

Hon. A. R. JONES: Section 26 of the Act states—

(1) The commissioner may from time to time recommend to the Minister what lands (whether Crown or private), in the opinion of the commissioner should be reserved as soil conservation reserves.

(2) Where the land so recommended to be reserved is Crown land, the Governor may by Proclamation declare the same to be a soil conservation reserve under this Act.

(3) Where the land is private land it may be taken or otherwise acquired as for a public work under the Public Works Act, 1902-1933, and the provisions of that Act—

and so on. As I pointed out previously, the Minister has the right to take either Crown land or private land; but the Act does not say that he has the right to do what I have suggested should be done where an owner is called upon to spend a huge sum of money. The Minister has power to make an advance of any money necessary to carry out a project, the sum being repayable over a certain period with interest charges added; but I feel that is not sufficient, if the project is a large one and would create the circumstances I have outlined. I would like the Minister to examine that aspect of the measure. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. L. C. Diver, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—ROMAN CATHOLIC BUNBURY CHURCH PROPERTY.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [5.52]: I secured the adjournment of the debate as I desired to examine the measure. At first sight, with 5½ pages of matter, the Bill appeared to warrant examination; but a closer scrutiny revealed that it contained only the methods of implementing its purpose, as set out in its preamble. This Bill is necessary to meet the changes of conditions and to re-vest this property in the Bishop of Bunbury, and the new diocese which has been created, instead of the diocese of Perth as has been the case hitherto. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

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

*House adjourned at 5.56 p.m.*

# **Legislative Assembly**

Thursday, 27th October, 1955.

## **CONTENTS.**

	Page
Questions: Commonwealth-State housing agreement, (a) finance received from Federal Government.....	1431
(b) houses under construction and payments .....	1431
(c) deferred payment contracts .....	1431
Sublaco flats, payments to contractor .....	1431
Workers' Homes Act, (a) money available .....	1431
(b) houses completed and under construction .....	1431
War service homes, availability of funds .....	1431
Gascoyne research station, income and expenditure .....	1432
Fremantle Harbour Trust, amounts payable for oil shipments .....	1432
Jolimont Lake, high water level .....	1432
Warawarrup siding, cost, etc., of erecting two cottages .....	1432
Mount Claremont, shopping area .....	1432
Library services, creation of archives board .....	1433
Public Service, (a) long service leave .....	1433
(b) continuance of duty till 65th birthday .....	1433
Leederville-Wembley power line, construction and completion, etc. ....	1433
Bunbury harbour, total expenditure from February, 1953, to date .....	1433
State housing, average rental of homes, Wilson Park area, Collie .....	1433
Diphtheria, compulsory immunisation in England, U.S.A. and Europe .....	1433
Galvanised roofing iron, unavailability in Kalgoorlie and Boulder .....	1434
Railway houses, average rental, Wilson Park area, Collie .....	1434
Leave of absence .....	1434
Assent to Bill .....	1435
Loan Estimates, 1955-56, Message, Com. ....	1438
Annual Estimates, Com. of Supply, general debate .....	1445
Speaker on financial policy—	
Mr. Hearman .....	1445
Bills: Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1434
Workers' Compensation Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1434
Education Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1434
Abattoirs Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1434
Loan Bill, £11,604,000, 1r. ....	1434
University Medical School, Teaching Hospitals, 3r. ....	1434
Bank Holidays Act Amendment, 3r. ....	1434
Factories and Shops Act Amendment, Message, 2r. ....	1434
Traffic Act Amendment, 2r. ....	1435
Child Welfare Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report .....	1445
Marketing of Barley Act Amendment, returned .....	1448
Soil Fertility Research Act Amendment, returned .....	1448

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

**QUESTIONS.****COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT.***(a) Finance Received from Federal Government.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How much money was received from the Commonwealth Government under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement for the current financial year?

(2) Of the amount received this financial year, how much had to be repaid to the Treasury trust funds to offset the £1,700,000 borrowed and overspent last year?

(3) What was the exact amount available under the Commonwealth-State agreement after such adjustment had been made this financial year?

(4) What amount was spent under the Commonwealth-State agreement this financial year up to the 1st October, 1955?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) £5,000,000 allocated.
- (2) £1,233,620.
- (3) £3,766,380.
- (4) £2,045,563.

*(b) Houses Under Construction and Payments.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many houses were under construction under the Commonwealth-State housing agreement as at the 1st October, 1955, in—

- (a) metropolitan area;
- (b) country districts?

(2) Will all houses completed as in No. (1), be paid for this financial year?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) (a) 804.
- (b) 92.
- (2) Yes.

*(c) Deferred Payment Contracts.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

Have any contracts been let under a deferred payment scheme; and if so, on what terms?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, for 58 houses. Progress payments made by bills of exchange payable on the 31st July, 1956. Interest rate, 50 per cent. per annum.

**SUBIACO FLATS.***Payments to Contractor.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What amount of money was paid this financial year to the contractor on the Subiaco flat project up to the 1st October?

(2) How much money will be spent and paid to the contractor on the Subiaco flats after the 1st October this financial year?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) £76,718.
- (2) Estimated at £150,000.

**WORKERS' HOMES ACT.***(a) Money Available.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How much money has been made available this financial year under the Workers' Homes Act?

(2) What amount of money remained unexpended under the Workers' Homes Act as at the 1st October, 1955?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) £1,827,000, being loan funds provided by Treasury.
- (2) £781,391 of the amount mentioned in No. (1).

*(b) Houses Completed and Under Construction.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many homes were completed up to the 1st October this financial year under the Workers' Homes Act in—

- (a) metropolitan area;
- (b) country districts?

(2) How many homes were under construction under the Workers' Homes Act as at the 1st October, 1955, in—

- (a) metropolitan area;
- (b) country districts?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) (a) Two hundred and twenty-one.
- (b) Seventy-nine.
- (2) (a) Two hundred and fourteen.
- (b) Fifty-eight.

**WAR SERVICE HOMES.***Availability of Funds.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is it correct that no fewer than 40 applicants for war service homes have entered into contracts to build war service homes and have since been told that there is an indefinite delay in the availability of funds for this work?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," what is the position at law of those applicants who have signed contracts with builders and now find themselves unable to proceed?

(3) How did the position arise whereby applicants were encouraged to enter into contracts only to find that money was not available.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. 1.

#### GASCOYNE RESEARCH STATION.

##### *Income and Expenditure.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What was the gross income from the Gascoyne research station for the year ended the 30th June, 1955, in—

(a) bananas;

(b) other produce?

(2) What was the total cost of running that station including depreciation during the same period?

(3) Is the income from this station credited to Consolidated Revenue or the North-West section of the Department of Agriculture?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) £10,626 11s. 11d.

(b) £16 12s.

(2) £8,251 3s. 9d.

(3) Consolidated Revenue.

#### FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST.

##### *Amount Payable for Oil Shipments.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works:

What would be the total amount payable to the Fremantle Harbour Trust for nine shipments of oil of a total tonnage of 66,401 tons?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

Had 66,401 tons of refined white oils been imported at the inner harbour instead of at the outer harbour refinery berths, the toll charges payable at existing inner harbour rates would have been:—

	£
Wharfage and harbour improvement rate ....	22,912
Tonnage (approx.) ....	732
Pilotage (approx.) ....	384
Total (approx.)	£24,028

#### JOLIMONT LAKE.

##### *High Water Level.*

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will he afford some relief to people in the Jolimont area in respect of the high water level of Jolimont Lake?

(2) What does he suggest could be done?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) The water level in Jolimont Lake can be controlled only when a major drainage scheme is constructed. There are no loan funds available for such works at present.

(2) Consideration can be given to the provision of this drainage scheme when funds become available and having regard to the many other areas to be drained.

#### WARAWARRUP SIDING.

##### *Cost, etc. of Erecting Two Cottages.*

Mr. MANNING asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the reason for erecting two cottages at the Warawarrup siding?

(2) Is it considered that these cottages comply with reasonable living standards?

(3) Was the health and safety factor considered when the site for these cottages was chosen?

(4) What is the completed cost of these two cottages?

(5) Has the department erected this type of dwelling elsewhere?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) To provide accommodation for Traffic Branch employees.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) £1,220 each exclusive of drainage and fencing.

(5) Yes.

#### MOUNT CLAREMONT.

##### *Shopping Area.*

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister representing the Minister for Town Planning:

(1) Is it a fact that the Mount Claremont shopping area is nearly an accomplished fact?

(2) What prevents this being so?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

The Minister for Town Planning has received a request from the Nedlands Road Board to approve of the board advertising their proposal to amend their town planning scheme to include two lots at the corner of Asquith and Strickland-sts., Mount Claremont, in the shopping area. The Minister is giving this matter his consideration.

**LIBRARY SERVICES.***Creation of Archives Board.*

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

Now that library services are being fused, will he give consideration to creating an archives board, directly responsible to the Premier's Department, with the necessary legislative authority similar to archival authorities in the Eastern States?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter is already being considered.

**PUBLIC SERVICE.***(a) Long Service Leave.*

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

(1) In the Public Service, what is the rule regarding the taking of accrued long service leave, at or about the retiring age of 65?

(2) Is it a fact that under certain conditions, pertaining solely to long service leave, there is a lack of uniformity with regard to dates of retirement which has given rise to some dissatisfaction in the service?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The rule in the Public Service regarding the taking of accrued long service leave at or about the retiring age of 65 is that an officer shall retire on a date prior to his 65th birthday in order that the period of all accrued leave shall expire on the day he attains the age of 65 years.

Exceptions to this rule are made only where special circumstances obtain in respect of senior officers and then only with the approval of Cabinet.

(2) See answer to No. (1).

*(b) Continuance of Duty till 65th Birthday.*

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

(1) Under what conditions can Executive Council approval be obtained for an officer of the Public Service to continue his duties up to the date of his 65th birthday?

(2) Can any officer gain this approval?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Executive Council approval is not necessary for an officer of the Public Service to continue his duties up to the date of his 65th birthday as the authority is contained in Section 59 of the Public Service Act, 1904-54.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

**LEEDERVILLE-WEMBLEY POWER LINE.***Construction and Completion, etc.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) How soon will the power line being constructed through Leederville to Wembley be complete and in operation?

(2) What improvements to power supplies will result?

(3) In which localities will the improvements be evident?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) This high tension line from Bourke-st. substation to West Subiaco is part of the work essential to meet the growing load. The whole of the work is planned to come in for next winter's load.

(2) See answer to No. (1).

(3) Subiaco, West Subiaco, City Beach, Swanbourne, Nedlands, Claremont and Cottesloe.

**BUNBURY HARBOUR.***Total Expenditure from February, 1953, to Date.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works: Will he state the total amount of money spent on the Bunbury harbour from February, 1953, to date?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

The expenditure from February, 1953, to date is £192,267.

**STATE HOUSING.***Average Rental of Homes, Wilson Park Area, Collie.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Housing:

Will he state what is the average rental of State Housing Commission homes in the Wilson Park area, Collie?

The MINISTER replied:

The average rental is £2 8s. 10d.

