

community, the better. It is something that is urgent, and I do not think we can continue for long asking other States to carry our burdens.

As a people, we are increasing rapidly in numbers, and we should now face the burdens that the population imposes; and one of the most urgent burdens for us to carry is that of a medical school. It will be expensive, if it is to be effective, but to lose all idea of medical progress and of establishing our own medical school might in the end be a much more costly business than any infection. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 7th April, 1954.

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

STATE SAW MILLS—APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL MANAGER.

As to Tabling of Papers.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yesterday the member for Dale asked that papers relating to the appointment of the new general manager of the State Sawmills be laid upon the Table of the House and I replied that I was prepared to accede to that request. However, I trust that members will appreciate that there is a report to me on the applicants by the Public Service Commissioner and that report is marked "confidential." I very much question whether such should be made public.

However, if the hon. member persists that I honour the undertaking I have given in answer to a question without notice, I am prepared to lay all the papers upon the Table of the House with this exception, that the actual applications have been removed by me because seven of them were from persons outside Government employment and accordingly it could have been most embarrassing for them in their relationship with their present employers.

I might add that I am quite prepared to permit the member for Dale to peruse all the papers, including the applications, any time at his convenience. If the hon. member still requires the Public Service Commissioner's file and my own personal papers, I am prepared to lay them on the Table of the House with the qualification I have outlined.

Mr. WILD: I am prepared to accept the position as set out by the Minister for Forests and if the Minister will lay on the Table of the House the papers to which he has referred, I will certainly treat them as confidential.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I move—

That the papers relating to the appointment of the new general manager be laid on the Table of the House for one week.

Question put and passed.

QUESTIONS.

FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

As to Reconstruction and Cost.

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

(1) How many piles are in the Fremantle railway bridge?

(2) How many have been replaced or will be replaced?

(3) When was reconstruction of this bridge commenced?

(4) When is it anticipated the reconstruction will be completed?

(5) How much has been expended on the bridge to date?

(6) How much is it estimated will be spent by the time reconstruction is finished?

(7) What is the estimated life of the bridge after the reconstruction has been completed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Five hundred and eighty-seven effective piles.

(2) Between 1933 and 1953—605 have been driven. Number of replacements will depend on divers' six-monthly inspections.

(3) March, 1952.

(4) September, 1954.

(5) £20,660 on reconstruction.

(6) £30,560.

(7) Renewal of piles is a continuous operation. Piers above water level which have not been reconstructed recently are estimated to have a life of 10 years before major renewal of these piles becomes necessary.

SPASTIC CHILDREN.

As to Transport by Government Buses.

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

(1) Is it correct that buses provided by the Government no longer transport spastic children to the Spastic Welfare Centre?

(2) If so, when and why were such buses discontinued?

(3) If not correct, how many buses are operating, and how many children are transported daily?

(4) From what districts are they transported?

(5) What number of buses were operating in 1952, and how many children were carried, and from what districts?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Three buses; 48 children.

(4) (a) Districts to Cannington.

(b) Districts to Midland Junction.

(c) Districts to Mosman Park.

(5) Three buses; 33 children.

ROADS.

(a) As to Main Roads Department and War Service Settlement Areas.

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

(1) In connection with roads in war service land settlement project areas in course of development, which roads are used also as school bus routes, to what extent does the Main Roads Department repair and maintain such roads?

(2) Is there any difference in the set-up where the road was first constructed at the cost of the Main Roads Department?

(3) If the Main Roads Department does not normally accept responsibility for care and maintenance, in view of the heavy Government traffic occasioned by the development of the project area, is the department prepared to accept responsibility, and if so, to what extent?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) When a school bus route has been established it becomes listed for an allocation of £6 per mile per annum for assistance with its maintenance. This work would be carried out by the Main Roads Department or the local authority by arrangement. In certain cases the department would give consideration to the augmenting of these funds.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(b) As to Widening and Reconstruction, Guildford-rd.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

In view of the fact that work has commenced on the reconstruction and widening of Guildford-rd. westwards from Garrett-rd., will he inform the House—

(a) how far this work will be extended under the current programme;

(b) when it is intended to commence work eastwards of Garrett-rd?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) The work will extend westerly to Grosvenor-rd. In addition, drainage improvements will be effected between Caledonian Avenue and Falkirk-st.

(b) Commencement of work eastwards of Garrett-rd. will depend upon what sections of roadway are included in the next programme of works for the whole road. This will come up for consideration in a few weeks' time.

POLIOMYELITIS.

As to Reported Cases in Various States.

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

(1) Will he inform the House as to—

(a) the total number of cases reported as poliomyelitis in Western Australia from the 1st October, 1953, to the 31st March, 1954?

(b) The total number of such cases reported in the same period in—

- (1) Federal Capital Territory;
- (2) New South Wales;
- (3) Victoria;
- (4) South Australia?

(2) Of the total number of cases reported in Western Australia, were any subsequently ascertained as not suffering from poliomyelitis, and if so, how many?

(3) Of the total number of cases reported in Western Australia, how many were non-paralytic?

(4) Were non-paralytic cases included in the numbers given for the places mentioned in No. (1) (b)?

(5) In Western Australia what is the total number of cases admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, or otherwise quarantined in similar institutions during the period mentioned, and how many are in such institutions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) 354.

(b)

	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	Vic.	S.A.
Oct., 1953	—	40	8	19
Nov., 1953	—	47	15	17
Dec., 1953	—	34	8	4
Jan., 1954	—	77	9	13
Feb., 1954	7	78	17	12
March, to 20th	12	103	46	14
Totals	19	379	103	79

(Subject to amendment.)

(2) Yes—19.

(3) 148 non-paralytic (not specified, 62; paralytic, 135).

