drawn attention to this matter year after year but each time we have been told that the railways could handle the necessary traffic and the expenditure would not be greater than the estimate. Every year the estimate has been exceeded by a large amount. The Premier has already stated in this Chamber that the position will have to be dealt with, and yet indications are that the expenditure this year will be greater than ever. Within the last two or three days statements have appeared in the Press dealing with this question. Firstly there was a statement by Mr. Noakes, who said that the Railway Department had fallen down on its undertaking and would not be in a position to transport the super. That is why road transport had to be started earlier than usual. That is a definite statement about it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They are getting in early.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The earlier the start, the greater will be the cost. In this morning's issue of "The West Australian" a reply to that statement appeared and the railway authorities insisted that they had done better than expected, and that the earlier cartage of super had been brought about because the manufacturing firms had produced super earlier than was anticipated, in consequence of which the farmers were receiving their supplies earlier. If that is so and the State has to pay for it, there can be no justification for the expenditure indicated because, if the railways can do the task allotted to them, we have no right to ask the general taxpayer to bear the burden of the cost so that someone can get his super a bit earlier than was previously thought desirable.

In view of the fact that the cartage of super started earlier than usual and in greater quantities, we must anticipate the expenditure exceeding £100,000 this year. It certainly looks very much like it to me. Therefore, the Estimates are completely unrealistic and as such are misleading to the Committee. That should not apply to Estimates submitted to members. I believe the Treasurer ought to make a definite attempt to ensure that the Estimates he submits to the Committee bear out what he himself believes to be the position with regard to the various items. The position is reduced to the farcical when we have figures like these, completely unrealistic and with no relation whatever to the actual expenditure that will be incurred.

It is remarkable that the Treasurer, with all his knowledge and with so much information available to him, can be so wide of the mark, yet I, with no informa-

tion available and with no officers to assist me, can tell him, year after year, what the position really is. There is something wrong when that situation can obtain. The Treasurer knows that that is so. If he looks through the pages of "Hansard," he will find that I have told him, year after year, that he would not be able to live within his Estimates, even when he has replied that the Railway Department had asserted it would be able to haul a certain quantity, and the figures had been based accordingly. Now we are told by the Railway Commissioners that they have done better than they were expected to do. Is that true? We are entitled to be told what the position is. Is the statement appearing in "The West Australian" this morning—it was made by a spokesman for the Railway Department—correct or incorrect? If it is correct, there is no justification for starting road cartage of super so early and to such an extent as obtains at present.

If the statement by Mr. Noakes is correct, that of the Railway Department is incorrect—and someone ought to be hauled over the coals for misleading the public generally. We are entitled to know the true position. It is very wrong for the Committee to be misled year after year by having Estimates placed before it that are as completely unrealistic as are those under discussion. If we were to place this table of figures before anyone outside and say it represented the Estimates placed before Parliament, that person would wonder what sort of a dill was in charge of the framing of them. The figures are actually fantastic. We are entitled to have placed before us, in all fairness, figures that can be accepted respecting the various departments. It should be a reasonable forecast, and the forecast embodied in these Estimates is completely unreasonable.

I would like to know upon what basis the Treasurer determined that an amount of £100,000 will be spent in this connection during the financial year. I would also like to know whether the statement by Mr. Noakes is correct or whether the Railway Department's statement is accurate. Which is right? If the department's statement is correct and it has already done more than was expected at this stage, why was the transport of super by road authorised so early? If that form of transport is allowed to continue for the usual time, the effect will be that most of the super will be carted by road and very little by rail, with the result that the general taxpayer will have to bear the cost.

We must have regard for the fact that legislation is before Parliament with a view to giving wheatgrowers a greater return for the wheat they produce. That means that stock feeders throughout Australia will pay more than the guaranteed

home consumption price. So we have to be very careful that the general taxpayers are not called upon to provide subsidies as well as to meet these costs. If it is fair and reasonable to ask the public to pay the increased prices for stock feed, for eggs and for bacon, it is unfair, when the wheatgrowers are going to get world parity for their wheat, to call upon the people to subsidise wheatgrowers in various directions. That is what this amounts to.

As a means of ensuring that the requisite quantity of super. will reach the farmers at the proper time we cannot object to the subsidy, but if we are going to guarantee, irrespective of the railways' capacity and simply to suit the convenience of some persons, to put road transport in operation earlier, it is time we examined the position in the interests of the taxpayers. I consider the Treasurer has a lot to answer. We have not had a proper statement of the position, and these figures, on the face of them, are so ridiculous that unless we want to convey the impression that we accept any figures put before us, some explanation must be given as to how the Estimates have been arrived at. No attempt has been made by the Treasurer to place the true position before the Committee.

Mr. BRADY: When work is taken from the Railway Department and given to road transport, it interferes seriously with the continuity of employment for the railway men, both in the workshops and on the trains. I have become disappointed and tired of hearing the Premier's estimate of how much is being spent overseas for the purchase of new engines, new rollingstock and new machinery. That has been going on for several years. We should be obtaining some benefit from the money that has been spent in that way and from the new locomotives that have been arriving during the last 18 months or so.

Though we have been getting new "P.R." and "W" class engines, the quantity of super. carried by the railways dropped from 235,000 tons in 1949-50 to 219,000 tons in 1950-51, a decrease of 26,000 tons. There is room for investigation into the reason for that decline. We were led to believe that the new engines and rollingstock purchased overseas would enable the department to concentrate on repairs and bring existing rollingstock to a condition where it could handle the traffic offering, but that is not occurring. There is room for inquiry along those lines. We seem to have reached a stage where there is mismanagement in regard to both road and rail transport.