**DIPHTHERIA.***Compulsory Immunisation in England, U.S.A. and Europe.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health:

Can he state whether immunisation for diphtheria is compulsory in—

(1) any States of the U.S.A.;

(2) England;

(3) any European country?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) It is understood that immunisation against diphtheria is compulsory in three States of the U.S.A. Further inquiries are being made.

(2) It is not compulsory in England.

(3) Yes. Immunisation is compulsory at certain ages in Hungary, France, Yugoslavia, Spain, and in one canton in Switzerland.

#### **GALVANISED ROOFING IRON.**

*Unavailability in Kalgoorlie and Boulder.*

Mr. MOIR asked the Minister representing the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Is he aware that galvanised roofing iron is unobtainable in Kalgoorlie and Boulder and that this position has existed for the past six months?

(2) Does he know that these towns draw their supplies from the Eastern States through the port of Esperance and are not supplied from Perth?

(3) Will he try to arrange that supplies be made available as soon as possible?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied:

(1) No complaint has been lodged, but inquiries reveal that as the "Beltana" did not call at Newcastle in June, as scheduled, a quantity of galvanised iron was railed from Newcastle to Sydney for shipment to Esperance. Unfortunately, it did not arrive in time to catch the vessel.

(2) The Minister is aware that the Goldfields draw their supplies through Esperance. Latest information indicates that all the orders received for iron from Goldfields merchants should be met by supplies on the "River Glenelg," due in Esperance on the 7th November.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

#### **RAILWAY HOUSES.**

*Average Rental, Wilson Park Area, Collie.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

Will he state what is the average rental of Railway Department houses in the Wilson Park area, Collie?

The MINISTER replied:

The average rental is 28s. 1d.

#### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

On motion by Mr. Oldfield, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Yates (South Perth) on the ground of urgent public business.

#### **BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.**

1, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.

2, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Labour.

3, Education Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Education.

4, Abattoirs Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

5, Loan, £11,604,000.

Introduced by the Treasurer.

#### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.**

1, University Medical School, Teaching Hospitals.

2, Bank Holidays Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

#### **BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.**

##### *Message.*

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

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR** (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn) [2.33] in moving the second reading said: At the outset I should like to point out that considerable time has elapsed since amendments of a substantial nature were made to the Act, and I suggest that after members have perused the contents of this Bill, they will find that there are very few, if any, of the proposals which may be regarded as contentious.

The first provision is the result of representations made that a doubt exists whether hairdressers' shops come within the definition of "shop", and, to resolve the doubt, it has been decided to amend the Act to ensure that such shops are included in the interpretation.

Another proposal relates to the closing time of shops. Section 113 of the Act provides that a shop must be closed on the cessation of work. In one of the country districts some time ago, a shopkeeper decided that, whereas the ordinary closing time was 5.30, he would pay overtime and keep his shop open to the public for business until 9 p.m. He considered that, under the Act, he had a right to do this. The Bill will make it clear that a shop must be closed for business at the expiration of the ordinary working hours, exclusive of overtime. Under the relevant award, an employer would be entitled to work an employee for a reasonable amount of overtime, but under this measure it will be necessary for the front doors to be closed against business with the public after the prescribed working hours have expired.

Ventilation is another matter dealt with in the Bill. Section 60 provides that a factory, or any portion of it, shall be ventilated so as to render harmless as far as practicable all the gases, vapours, dust and impurities generated therein "and in the opinion of the chief inspector injurious to health." It is proposed to delete the words "and in the opinion of the chief inspector injurious to health". There will still be

ample scope for inspectors to make their inspections and tender advice to factory-owners, but it is suggested that there may be certain gases or impurities which an inspector could not say were injurious to health, though they could cause considerable inconvenience to employees. That is the reason for proposing the deletion of those words.

Most of the clauses in the Bill refer to working hours and overtime. Under the Act, when certain employees are required to work beyond the normal hours, tea money or meal money is paid at the rate of 1s. 6d. This amount conveys an idea of the lapse of time since that provision was inserted in the Act. In a number of awards, the amount is 3s. 6d., and we propose to increase the amount specified in the Act from 1s. 6d. to 3s. 6d.

Regarding statutory public holidays, the proposal is to provide penalty rates for shop employees who have to work on prescribed holidays by altering the overtime provision from time-and-a-quarter to time-and-a-half. This will bring the provision in the Act into line with the rate in the metropolitan shop assistants' award. As to hours, practically all references in the Act are to a 48-hour week. We had a discussion here yesterday about a five-day week of 48, 44 or 40 hours, and here is another indication of the time that has elapsed since the Act was amended. This is a proposal to bring the hours prescribed in the Act up to date. Wherever 48 appears it is proposed to substitute 40.

Under the Act the stipulated closing time is 6 o'clock and it is proposed to alter that to 5.30 because that is largely the closing time now. Similarly where 1 o'clock appears as the closing time for shops on Saturday afternoon we propose to insert "noon" instead because, for some years, noon has been the closing time.

What I am about to say with regard to shows may seem peculiar, but nevertheless it is true. The last section of the Act provides that any bazaar or similar function held for charitable purposes in the metropolitan area, or any agricultural show, conducted in the metropolitan area for one day, shall be exempt from the provisions of the Act. This means to say that if the Royal Agricultural Society held its show for one day, and the prescribed closing time for shops was 6 o'clock, it would be quite in order for those people who had leased or rented property from the society, to carry on their ordinary business there after 6 o'clock, although they could not do so in Perth.

Mr. Court: Have you had any cases of that sort?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No. It is proposed to alter the word "day" to "one week" so that for the whole of the week that the Royal Agricultural Society conducts its annual show, it will be quite in order for the people associated with the

show ground business to carry on without hindrance. Provision is included for the construction of the necessary lavatories for both sexes, and it is suggested that a minor amendment shall be inserted to ensure that the lavatories are kept in a clean and hygienic condition.

Those are the main provisions of the Bill. I think it will be agreed that all the references I have made to working hours, overtime and the closing of shops will only bring the Act up to date and into line with the shop assistants' award. The Act operates only where no industrial award or agreement, having the effect of a common rule, applies. Where an industrial award is current, its provisions will, so far as there is any conflict, override the provisions of the Factories and Shops Act.

I invite members to peruse the Bill and compare the suggested amendments with the Act because if they do, when they come to speak on the second reading—next week, I hope—they will find that the provisions of the Bill are reasonable and not very contentious; they are merely an attempt to bring the position into line with present day circumstances.

On motion by Hon. L. Thorn, debate adjourned.

#### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Medical Act Amendment Bill (No. 1).

#### BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

##### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 25th October.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [2.46]: The idea behind the Bill is a valuable one. There are certain traffic offences which, though in nature, quasi criminal have become to be regarded merely as a matter of discipline. I refer to such offences as parking, not fixing registration stickers on the car, and a hundred and one other minor breaches.

Mr. Oldfield: Would you include double parking in them?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes.

Mr. Oldfield: Some bloke double parked in front of Parliament House the other day.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know; he has been spoken to. These interjections are very disturbing. The Bill is an attempt to rationalise the position and, perhaps, to veer away a little from the quasi criminal attitude in connection with these offences. Of course, one has to be penalised if one does not obey the regulations, but I think that few people in the community regard the breaching of them as having any taint of criminality.

The regulations must be observed if the community is to carry on in a rational manner, but I do not think anyone regards himself as a criminal because he has been caught double parking, or even parking in the wrong situation. But, of course, such people have to be regulated and if the regulations are broken a penalty is imposed to ensure that the traffic of the city and the State is carried on in a proper and rational manner.

The present system is one which costs the State a lot of money. First of all it has to be ascertained whether the car was parked by the licensee or some other person. Then the summons has to be issued. The matter has to be tried before a court of petty jurisdiction and the accused is expected to attend—more often than not he does not—and a fine is imposed. Notice of the fine is given and the fine has to be paid. All this is a matter of considerable expense to the Government and causes a good deal of irritation to the citizen.

I think every motorist appreciates the fact that if he breaches a regulation he must pay the penalty. He may take a chance and, if he does, he has to suffer the consequences. If he does that too often, the penalty is increased until such time as he feels it is not worth his while to repeat the offence. This is a sensible measure and the Minister has been good enough to place before us a set of the regulations proposed to be made under the legislation. If they were under review, I would have something to say about them as I do not altogether approve of them, but that is a matter of administration and drafting, as they are not under discussion at the moment.

The Bill proposes that minor offences, which are to be prescribed by the Governor, may be dealt with by sending a notice of the offence to the person alleged to have committed it and a notification of the penalty is included. If guilt is acknowledged with payment of the money, that is the end of it; but, on the other hand, if the person accused is not guilty he has the option of going before the court. I see this difficulty, that in many cases the accused person may not be the person responsible and that will place a great deal of onus on the person charged with sending out these notices—who is the Under Secretary for Law or his nominee.

I presume that the Crown Law Department is the best authority to deal with this matter but officers of that department will not have any intimate knowledge of the facts as I take it they will be informed only briefly on the case in question, and whether the discretion of proceeding further in the matter should be left with them or the police is another question. There will be instances where the accused person is not the one who committed the offence. Although the licensee of the car would probably be the person primarily notified, he may not be the

one who committed the offence. I would have thought the Minister would introduce the principle of making the licensee responsible for petty offences in connection with his car, and here I refer to parking offences, failure to have the vehicle licensed, driving an unlicensed vehicle and so on. In my view, it would have been better to make the owner of the car primarily responsible for such breaches.

The Minister for Police: That caused a lot of trouble in Victoria when it was introduced there and a great deal of opposition was shown to it.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I believe there would be considerable opposition to it but, on the other hand, surely the owner should be responsible in these petty matters for the conduct of anyone to whom he hands over his car! I am not talking about careless, negligent or drunken driving, or other offences of that kind, but I think the owner should be responsible primarily rather than the person driving the car. If I lend my car to someone who parks it in the wrong place, I think I should be responsible because he is virtually my agent in relation to this offence.

These breaches cause a great deal of trouble to the police who cannot launch prosecutions—I do not know whether they will be able to issue these notices—without ascertaining who was in control of the car when the offence was committed. These inquiries involve a great deal of time and expense and so if a licensee hands over his car to the control of a third party, I feel he should be primarily responsible in relation to these petty offences.

A further provision to which I think objection can be taken is that the Bill leaves it to the executive to say what are minor offences and what penalties may be imposed by regulation. It is suggested, of course, that under the proposed regulations the maximum penalty will be £1 but I think there should be a limitation by statute of the amount of the fine that can be imposed. If the Bill passes the second reading, I propose to move an amendment, during the Committee stage, with the intention of limiting the amount which may be prescribed as a fine to £5. The Minister has said that £1 should be the figure, but I will move that the maximum amount which the regulations may provide shall be £5.

The Minister for Police: All the offences to which this provision would apply are set out in the draft regulations—some 20 of them.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I agree, and I approve of what has been suggested, but some other Minister might have different views.

The Minister for Police: You think he might add to the list?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: He might do that or increase the penalties under this system.

The Minister for Police: I do not think so; £1 is the maximum here.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is under the Minister's suggested regulations, but there is nothing to prevent another Minister having a different viewpoint and suggesting perhaps £20, because many of the penalties for breaches of these proposed regulations vary from £10 to £20. I think the maximum penalty for parking offences is £20. Under regulation No. 413, for instance, the maximum provided is £20. There are others of £10 and they vary from £10 to £20. But I think the maximum that should be imposed under this system—and I hope the Minister will agree with me—should be £5. In the proposed regulations, the Minister has stated £1, but another Minister could have a different point of view altogether. I think that once an offence warrants the imposition of a penalty greater than £5, it should be dealt with by the court.