(4) Yes.

(5) Admissions to Infectious Diseases Branch from the 1st October to the 31st March—127.

Active cases in Infectious Diseases Branch as at 31/3/54—12.

After-care cases—20 (I.D.B.); 23 (Golden Age).

No precise information can be supplied at short notice in regard to cases "quarantined in similar institutions" elsewhere.

There have been 92 country cases notified (49 paralytic; 26 non-paralytic; 17 not stated). The majority are likely to have been treated in country hospitals.

EDUCATION.

(a) *As to School Contracts to A. V. Jennings Construction Pty. Ltd.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Treasurer:

(1) What school contracts have been let to A. V. Jennings Construction Pty. Ltd.?

(2) What is the cost involved in each case?

(3) What is the total cost?

(4) What proportion is the Government paying before the completion of the work?

(5) When will the balance be payable?

(6) Is interest included in the contract price, or otherwise payable?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) and (2) Contracts let to A. V. Jennings.

School.	Amount.		
	£	s.	d.
Bencubbin	3,747	16	9
Bindoon	9,730	17	3
Chowerup Creek	4,979	0	9
Clackline	7,259	1	7
Coorow	6,431	0	5
Corrigin	3,300	13	4
Forrestfield	4,386	19	0
Gnowangerup	6,071	1	5
Kondinin	10,488	17	10
Mandurah	5,976	14	2
Mingenew	4,015	12	0
Morawa	6,271	6	3
Nyamup	3,667	15	0
Safety Bay	8,480	17	11
Serpentine	9,751	6	2
East Maylands	12,720	17	3
South Coogee	3,492	6	3
Trayning	3,985	15	6
Upper Swan	2,883	8	0
Wyalkatchem	7,046	8	6
Yealering	3,174	5	6
Gnowangerup—			
Latrines	1,379	12	0
Boddington	9,666	14	5
Merredin High	8,342	18	5
Denmark	7,634	9	4
Jarrahwood	4,920	7	6
Manjimup	7,892	11	9
Total	£167,698	14	3

(3) £167,698 14s. 3d.

(4) Nil.

(5) 31st July, 1954.

(6) Yes.

*(b) As to Provision of New School,
Dudinin.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What is the condition of the Dudinin school building and outbuildings?

(2) When was a new school first approved for Dudinin?

(3) When is a new building likely to be commenced?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The school is old and in poor condition.

(2) The 8th January, 1952.

(3) The matter of a new building for Dudinin has been delayed while inquiries are being made into the possibility of consolidation of the Dudinin, Harrismith and Tinkurrin schools.

*(c) As to Swanbourne School
Accommodation.*

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many children are there at the Swanbourne State school over and above the facilities provided at present?

(2) What relief is expected by a transfer to the North Cottesloe school, and how soon?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 60 (two hat rooms are in use as classrooms).

(2) It is expected that with the completion of the two classrooms at North Cottesloe within three to four weeks, the department will be able to cease using the hat rooms at Swanbourne school for class purposes.

*(d) As to Buildings Erected on Deferred
Payment System.*

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

(1) What schools or parts of schools are being erected on the deferred payment system?

(2) What is the total cost involved?

(3) How much is to be paid this financial year?

(4) Will the amount paid this financial year be equivalent to the value of the work done in the same period, and if not, what portion will be deferred and what rate of interest is payable thereon?

(5) With whom are the contracts made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) —

School, Contractor, Amount.

Midvale School—Additions; G. Esslemont; £6,000.

N. Northam (new school), Belmay (additions), Ashfield (new school); Concrete Industries (W.A.) Pty. Ltd.; £49,735.

Bencubbin (additions), Bindoon (new school), Chowerup Creek (additions), Clackline (new school), Coorow (additions), Corrigin (additions), Forrestfield (additions), Gnowangerup (new school), Kondinin (new school), Mandurah (additions), Mingenew (new school), Morawa (additions), Nyamup (additions), Safety Bay (new school), Serpentine (new school), E. Maylands (new school), S. Coogee (additions), Trayning (new school), Upper Swan (additions), Wyalkatchem (new school), Yealering (additions), Gnowangerup (latrines), Boddington (additions), Merredin (two classrooms on new school site), Denmark (additions), Manjimup (additions); Jennings Construction (W.A.) Pty. Ltd.; £167,698.

Total—£223,433.

(2) Total cost involved—£223,433.

(3) £7,500.

(4) No. £160,198 14s. 3d. Rate of interest, 5 per cent.

(5) G. Esslemont.

Concrete Industries (W.A.) Pty. Ltd.
Jennings Construction (W.A.) Pty. Ltd.

*(e) As to Use of Other than Recognised
Classrooms.*

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

(1) How many halls, hat rooms, staff rooms and other premises not being recognised class rooms are now in use as class rooms in Western Australian schools?

(2) How many children are using such premises at the present time?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 153. However, it needs to be borne in mind that contracts have been let and Treasury approval obtained for the erection of 136 classrooms.

(2) The exact number is not immediately available, but the estimated number is 4,000.

HOSPITALS.

(a) As to Modern Bed Requirements.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

What are considered to be the modern hospital bed requirements for—

(a) adult general hospital cases, per 1,000 population in an urban community;

(b) children's hospital bed requirements in an urban community?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) 4.7 per 1,000 population.

(b) 0.8 per 1,000 population.

These figures apply to bed requirements in acute hospitals.

(b) *As to Master Plan for Construction, etc.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Has any overall master plan been prepared for the construction of, and modifications and additions to, hospitals in this State?

(2) If so, have Professor Stephenson's ideas been incorporated into the plan?

(3) When was the plan, if any, formulated?

(4) Will he table the plan if there is one?

(5) If not, why not?