We as a Parliament should be discouraging the use of road transport, because practically the whole of the equip-

ment it requires—rubber tyres, steel chassis, engines for locomotion, petrol and oil—is imported, whereas a substantial proportion of the requirements of locomotives is provided within the State—water, coal, etc.—while various fabrications are obtainable within Australia. At one stage all the engines and rollingstock required by the department were constructed in the workshops at Midland Junction, but we are reaching a stage where employment in the railways is being undermined.

Men who set out to follow a career in the railways are leaving and accepting employment with private enterprise, because they feel that motor transport is securing the cream of the traffic. They are helping to build motor vehicles for private enterprise when they should be engaged in the workshops building rollingstock for the railways. The train crews are in practically the same position. A man who joined the service 20 years ago, believing that he would obtain promotion to the position of platform inspector at Perth in the course of 12 or 15 years, finds that he is still a shunter, because the requisite work is not available to enable him to get promotion. That the position brought about through men leaving the service has become serious is obvious from the advertisements appearing in the newspapers almost daily imploring people to accept employment in the department.

I enter a strong protest against this business of subsidising road transport. Practically every local governing authority is worried by the tremendous cost entailed for the upkeep of roads. I foresee a serious position occurring in the Maylands area next winter on account of the roads crumbling under the heavy transport of fertiliser that ought to be carried on the railways. Better would it be to subsidise the workshops section to the extent of this £100,000 in order that overtime might be paid and the equipment modernised to enable the department to cater for this work.

Another feature of which I take a serious view is the action of the Government in selling railway trucks to the Midland Railway Co.—a private company—to enable it to handle its fertiliser freight. A private company is able to get rollingstock from the Government to enable it to transport its fertiliser freight, and in addition, the Government is hiring stock to the company. Yet the Railways Department cannot handle the freight available to it. The Government, by its action, is encouraging the people interested in road transport to look for subsidies. To me, the whole business smells. I feel that certain vested interests have the ear of the Government and are being encouraged to expect this form of subsidy.

I object to the railways being neglected in the interests of road transport, which is being placed in a false position. Some of the people interested in road transport do not understand the economics of the situation. They are purchasing trucks costing £3,000, £4,000 or £5,000 each and tying themselves up by mortgaging their homes and their future in order to finance these purchases, so that they may engage in carting super to the country, not realising that the business will be cut from under their feet presently and that they will probably become bankrupt. If they knew subsidies were going to be discontinued, they would refrain from buying new trucks and would accept permanent employment in the Government service or some other avenue. I would be very remiss if I did not protest against the railways, in which public money to the extent of £30,000,000 is invested, being neglected in order that overseas companies could sell motor trucks and local motor firms could sell motor accessories.

Mr. ACKLAND: I was very hopeful that, long before this, road transport of primary products would have ceased. I am convinced it should not be necessary, particularly with regard to super. But though I can agree with some of the things said by the member for Melville, I am certain that the member for Guildford-Midland is completely off the beam when he talks about the Government wanting to put assistance in the way of motor firms or road transport contractors. That is quite without foundation. As a wheatfarmer and one who uses a considerable amount of super, I hate the thought that that industry is being subsidised by anybody, and I think the time should have arrived when that subsidy ceased.

But I happen to know that this worries the Premier as much as it worries me. He is very concerned that this item should appear once again on the Estimates. He discussed the matter with some of us and requested the members for Roe and Wagin and myself to go into the question and see what could be done. Within the last fortnight, we have met the super companies and the Commissioner of Railways, with his chief traffic officer, with a view to discussing the subject, and I have the Premier's permission to mention what transpired, and what we recommended. I think that the policy of the Railway Department is at fault. I have before me Press cuttings of what occurred in the Railway Department recently. The carrying capacity has been increased tremendously, yet we find that the transport of wheat and super has decreased.

I enthusiastically supported legislation in this place to appoint three Commissioners in place of the one we used to have. I am not nearly so enthusiastic today as a result of that legislation. We were given an assurance from the Railway Department that it would be ready by October

to handle all the traffic offering, but that is not possible because trucks which were ordered for a certain date have not been delivered. Quite recently, one of the Commissioners, Mr. Raynor, informed the member for Wagin, the member for Roe and myself that he would have to put his plan back some six months because the trucks had not been delivered.

I would like to read a statement which appeared in "The West Australian" of the 13th November, in which the Railway Department provided statistics regarding the haulage position in 1931 and 1951 respectively. The figures show that in 1931 the wheat hauled, in tons, was 1,326,000; and in 1951, 599,000. The wheat in ton miles was 204,000,000 in 1931 as against 88,000,000 in 1951. The statement proceeds—

From the figures shown, it will be seen that the railways gave a much better performance in 1951, with fewer waggons and an equal number of locomotives than in 1931. In fact, the ton-miles figure for 1951 exceeds the record of 1950 by 34,000,000, which is a vastly improved effort over that of 1931.

Although the above figures indicate a big reduction in the ton-mileage of wheat hauled, there was a big increase in the ton mileage for all paying traffic. Unfortunately, because of the department's inability to convey all traffic offering, considerable quantities of wheat and superphosphate were conveyed by road hauliers, and the above figures clearly indicate the great need of the department for additional waggons and facilities to meet the heavy demands now being made upon it.

As one who wants super, I believe that we have a just claim in expecting the Railway Department to give us a fair proportion of the trucks offering, but the Railways Commissioners are of the opinion that it is far better to carry light freight of a very high freight rate, which does not earn as much as a full truck of a heavier commodity. In the last five years, the freight on super has been raised by 460 per cent.

Mr. Styants: And it is still carried at a loss.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am convinced that it is not carried at a loss, because there is a return load waiting for it wherever it goes. It is traffic which can be carried at the convenience of the department, and not something that has to be rushed through because it is perishable. This, in itself, must be of assistance to the department in deciding on its yearly programme because it knows 12 months ahead what is offering. As an outcome of the conference with the Commissioner and the super people, we recommended to the Premier that the Railway Department should not be allowed to refuse the cartage of any super beyond a distance of 100 miles; in

other words, that road cartage should not be permitted for distances greater than 100 miles, but utilised for the short distances.