Under these regulations it is proposed that if the Crown Law Department, which is the authority charged with issuing the notices, considers the offence warrants a fine greater than is provided for by the regulations, the matter can be sent on to the courts to deal with; or, of course, the accused can decide to go to the court. But I think in the Act itself we ought to have a limit on the amount that can be prescribed because it would be possible for any Minister to raise the fine for these penalties up to the amount provided for—and that would be up to £20 in the case of parking.

The Minister for Police: Yes, but he would have to do it by regulation and the regulation could be challenged here.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is so.

The Minister for Police: I hope you are not going to raise obstacles about what you imagine might happen.

Hon. A. F. Watts: But the regulation could be made the day after Parliament adjourned and it would be in operation for seven or eight months.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes. I entirely agree with the Minister; I do not think any Minister or Government would be so irrational as to use this system for imposing fines that were not reasonable. On the other hand, it is an important matter, and I think the statute should limit the amount which can be imposed under this system. It would also give the Crown Law authorities some indication of the type of offence which should be sent on to the courts. If they find that the offence warrants a fine of more than £5, they will send it on, because the Act says irrespective of what is in the regulations, that the case should be sent to the courts if it warrants a fine greater than £5.

I know I am not in order in dealing with the regulations, but I would like to point out one aspect to the Minister. I do not think there is any need for delay in sending out the notices. I know that there has been a delay with police prosecutions because a great deal of work and investigation has been involved in order to bring the cases before the courts.

The Minister for Police: Most of the delay is in the courts and not in the traffic office. They have piles of cases there and not sufficient magistrates to deal with them.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I agree, but the Minister has provided in the proposed regulations that this method may be proceeded with any time within six months after the offence is committed. I cannot do anything about it here but I suggest that that period should be lessened; it would not be unreasonable if the notice had to go out within a month. I think the investigation should take place and the notice be given within a period of one month. If the offence is of such a nature that it requires greater investigation, greater care and greater attention, then it is one that ought to be brought before the court. On the usual basis, the prosecution would have to be launched within six months in such cases.

There again I agree with the Minister, but I do think that notices relating to parking should be sent out while the event is fresh in the memory of the accused, and I see no reason why the regulation should not provide for some lesser period than is proposed. Maybe a month is too short but in my opinion it would be sufficient. If it is not, the ordinary procedure ought to be observed and the case brought before the court.

There is no time limit on an indictment and a person can bring an indictment for an offence at any time; but a prosecution under the Justices Act cannot be instituted after six months. If a person discovers that an offence has been committed and he thinks it is sufficiently serious to warrant a prosecution, he should bring it before the Supreme Court. Similarly, under the Traffic Act, if the police think that the offence is sufficiently serious and notice has not been sent within the prescribed time, the offence should be brought before the court. However, I think a month or some slightly longer period should be quite sufficient in which to allow the notice to be sent out.

I envisage that the notice will be sent out to the licensee without any inquiry at all and if he pays the fine, that is all that need be done. But if he disputes it, the case will go back to the police for further inquiry to decide whether or not they will launch a prosecution. They will have to inquire as to who was driving the car. I should think that in the majority of cases, where a person knows he



has committed an offence and has received a notice, he will pay up, but if he was not driving the car the matter will be referred back to the police for further investigation and prosecution if they think fit.

As I understand the system at present, a notice is left on the car asking the driver to attend the traffic office. If the person concerned does not do so, the police have to ascertain whether, in fact, the owner of the car committed the offence, or whether it was committed by some other person. That entails a lot of work. The police officers have to find the licensee and ascertain whether it was he who parked the car and when they find out who did park it, they can launch a prosecution.

Under the existing law the onus is on the prosecution to prove who actually parked the car. But under this system it will not have to be proved before the notice goes out, but if the person to whom the notice is sent admits the offence, that is the end of it; but if he does not admit it, the case goes back to the police and they will make such further inquiries and launch such prosecutions as they think fit. There will be a considerable saving in cost and administration expenses. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. F. Watts, debate adjourned.

### LOAN ESTIMATES, 1955-56.

#### *Message.*

Message from the Governor received and read transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1955-56 and recommending appropriation.

#### *In Committee.*

The House resolved into Committee to consider the Loan Estimates, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

#### *Vote—Railways, £4,000,000:*

**THE TREASURER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [3.11]: The borrowing programmes of the Commonwealth and State Governments for this financial year have been fixed by the Loan Council at a total of £193,500,000. Of this total, an amount of £3,500,000 has been allotted to the Commonwealth for the provision of emergency wheat storage facilities in the current year, leaving £190,000,000 for distribution between the States. Western Australia's share of the £190,000,000 is £17,900,000 and of this sum, £5,000,000 has been allocated for Commonwealth-State housing projects, leaving a balance of £12,900,000 for other works.

#### *General Works Programme.*

Loan repayments are expected to amount to £1,625,000 in the current year which, together with the allocation of £12,900,000

through the Loan Council, will permit of a general works programme of £14,525,000 for 1955-56. The printed Loan Estimates, which have been distributed to members, give details of this proposed expenditure.

#### *Loan Borrowings.*

The Loan Council has also given approval to the State Electricity Commission to borrow £2,100,000 in this financial year. Members may recall that the Loan Estimates for last year were based upon our share of an anticipated borrowing programme for all States of £200,000,000. Unfortunately, the loan raisings in Australia during the last financial year fell below the total estimated programme by £20,000,000 and each State's allocation was reduced by 10 per cent. As a result of that happening, we, in Western Australia, suffered a reduction in loan funds of £1,900,000. Because of that reduction, about which we did not receive notification until towards the end of last financial year, expenditure on loan account last year exceeded receipts by £1,200,000.

Last year, funds available to the State for the general works programme amounted to £15,300,000, comprising an allocation through the Loan Council of £13,600,000 and loan repayments amounting to £1,700,000. However, loan expenditure recorded for the year amounted to £16,500,000, which was £1,200,000 in excess of moneys received in the year. The excess expenditure of £1,200,000 was due entirely to a reduction in the total loan allocation for 1954-55.

#### *Loan Expenditure.*

Reference to the Loan Estimates will reveal that last year's expenditure of £16,525,000 is £2,000,000 above the anticipated expenditure for this current year. The difference is largely accounted for by last year's excess expenditure of £1,200,000 to which I have already referred, and a reduction of £700,000 in the allocation of funds for the general works programme in 1955-56. Although the funds to be provided for the general works programme have been reduced from £13,600,000 in 1954-55 to £12,900,000 in 1955-56, the allocation for Commonwealth-State housing projects has been increased from £3,500,000 to £5,000,000, which represents an overall increase of £800,000.

#### *S.E.C. Borrowing Programme.*

On the other hand, the approved borrowing programme of the State Electricity Commission for this year has been reduced to £2,100,000 which is £860,000 less than the amount raised in 1954-55. This restriction on semi-governmental borrowing has required an increased allotment of loan funds to the State Electricity Commission to compensate for the reduction in the commission's own borrowing programme.

The amount to be allocated from General Loan Fund this financial year to the commission is approximately £900,000.

#### *Commonwealth-State Housing.*

Of the additional £1,500,000 being provided in this financial year for Commonwealth-State housing projects, £1,185,000 is required to clear an overdraft on this account at the 30th June last. Members have already been advised that this overdraft was financed temporarily from trust funds. The Estimates now submitted cover an expenditure during the financial year of £14,525,000 from works financed from the General Loan Fund.

#### *Railways.*

The total expenditure of the Railway Department for 1954-55 was £5,882,000, being £706,000 less than the amount expended during the preceding year. Of last year's expenditure, £1,465,000 was for overseas contracts—mainly locomotives and rollingstock; £1,080,000 for Australian contracts—largely wagon construction—and £3,337,000 for local works in all categories.

#### *Details of Expenditure.*

The larger items of expenditure were—

	£
Renewal of track .....	702,000
Renewal of sleepers .....	829,000
Other track improvements .....	162,000
Renewal of bridges and culverts .....	134,000
Housing .....	232,000
Coogee-Kwinana railway .....	96,000
New wagon stock .....	1,376,000
New locomotives and diesel railcars .....	1,300,000
Improvements to rolling-stock .....	97,000
Rehabilitation of coaches .....	115,000
Rehabilitation of wagons .....	176,000

I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would agree with me largely, if not completely, that tremendous sums of loan money have been expended on the Railway Department in recent years. It is true that from the beginning of the economic depression, right through to the end of the war, and also in the early postwar years, not a great amount of money could be made available to get the Railway Department in reasonable running order. As a result, the railway system undoubtedly fell far below efficient standards. However, during the last eight, nine or perhaps ten years, huge sums of loan funds have been spent on the Railway Department for the purpose of rehabilitating it. I would think that the system as a whole is probably in better order today than it has been for a great number of years.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It ought to be.

#### *New Rollingstock Programme.*

The TREASURER: Indeed it ought! However, it is not yet in 100 per cent. efficient order in all sections of the system.

It seems that when we buy modern rollingstock, such as larger and faster engines, heavier trucks and so on, there develops immediately a much heavier commitment in relation to the tracks upon which these engines and wagons must run. It seems that unless the track is strengthened in such a way as to enable it to carry the new rollingstock, and carry it at faster speeds, that new rollingstock becomes more or less uneconomical.

In other words, tremendous sums of loan money have been invested in new and modern engines, and trucks, and the volume of the investment becomes uneconomical unless the engines are permitted to pull the big and heavy loads at reasonably fast speeds. If the railway tracks are not capable of carrying the heavy loads, or of carrying them at faster speeds, then the modern rollingstock does not earn as much as it otherwise would within the same period, whether it be one hour, one day, one week or longer.

The Minister for Railways: We have already had to reduce a number of them from 13-ton to 10-ton axle loads.

The TREASURER: As the Minister for Railways points out, deliberate action has had to be taken by the Railways Commission to reduce the load, and also, I believe, the speeds, of these modern trains on a number of the railway tracks in the State. There is at least a suspicion, if not something more, that some of the derailments have been caused either by the faster engines and bigger loads or by a combination of those factors, and the tracks upon which they run. It does seem, therefore, that the State will have to continue to invest considerable additional capital in the railway system to bring the tracks up to the required standard to enable the new and modern trains to carry the heaviest loads consistent with the capacity of the engines, and to enable them also to travel at reasonably faster speeds.

#### *Allocation of Expenditure.*

For the current year, £4,000,000 has been allocated to the Railway Department, including the following commitments already made:—

	£
Locomotives and diesel railcars .....	1,412,000
Traffic cranes and lifting equipment .....	29,000
Rails and fastenings .....	200,000
Collie roundhouse contract .....	110,000
Housing contracts .....	247,000

Expenditure for new wagonstock during 1954-55 is £1,376,000, and the number of new wagons placed in service was 611 four-wheelers and 163 bogie wagons.