(6) If there is no plan, does he not think that there should be one?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The plan has since been modified in discussions with Professor Stephenson.

(3), (4) and (5) The plan was tabled in the report of the Commissioner of Public Health of 1950.

(6) The plan concerning the metropolitan area, modified in conformity with Professor Stephenson's ideas, will be embodied in his report to the Government.

(c) *As to Site for New Building, Fremantle.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Where is the proposed site for the new Fremantle hospital?

(2) Have all parties concerned been fully and definitely informed of the whereabouts of the site?

(3) Does the Fremantle City Council at present hold the title deeds to the proposed site?

(4) If so, what is causing the delay in the matter of satisfactory arrangements being concluded with the Fremantle City Council for it to relinquish the site in question?

(5) If not, why is there a delay at all?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) On the south side of Reserve 671, Hilton Park district.

(2), (3), (4) and (5) The Fremantle City Council has agreed to transfer the land to the Crown, but has asked for certain compensation. Negotiations are not complete.

ART GALLERY.

As to Site and Plans for New Building.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Town Planning:

(1) Has a site been set aside, or have any plans been made for the construction of a new Art Gallery?

(2) If so, where is the site, or in what projected building, will the gallery be accommodated?

(3) If nothing has been done in this regard, does it indicate that the present gallery is all-sufficient?

(4) Has Professor Stephenson been consulted on this matter?

(5) If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) The trustees of the Art Gallery and Public Museum have approached the Town Planning Commissioner in this regard and discussions are taking place.

(2) No decision in this connection has been made.

(3) Answered by Nos. (1) and (2).

(4) Yes.

(5) Answered by No. (4).

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Extension in Country Areas.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Works:

While the shortage of loan funds remains acute, would the Government agree to extend service pipes from Goldfields Water Supply mains, which are large enough to supply adequate water, to farmers who desire connection to the Goldfields Water Supply and who agree to cover the cost of same by contributions, which would be offset against water rates on those properties until liquidated?

The MINISTER replied:

Water will not be available for extensions east of Cunderdin until a new booster station at Kellerberrin is completed and a new pumping station is erected at Cunderdin for pumping eastwards. These stations will not be in operation for the coming summer.

The proposal for special financial arrangements has some merit and can be considered when more detail is available and other considerations make it practicable.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Inspections by Rent Inspectors.*

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

What number of inspections have been made under the provision of Section 13, Subsection (2) (a) of the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act, 1951, since the 1st January, 1954, by rent inspectors relating to premises where premises are part of premises which are leased separately for residential purposes on the application of—

(a) the lessee;

(b) the rent inspector of his own motion?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(a) Three on behalf of lessees, 34 on behalf of lessors.

There have been numerous complaints by lessees who will not apply because of fear of eviction.

(b) No inspections have been made because any determinations by the rent inspector before the 30th April could be varied by the lessor on and after the 1st May.

Inspections will commence on that date or sooner if the provisions of the present Bill are expeditiously accepted by Parliament.

(b) *As to Part-Leased Premises and Charges.*

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is it not a fact that the Minister read out to this House some cases of excessive charges in connection with part-leased premises?

(2) Are there not a number of such cases known to the Chief Secretary's Department?

(3) Is it not a fact that in the existing Act the provisions relevant to part-leased premises operate until the end of this year?

(4) In view of that, why has no action been taken to remedy the position in the cases which he states are infamous?

The MINISTER replied:

I shall refer the matter to the Chief Secretary under whose administration the matter comes. But at this stage I feel I can say that it has been at the request of the tenants that no action has been taken because of the certain knowledge that following an application by them there would be immediate notice to quit.

(c) *As to White Ant Infestation, Rental and Service Homes.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is it a fact that a fairly large proportion of comparatively new Commonwealth-State rental homes and war service homes are infested with white ants?

(2) What action, if any, is being taken to eradicate existing infestations and also what action is being taken to prevent such early encroachment by this pest in the future?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Definitely no. I might add that questions of this nature based on incorrect information do irreparable harm by creating false impressions in the minds of tenants.

(2) All normal precautions are taken in construction of buildings and regular inspections are carried out by officers of the commission.

HEALTH.

As to Alleged Dust Nuisance from East Perth Power House.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that the dust emanating from the power house is causing great inconvenience and damage to property of persons residing adjacent to the river in the Mt. Lawley electorate?

(2) What dust cleaners and dust eradicators are installed at the power house?

(3) Is such equipment of the most modern design?

(4) Is all such equipment in first-class working order and condition?

(5) If any equipment is not in first-class working order and condition—

(a) how long has it been out of order;

(b) when will it be placed in first-class working order and condition?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The dust emanating from the East Perth power station is not sufficient to cause great inconvenience and damage to property.

(2) Electrostatic precipitators.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) Answered by No. (4)

HOTELS.

(a) *As to Banning of His Majesty's, Fremantle.*

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

(1) Has he seen the report in the "Daily News", of the 3rd April, 1954, regarding the alleged declaring black of His Majesty's Hotel, Fremantle, by the Seamen's Union?

(2) Was the dismissal complained of justified?

(3) Was the dismissal complained of lawful?

(4) Was the action of the Seamen's Union in placing a ban on the hotel lawful?

(5) Is action proposed to prevent this kind of intimidation of traders?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2), (3) and (4) I have no information in connection with these points.

(5) The question of trying to prevent all kinds of intimidation, including the type which is practised by some large companies against small commercial concerns, will receive consideration.

(b) *As to Rights of Individuals.*

Mr. LAWRENCE (without notice) asked the member for Nedlands:

Does the hon. member consider that individuals, as members of a union, are not entitled to eat or drink at any public house that they may desire?

Mr. COURT replied:

I have no answer to make until I receive more information from the Premier. I shall be asking him further questions without notice to clarify my original question, because he was unable to give me answers to Nos. (2), (3) and (4), of my question.