I think from memory it was found that the department could transport all of the quantity that had to be carried between now and December 31st, with the exception of 14,000 tons. It was worked out that the road haulage would cost approximately £8,000 for that period. The point about assisting the super companies does not, I am convinced, come into the picture at all. They are perfectly willing to have all the super carted by rail. In fact, it is a matter of hindrance to them to have two kinds of transport because their works have not been built to handle both road and rail transport.

So the statement made by the member for Guildford-Midland does not, I am convinced from what transpired at the meeting between the Railway Department and the super companies, hold water at all. The Government found itself, because of the policy of the Railway Department, compelled to assist road transport, but I believe there was justification for the subsidy that was paid, much as I dislike it. It is of no advantage to those who use super to have road haulage; rather it is to their disadvantage because when a truck of super is not taken into the country, a truck of wheat is not hauled back. I have here a statement to which I referred last night, but did not read. This appears in "The Farmers' Weekly" of the 8th November. It is a statement by Mr. Simpson, and is as follows:—

My remarks to the wheat executive were given from a railway wheat transport aspect only. The facts, as I know them, are that the railways transported 44 per cent. of our wheat for the year just ended at an average cost of 9½d. per bushel.

The balance of 56 per cent. was done by motor road haulage at an average cost of 1s. 5½d. per bushel; so you can see that if our railways were brought up to standard where they could cater for the whole of our needs there would be an immediate saving of costs of 8½d. per bushel on the 56 per cent. carted by road, beside the huge saving on our roads.

I believe that pressure should be brought upon those who are responsible for this neglect of our railway system and have it brought up to a standard of efficiency where it can service our needs. Personally I doubt if we are in a position to protest to the Government on increase of wheat freights when we are paying so much for road transport and making no effective demand for the necessary railway rehabilitation.

The proportion of 56 per cent. of last year's crop represented 25,760,000 bushels, and this resulted in a cost to the wheat-grower, and to no-one else, of £877,000.

So I am convinced that if the Railway Department would give more consideration to full truckloads, whether of wheat, super, or anything else, with a quick turn-round of trucks, rather than go in for miscellaneous consignments which mean that a truck takes up to a month or six weeks to do a round trip, it would earn far more than it does today.

In defence of the Premier, I want to say that he would not have asked us three members to make a report to him to see just what could be done if he were not terribly concerned. He told us definitely that not a penny more than £100,000 could or would be spent, and he wanted us to see whether we could arrive at some formula by which that amount could be greatly reduced. I am convinced that if the Railway Department would look at this, firstly from a practical point of view by which it could earn more from haulage, and secondly from the fair point of view whereby its regular customers would receive a reasonable percentage of the available trucks, the position would be rectified.

Mr. May: A lot of other produce has increased considerably—coal and timber for instance.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am not able to talk about coal and timber.

Mr. May: These things have increased the work of the railways.

Mr. ACKLAND: I realise that. Personally I think coal transport must receive first consideration.

Mr. May: I am not suggesting that even, but merely pointing out the increase.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am, because the railways could not do without coal and, in addition, our industries could not operate if electric power were not generated for them. But even taking into consideration the great increase in coal transport—

Mr. May: And timber.

Mr. ACKLAND: —there is still a great disparity between the increase there and that of the haulage capacity of the railways. I think that super haulage by rail has not received its fair share of the increase.

Mr. STYANTS: No matter how we try to camouflage the position I do not think we can escape the conclusion that the road and rail haulage of super in this State is imposing a heavy burden on the finances of the Railway Department and, consequently, upon the taxpayers of the State. I can understand the reluctance of the Railway Department to divert a large proportion of its wagons and haulage capacity to the carting of super and wheat instead of other freight of a more profitable nature. When we consider that the average haulage rate on the railways is 3.56d. per ton mile and the average earnings for the twelve months ended the 30th June last for the haulage of wheat were

1.87d. per ton mile—as shown in the Commissioner's report—we realise why the department is not anxious to divert trucks from payable traffic which earns 6d., 7d., or 8d. per ton mile and use them for the haulage of wheat and super.

According to figures supplied in answer to questions I asked earlier in the session, and from the report on the five years comparative operations supplied annually by the Commissioners, I find that the average earnings per ton mile, on a haul of 146 miles, is 2.35d. for super. but that does not represent the true position. We must consider the return to the Railway Department from the haulage of super over all distances, and the average is 1.36d. and not 2.35d. per ton mile. I wish briefly to compare the return received by the Railway Department, and that received by those who own and operate road transport vehicles for the carting of super in this State.

The average earnings per ton mile for the Railway Department over all distances were 1.36d., while the average paid in subsidy to road transport operators was 4.9d. per ton mile—something in excess of double the rate paid to the Railway Department. Worked out on a basis of 146 miles, which the Railways Commission says is the average, the department receives 28s. per ton for the haulage of super while on the same length of haul the road operator receives £2 19s. On a 10-ton truck the railways receive £14 for 146 miles and the road transport owner receives £29 10s. According to the figures supplied, 181,070 tons of super were carried by road last year and the subsidy paid was £240,381, which means that the road transport operators were paid a subsidy of roughly £1 6s. 8d. per ton.

What alarms me—in addition to the general position—is that the amount of the subsidy seems to be increasing each year. From the figures for the previous twelve months we find that the average subsidy paid was approximately £1 per ton, while for the last twelve months the increase in the subsidy per ton has been something like 33-1/3 per cent. The subsidy of £240,381 on the road haulage of super should be compared with the ton mileage of super carted by the railways, and taking into consideration the fact that the railways received 1.36d. per ton mile for super while the average haulage cost was 3.56d. per ton mile—even allowing for its being 25 per cent. cheaper, and I admit it would be cheaper to cart super by rail where the wagons were carrying their maximum capacity than it would where they were carrying only 75 per cent.—I find that the department would have lost £225,000 in the haulage of super. There we have a loss of £225,000 on super haulage, plus £240,381 paid in road subsidy, which gives £465,381 as the total cost to the taxpayers of the State of getting the super out to the farmers.