#### *Locomotives and Diesel Equipment.*

An expenditure of £1,300,000 was incurred last year in the purchase of steam, diesel-electric, diesel locomotives and diesel

railcars. Of the 112 road and railcars ordered, 68 have already been delivered and are in operation, leaving 44 still to be delivered. Expenditure for the current year on these contracts will be £1,412,000.

#### *Railway Housing.*

Expenditure on housing for railway employees last year amounted to £232,000. During the year, 45 new houses of conventional type were completed for occupation, six houses were purchased, and at the 30th June, 1955, 50 were in course of erection, or the subject of contracts about to commence. It is certainly a great pity that houses are not as cheap to construct to-day as they were, say, in 1939, 1946 or 1947.

A problem for solution was the provision of housing for employees, particularly permanent way workers, who for years have been obliged to live under canvas. To give the quickest relief possible to the greatest number of these workers and their families, a bunkhouse type building was developed which costs only about one-half of the Banksiadale type of railway residence, but affords substantial shelter and moderate comfort for families who would otherwise be destined to remain in tents for a long time.

At the end of the last financial year, 125 of these bunkhouse type units had been prefabricated in Western Australia and of these 55 had been erected. Expenditure for the past year on this item was £86,000, and for the current year the cost will be £157,000 as part of the overall housing allocation of £247,000 for the year.

#### *Track Work and Sleeper Renewals.*

During last financial year, an amount of £864,000 was expended on relaying, ballasting, and bank widening, mainly on the Eastern Goldfields and south-western railways. These works will proceed during the current year. A total of 598,000 new sleepers was placed in the track during last year at a cost of £829,000. Provision for the current year is for an expenditure of £818,000.

#### *Midland Junction Workshops.*

Reorganisation proceeded during last year at the Midland Junction Workshops in construction and adaptation of buildings and procurement and placing of machinery at a cost of £101,000. The requirement for the current year is £180,000.

#### *Railway Barracks, Industrial Necessities and Amenities.*

In accordance with government policy to improve the working, living and social conditions of railway employees—especially those obliged to reside in remote areas—funds have been allocated to the commission for the implementation of a comprehensive programme. Last year, £60,000 was spent on improvements. For the current financial year, £100,000 has been allowed for completion of the programme

in hand at the 30th June last, and to commence the construction of the new Railway Institute premises at Bunbury and Collie.

#### *Tramways Department.*

A sum of £67,000 was spent last year on the Tramways Department, and provision is made to spend £50,000 in this financial year.

A new substation is being erected in Floreat Park to improve the power supply so as to enable extension of trolley-bus services in the Wembley and Floreat Park areas. The cost incurred last year for work in these districts was £12,000 and a further £7,000 is to be spent this year.

#### *State Electricity Commission.*

During last year expenditure from the General Loan Fund by the State Electricity Commission was £705,000, including £140,000 spent on the conversion of the metropolitan system from a frequency of 40-cycles to a frequency of 50-cycles. In addition, the commission raised the sum of £2,961,000 under its own borrowing powers for expenditure on capital works.

The commission's loan borrowings during the current year will consist of £900,000 to be obtained from the General Loan Fund and £2,100,000 to be raised by the commission under its own borrowing powers, making a total of £3,000,000. In addition, a further sum of £100,000 will be expended from the General Loan Fund on the change of frequency in the metropolitan area.

The commission will proceed with the installation of new plant at the East Perth power station and at the Bunbury station. The policy of providing services to new consumers both in the country and in the city continue where such extensions are economically justified and to the limit of the funds available for this purpose.

#### *Summary of Commission's Progress.*

A summary of the progress made during the past financial year is—

**South Fremantle Power Station:** The fourth turbo-alternator and the last two boilers were commissioned and only minor works remain to be done. The station now has a capacity of 100,000 kilowatts of modern 50-cycle plant.

**East Perth Power Station:** One new boiler has been commissioned at this station and work is in progress on a second boiler. One 30,000 kilowatt turbo-alternator is being installed, and construction work on a new coal handling plant has commenced at the station.

**Bunbury Power Station:** Good progress has been made at this station, the work being chiefly confined to foundations, the main building framework, general earthworks and boiler construction.

South West Power Scheme and Other Country Undertakings: Foundations, building and penstock pipes were completed on the 2,000 kilowatt hydro-electric plant which is being erected at Wellington Dam. A transmission line from Northam to Cunderdin and Kellerberrin is under construction.

A transmission line was erected from Northam to Toodyay, and the electricity undertaking in Toodyay was taken over by the commission. The construction of a 132,000 volt line from Bunbury to Perth was commenced, which will inter-connect the Bunbury power station with those in the metropolitan area.

#### *Public Works.*

The main headings of expenditure under the Public Works Department are Cockburn Sound harbour works, country areas and town water supplies, drainage and irrigation and public buildings.

#### *Cockburn Sound Harbour Works.*

Expenditure on this project in the last financial year amounted to £380,000, of which £328,000 was expended on dredging and the remainder on the navigational side.

Provision of £248,00 has been made in this year's Estimates which should meet remaining expenditure in connection with the development of the Parmelia and Success Bank channels to fully open up shipping access to Cockburn Sound.

#### *Country Areas and Town Water Supplies.*

Total expenditure during 1954-55 was £1,006,000 compared with the estimate for the year of £955,000. Provision has been made in the current year's estimates for a total expenditure of £986,000.

Expenditure on the comprehensive scheme last year was £468,000, and it is proposed to spend £570,000 on this work in the current year.

Broadly, the allocations for the comprehensive scheme amount to £330,000 for the northern section and £240,000 for the southern section. On the northern section there is a provision of £66,000 for work in connection with pumping stations at Mundaring, Cunderdin and Kellerberrin, together with a sum of £67,000 for enlargement of the Goldfields Water Supply main conduit, and £128,000 for the Narembeen-Kondinin pipeline. In addition, £20,000 is provided for the North Kellerberrin main and £20,000 for reticulation south of Merredin.

On the southern section of the scheme, provision of £217,000 is made for the pipeline from Wellington Dam to Narrogin, as well as funds for the Narrogin pumping station. The programme provides for completion of the pipeline to give a supply to Narrogin and also to Kondinin.

Provision is also made in the Estimates for the expenditure of £164,000 on the existing Goldfields system, the major item of

expenditure being £50,000 for No. 3 reservoir at Kalgoorlie which, I understand, has recently been completed.

An amount of £252,000 has been provided for water supplies for towns including £37,000 for Bridgetown, £30,000 for Geraldton, £29,000 for raising the height of the dam at Manjimup, £60,000 for Mount Barker water supply, £27,000 for Tambellup water supply, and £12,000 for Albany water supply.

#### *Drainage and Irrigation.*

An amount of £105,000 was expended last year on these works, and it is proposed to expend £185,000 during this financial year. The main item of expenditure will be £135,000 for Wellington Dam in connection with future activities in raising the wall.

#### *Public Buildings.*

Provision has been made in this year's Estimates for an expenditure of £1,561,000 compared with £1,880,000 last year. Of this year's allotment of funds, £931,000 is the amount for school buildings, including works in progress at the 30th June last.

Hospital works are estimated to cost £483,000, the main items being the completion of the second section of Royal Perth Hospital, additions to Goomalling hospital, additions to Mt. Barker hospital, new maternity block at Collie and the new hospital at Calista.

#### *North-West.*

Expenditure on water supplies, public buildings and additions to jetties and similar works in the North-West amounted to £112,000 in 1954-55, and provision is made to spend £187,000 on those works in this financial year.

An amount of £721,000 was spent last year by the State Shipping Service in meeting a final payment of £200,000 due to the Commonwealth on the "Kabbarli", and progress payments of £521,000 on the "Koojarra", "Dorrigo" and "Dulverton". In the current year's Estimates, provision has been made to meet further payments of £282,000 on the "Koojarra", a first payment of £100,000 on the new ship under construction, and an instalment of £30,000 on the "Dulverton" and "Dorrigo". It is also proposed to spend a sum of £170,000 on the electrification of and structural alterations to the "Dulverton" and "Dorrigo".

#### *Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage.*

Provision has been made in this year's Estimates for expenditure of £953,000 on metropolitan water supplies, not including the Kwinana area, compared with an actual expenditure of £964,000 during the last financial year.

*Trunk Main and Pipe Head Dam on  
Serpentine River.*

Expenditure in the current year on this project, which was commenced last year, will amount to £460,000, which is nearly one-half of the total money to be spent on metropolitan water supplies.

*Lake Thompson-Fremantle Trunk Main.*

A commencement will be made during the current year with the laying of the Hamilton Hill section of the Lake Thompson-Fremantle trunk main and £37,000 is the amount set aside for that work.

*Mundaring-Guildford Trunk Main.*

An amount of £116,000 was expended last year on the completion of the 30 in. trunk main from Mundaring to Guildford. This main now feeds 10,000,000 gallons of water a day from Mundaring Reservoir into the Perth system.

*Mt. Yokine-West Coast Main.*

The largest single work carried out last year was the laying of a supply main from Mt. Yokine to the coast. Expenditure totalled £186,000, and provision is made to complete the work this year at a cost of £12,000.

*Water Main Extensions and Improvements.*

Reticulation mains to serve new homes and areas and for improvements to existing reticulation mains resulted in an expenditure of £370,000, and an amount of £42,000 was also spent in the purchasing and fixing of new meters. A sum of £227,000 is included in this year's Estimates for further water main extensions and improvements and £50,000 for the purchase and fixing of new meters.

*Morley Park Feeder Main.*

An amount of £57,000 is to be spent this year on a feeder main to provide a water supply for the Morley Park area.

*Sewerage and Drainage.*

Last year the expenditure on sewerage and drainage works totalled £325,000. For the current year, an expenditure of £237,000 is anticipated comprising £90,000 for recurring works and services, £73,000 for the completion of works in progress and £54,000 for the Guildford-Bayswater rising main. An amount of £20,000 has been provided for stormwater drainage at Bayswater.

*Kwinana Water Supply.*

An expenditure last year of £277,000 practically completed the necessary work at Kwinana. Only £2,400 will be required this financial year to complete the programme. I may mention that the State has expended more than £5,000,000 during the last 2½ years on public works undertakings at Kwinana.

*Mining.*

Under the heading of Development of Mining, the expenditure last year totalled £164,000. This year provision has been made for an expenditure of £162,000. The drilling organisation of the Mines Department has been expanded by the addition of two new drills, and these are now in operation in the North-West and on the Murchison goldfields. The department is also drilling at Day Dawn on the Great Fingal mine for an extension of the ore body at depth and on the Yilgarn goldfield. Drilling at Koolyanobbing has been successfully completed and good deposits of iron and pyrites have been located. In all, a total of £110,000 has been provided for this year's deep drilling programme.

During last financial year, approval was given for a loan of £100,000 to the Sons of Gwalia mine to enable the company to modernise its plant, provide amenities and further develop the mine. A sum of £76,000 was advanced to the company in 1954-55 and a further £24,000 will be provided during the current year.

*State Housing Commission.*

During the year, 798 housing units were erected under the provisions of the State Housing Act, and at the close of the year the commission had under construction or contract a further 474 units, all of which will be completed during the current financial year. In addition, contracts will be let during the year for a further 423 houses under the group building scheme and approximately 40 individual homes.