(c) *As to Dismissal and Ban.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of his answers to Nos. (2), (3) and (4) of my questions, and because of the seriousness of the matter concerned, will he cause inquiries to be made?

The PREMIER replied:

In connection with Nos. (2) and (3), it seems to me, that the Government has no standing to make these inquiries, because the making of such inquiries would necessitate a direct approach to the employers, and the Government might easily be told to mind its own business. I suggest that if the member for Nedlands is anxious to check up on these two points, he himself make the approach direct to the employer, and report the result to the House.

In connection with No. (4) I am prepared to make inquiries to ascertain whether the placing of a ban of the type in question is covered by any existing legislation on the State statute book.

LOAN FUNDS.

As to Sources and Expenditure.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

Will he supply the following information:—

(1) A schedule setting out—

- (a) the actual expenditure of loan funds for each calendar month in this financial year to the end of February;
- (b) the actual expenditure of loan funds for March, if available;
- (c) the total amount of loans raised this financial year by the State Electricity Commission;
- (d) the actual expenditure of loan funds by the State Electricity Commission to the end of February, 1954;
- (e) the actual expenditure of loan funds by the State Electricity Commission to the end of March, 1954, if available;
- (f) the allocation to the State Electricity Commission of loan funds (other than those raised by the State Electricity Commission itself) up to the end of February, 1954;

(g) the allocation to the State Electricity Commission of loan funds (other than those raised by the State Electricity Commission itself) up to the end of March, 1954 (if available)?

- (2) A statement setting out particulars of the amounts available for loan expenditure this financial year, and the sources from which they are to be provided?
- (3) The total loan funds available to the State Housing Commission for this financial year, and sources from which these funds are to be provided?
- (4) The total expenditure of loan funds by the State Housing Commission to the end of February, 1954?
- (5) The total expenditure of loan funds by the State Housing Commission to the end of March, 1954?

The TREASURER replied:

- (1) (a) July—£687,432.
 August—£1,094,550.
 September—£1,392,255.
 October—£1,012,283.
 November—£1,625,375.
 December—£1,402,916.
 January—£540,138.
 February—£677,576.
 March—£997,933.

These figures represent expenditure from the General Loan Fund and do not include disbursements from Commonwealth-State housing funds or loans raised by the State Electricity Commission.

- (b) Answered by No. (1) (a).
 (c) £2,001,740.
 (d) £1,937,355.
 (e) £2,064,772.
 (f) £554,000.
 (g) £554,000.

- (2) Allocation through Loan Council for general works programme—£14,000,000.
 Allocation through Loan Council for Commonwealth-State housing projects—£3,750,000.
 Loans raised by State Electricity Commission—£2,001,740.
 Loan from Australasian Petroleum Refinery Ltd.—£500,000.
 Loan from Commonwealth Bank to Royal Perth Hospital (estimated)—£176,000.
 Loan repayments—£1,630,500.
- (3) Allocation through Loan Council for Commonwealth-State housing projects—£3,750,000.
 Loan from Australasian Petroleum Refinery Ltd.—£500,000.
- (4) £2,418,345.
- (5) Not available.

INDUSTRIES, MAJOR.*As to Intention to Establish.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

During the period the Government has been in office, what major industry, if any, has indicated its intention to establish itself in this State?

The MINISTER replied:

Discussions have been held with a number of large concerns. No major concern has yet indicated its intention to establish itself in Western Australia. A number of smaller, but still important manufacturing enterprises have commenced, either with or without Government encouragement, and from inquiries made, it can safely be said that this sound expansion of industry will continue.

DRAINAGE.*As to Work at Queen-st. Swamp.*

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it the intention of the Government to drain the Queen-st. swamp before classes commence at the Maylands East school which is nearing completion?

(2) If so, when can it be expected that work will commence?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is in the negative, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Loan funds are not available.

RAILWAYS.*As to Report on Couplings.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Did Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane, when furnishing a report on the chord railway, also prepare a report on railway rollingstock couplings?

(2) If so, will he lay it on the Table of the House?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) From memory, I do not think the coupling question was raised in the report by Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane in connection with chord line, but I have a recollection that Mr. Dumas did afterwards make a submission to the Minister for Works in connection with the couplings, which was forwarded to me. For the information of the member for Greenough, I shall endeavour to get the report and lay it on the Table of the House.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.*As to Readjustment of Boundaries.*

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yesterday the member for Maylands asked me a question in regard to the Commission's

findings in connection with the alteration of local government boundaries. I then undertook to get the information for him, and it is as follows:—

Work of the commission is temporarily held up because of the fact that the City of Perth has not yet made a submission. They hoped to do so earlier, but the Royal visit has delayed this. The submission will be effected within three weeks, following which it should not be long before the inquiry will be completed, and then a report prepared for presentation to the Minister for Local Government.

INDUSTRIAL.*As to Payment to Waterside Workers.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that the waterside employees of the Fremantle Harbour Trust are to be paid for the half day's work lost through the departure of the "Gothic."

(2) Is he of the opinion that if the payment had been made earlier by Cabinet, the shipping would not have been dislocated and held up?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No, because private employers would have refused to pay the men and that would have caused the trouble. If I may be allowed to amplify my remarks, the position is really this: The statement in this morning's paper does not show the true position, because it is therein stated that the union had approached me in connection with this matter and that I had indicated that the Government would not not be prepared to agree. That is quite untrue, because the union did not approach me in connection with the matter, and I had no opportunity of bringing it before the Government until the trouble had occurred on the waterfront. The first opportunity was at last Monday's Cabinet meeting, when the Government made its decision to grant payment for the half-holiday, believing that the men were morally entitled to receive it.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.*As to Bricks for New Building.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Are any bricks to be used in the new State Government Insurance Office building?