It is difficult to discover whether the reasons alleged by the member for Moore for the inability of the department to handle the freight are correct. We know the railways are in process of rehabilitation but, with the amount of money already expended for that purpose, I think the taxpayers of the State are justified in expecting considerable improvement in the operations of the department. The member for Moore said he believed—despite the great disparity between the amount received by the department for the haulage of super and the average cost—that super was carried at a profit by the department. Nothing could be more ridiculous. It costs the department twice as much to transport the super as is received for that freight, and that is allowing for 25 per cent. less than the average rate because full loads can be hauled at a lower cost than is possible where the vehicles are carrying only 75 per cent. of their maximum tonnage.

The member for Moore said that the principle reason why super is carried at a profit by the railways is because it is hauled at times that are convenient to the department. That is so to a great extent but, no matter when a commodity is transported, if the department receives only 1.36d. per ton mile to haul it and the cost of transporting it is about 3d. per ton mile, it will still show a loss, though perhaps not as great a loss as if it had to be shifted immediately there was a demand for it. So I feel that a serious position has been in existence for a number of years. We have been promised for some time past that this amount would be progressively reduced and I think last year it was reduced by a few thousand pounds, but the subsidy burden has been increased.

I know it is necessary to get the super out so that the farmers can put in their crops, but with the returns they have been receiving for their primary products there is no logical reason why they should not at least pay the actual cost. The Railways Department is a developmental instrumentality and it should not be run for the purpose of making a profit, but when any industries are in a position, as are the primary industries at the moment, to pay the actual cost it is not unreasonable to suggest that they should be called upon to do so.

I hope the department will be able to handle a greater amount of this traffic, not because it will be of any great financial advantage to the taxpayers of the State but because if a more realistic view is not taken of the position, and the freight rate increased to at least the cost of the transport, it will inflict a greater deficit upon the department. If the railways can handle a greater amount of this traffic there will be less damage done to our roads.

Our highways have been used extensively in this carriage of super and wheat over the last three or four years and I should say that millions of pounds worth

of damage has been caused to them. The roads are not standing up to it because the foundations were never intended to carry the huge tonnages that they are being called upon to carry because of the modern motor transport being used. Therefore I hope that the railways will be able to handle a greater amount of the traffic available, and that a revision of freight rates will take place so that any industry that is thriving and flourishing, and is on the crest of the wave of prosperity, shall at least be called upon to pay the actual cost of the services rendered for it.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is of no use bemoaning the fact that wheat trucks are ruining our roads. We know that and we know that there is no alternative because the railways have been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that they cannot haul the tonnages that they did 20 years ago. But I think there has been a too easy acceptance of this principle of road transport subsidy. I do not question the fact that we have to cart some super and wheat by road but why on earth should we be prepared to subsidise the prosperous wheat-farmers? Why do they not pay for their own cartage?

When the transport legislation for the setting up of the Transport Board came before Parliament a few years ago, there was an organised outcry throughout the wheat areas. The primary producers were howling for road transport and they objected to the Government's trying to safeguard the interests of the railways. Now, because of force of circumstances, they are compelled to use it and the poor old taxpayer has to come into the picture and subsidise that transport for them. In those days road transport was being used to transport wool from as far north as the Upper Murchison, and the transport Act was brought in mainly because of that fact. The road transport operators were picking out the high-priced freights and letting the railways cart the remainder. I do not think the Premier can justify any subsidy being paid.

I agree with the member for Moore that the railways should make the long hauls so that the people further out can get the benefit, and the people who are closer to the metropolitan area can pay whatever road transport costs are necessary. Because of their nearness those farmers are generally more prosperous. Ever since I can remember, the taxpayer has been forced to subsidise the wheat-farmer and why should he be called upon to continue to pay that subsidy when the wheat-farmers are enjoying such prosperous times? I do not think the item should be on the Estimates at all.

The PREMIER: I am naturally concerned about this item because, as I have told members, it has been questioned by the Grants Commission and I have to

give evidence before the Commission on Monday morning. But the fact remains that farmers like to get their super, hauled by rail because the freights are cheaper, but the railways cannot provide the service. It is all very well for members to talk about the new locomotives that we have received, the thousands of trucks that have arrived and the thousands that are on order. All those units are being provided to bring the railways to a state of efficiency as quickly as possible so that there will not be any need for road transport. If that is done the railways will be able to carry all the goods we expect them to carry and which, in the best interests of the country, they should carry.

The farmers say "It is pretty rough on us when we are prepared to have our super carted by rail, but because of the condition of the railways we are forced to have it carried by road and thereby are forced to pay higher freights for it." The member for Melville talked about my estimates of expenditure and quoted figures for the years 1947-48 to 1951-52. I think those figures were quoted by the member for Fremantle. They are certainly wide of the estimate; in fact, greatly in excess of it. The only way that I can arrive at an estimate is to consult the Railways Commission and ask what amount of super the railways can cart. The Commission has been optimistic, but unfortunately its estimate has gone astray, with the result that these large amounts have had to be paid over the years mentioned.

Mr. May: All farmers are not subsidised. A great number of them are getting the super, from Geraldton, and paying rail freight and cartage to the farm from the rail head.

Mr. Ackland: No farmer gets paid a subsidy for super, carted from the siding to the farm.

Mr. May: Many have to pay all the cartage costs and receive no subsidy at all.

Mr. Ackland: I know they do.