An amount of £50,000 has been provided for assistance to home-builders by way of second mortgages under the amending legislation passed last session, and £30,000 to assist self-helpers who have made considerable progress with the erection of homes but who, through lack of finance, have been unable to complete them.

Provision has been made for an expenditure of £550,000 for land acquisition and development. The bulk of this money will represent payment of compensation claims for land acquired by resumption for housing purposes last year.

*Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.9 p.m.*

*Credit Freeze on Housing.*

The TREASURER: The demand on, or request to, the State to provide housing has increased much more than it would have had the private financial institutions not applied—at least in respect of finance for housing—what is known in many quarters as a credit freeze or a credit squeeze. There are, in this State, quite a number of people who, in the normal course of events, would have obtained their housing finance from private financial institutions.

However, for at least a year, those institutions seem to have closed down almost entirely on the making available of money to assist people to build houses.

Consequently, all the people concerned have approached the State Housing Commission and registered as applicants, either for Commonwealth-State rental homes or for homes under the State Housing Act.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What about the money they are going to make available for private homes, through the building societies and our own Workers' Homes Act.

The TREASURER: I am dealing with the position which has, in fact, developed during the last year.

#### *Housing Finance.*

The Leader of the Opposition is looking into the future and suggesting, or hoping, that the Commonwealth and the States will be able to agree upon many substantial amendments to the existing Commonwealth-State rental housing scheme. It might very well be that when the matter is finalised, the Commonwealth Government will make funds available direct to building societies to enable those institutions in the various States to make money available direct to people to assist them to build homes to their own designs and wishes. However, that situation has not yet been reached, nor do I think it is likely to be reached for many months to come. In the meantime, therefore, the requests to the State Housing Commission are not likely to cease, to any worth-while extent, if to any extent at all.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the building trade has been fully employed during the whole of this time, so no more building could have taken place.

The TREASURER: That is very doubtful.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not think so.

The TREASURER: My information would lead me to believe that a considerable number of additional houses could have been built during the last 12 months had finance been available.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But other buildings would have been left aside.

Mr. Ackland: It is difficult to get labour.

The TREASURER: If the member for Moore were to go closely into the subject, he would find that there are builders available who are anxious to obtain work.

Mr. Ackland: Today.

The TREASURER: Today and three and six months ago.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: They are still pretty hard to get.

The TREASURER: That is not our experience.

#### *Availability of Builders.*

What is more, I think this is probably a clear indication of the correctness of what I have been saying: Tenders for

the building of houses are being submitted showing a lesser cost now than the price asked before the increase in margins, and before the recent increase in the cost of living figure granted by the court.

Mr. Ackland: Is not that because there is more competition for the work offering?

The TREASURER: Exactly. There is more competition for the work offering because there is not the amount of finance available for building purposes which was available prior to six, seven or even 12 months ago. A number of builders now are chasing work whereas nine or 12 months ago they were being chased by prospective clients. So I think there is no doubt that the credit freeze, in respect of housing, by the private financial institutions did slow down the building industry, and naturally caused the number of clients going to the State Housing Commission to increase substantially.

#### *Kwinana Area Housing.*

This project has now been completed to the stage where the oil company's present requirements have been fully satisfied. The building of any further homes in the Kwinana area, under the oil refinery agreement, has been deferred. As members know, the original agreement provided for the building by the State at Kwinana of 999 houses at the rate of 333 a year. After the first 500 or 600 houses had been built, the company found that the demand for houses in the area was not as great as had been originally anticipated. Therefore, the representatives of the oil company approached the Government and asked that the building of the additional 300 or so houses be deferred until such time as the needs of the oil industry at Kwinana might require the erection of the balance of the homes.

A supplementary agreement has been made between the Government and the company which provides that the balance of the houses will be built by the Government, at the request of the company, during the next 15 years, I think it is, at the most, and only then if the company, in the meantime, makes some substantial expansion to the industry at Kwinana. Under the terms of the original agreement, and following the postponement of the building of some 300 houses, which was agreed to as between the Government and the company, the arrangement would have had a sort of Kathleen Mavourneen existence. Therefore, the making of this supplementary agreement is most satisfactory to the Government, and the company has been quite willing and satisfied to agree to what was proposed.

#### *Agricultural Department Buildings.*

The Government has decided to build a block of research laboratories on an area of land in South Perth as the initial and

major step in the rehousing of the Department of Agriculture. As various members on both sides will know, the accommodation for the Department of Agriculture has been receiving consideration for many years. But nothing practical could be done or attempted up till now because of the extreme pressure of other requirements, such as housing, hospitals, schools and so on.

The position has now been reached, and a decision has been made by the Government, to go ahead with the development of a rehousing plan for the department. I suppose that if the expenditure of loan money by Governments over the last 20 years had been worked out on a basis of absolute merit in respect to priorities, instead of, as was properly done, on a basis of absolute urgency, the Department of Agriculture would have been rehoused many years ago.

#### *Research Laboratories.*

We all know that the agricultural industry contributes directly to the wealth and income of our State. Therefore, it is proper that the Department of Agriculture or the officers within it, especially those on the technical side, should be housed under good conditions. The provision of new research laboratories will permit the removal of existing laboratories from the present unsatisfactory locations, and will allow officers to work under conditions which will give them considerably better opportunities and encouragement for effective research than at present.

Any member who has been through the existing accommodation of the Department of Agriculture situated in St. George's Terrace will know how hopelessly cramped and inadequate it has been and would therefore agree with the policy of the Government in proceeding with a programme to re-house the department's activities and officers.

It is estimated that the total cost of the project, including fittings and services, will be in the vicinity of £300,000. Provision is made in the current Loan Estimates to meet the cost of the work which can be undertaken in 1955-56, which amounts to £33,000.

#### *Forests.*

An amount of £160,000 will be spent this financial year on the development of pine plantations. Of this sum, £100,000 will be provided from loan funds and the balance of £60,000 from the reforestation fund. This year, it is proposed to plant 1,310 acres of pines and to clear 2,740 acres for future planting. Last year, 1,058 acres were planted.

#### *Fremantle Harbour Trust.*

In 1954-55, an amount of £553,000 was expended, through the Fremantle Harbour Trust, on the construction of the No. 10 berth, on the provision of electric cranes

and other equipment, and the reconstruction of the north and south quays. The continuation of these works in this financial year, at a cost of £500,000, is allowed for in the Estimates.

#### *Rural & Industries Bank.*

Provision is made in the Estimates for an allocation to the bank of £817,000 to further assist in the development of the State's primary and industrial production.

#### *State Saw Mills.*

An amount of £136,000 was spent by this concern in 1954-55 on the installation of a sawdust burning boiler at Deanmill; erection of cottages at Pemberton and Shannon River; provision of pre-cutting plant at Carlisle; and the purchase of Buckingham's and Kent River saw mills. Additional working capital of £20,000 was also provided from loan funds.

Included in the Estimates for this year is provision for additional housing at southern mills, kiln seasoning and machining plant at Manjimup, and the reconstruction of Holyoake mill at Dwellingup. A total expenditure of £70,000 has been allowed for in the Estimates.

#### *Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd.*

Recently, when introducing the Revenue Estimates, I referred to the State's heavy financial obligations under the agreement made by the State and Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd.

Last year, a sum of £500,000 was advanced to this company, but it has not been possible to provide for any further advances in this financial year, nor is it likely any further advances will be made by the Government to the company this financial year.

#### *Deficit Funding.*

Provision is made in the Estimates to fund the adjusted deficit for the year 1952-53.

The published deficit for 1952-53 was £508,000 in respect of which the State received a sum of £350,000 from the Commonwealth Government. This special grant was received in 1954-55 on the recommendation of the Commonwealth Grants Commission and left a balance of £158,000 to be funded by a charge to loan funds.

As I stated recently, when introducing the Revenue Estimates, a sum of £25,000 will be received this year towards reduction of the deficit of £103,000 incurred in 1953-54. The balance of £78,000 will also have to be funded from the General Loan Fund, but it is not proposed to take that action this financial year. No action can be taken in respect of the deficit for 1954-55 until the Grants Commission investigates and reports on our budget results for that year.

*General.*

The loan programme for this year has been worked out on a basis of meeting what are considered to be the more urgent and more essential needs of the State. They have been decided upon in an effort to make a substantial contribution to Western Australia's further development and progress. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to devote as much of the loan funds to developmental undertakings for the purpose of increasing wealth production as members of the Government would have liked.

The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues in the previous Government would well know that when matters of this kind are being decided by a Government, practical consideration has to be given to urgent community needs in the way of schools, hospitals and similar undertakings. Loan money expended on the building of schools, hospitals, housing and so on is money that is not an investment in wealth production in the material sense. However, not only is it essential, but also it is an investment under a different heading.

From time to time we all admit, not only frankly but also willingly, that education is a tremendously valuable medium for training our children not only in respect of the education which they should receive, but also to enable them to be efficient and successful in the occupation that they may follow in later life. It is also valuable in respect of the training of their minds in co-operation as between one individual and another and in respect of the development of a community spirit in the young people so that when they become men and women, and thereby citizens of our State, they will acquit themselves in a way which will reflect considerable credit on our part of Australia.

It will ensure, too, that our community will be one which is civilised to the greatest extent possible and that the members of the community will work together for the achievement of as much good as it is possible to accomplish for the people as a whole. I think we can say the community of Western Australia is one that loses nothing by comparison with those in other parts of Australia and perhaps loses little or nothing by comparison with communities in other parts of the world. We are not perfect—not each of us, anyway—but nevertheless I think our community is one which lives largely on a basis of friendly co-operation; on a basis of mutual help.

We do know, as is now being exemplified by the appeal for funds for the medical school, that the people of Western Australia are generous of heart and are prepared to make what might be considered sacrifices—at least financially—to ensure that there shall be established in our State those facilities which are so essential to

the protection of health; to the improvement of health standards and to the minimising of disease and pain among people who would otherwise fall sick or be stricken with disease from time to time.

Although the provision of loan money for the building of new schools and for additional classrooms is not an investment for producing increased wealth from the soil or from secondary industries, nevertheless it is a tremendously important investment, and one which in many fields in the future will return financial and other dividends, even though one might not consciously realise the dividends which are being paid to the community from such investments. The same argument, with some qualifications, would more or less apply to expenditure on hospital buildings and on the provision of housing.

While the Government has not been able to allocate as much of the loan funds as it wished to expend in directly increasing wealth and production, it has, in the circumstances, made the largest possible allocation. Despite some dark spots on the economic horizon, as far as Australia generally is concerned, we can all rejoice in a restrained way in the fact that Western Australia has made considerable progress since the war, is still making progress and appears likely to continue to achieve further progress and development in the years immediately ahead. I have pleasure in submitting the Estimates for the consideration of the Committee.

Progress reported.