(2) If so, how many—

(a) have been used to date;

(b) are required for the whole structure?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) and (b) 475,000 bricks will be required for the whole work over a period of about 18 months. Nine thousand have already been laid. Five thousand are now on the site.

I might add that for several years the Public Works Department, which is erecting the building, has been on a weekly allocation of 50,000 pressed bricks and 15,000 wire-cut bricks. That has to cover all its jobs, including ones for which it has let private tenders. Whilst the present brick position continues, any bricks for the State Insurance Office building will have to be drawn from this allocation.

QUESTION DISALLOWED.

As to Rate Increases.

Mr. OLDFIELD (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the fact that he attended a ratepayers' meeting held at Wembley last evening and expressed at length his disagreement with the Perth City Council's action in increasing his rates from £12 8s. per annum to £23 18s. per annum, will he inform the House what steps he is taking regarding the action of the Government in increasing the water rates in the northern and eastern suburbs by as much as 300 per cent. and rail freights and charges by as much as 35 per cent.?

Mr. SPEAKER: That question is a bit on the dubious side. The action of the Minister for Railways in attending the meeting referred to was that of a private citizen, in which capacity he may appear as a ratepayer. It is not a ministerial question, and I must therefore rule it out of order.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 4.30 p.m., and on Thursdays at 2.15 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m., if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

These are the same sittings and hours as we had in the previous session, and I think they will be acceptable to all members.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

That on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

Library—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nimmo.

Standing Orders—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Hon. J. B. Sleeman, Mr. Nalder, and Hon. C. F. J. North.

House—Mr. Speaker, Mr. May, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Yates and Mr. Ackland.

Printing—Mr. Speaker, Mr. McCulloch, and Mr. Hutchinson.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [5.10]: At the opening of this session of Parliament, we heard the shortest Speech that has ever been delivered by a Governor; and we listened to a very brief speech by the mover of the Address-in-reply. I do not offer any objection in either case.

We meet now just after a great historical event—the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. Their visit to our State was what we expected it would be—a great success. Never was greater enthusiasm displayed. One of the most pleasing features in regard to the visit was the fact that so many of our people had an opportunity of seeing Her Majesty and His Royal Highness. All who wished to see Her Majesty—and there were many thousands who did—had an opportunity to do so; and, of course, thousands of people saw Her Majesty and His Royal Highness on a number of occasions.

Probably a greater percentage of people had an opportunity of seeing them in Western Australia than in any other State. There is no doubt that the visit has done a great deal of good. It has clearly indicated to Her Majesty that the same feelings of loyalty exist in our country as exist in Britain itself; and, indeed, in the other parts of the Commonwealth which she has visited. Wherever the Royal couple went, they were received by the people with wonderful enthusiasm.

I want to pay a tribute to the people as a whole. The decorations and the general display of loyalty reflect great credit on all the people, and Western Australia can be proud of the welcome it gave. I want to say a word in regard to the State Director of the Royal tour, Mr. Dolg, who had a difficult task, but all went smoothly. I certainly think that he and his staff are to be commended on the excellent work they carried out. I offer my congratulations to the business community for their

decorative efforts, and I join with the member for West Perth in congratulating the police on the way they carried out their duties; and I also congratulate those who handled the transport. As I say, the people generally displayed whole-hearted co-operation and enthusiasm.

The calling together of Parliament at this time of the year is not usual, but I want to say now that it is the desire of the Opposition to be co-operative, without departing from principles. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, will not permit me, during the debate on the Address-in-reply, to discuss legislation that is before the House; and, of course, I do not intend to do so. At all events I hope this legislation will not be considered by the Government from a purely party point of view. If we are to achieve anything with regard to it on this occasion, I believe there must be a spirit of compromise, and I wish to let the Premier and the Government know now that the Opposition does not subscribe to all that is contained in the Bill and will move certain amendments and make certain suggestions. Had the Government taken a more reasonable attitude when similar legislation was introduced last session, I do not think there would have been any need to call Parliament together at the present time.

The Minister for Lands: You do not believe that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do, and I think the Minister believes it, also.

The Minister for Lands: You are talking of the Legislative Council, surely, and not of this Chamber.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: When the amending Bill was introduced last session, the Government was not inclined to accept any suggestions or amendments from this side of the House. That was the wrong attitude to adopt; and I feel certain that had a more reasonable stand been taken, there would have been no need to call Parliament together at this particular time.

Mr. Lawrence: Wishful thinking!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It was all or nothing with the Government last session. The Government should keep in mind the fact that the Opposition represents about half the people of Western Australia.

Mr. Johnson: Far less than half.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If it is less than half, it is very little less.

The Minister for Native Welfare: How many of the people are represented by those who threw the Bill out in the Legislative Council?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Legislative Council expressed the views of a very considerable body of people. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Lawrence: What percentage of the people?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I repeat—members on the Government side of the House will not deny this—that the Opposition does represent a large percentage of the public opinion of this State and for that reason I consider that the views it holds and the suggestions it makes should be taken into consideration by the Government. However, the views expressed by the Opposition in this Chamber received scant consideration last session.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You did not think that when you were on this side of the House.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think I did.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You put the gag on us, and everything.

The Minister for Housing: Do you remember the arbitration Bill?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, and numbers of the amendments moved by the present Premier, when Leader of the Opposition, were accepted, as I think were also some of those moved by the present Minister for Housing.

The Minister for Housing: Only to reduce some of the penalties.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Just to reduce the savagery of the measure.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know the Minister for Housing did his best to beat up propaganda with regard to the savagery of that measure—

The Minister for Housing: It resulted in your Government going out.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think so.