The PREMIER: The reason for the rush now is because it is desired that 25 per cent. of the super, be delivered before the end of the year, and I understand that road cartage has started already. The railways have had urgent calls on their facilities, particularly for the cartage of coal. It is necessary to have sufficient coal in the metropolitan area both for the railways and to provide electricity. Even in normal times it is difficult to meet current needs. As a result, railway trucks have to be diverted to Collie to bring the coal to Perth. Trucks have also been supplied to cart potatoes. Therefore, the railways have had a great-

er demand on them than was expected, with the result that road transport has been called upon.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Railways Commission has said that it has done better than it expected.

The PREMIER: So it has, but the demand for super. has increased.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That does not tally with the statement you made. If the railways have done better than was expected, how can the demand for other traffic have any influence at all?

The PREMIER: It has influenced them to this extent: Instead of the railways carting super, they have had to divert their rollingstock in other directions.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Did you read the statement in this morning's Press?

The PREMIER: I did. I am most concerned about this and I have indicated that to members on several occasions. I have discussed the matter with some of the country members representing districts to which super is carted, and told them that we must keep within this estimate. In order to try to keep within it, I sound this warning. For each farmer there should be a maximum amount of super on which subsidy is paid. I do not think that farmers who are able to purchase large quantities of super should expect the Government to provide a subsidy for the lot. I have therefore suggested that a maximum quantity should be fixed and anything over and above that will carry no subsidy.

Mr. Rodoreda: First in gets the lot!

Mr. Bovell: No, a maximum amount for each farmer.

The PREMIER: Yes, that is the position. As the member for Moore has pointed out, consideration has been given to refusing to cart super. over distances exceeding 100 miles. This should also assist in keeping the subsidy down. I assure members that every possible effort will be made to keep within this estimate of £100,000. I am hoping that with the increased rollingstock coming to hand, plus the new locomotives, we will not have to provide for a subsidy next season. The member for Guildford-Midland need have no fear that railway employees will lose their positions because the railways are not carting super.

To use a common expression, the railways are "flat out" with the cartage of other goods. As to the trucks being repaired by the Midland Railway Company, the Minister for Railways has told me that the Government could not have repaired them and, as a consequence, the Midland Railway Company was allowed to do the work. It is also carting super. to ease the position, and the Government is using trucks belonging to the Midland Railway Company to ease our dif-

ficulty. That is the position in regard to this road subsidy, which I am anxious should be kept to a minimum.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Premier has not satisfied me with his answer; I do not know about other members. He talks about the trucks being used by the Railway Department for this, that and the other. He even mentioned that trucks are being used to cart potatoes from Bunbury in order that they might be shipped at Fremantle. Why cannot a ship load the potatoes direct at Bunbury?

The Premier: We have not the ships.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: There should be no objection to shipping potatoes from Bunbury. At the moment, the railways are carting them from the South-West to Fremantle in order that they might be loaded on to ships there.

The Premier: I agree with the hon. member's contention, if a ship can be obtained.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the item.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Premier has not given a satisfactory explanation. He has started to come our way because he realises that the farmers are prosperous. No-one would even admit that before.

The Premier: Did I say that?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Yes. The Premier said that they should begin to realise that they cannot always receive subsidies for the cartage of their super. The member for Moore knows, as well as the Premier, what a wonderful time the farmers are having at present as a result of the prices they are receiving for their products. There will be a bumper harvest this year and yet the Premier is going to give them £100,000 to assist them in the cartage of their super. I think we should say to him, "We expect you to tighten up on the people who can afford to pay for it themselves, and give this money to the people who cannot afford to pay."

The poor old pig farmer should be granted a few shillings and, in order that a few shillings might be scattered among them, I intend to move that the item be reduced by £20,000. That will leave £80,000 for the poor old unfortunate farmers who cannot afford to pay for the cartage of their super. Other producers have to pay their freights. I heard the member for Moore say that he had received a lot of super, but I hope he did not receive it with the assistance of subsidy. He did not indicate that, but it would be interesting to know. I move—

That the item be reduced by £20,000.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I asked the Premier if he would state whether Mr. Noakes's statement was correct or whether the statement of the Railway Department was correct. He ignored that altogether and made no attempt to say which, if either, statement was correct or incorrect. If the statement of the Railway Department is

correct, the position is most unsatisfactory. This is what was said by a spokesman of the railways in "The West Australian" of today—

Already this year the railways have carried 81,464 tons of superphosphate as against the agreed commitment of 73,000 tons.

There was no reason to believe that the department would not haul the 243,000 tons allocated to it for the current season.

This was said by a railway spokesman in reply to a statement by Mr. Noakes which appeared in "The West Australian" yesterday.

It was apparent, the spokesman added, that superphosphate works were producing large quantities of the fertiliser earlier than expected and had therefore called for road transport sooner than was previously thought necessary.

This is how the matter presents itself to me: I would imagine that, following upon the Premier's desire to limit the expenditure on this item, a conference was called to see what road transport was necessary and the railways were asked to make an estimate of what they would be expected to haul, and what they could haul; and upon the information supplied a plan would be drawn up so that the super would get out into the country as it was ready for distribution.

If this statement is correct, then the railways undertook to get out by this time 73,000 tons, and according to them they have actually got out 81,464 tons, so they are ahead of schedule. If they are ahead in doing what they are expected to do, what justification can there be for putting on road transport earlier than is normally done? That would only be justified, in my opinion, if the railways had failed to carry out their undertaking and had thereby jeopardised the whole plan, and it had become apparent that their efforts would have to be augmented by road transport to clear the super from the works. But if the railways have actually done better than they were expected to do, then there is no justification for augmenting their efforts in this way and in asking the taxpayer to meet the cost.