### **BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 25th October.

**HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling)** [4.33]: I propose to support the second reading of this Bill although there are parts of it that do not appear to me to be particularly desirable and in regard to which the Minister in introducing it did not give any really satisfactory explanation. I refer in particular to the intention to substitute the word "director" for the word "secretary." I do not suppose it matters in the ultimate whether the officer in charge of child welfare, as managed by the department in question, is called a secretary or director. In many aspects it is a matter of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

The thing that concerns me most is the occupant of the position, whatever it be called, and the ability of the occupant to undertake the responsibility which is imposed upon him by virtue of the office. I do not think the department has suffered by having a secretary in charge of it on the administrative side, with the chief clerk as his senior officer. If my memory serves me aright, some 18 months ago applications were called in the "Government



Gazette" for the position under the Public Service Act of director of the Child Welfare Department.

Apparently no appointment of such an officer was made because the Act provided quite carefully that the person in charge of the department should be called the secretary. It is intended by this Bill to alter that designation presumably so that an appointment can be made of a director. What is to become of the position of assistant director has, of course, not been made clear at all. If I looked at this matter one way, I can assume that the person who at present fills the position, or somebody equivalent to the post of chief clerk, will become the assistant director, and there will simply be a change of name from secretary to director of the officer immediately above him.

I have a feeling that will be the position. If that is not going to be the position, the Minister should take the House into his confidence because, as he explained his views on the subject, it was just because it was more desirable that the head of the department should be called the director; he was called a director in the other States and he ought to be called that here. The Minister did not give any good reason why that officer should be called the director in Western Australia. If that is the only reason, then, as I said before, it is a matter of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and I am not going to argue against it, but if there is to be some really considerable change intended in the administration of the department which will make some fundamental alteration in the principal executives, and their relationship with one another, which could, as I also said, be contemplated, then we ought to have the fullest information on the subject so that we may support or oppose this Bill in the knowledge of all the circumstances.

So, I leave the matter at that, hoping that the Minister will define more clearly what is proposed to be done when he gets the statutory authority to call the head of the department the director, and the authority subsequent upon that to appoint an assistant director. It is true that when I was Minister for Child Welfare and introduced a consolidated measure in respect of the Child Welfare Act in 1947, there was taken out of the powers of the Children's Court, the power to try cases which dealt with offences against children.

There was some conflict of opinion, and, if my memory serves me aright, there was some qualification in the enactment so that, with ministerial approval, certain cases against children could be dealt with by the Children's Court. Broadly speaking, the hon. gentleman was perfectly correct when he said that the Act of 1947 took away from the Children's Court the power to deal with offences against children and, in the main, limited the jurisdiction of the court to offences by

children. I think there was some controversy about it at the time, although the majority opinion was that it would be better for the Children's Court to be concerned with offences by children and not also with offences against children.

The reservations were mainly in respect of affiliation or paternity cases where it was thought that such cases could properly be decided by the Children's Court, although even there the Act as it stands restricted the authority of the Children's Court in that regard. I have no objection to affiliation cases being dealt with in the Children's Court; I am easy on that point, but I still think the better opinion is that other types of offences against children should not be dealt with in that court.

The Children's Court has power of only a court of petty sessions under the Justices Act and therefore can only commit for trial children guilty of more serious offences, such as murder, manslaughter or other indictable crimes. Nevertheless, a number of cases that would come before the Children's Court involving offences against children by adults would be of a very sordid character, and I doubt the desirability of a magistrate, the major part of whose time is occupied in dealing with offences by children on the basis of punishment, and the administration of justice, finding himself involved every now and then in cases of offences by adults against children for which the punishment and administration of justice are entirely different from those which should apply in the Children's Court where the offences are committed by children.

Therefore, I do not feel drawn towards the proposal to again bring under the Children's Court all offences by adults against children, because it would involve all offences, even were they matters for committal for trial on more serious charges. I am prepared to concede the desirability of affiliation and paternity cases where the welfare of the child is peculiarly at issue coming before the Children's Court, but I cannot work up any enthusiasm for a proposal—and I think it would be a retrograde step—to go back in the matter of giving the Children's Court jurisdiction to deal with offences by adults against children. I hope that the House will not agree to that.

The last item to which I wish to refer is the proposal that children under the age of 14 shall not be liable to imprisonment. I had not expected that the measure would come up for consideration again at this stage. I had submitted some questions to the Minister to ascertain what, if any, number of children had been committed to prison by the Children's Court. The object of my question was to ascertain whether there had been any substantial number. I am fairly certain that in the metropolitan court such cases have been entirely non-existent. There have been some cases in rural areas where the

equivalent of a children's court—the local justices appointed for the purpose—have not applied the principles that should be and have been applied in the metropolitan area to deal with such children.

There have been one or two cases that I know of, and I was hoping to find out whether there had been other cases. In one or two instances, the sentence was reduced immediately after it had been brought to the notice of the Attorney General or the Minister for Justice. While I think it is perfectly true to say that very few children under the age of 14 have been committed to prison, it is equally true to say we should try to dispense with such imprisonment altogether. Therefore, I have no objection to that proposal. I shall support the second reading, and in the Committee stage I propose to take up the two matters to which I referred in my opening remarks.

**HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT** (Mt. Lawley) [4.50]: I support the comments of the member for Stirling relating to people in children's courts, accused of offences against children. Such proceedings are for the trial and punishment of the accused, if guilty, and, as the member for Stirling pointed out, the atmosphere of the Children's Court is not that of a court of criminal jurisdiction. The Children's Court has not the environment of a court suitable for the trial of people accused of serious crimes against children. I know it is unpleasant for a child to have to give evidence in a criminal court, but if the case is tried on indictment the child must give evidence in the Supreme Court.

For my part, I see no reason why we should distinguish the method of trial, so far as it relates to the giving of evidence by a child, in cases which perhaps are not quite worthy of being tried on indictment. The main object of such prosecutions is the trial of the accused. In dealing with offences by children the situation, of course, is entirely different; the atmosphere is different, and rightly so. If a magistrate thinks that the evidence is of such a nature that the public should not attend, he is entitled to clear the police court, as has been done and will be done in future, I suggest, on all suitable occasions. Apart from the comment I have made, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Child Welfare in charge of the Bill:

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—General amendment:

**HON. A. F. WATTS:** As the Minister has not given any reason other than that which he gave the other night—which in my view was no reason at all—I propose, at this stage, to vote against the clause.

**The MINISTER FOR CHILD WELFARE:** It seems to me, as I think it will seem to most members, that the term "secretary" as the official title of the head of the Child Welfare Department, is inappropriate. That department is not a sort of bureau dealing with merchandise but a department dealing with the welfare of children. The use of the term "secretary" is usually and almost naturally linked with correspondence and so on, and it is not an official title that should relate to the Child Welfare Department except, perhaps, to the person in charge of the correspondence section. It is therefore proposed to change the title from "secretary" to "director," and I think that should commend itself to a majority of members.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result:

Ayes	....	....	....	....	16
Noes	....	....	....	....	15

Majority for .... 1

#### *Ayes.*

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Brady	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Graham	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Norton
Mr. Heal	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. May

(Teller.)

#### *Noes.*

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Owen
Mr. Brand	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Sir Ross McLarty	Mr. Court
Mr. Nimmo	

(Teller.)

#### *Pairs.*

<i>Ayes.</i>	<i>Noes.</i>
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Yates
Mr. Sleeman	Mr. Boveil
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Molr	Mr. Manning
Mr. Sewell	Mr. Cornell
Mr. Lawrence	Dame F. Cardell-Oliver

Clause thus passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Section 20 amended:

**HON. A. F. WATTS:** I will oppose this clause. For the reasons I gave and those mentioned by the member for Mt. Lawley, I do not think it is desirable that this amendment should stand. As the member for Mt. Lawley said, it is true that children have been required, in some cases, to give evidence before courts that are not children's courts, but that the most serious cases have to be submitted for trial to the superior court and therefore the child concerned would have to give evidence twice most probably and at least once in the superior court.

However, the general principle is more at stake, namely, that it should be the duty of a children's court to deal with offences by children. There are specific provisions for dealing with such offences through the Children's Court. Ordinary procedures of

law are not closely followed in the Children's Court, but they would have to be closely followed in cases where adults were the offenders. So I think it was wise to make a distinction between the two types of offences. Whilst I agree that something should be fitted in—although it is beyond me to do so—to enable foreign cases to be dealt with by the Children's Court, I do not think we should go beyond that. Therefore, I oppose the clause.

**THE MINISTER FOR CHILD WELFARE:** The purpose of the Government in introducing this amendment to the Act is to have consideration given for the welfare of the children concerned. I am sure that that intention would also be in the minds of members opposite. It is thought that when the children concerned in these cases have to enter ordinary courts of law, the experience could be detrimental to them and, in fact, there is proof that it has been in some cases.

The member for Stirling has said that in regard to a more serious offence which has been committed against a child, he or she will still have to appear in the superior court after the person perpetrating the offence against the child has been committed for trial in the Children's Court. Although that would be so, I think the child concerned would at least have had the initial experience of appearing in the Children's Court and consequently would have had a sort of "softening up" process, if that is the correct way to describe it. That experience would benefit the child considerably when the case was being tried in the superior court.

The best advice we have been able to get is in favour of this proposed alteration to the law. I do not pose as an expert on the matter. My own natural inclination is that it would be better for the child if this amendment became law. The experts who were consulted and who were largely responsible for this amendment being recommended to the Government, all appear to agree that this procedure would be better in the interests of the welfare of the children concerned than the present procedure. This amendment has been introduced for those reasons and I think it would be wise for the Committee to pass it in the interests of children who would be concerned in the future.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	....	17
Noes	....	....	....	....	16

Majority for 1

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Brady	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Graham	Mr. Norton
Mr. Hawke	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styant
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. May
Mr. Johnson	

(Teller.)

Noes

Mr. Abbott	Mr. North
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Brand	Mr. Owen
Mr. Doney	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Sir Ross McLarty	Mr. Wild
Mr. Nimmo	Mr. Court

(Teller.)

Clause thus passed

Clauses 5 and 6, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Marketing of Barley Act Amendment.
- 2, Soil Fertility Research Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1955-56.

### In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 25th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council £7,453:

**MR. HEARMAN** (Blackwood) [5.10]: During the comparatively short period I have been a member of this Chamber, one of the matters that have impressed me is the tremendous increase in the amount of money that the Treasurer of the State handles from year to year. The Budget introduced in 1950 by the present Leader of the Opposition was for a sum of approximately £25,000,000. The Treasurer, who was then Leader of the Opposition, interjected that the Treasurer of the day had plenty of money and that he could be care-free.

A week or two ago we heard the present Treasurer introduce a Budget which, to all intents and purposes, amounts to £50,000,000 and which is double the amount budgeted for in 1950. It seems amazing to me that, despite the fact that the amount of money has increased to such a great extent, and taking into account rising costs such as increases in the basic wage, etc., we still seem to be as short of money as we have ever been for essential works. No matter where one turns one is met with the constant excuse that there is no money available for this or that project.

This leads one to wonder where all the money is going and whether we are getting the value we should be for the money that is going through the Treasury. There are many items upon which we do not spend as much money as we did in 1950, 1951, and 1952. For instance, the cost to the State of the war service land settlement scheme alone in latter years has been much less than in the years to which I have just referred. We now have the bulk of the Kwinana expenditure off our backs, as it were, and I had hoped that with the cleaning up of that item we would have been able to see great progress made in some new developmental work.