The Minister for Housing: It resulted in you going out.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We went out, and you will also. We all have our turn. You should make the best of it while you are there. I am sure there is widespread resentment because the Opposition's views received such scant consideration during the last session of Parliament. I cannot recall any session during which less consideration was given to the views of the Opposition than was the case during our last parliamentary session.

Mr. Johnson: What did you do two years ago? You have a very short memory.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I cannot hear what the hon. member says but I know it does not matter, in any case.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition should ignore interjections.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I cannot help noting, in the latest return issued by the Treasurer, that the financial position is far from satisfactory. In his state-

ment on the 5th April he said that the accumulated deficit for the last nine months was £1,940,000, as compared with £1,896,000 last year. Members will recall that during the election campaign the present Premier described the condition of our finances as deplorable. He is a master of the use of certain words—"deplorable," "outrageous" and all the rest of it. His vocabulary, in that direction, is hard to beat. But what do we find? Despite all the additional charges and the taxation that has been imposed by the present Government, the financial position of the State is now worse, and if it was deplorable when we were in office it is more so now.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It is grim now.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is grim, and it will be interesting to hear the Treasurer—

The Premier: It will.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: —telling us what he is going to do in regard to the financial position of this State.

The Premier: It will be most interesting.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I asked the Government last session—I think I heard an interjection from the member for Victoria Park—what particular orders for goods it would like to cancel or what goods we had ordered overseas it did not approve of, and I did not hear one solitary objection.

Mr. Andrew: We had to pay for what you contracted for.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government raised no objection to what we had contracted for and, in fact, found those contracts very useful indeed. I know that the Premier will blame the Commonwealth Government, although he admits that he has received fair treatment as the result of the recommendations of the Grants Commission, yet despite those facts he continues to show this increasing deficit. I think he told the Grants Commission that he would have a deficit of £600,000 this year and that shows how wide of the mark he was. He does not seem to have any grasp of the situation, and his estimates appear as though they will be hundreds of thousands of pounds wide of the mark.

Mr. Andrew: It is deplorable.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is.

The Premier: Of course, you realise that the railways are not carrying any wheat now.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I will say something about the railways as I continue, because the Premier promised that he would cure the ills of the railways without increasing freights, and so on.

Hon. D. Brand: But instead he raised the freights by 35 per cent.

The Premier: The fact that no wheat is being transported by the railways is having a serious effect on railway finance.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Premier has found an excuse already.

The Premier: It is a fact.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Premier is a past master at putting forward excuses as to why this or that cannot be done, and it is a good thing that he is able to do so because he will be hard put to it to justify the promises he made but has not fulfilled and is not likely to fulfil.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Remember the excuses you put up about the wrong use of certain cement?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, I do.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You said you did the correct thing.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I still say so.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: This Government had to bring down a special item in the Estimates to cover that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Of course I remember it. You went down to see the Governor but did not get very far.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He did not say—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Premier goes on increasing charges and taxation in every direction that he can think of and with regard to the question I asked yesterday about the Subiaco flats, I thought his reply was extraordinary. Here we find that some hundreds of thousands of pounds are to be spent. The Government has decided that this money shall be used for the building of flats, but the Premier said he did not know from where the money would be obtained.

The Premier: I said the Government had not decided, and that is different from what you have just said.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: You said you had not decided from where the money would be obtained.

The Premier: That is different from what you said.

Hon. D. Brand: Do you know whether the money is available?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think that when such a huge sum of money is to be spent and tenders are called, it is an extraordinary position that the Premier at this stage should say, "I do not know from what source the money will come."

The Premier: I said the Government had not yet decided from which source it would come and that is entirely different from what you are saying.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Then take what you say, that you have not decided from what source it will come. Does the Treasurer regard that as sound finance?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: To call tenders, not knowing from what source the finance will be made available?

The Premier: You are still mis-stating the position. I said that the Government has not yet decided from which source the money will come.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: All right. I still say it is most extraordinary finance.

The Premier: What is?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What you are doing.

The Premier: What is that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: At this stage you have not decided from which source the money will come.

The Premier: That is right.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yet you call tenders! If the Government is carrying on its business in other directions in the same manner as this, I can see a very confused state of affairs arising.

The Premier: We will arrive at a decision before letting the contract.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know you are calling tenders, but you have definitely decided to go on with this work and surely the first thing to do would be to decide from which source the finance would be made available!

The Premier: We only decide finally to go on with the work when we let a contract.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know, but to all intents and purposes you have decided to go on with this work and I think we are entitled to know from which source the finance will be made available. Is it going to affect your loan programme, and if so, to what extent? What public works will be affected by it?

The Premier: None.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Therefore it is not coming out of loan funds.

The Premier: Not out of loan funds for public works.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Then from what other loan funds?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition must not conduct a private discussion across the Chamber, but must address the Chair.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is a most interesting discussion and I do say this is most extraordinary finance.

The Minister for Housing: It might interest the Leader of the Opposition to know that contracts far greater than that contemplated for the Subiaco flats have been entered into by the State Housing Commission within the last month for the purpose of building individual houses, and there is nothing extraordinary about that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is an entirely different thing. You have certain funds allotted to the Housing Commission and you are using them.

The Minister for Housing: But there is no certainty, in respect of any particular house, as to from what funds the money will come, because it is an overall programme.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: You know it will come from housing funds.

The Minister for Housing: Under one or a number of headings.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Is this another instance of where you do not know where the money is coming from?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will please resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition seems to be in a queer mood this afternoon.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: I have already drawn his attention, two or three times, to the fact that he is conducting a private discussion across the floor of the House. I ask him to please ignore all interjections, but, if he has to reply to them, not to answer them in a personal sense.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Very well, Mr. Speaker. I shall try to obey your ruling. I was dealing with the financial position generally, but I would remind the Treasurer that the more taxes he imposes upon the community, the more he will have to provide to meet the needs of the State. It is certain that he cannot tax the State into prosperity.