The point I would like to make is: Are the railways telling the truth? If they are, then the Premier is not entitled to put on road transport earlier and pay a subsidy for it. If some farmers are anxious to get their super out, and they will not wait according to the scheme, they should have to pay for it out of their own pockets and not expect to get it out of the pockets of the general taxpayers. If the railways have done better than their actual undertaking and the Premier's estimate is based on that, he has no chance of living within his estimate. The only result of

putting on road transport ahead of schedule will be an increased cost, and there will be a greater proportion of super. carried by road than normally. We would then be in the position that later on when the railways were able to carry out their undertaking and cart still more super, there will be no super. for them to cart, because it will already have been transported by road at greater cost. That will be bad for railway economy and bad for the State's economy. That is the part that needs explanation.

In view of what has happened, and assuming the railways are telling the truth, there is every justification for the amendment moved by the member for Fremantle. The estimate for 1948-49 was a mere £500, and the expenditure was £100,000. Surely we have made some progress with regard to railway rehabilitation since 1948-49 and, if the railways have actually done better than was expected, there is not the slightest justification for this increased amount. The Committee should indicate to the Government that a subsidy on road transport is not to be readily available at the convenience of super. companies, or anyone else who wants to get it out earlier than has been provided for, but that the subsidy is only there to relieve the burden on farmers who are unable to get their super. out by rail when they require it and are therefore obliged to use road transport.

There is no justification for using road transport when the railways are doing their job. No valid reason has been advanced so far for the earlier transport of super. and for keeping this figure up where it is. If the Premier has already had an indication from the Grants Commission that this item must be kept in check, it seems to me he is going to be in serious trouble in explaining to the Commission later that he has put on road transport earlier than he should have done, when the railways were doing better than was expected of them.

The PREMIER: We are endeavouring to get out 25 per cent. of the super. requirements before the end of this year. It is evident that we shall not succeed in doing that, even admitting that the railways have done better than they expected to do. The super. must go out and the only way to get it out is by road. Accordingly, cartage has started earlier, and a subsidy will be necessary. I do not know that it is much use my going over the ground again. I have already mentioned the steps we are taking to try to keep this subsidy within limits, and there is no other explanation I can offer. I certainly oppose the cutting down of this Vote. I think the hon. member should leave it at £100,000.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You exceeded it last year.

The PREMIER: We are taking every possible step to keep within that estimate.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Premier is worried about the extent of this subsidy, but has made no attempt at all to justify the payment of it.

The Premier: I have told you that the railways cannot cope with the super.

Mr. RODOREDA: I acknowledge that, but I want the Premier to justify to us the payment of anything to prosperous farmers. Why should these wheat and sheep farmers with incomes of £10,000 or £15,000, or a man on a rehabilitation property with an income of £8,000 or more in his second year, be granted a payment of £100 or £200 or whatever it might be? If these producers were in desperate financial circumstances, I would approve of the payment, but why on earth should it be paid to prosperous farmers? In a time when they are enjoying the greatest prosperity they have ever known, we are asking the taxpayers to foot this bill. Can the Premier justify it?

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Premier has to justify this payment before the Grants Commission, he will be hard pressed to find a satisfactory explanation. The Premier said the Government had decided that only a limited quantity of super. would be hauled by road, but he did not tell us what the quantity was. Would not that statement cause an immediate demand by farmers to get their super. on the road at the earliest possible moment? I should think that when they learnt that only a limited quantity was to be hauled by road upon which subsidy would be paid, there would be an immediate rush to get deliveries.

The Premier: That is not so.

The Minister for Education: It would not matter if that happened.

The Premier: A user would get only 25 per cent. before the end of the year, no matter when his order was lodged.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am convinced that the Premier's statement would lead farmers to lodge their orders as early as possible in order to get their super. hauled before the maximum quantity had been reached.

The Minister for Education: But they would get only 25 per cent.

Mr. MARSHALL: It seems to me that those whose deliveries occurred later would not get the advantage of the subsidy. Regarding the utilisation of Government rollingstock by the Midland Railway Co., it is strange that there is no shortage of haulage capacity on that line. It seems to be able to haul all its super. freight.

Mr. Ackland: It is not. I can assure you of that.

Mr. MARSHALL: I have not heard the hon. member voice any complaint in this Chamber.

Mr. Ackland: Last year a big tonnage of wheat was carted by road.

Mr. MARSHALL: Recently I made a trip to Geraldton and saw no haulage of wheat or super. this side of Mingenew, though there was on the other side. Apparently Government rollingstock is being used to assist this private company to oblige its farmers at the expense of those served by the Government railway system.

The Premier: What is the use of rollingstock if you cannot haul it?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Premier does not explain these things. He reminds me of a former Minister who, when handling a Bill, said more while he was seated than when he was standing up.

The Premier: I told you that.

Mr. MARSHALL: No, the Premier brushed the point aside with some remark that we had had some of the company's rollingstock. I have heard no complaints about the haulage of wheat or super. on the Midland line, but there have been plenty of complaints about the Government lines.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item, State Shipping Service—freight subsidy, £10,000.

Mr. RODOREDA: Having directed attention to this item in previous years, I hope the Premier has some information on this occasion, because I am worried about what is intended. Last year the expenditure was £9,600.

The Premier: It is mostly on petrol.

Mr. RODOREDA: I thought the idea was to stabilise the cost of petrol on the coast and, in my experience, it is not having that effect. I doubt whether any consumer in the North-West is getting any benefit. The Premier should make inquiries to ascertain whether the scheme is working out as intended. The original idea was that consumers in the North-West should get petrol at approximately the price paid in Geraldton, and I do not think it is working out that way. On a gallon of petrol there could not be much effect, but there might be some effect if a man bought a 44-gallon drum. I hope the Premier will have inquiries made as to what is occurring.