As it is, we find that we are spending much more money and we appear to have no new projects afoot; at least, we have no new land development scheme in progress at the moment. There does not seem to be any marked expansion, during the last couple of years, in the establishment of additional secondary industries. Those are grounds for querying whether we are getting the value that we should be obtaining for the money that is expended by the State Treasury. We hear constant complaints—almost weekly—that the Commonwealth Government is not giving us enough money, and yet that Government is supplying us with more money than it has ever done before. We are securing more money under the uniform taxation formula than we should get.

It is worth bearing in mind that the uniform taxation scheme is a Labour proposition from beginning to end. The formula was drawn up by Labour members. Despite the fact that we have been generously treated by the present Federal Government, we still have constant complaints about niggardly treatment. We get more by way of Grants Commission payments than any other State. I do not say that we should not; but we do. The Loan Council is, of course, not a Federal Government matter at all, but is a council consisting of all State Treasurers, plus the Federal Treasurer and another representative, and it has treated this State very generously. There is no question about that. We have been in at the division of the spoils.

One wonders, therefore, just how responsible some of the statements made by the Treasurer really are. One is inclined to ask if he really believes that a responsible Federal Government could reasonably be expected to give a great deal more to Western Australia. I do not know what the Treasurer thinks Western Australia should receive; and I do not know where the £3,000,000 that he proposes to expend on Bunbury is to come from. If he wants to do things like that we will require to have much more money unless we cut ourselves short in other directions.

It does seem rather tragic to think that we have got to a stage where we are spending more money than ever before. We have no particularly large projects in hand, and we are now adopting a system of delayed payments for work done for the Government by way of housing and other contracts. I think we should stop and ask ourselves where we are going in this matter. We should ask ourselves whether this sort of procedure is to continue, how long it can continue and, also, whether this system of delayed payments is the cheapest method of getting the work done. The Government could be placed in an invidious position in so far as it may be holding money which should be paid to certain people. The handling

of public moneys is something that requires close scrutiny, and there appears to be far too many matters which we do not have explained to us in the clearest cut manner possible.

Only this afternoon I had a question on the notice paper in connection with war service homes. The question was postponed yesterday and the answer I received today was, "No." I find that extremely intriguing, particularly in view of the context of my question. Surely I could have been told, "No" yesterday equally as well as today. That question was prompted because one of my constituents came to me and said that he was an applicant for a war service home. He has a block of land and his plans have been approved. He has a contractor; he was told two months ago to go ahead and get hold of a contractor. He is ready to build. After having experienced delays of anything up to a month in receiving answers to his letters—and then not having had them answered, but merely receiving notes to say they had been received—he was told there was a delay and that no money was available.

He was also told by an officer of the State Housing Commission that if it was any consolation to him, there were about 40 applicants who had already signed contracts and were not able to go on with the work because of a shortage of money. It seems most amazing that genuine applicants should be told by an officer of the State Housing Commission that some 40 odd people have now actually entered into contracts and are held up for money. The Minister tells us that this is not happening to anyone. I do not suggest that the Minister is not telling the truth, but quite obviously somebody is not telling the truth. He cannot have it both ways. I wonder whether the Minister has possibly been playing with words, and whether the figure of 40 may not be correct; or whether he could have given me a different answer if there were 39 applicants.

Hon. D. Brand: You had better make it 30 and ask him again.

Mr. HEARMAN: We may have to pursue the matter further. It seems strange. It appears to be an appalling state of affairs when people who were encouraged to go ahead and get in touch with contractors to do the job, are told that there is an indefinite delay. Such people are put to considerable inconvenience. The first necessity is for them to put a certain amount of money down. In the particular case I have in mind, I know that the man has borrowed £1,000 on which he is paying interest at the rate of 5 per cent. He has sold some securities and has had to turn them into cash; they are no longer earning money for him.

Having done that at the behest of the Housing Commission in order that he might get on with the job of building his war service home, he is now glibly told

that there is an indefinite delay and they do not know when he will be able to go ahead. This delay has cost that man money, and the matter has been very badly handled indeed; he should never have been placed in that position. Surely the Housing Commission must have known if there was to be a shortage of money! It must have had some indication of it last September at the very time it said that this man could go ahead and secure his contractor, and get ready to build.

The Minister cannot tell me that it happened overnight; that the Federal Government wrote over and said, "There is no more money," and cut it off like that. This sort of thing must work on some basis of quarterly allocations or something of that nature. I cannot be persuaded to believe that the Housing Commission had no knowledge from week to week as to how much money was available. The commission is actually encouraging people to enter into contracts on the one hand, and on the other it does not know whether it can honour those contracts.

This matter deserves a good deal more consideration than was given to it on the floor of the House by the Minister. After delaying his answer to the question for a day, the Minister has given me no information at all. It is idle to suggest there is no hold-up in the matter of war service homes. It is time the position was clarified in order to save other people from going through the same experience as this constituent of mine. Applicants for war service homes should not be placed in the position of prejudicing their own financial commitments in this matter.

On the information received from the Housing Commission, this constituent of mine does not know what to do. He does not know whether to reinvest his money, to hang on to it or to put it in the bank in his credit account. He can get no satisfaction at all as to when he is likely to build. It is a bad business. If the responsibility is entirely with the Commonwealth—and I cannot believe it is—the State should have nothing to do with it at all. The Minister has been secretive about this question and it seems that there is something he would rather not reveal. We should get this matter out into the open, and find out where we are travelling in this matter of war service homes. We should be encouraging everybody to build homes as much as we can. People should not be messed about in this manner.

Another matter I would like to discuss has relation to the Department of Agriculture. I know it is something in the nature of a hardy annual as far as I am concerned. I am pleased that some efforts are at last being made to do something to meet the accommodation needs of this department. I do not suppose that

members will be surprised when I say that I would like to see very much more done. But that is not the particular matter I wish to discuss today.

I am rather concerned at the way in which the department appears to be growing without, I feel, any particularly clear-cut idea of just what sort of department we want. We seem to be over specialising. That may seem rather an odd statement in these days of improved and increased scientific knowledge, but we do appear to be becoming more and more specialised almost daily in our agricultural and research fields. I would draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that a month or so ago I asked a question about the number of officers of the department stationed at Bunbury. The answer given me was that there were 14 officers and that they were all specialists.

Despite the fact that we have 14 officers at Bunbury, there are still a number of matters of importance to the local agriculturists on which there is nobody competent to give advice. This raises the point as to how far we can go with our idea of specialising; and whether we can get sufficient specialists in every particular branch in which they are needed to give specialist service throughout the State. I think we ought to have a look at what is going on in other countries in relation to this matter.

In the United States of America, which is unquestionably a progressive country, and which is sometimes regarded as the home of the specialist, the tendency is in the other direction. Instead of favouring specialists in their contacts with farmers, they are moving more towards people who have a sound scientific training and general knowledge. Actually it is not a very good idea to adopt over here. In medical science we have a highly specialised profession. We have specialists of various kinds—neurologists, pathologists, gynaecologists, orthopaedic surgeons, and so on.

But the major part of medical practice in this State is carried out by general practitioners—men who are well trained, and well versed in all the branches of medicine. When such a practitioner comes up against a problem which he cannot fully tackle himself, he calls in a specialist. I am just wondering what is wrong with applying the same idea to our Department of Agriculture in connection with the dissemination of knowledge to the farming community. I know there are portions of the State—the wheat belt for instance—where perhaps there is not the same call for the great number of specialists that we have in the South-West.

Take my own electorate. There we have horticultural people, dairy people, and of course sheep people. We have experts in flax—I think they are agronomists. There is also a certain amount of meat production in the area, and we grow a lot of potatoes.

Yet we just simply have not sufficient specialists to give adequate service to the people in the electorate. It has always riled me to think that a horticultural expert can go to an orchard and if, while he is there, he sees a case of foot-rot, it is no business of his to deal with it, and he is not concerned about it.

It would be much better if, instead of concentrating a whole lot of people in a place like Bunbury, we endeavoured to have officers of the department cover a much wider field and visit small country towns where they would become known personally to farmers and disseminate general scientific knowledge much more effectively. The advice they would tender would be very much sounder, because they would get to know the individual farmer better and become aware of his capabilities and limitations to a greater extent than is possible at present. They would know more of his personal background and what his family problems were, and they would tender their advice with a general knowledge of the set-up of the individual.

There are many small farmers who run a few dairy cows and a few sheep, and handle a commercial orchard. If those men did everything that the dairy branch, for instance, told them to do, it is possible that they would neglect their orchards. On the other hand, if they did everything that the horticultural instructor advised, they might neglect their dairy herds. There is no balanced advice as to what should take precedence and at what time of the year. The farmer has a lot to do for himself.

I admit that the final decision is with the farmer; but that final decision is quite important, and it is a pity that departmental officers who are specialists in particular branches can in no way be said to be competent to give a balanced recommendation to many of these people. In the United States the idea is to get what is known as extension work into the small community. The departmental officer becomes one of the community and knows all the people individually and personally. He is acquainted with their problems and can give general advice on agricultural matters. When he comes up against problems that are beyond him, he refers them to the specialist.

Furthermore, in that country, very much more attention is paid to the training of departmental officers in the art of disseminating information. There are even courses in the universities. It is most important to ensure that such information as is given is provided in a form that will assist the farmer to the greatest extent. As a matter of fact, the idea there is to allow the farmers to have their own way in many matters; to let them endeavour to solve their own problems with the advice given to them. That is what a farmer has to do ultimately, in any event.

Under the set-up in the United States, there is not conflicting advice. If a man did everything here that every departmental officer advised him to do, he would go broke in six months. He receives advice from the animal nutrition officer, from the wheat expert, and from the pest control man; and it would not be possible for him, working a 14-hour day, to comply with all the advice tendered to him, and he has to decide for himself what he will do.

I make no complaints or charges against any of the departmental officers. I have attended a number of field days recently and have come in contact with a lot of these men. I have not struck one whom I would say was not doing a fair job. I consider that the vast majority are doing an excellent job. But I have discussed this matter with them, and most of them experience a considerable degree of frustration because there are so many jobs they would like to do, that they know need doing, and that could be done if only they were given more opportunity and more time to do them.

In other words, we need more officers, if we are going to carry on with the idea that we must have specialists everywhere. We are going to need thousands of them; but the time will never come when we can afford them. We must therefore look for a cheaper system so that we can give at least some advice, even if it is not all of a specialised kind, to more farmers. It is surprising to discover that many farmers do not know of the existence or the names of some of the departmental officers. That is no reflection on the officers, who are working hard and go to those who display the most interest in their activities, which is only natural and reasonable.

Many farmers could, with great advantage, take heed of the advice given by departmental officers. But we must spread our departmental officers through the agricultural areas and get away from the specialising idea. I am not suggesting there is not room for the work of specialists, but every farmer cannot deal with a specialist in every particular problem that arises on his farm. I would like to see the whole matter gone into. I think there is a lot to be learnt from overseas, and it is time that the Agricultural Department became something more than the poor relation among other Government departments, which it has been for many years.

I am aware that the Agricultural Department has not the political attraction of some of the other departments. An election cannot be won through the activities of the Agricultural Department, which cannot build hundreds of houses or erect flats at Subiaco into which to put people of the right political colour. So far as the general public in the metropolitan area are concerned, the Department

of Agriculture comes into contact with them more in respect of its policing activities than anything else.