Another matter to which I wish to make reference and which I have noted with interest is that the Government has been making certain appointments and an outstanding qualification appears to be that the applicants should be Government supporters: Let us have a look at the State Electricity Commission to start with. Mr. Frank Ledger has not been reappointed as a member of that commission.*

The Minister for Education: Whom did he replace, by the way?

The Premier: Why did your Government put Mr. Gough off and put Mr. Ledger on?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: My Government put Mr. Ledger on because he was a manufacturer, and one of the largest consumers of power in this State.

The Premier: The large consumers are well able to look after themselves.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He was an engineer and had all those qualifications which we considered well fitted him to be a member of the State Electricity Commission.

The Premier: He was not an engineers' representative.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No, he was not; he was a consumers' representative and a large consumer himself. He was vitally interested in the consumption of electricity.

The Premier: But not in the small consumers.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Of course he was interested in the small consumer. Why should he not be interested?

The Premier: He was not interested in the small consumer.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is not correct.

The Premier: Of course it is correct.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Did the Premier hear any complaints about Mr. Ledger's representation of the consumers whilst he was a member of the commission?

The Premier: Did the Leader of the Opposition hear any complaints about Mr. Gough's representation of the consumers?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No.

The Premier: No, of course you did not.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: But my Government did consider that, in placing a man like Mr. Ledger on the commission, it was appointing a man who would be an acquisition to it and who represented a number of people who were vitally interested in electricity, not only from the point of view of lighting, but also from the point of view of the supply of power to keep industry going.

The Premier: Could not Mr. Gough represent all the consumers?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think he could. What knowledge has Mr. Gough of the interests of the manufacturing industry?

The Premier: Considerable.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Would not Mr. Ledger have an opportunity to consult all manufacturers in the city?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition please resume his seat? I would ask Ministers to refrain from these constant interjections. Each Minister has the right to reply to whatever the Leader of the Opposition is saying, and I think we would get on with our business a lot faster if these constant interjections from Ministers would cease.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not consider that there was any justification for the Government taking this action and it is unfortunate that it has done so. It has taken off the commission a man of ability; a man of considerable knowledge of electricity requirements and, as I have already said, he is one who is able to consult with the large users of power in this city. There is no doubt, too, that he was quite capable of representing the views of consumers generally.

The Minister for Education: Will you tell the House why you took me off University Senate?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Speaker has already reprimanded me on two or three occasions, but if he will permit me, I will tell the Minister why. The Minister was appointed to the University Senate

and, I take it, in his capacity as Minister for Education. We had a look at the whole set-up of the University Senate and we thought it was necessary that we should have on it appointees who could give plenty of time to its affairs, particularly to those relating to finance. We put an accountant on the Senate and I believe our action was justified. It cannot be said that we made political appointments to the Senate—

The Minister for Education: Oh, no!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: —because we did reappoint and appoint members who were supporters of the previous Labour Government. One of our last appointments was that of Mr. T. G. Davies to a position on the Senate. I understand that on the State Electricity Commission Mr. Severn, the secretary of the Hospital Employees' Union, has been appointed in place of Mr. Ledger.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: A very good appointment that!

The Minister for Health: A very good man!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know him personally. I know he is the secretary of the Hospital Employees' Union, but I do not know what qualifications he has to fill a position such as this. He may be a good man, but I know he has succeeded a good man also. Of course, under the terms outlined in the Act, there is provision for the employees to have their own representative on the commission. I want to pay a tribute to the retiring chairman of the State Electricity Commission, Mr. Dumas. There is no doubt that he did excellent work in his position as chairman of that commission. I would say outstanding work. I think we were very fortunate indeed that we had his services during a very important stage of our power development.

I now come to yet another appointment. This is the general manager of the State Saw Mills. Mr. Gregson has been appointed to this position. I do not doubt Mr. Gregson's qualifications and I have no knowledge of his political views—

The Premier: Neither have I.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: —but it is, to say the least of it, another instance of extraordinary procedure when one considers that certain men were selected to report upon certain activities of the former Conservator of Forests and that two or three have received top appointments in this State. It is a precedent without parallel in Western Australia and I hope that in future, when inquiries are being made into the activities of any Government department or any Government officer, those taking part in the inquiry will not be applicants for a position in the department or some other department concerned.

The Minister for Housing says that he wants people to own and build their own houses. He complains of the tendency of people to lean upon Governments to provide housing. I think that is right. At Narrogin he said, "We want to get back to the good old pioneering days" and he went on to say that the new Australians had this spirit and denied themselves in certain directions in order to provide homes for themselves. I agree that the pioneers of this country provided homes for themselves and their families under extremely difficult circumstances. However, it must be remembered that the controls which have existed for such a long period have not offered inducements to people to build their own homes. Surely the Minister will agree with that.

The Minister for Housing: Those controls were soon lifted by this Government, though.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We also were well on the way to lifting controls. The Minister was following our policy in regard to the lifting of controls. I commend the Minister for following our good example in that direction.

The Minister for Housing: I went further than you were prepared to go.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Oh, no! There is no doubt that the lifting of controls and the plentiful supply of building materials will bring out the initiative and enterprise of a great number of people. What we require is the provision of good homes at the cheapest possible cost. The policy of the Government in building homes by day labour will not achieve this result. Competition in the building trade should be encouraged.

I notice that it is the policy of the Government to bring about the abolition of private building. Just how soon it proposes to put that policy into operation, I do not know, but I do know that it will be a most retrograde step. I notice that it is first proposed to control the private builders, and no doubt this control will severely hamper their activities. In a country such as this, to do anything which will not encourage the private builder to build to his utmost constitutes a shocking policy.