The PREMIER: I will have inquiries made from the aspect mentioned by the hon. member. The subsidy was introduced by the Wise Government with the idea that people north of Geraldton should not have to pay more for petrol than did the people at Geraldton. I am not able to say how it is working out but I will have

a look at it. If the money is being paid for no purpose I do not think payment will be continued.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am glad to hear that; but there is a principle involved. The Premier agreed that the people there should get their petrol at the same price as those in Geraldton. I think this subsidy is not sufficient to enable the petrol companies to do that and this aspect needs to be looked into. I do not want the people to lose their subsidy. I want the principle to be made effective. The subsidy was instituted five or six years ago when an allowance of £10,000 did have some slight effect upon the freights, but since then freights have risen a couple of times and the people derive little benefit from the present subsidy.

Item, Air Transport of Beef, £10,000.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like the Premier to give us some information about this item. Last year the expenditure was £5,078 and this year the estimate is £4,922 more.

Mr. RODOREDA: I also would like some information on this matter. Last year the Vote was £12,000 and only £5,000 was spent; now the estimate is £10,000. Does the Premier anticipate that the subsidy will be continued at the present rate, or is there any indication that air beef will come good and that the subsidy will disappear? I know the company's operations have considerably increased and it is developing sidelines. This project is a wonderful one and could be a better proposition in the Kimberleys. If a few more air beef killing establishments were developed I can visualise that the time would come when there would be no droving of cattle in the Kimberleys. The scheme is out of the experimental stage and some information should be available to the Committee.

The PREMIER: This subsidy is being paid to enable the establishment of air transport of beef in the North-West. It is based on the difference between the Wyndham Meat Works charges over and above 1.1d. per lb. The cost to the Wyndham Meat Works is subject to an increase brought about by basic wage adjustments. Assistance may also be given for other expenditure that may be considered necessary towards developing a method of transport of beef by air. The payment of the subsidy this year is dependent on what assistance the Air Beef Company receives from the Australian Meat Board.

Mr. Rodoreda: They get about 1d. per lb.

The PREMIER: Yes. The Air Beef project was brought about to enable inland killing, and to make provision for the killing of large numbers of stock which would never otherwise be used for human consumption. This is a great experiment which is in its infancy at present. When

I was in Britain, this particular project caused more interest than anything else we are undertaking in this State. I met numerous people who asked me about the prospects in regard to aerial beef. If this scheme is a success, there will be other inland abattoirs. The encouragement of this project in its early stages will promote the development of inland stations, particularly when they know they will be able to market stock and will not suffer the great losses that have been experienced in the past.

Only in the last day or two I have received a report from Senator Spooner. A committee of Federal and State representatives has been working on the development of the Kimberleys, and the report refers to that district as the most neglected area in the Commonwealth. I do not know that I should have said that, because the report has not yet been published. It also makes some reference to the aerial transport of beef and, as far as I have been able to read it in the limited time at my disposal, indicates that something should be done to encourage that project. The purpose of this Vote is to assist in carrying on this experiment in the hope that aerial transport of beef will prove a practical proposition.

Mr. RODOREDA: I was hoping that the Premier would have been able to give us some indication whether the company expected the project to be on an economic basis within a year or two. This is the third year it has been in operation. I have no objection to the subsidy. In fact, I am all in favour of it. I would far sooner see the amount doubled or trebled than have the experiment go by the board. I would sooner see £50,000 paid to these people than £100,000 granted to wheat farmers as a super subsidy. This is the first experiment of its type in the world, and it is a magnificent undertaking. The Premier has seen this establishment at Glen Roy Station.

The Premier: No.

Mr. RODOREDA: I was under a misapprehension. It is a remarkable achievement, and there is room for three or four more establishments of this kind in the Kimberleys. With the proper development of this project, we might be able to save millions of pounds on roads in the Kimberleys. Every hoof of stock could be transported by air. Would it not be better to provide subsidies for this scheme to the extent of the interest on loans, or portion of the money that would be spent out of the main roads grant in the building and maintenance of roads in the Kimberleys?

The Premier: That is a proposition which is put forward by quite a number of people today.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is a very sound proposition and I would like to see it investigated further, and some enthusiasm

displayed concerning it. As far as I can see, this is the only thing we can try in order to get a quick development of the cattle industry in the Kimberleys.

Item, Emergency aerial transport—perishable goods, £18,000.

Mr. RODOREDA: In reply to a question I asked the other evening the Premier advised that the subsidy on the transport of perishables by air would commence on the 1st December, but no information was given as to the nature of the perishables. We have to look at the Press to find this out. The "Daily News" last night gave a list of the items which would be subsidised this year. The member for the district, who is interested, is entitled to be given the information.

The Premier: I did not see the list myself.

Mr. RODOREDA: I should say it was given out by the Premier's Department. We find that the transport of perishables will not be subsidised this year to the same extent that it has been in the past. The Press states that butter, milk and fruit will not be amongst the items to be subsidised. I do not know how any person in a responsible position can say that lettuce and tomatoes will be subsidised, but not fruit. There will be a protest from every centre in the North when this information becomes known there.

Whilst the people in the ports can manage without a great deal of difficulty with regard to butter and fruit, because these goods are carried in the ships' freezers and later stored, the people in the outback are in a different position. The butter and fruit has to be transported to them by motor truck, which takes a couple of days in a temperature, perhaps, of 110 to 115 degrees. I want to know why this item has been transferred practically in toto from the Transport Board funds to the Treasury funds. In previous years the Transport Board paid most of this amount from its funds. Since the present chairman of the Transport Board took office we have had a rough spin in the North-West. I am not prepared to say that what has happened is attributable to him, but if it is not it is a bit of a coincidence.

The Minister for Education: You have a suspicious mind today.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am entitled to. We had a reasonably open go when the Transport Board funds were used, because it did not then matter to the Treasurer, but now there is an attempt to cut down here.