For instance, if somebody's milk is not up to standard, the Milk Board may refer him to the Department of Agriculture. If a person's orchard is not registered, the department gets on to him. If a fruit-fly baiting scheme is in operation, and residents in the metropolitan area do nothing about it, the Department of Agriculture takes action against them. For that reason the department is not popular from a political point of view in the metropolitan area. The amount of valuable work which is being done at the department's research stations may be appreciated by many of the farming community, yet probably not by a great number of them. As far as the average taxpayer in the metropolitan area is concerned, however, I think it could be said that he could not care less.

However, I suggest that there is no more important department than this one, when we consider the overall economic position of this State. After all, the agriculturist is producing a very large proportion of the goods exported from Western Australia; and it seems to me a pity that a department which performs such service for the primary producers should be such a poor relation politically, as it were.

While we have some very good officers in the department, we have lost some excellent men to other States which have been prepared to pay them higher salaries; and when we lose men from this department, it is not easy to replace them. I think that the last one who left us was Tom Miller, who went to the Department of Horticulture in South Australia. He was one who had been working in our orchards for some time, and he took away with him the knowledge gained in 10 or 12 years of experience of our problems and conditions, knowledge that we cannot purchase and which we cannot get back. We cannot employ another man who has that knowledge. We might be able to get a man with equal qualifications, but we could not get an officer with his particular experience of our peculiar problems.

The losing of such men is a serious matter, and the economic loss to the State is very considerable. Apart from the remuneration aspect, we do not provide opportunities for advancement for these officers such as exist in other places. I suppose there is no department that would have a greater influence in relation to the cost of production than the Department of Agriculture. That seems to be one of the keystones to the arch of our economic security. If we cannot reduce our production costs, it stands to reason that we are not going to be in a sound financial position. It is a case of being penny-wise and pound-foolish to neglect this department.

Another matter that interests me is dairying. During a recent Legislative Council by-election, various promises were made to the dairying industry, but so far

nothing has eventuated except that the overseas position has improved so that the dairy farmer may receive more than was thought possible a month or two ago. However, although that may alleviate the problem, it does not solve it. We are the second highest cost-of-production State in regard to dairy products, and the problem will have to be tackled. The Government says it is short of money and that the Commonwealth ought to help us financially. I do not know that that is a realistic outlook. If the Commonwealth assists us, we can assume that calls will be made on it for similar assistance by other States.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are a bit off the track, are you not? We are not asking the Commonwealth to give us money, but to lend it.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think so. We are not the only State with a cost of production higher than the Australian average, and if the Commonwealth helps us, it will have to help the other States. It seems to me that it will take years to work out a proposition that will be acceptable throughout Australia because in each State the problem varies. Our problem is entirely different from that in Queensland. If we wait until some Australia-wide system is determined, we will never get anywhere. Furthermore, if we want to put a really sound case before the Commonwealth, the best thing is for us to do something by our own efforts. After all, the Commonwealth problem on the question of dairying is entirely different from that of the States, and we cannot always expect the Commonwealth to ignore its own point of view to assist us.

One of the points that concerns me is that, although no definite promise has been made, the Treasurer did say in Bunbury that if the Commonwealth would not do anything, we would have to battle on by ourselves and try to do something. I do not know what he meant by that, and I do not think the dairy farmers do, either. One thing that does rather intrigue me is that in answer to questions I asked, I was told that any assistance the Government gave would be through the Rural & Industries Bank, and it would necessitate farmers opening accounts at that bank.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are wrong again.

Mr. HEARMAN: That was the import of the question.

The Minister for Agriculture: You said they would have to open accounts.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is how I understood it.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is strictly untrue.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is not entirely satisfactory to make Government assistance available through the Rural & Industries Bank. I cannot see why the old Agricultural Bank arrangement, whereby a man

worked through his own private trading bank, should not apply. I do not know why it is necessary to open an account at the Rural & Industries Bank. I have definite feelings in this matter because, in 1946, I, as an ex-serviceman, asked for a £1,000 rehabilitation grant, which was administered by the Rural & Industries Bank. The whole proposition was put to me in such a manner that it meant that if I did not transfer my account to that bank, I would complicate my banking procedure considerably.

The Minister for Agriculture: Under the scheme you are talking about now, there is no compulsion on anyone to transfer his account to the Rural & Industries Bank.

Mr. HEARMAN: If the Minister will stop interjecting, I will tell him what my personal experience has been. At the time I was discharged from the army, I owed my own bank—the Bank of New South Wales—£300, and I had a trading limit of £1,750. I applied for the £1,000 loan. Incidentally, not all my property was encumbered. The proposition put to me was that the Rural & Industries Bank would take a first mortgage over the unencumbered portion of my property and a second mortgage over the security held by the Bank of New South Wales. For this I was to be given an advance of £1,000 and my limit at the Bank of New South Wales was to be reduced to £750. The position was that I would not have had one penny more to work with; the whole of my property would have been encumbered, and I could not have sought further assistance from anyone except the Rural & Industries Bank. If the Minister doubts what I say, I challenge him to look it up.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am not arguing about your case.

The Minister for Railways: You would not take socialistic money!

Mr. HEARMAN: I did not. It took the Rural & Industries Bank nine months to get as far as putting up the proposition to me. Of course, by that time, the trading bank had made its decisions. I finally got a terse letter wanting to know why I had not signed the mortgage and why it had not received my cheque for inspection fees.

The Minister for Agriculture: What did you say?

Mr. HEARMAN: I quoted the receipt number on the question of the inspection fees, and I also pointed out that, in view of the fact that I had no intention of going on with the proposition, I would not be signing any mortgage. If the Minister wants to know what the bank said, I will tell him. I got a prepaid wire asking when it would be convenient for me to see the manager. Well, he came out and he admitted that the proposition that had been put up to me was a hopeless one, and it was quite obvious that it had been put to

me for one reason only, namely, to get my account away from the trading bank. This, I suggest, should never be the intention of Government assistance to ex-servicemen.

Mr. Johnson: That bank manager was probably trained in a private bank.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not know where he was trained. Does the hon. member suggest that the methods of the Rural & Industries Bank are no better than those of the private banks?

Mr. Johnson: On that basis, they are identical.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think they are because the private banks do not have the administration of these Government moneys.

The Minister for Agriculture: The point is that it does not apply to this proposed scheme.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am pleased to hear—The Minister for Agriculture: That settles that.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not know that it does.

The Treasurer: We will get a report from the bank about what you have been saying.

Mr. HEARMAN: The Premier can get the report.

The Treasurer: We will.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There are a number of similar cases to that of the member for Blackwood. They put pressure on these people to get their accounts by dubious methods.

The Treasurer: Go to the private banks.

Mr. HEARMAN: They are not able to expend public moneys.

The Minister for Agriculture: There are too many "ifs" in your speech.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is factual.

Mr. HEARMAN: No. I have given the Minister every opportunity to find out whether what I am saying is correct.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am not arguing about your case.

Mr. HEARMAN: I hope the Treasurer will get a report.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am not arguing about your case, but what you say about the proposed dairy scheme. You are on the wrong track.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not want to see any of the money that is to be made available to assist the dairying industry being utilised by the Rural & Industries Bank to purchase accounts. I think there will be other people who, like myself, do not want to transfer their accounts.

The Minister for Agriculture: There will be no need to transfer accounts.

Mr. HEARMAN: If it is Government assistance, it should be given in such a way that the person being assisted is



relieved of any pressure of that nature. He should be free to continue his present relationship with his bank.

The Minister for Agriculture: He will.

Mr. HEARMAN: That has not been my experience.

The Minister for Agriculture: It does not matter what you have experienced; it has nothing to do with this scheme.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not know that it has not, because the same bank will be administering it. Unless there is a change of heart on the part of the bank, it is reasonable to suppose that the policy will be the same.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are only setting up Aunt Sallies so that you can knock them over.

Mr. HEARMAN: No, because there is no scheme, as far as I am aware, so the Minister is quite safe in saying that.

The Minister for Agriculture: There is a scheme, all right.

Mr. HEARMAN: It does not seem to be operating very effectively.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are dealing with Mr. Menzies; that is why, possibly.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have pointed out why I consider that the immediate relief that is needed cannot be given. Whether we get relief from Mr. Menzies or not does not absolve this Parliament or the Government from tackling the problem. We have not solved it by saying that we have put the matter to the Federal Government and, because that Government does not agree to our demands, we can do nothing.

The Minister for Agriculture: Is this another Aunt Sally?

Mr. HEARMAN: It is of no use saying it is all Mr. Menzies' fault.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say that.

Mr. HEARMAN: Many dairy farmers would be glad to know what the proposition is that was put up. It is about time the Treasurer came up with it; if it is not time, I would like to know when the Minister for Agriculture thinks it will be time.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I do not think there is any provision on the Loan Estimates for this money.

Mr. HEARMAN: This matter is of fairly general interest throughout the dairying areas, and we would like to know more about it. If the Minister thinks it is not a matter of interest, I suggest he have a look through his own electorate.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are talking silly.

The Treasurer: Drivel!

Mr. HEARMAN: The question of availability of funds is one that concerns most of us. We know that the Government has

made funds available to Chamberlain Industries and we have been told that because it is a private firm the amount that has been made available to it, and so on, cannot be disclosed here. In passing, it is of interest to note that the Treasurer referred to the relationship between the State and Cockburn Cement Ltd. He did not seem to have any difficulty in disclosing the extent to which the Government was involved, and the extent to which the company was putting in its own money. It is rather funny that we cannot get this information about Chamberlain Industries, whereas we can about Cockburn Cement.

Mr. Johnson: If you look in the Auditor General's report, you will find it.

Mr. HEARMAN: We might.

Mr. Johnson: You will.

Mr. HEARMAN: The point is that we cannot get it disclosed by the Treasurer because Chamberlain Industries is a private firm. If what the hon. member says is right, why cannot the Treasurer disclose the information? If it is in the Auditor General's report, surely there would be no harm in disclosing it! I have every reason to believe that some further considerable sums of money have been put into that venture by the Government, and I do not altogether agree with the proposition that large sums should be put into a show like that, when we are told nothing about it, while at the same time primary producers, who are endeavouring to establish themselves on the land, cannot get the required money to assist them.

The other evening the member for Roe discussed this matter and unless we can get a Commonwealth scheme here, it does not seem as if we will be able to get any assistance in regard to our primary industries. Our secondary industries seem to get the assistance, but it is not given to the primary industries, and that is a matter to which members ought to apply themselves. I would like to hear something from the Treasurer that would indicate to what extent the Government has assisted secondary industries and primary industries through the Rural & Industries Bank. Some of these propositions are not attractive to lending authorities, but I feel that some assistance is necessary for primary industries, probably more so than it is for secondary industries.

I am not opposed to the idea of secondary industries. But I think that the primary industries, which, after all, are the ones which earn our income from overseas, deserve some consideration. So I would like to know the Government policy in regard to these matters and to have some clear indication of it from the Treasurer. There are one or two other matters I would like to deal with, but I shall leave that to a later stage as I understand the House is to rise at 6 p.m.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 6.3 p.m.*