The Minister for Education: But the Transport Board funds are still being used.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, but not to the extent they were. The Treasurer has to find this money from his own funds, and

naturally he endeavours to reduce the amount. Probably we will have the Premier talking about the wonderful North-West, and inviting people to go there for the defence of the country and the development of W.A., and so on, but he will not get more population there if he continues as he is going at present. For the prosperous farmers, a quarter of a million pounds can be found, but not a subsidy of £15,000 or £20,000 so that people in the North-West can get a pound of butter or a dozen oranges a week. I resent this attempt to cut down. I wonder how the scheme will be policed. How can the Government or anyone else know what is in the parcels that go to the North-West?

The Premier: It might be interesting to know just what is in some of them.

Mr. RODOREDA: If the people do not get what they require, they will not pay the extra 6d. per pound air freight compared with the boat freight. I assure the Premier that the people only get what they need, and they resent the extra 6d., too, because it is added expense. I can tell the Premier that butter will go into the parcels this year in spite of his ukase that it shall not. Who knows what is in the standard parcels put up by the firms and described as vegetables? It is cheese—paring to say that we shall send lettuce and tomatoes but not butter or oranges, and there is no logic in it. I hope the Premier will revise his ideas on this matter.

Mr. BUTCHER: I, too, raise my voice in protest against the curtailment of the articles that are to be subsidised in respect of air transport. This matter does not interest my electorate greatly, but it does some people I know who live further north. They depend on this type of transport for the few little things that people here accept as everyday items. Imagine the pleasure a woman living at a lonely mine on the fringe of the desert gets from a parcel of stone-fruit or a bunch of grapes! These women cannot get away for an annual holiday because the expense is far too great. It is a crime to deny them the little privileges that they regard so highly but which people who live here think nothing of at all. This item should be revised, and I ask the Premier to look into the matter so that these women can get the few little things which mean so much to them in their isolation.

The PREMIER: The amount is provided towards meeting the cost of perishable goods supplied to the northern part of the State at a time when such goods are difficult to obtain locally and the cost is very high. The Transport Board pays a subsidy on the air freight of goods all the year round to the following places:—Hall's Creek, Ragged Hill, Marble Bar and Nullagine. Yesterday I added to that list a place by the name of Jigalong. The subsidy is paid owing to their isolation. The Treasury recoups the board, as explained by the member for Pilbara, for any amount in excess of £5,000 per annum. Other

parts of the North-West receive the benefit of the subsidy on air freighted goods on the same basis from the 1st December to the 31st May following.

The object of the subsidy, according to the special circumstances, is to provide a flat rate of 8d. per lb. for all centres. I think that indicates the Government's sympathy towards those in isolated areas, seeing that we keep the subsidy going throughout the year. In other parts, where they can get perishables at certain times of the year, we provide the subsidy for that portion of the year when it is necessary.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: Is Marble Bar on the list all the year round?

The PREMIER: Yes, and so is Nullagine. I know what these things mean to people in remote areas and, in matters such as this are brought under notice, I assure the member for Pilbara and the member for Gascoyne that we will give them sympathetic consideration.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I am bringing it under notice now.

The Premier: And you have the subsidy for Marble Bar.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I am pointing out the foolishness of this cheeseparing. The Premier cannot justify the removal of fruit and butter from the subsidised list.

The Premier: I will have a look at the list.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: It is only an estimate, and the amount the Treasury will have to find will depend on what the people order.

The Premier: In what paper did you see it?

Mr. RODOREDÁ: In either last night's "Daily News" or this morning's issue of "The West Australian." It was a list of prohibited items. I ask the Premier to add butter, fruit and milk to the list.

Mr. BUTCHER: I have no quarrel with the subsidy, but would ask the Premier to go into the question of these articles that have been unjustly and stupidly taken off the list.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: As there seems to be a shortage of money with which to do justice to the great North-West, could not the Premier use for that purpose some of the money provided for item 73? I would like to hear him on that subject.

The PREMIER: That sum is provided to recoup the Railway Department the cost of freight on fittings used, and sent back to the country, to enable wooden trucks to be used for the carriage of bulk wheat. Early in the financial year Cabinet decided that the railways should provide the fittings, and it is probable that very little of the expenditure contemplated in this item will actually be incurred. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. provided these fittings in order to get more wheat into the trucks and, when the trucks were

going back empty to the country, the railways used to charge Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. freight on the fittings. The firm strongly protested and the Treasury used to pay the freight and so Cabinet decided that the railways should provide the fittings. In the circumstances, I think it is a good proposition because the extra capacity of the trucks saves a lot of road cartage.

Mr. McCULLOCH: I notice that in the item relating to the North-West Development Committee £200 was provided, of which only £65 was spent. I suppose that committee could advise the Premier of what has happened in the North-West but, as it has spent only £65, I would like to know what meetings it has had and what recommendations it has made in the last year with relation to the North-West.

The PREMIER: This grant is provided to meet the expenses of what is known as the North-West Development Committee, which consists of representatives of station-owners in the North-West as well as representatives from the Department of Agriculture, the Mines Department and the Director of Works from the Public Works Department.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Rather in the nature of a white elephant, is it not?

The PREMIER: No. Mr. W. A. Leslie, who comes from the Roebourne district, is a member ex officio. The committee has been set up to investigate all matters affecting the North-West, referred to it by the Government. The North-West is considered to be the area north of the 26th parallel of latitude. The committee is to submit recommendations to the Minister for the North-West concerning all measures which it considers essential for the future rehabilitation and development of that area. It has developed short-range plans for the immediate rehabilitation of the area, and the provision of reasonable amenities for residents of the North-West.

The committee is also developing long-range plans for increased population and production in the North-West and improvements to the pastoral, agricultural, mining, fishing and other industries, and the carrying out of major public works. In addition, the committee is to work in close collaboration with the members of the Western Australian Development Committee, and it has also established a liaison with the local North-West and Kimberley Development Association and any other approved local associations formed for the advancement of the North-West. The expenditure of £65 was for travelling expenses. The committee does not meet very often, and as a consequence little expenditure is incurred.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.