The Minister for Housing: There are more contracts in the hands of private builders now than ever before in the history of Western Australia.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is all right. I hope the Minister will continue with that policy. He should not carry out the Government's policy as printed and abolish private building.

The Minister for Housing: You can bet your life that the right thing will be done.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If the Government runs true to form, it will carry out its printed policy which provides for the abolition of private building. In answer to a question that I asked the Pre-

mier yesterday, he replied that no further increased rail freights would be imposed on the rural and mining areas. I was very glad to have that assurance from him. It will be most interesting to know what he is going to do about the railway position, because in his statement issued on the 2nd April, 1954, he said that the railways lost £131,236 last month and since the 1st July, 1953, a total of £2,552,000.

I would like to hear the Premier speak on this subject and ascertain what he is doing in trying to prevent these losses or to cut them down to a considerable extent. As I said last session, this is a huge spending department and it requires a most careful eye to be kept on it. If the Premier is to improve the finances of Western Australia he, as Treasurer of this State, will have to devote a considerable amount of time in keeping a very close watch on railway finances and seeing that he is getting full value for money spent. I noticed today a statement by the Minister for Railways in regard to the transport of livestock by road. The Minister expresses concern in this regard. There is no doubt that the railways are losing a considerable amount of stock traffic. The position is that farmers are able to cart their stock to the market and land them in good condition. The stock are not left in trucks for hours.

Another advantage is that farmers are able to back-load and land on their properties within a few hours any stock they may buy. Of course this is of great benefit and advantage to the farmers. I bring this specific case to the notice of the Minister: I was told the other day that stock loaded at Waroona, which is 70 miles from the metropolitan area, took 14 hours to get to the Midland market, and when they arrived they were sold at the very end of the sale.

The Minister for Railways: How long were they loaded before the departure of the train?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Not very long. There was considerable delay en route. The Minister has been contacted by letter in this regard, and I can give the names if he so desires so that he can have a look at the matter himself. These are matters regarding railway transport which require close investigation in order that inquiries can be made—

Mr. Nalder: How long did it take to transport the stock by road?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: A couple of hours.

The Minister for Railways: Why did your Government order 600 new stock trucks which are mostly in the sidings at present?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: My Ministers were advised by the same advisers as the present Minister. They ordered the trucks no doubt to cope with the demand which existed at that time.

The Minister for Railways: Then immediately lifted the restriction on road transport of stock and ordered 600 new trucks costing £1,500,000.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We could not cope with the moving of stock and something had to be done. The stock had to be marketed. Because we were not able to transport them by rail, that was not a sound reason why farmers should not get their stock to market in a reasonable time. I am extremely pleased that the people in the rural and goldmining areas will not have to face additional transport or railway charges at least during the next financial year. I think they will be safe for the year 1955-56 because the Premier will be very careful in regard to increasing charges during an election year.

The Premier: I think railway freights are at the maximum.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is very pleasing to know.

The Premier: Would you not agree with that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do.

The Premier: I notice the member for Greenough is kicking you on the toes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If the hon. Premier thinks that is an indication to finish, I might say that I have no intention of doing so.

The Premier: I thought it might have been an indication to you to be careful of what you are saying.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am very careful about that. Recently I saw where the Goldfields were complaining about railway freights. I am anxious to see the Goldfields moving along on a sound basis. Goldmining means a great deal to the economy of this State and every possible effort should be made to keep costs down to a reasonable level. Now that we are to have more latitude for sterling, the free countries of the world will buy more gold. They are short of gold. I notice there is a revival of the limited London gold market.

The Minister for Health: You mean the price of gold might go up?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know about that. I think there is a brighter prospect. Fifteen years ago the London market was the chief market in the world for gold. I would like to see some financial assistance given to marginal mines, provided they are properly supervised and all payable ore is mined. I believe there will be a revival in the goldmining industry of this State. Goldmining supports a large population and great sums of money have been provided for its development by Governments and by private investments. Governments also have provided public facilities and amenities for the residents in mining areas. From Western Australia's point of view, the future success of our goldmining industry is very important.

Primary producers will be relieved to know that transport costs will not be increased. These days farming is an expensive business, and the farmer has to face added costs continually. Not all of these have been caused by the Government. He has to fight against vermin, disease, drought, fire and pasture problems. It is a never-ending fight requiring a great deal of labour and expense. One cannot help but notice the progressive strides that are taking place in farming areas. Many farmers are trying to cut down the cost of production by improving farming methods and by mechanisation.

In the planning of public works the Government should see that the farming areas are not denuded of efficient farm labour which is already hard to obtain. It cannot be expected of primary producers that they shall plan ahead, if year after year they are faced with additional heavy taxation. Once again I wish to express my appreciation of the excellent work that our agricultural advisers are doing; they are certainly doing a great job.

I feel there is need for the Government today to watch closely all expenditure. In this State the railway position needs close scrutiny. As I said before, the Treasurer should satisfy himself that he is getting value for money in regard to the huge sums the State is spending on railway rehabilitation. In such spending, waste and extravagance is bound to develop unless closely guarded against. If we are to keep taxation on a reasonable level, Government spending of both loan and revenue has to be carefully watched.

Soon we are to face a Federal election and electors must guard against handing their votes to the highest bidder. They should remember this: All hand-outs have to be paid for by the taxpayers, and reckless Government spending or promises are detrimental to the community. What is required is more intense thinking in the community today and a greater interest in public affairs. There is too much bulk thinking and not enough thinking by the individual. I see no reason why this session should be prolonged. As I have said the Opposition wishes to be reasonably co-operative.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Are you speaking on behalf of your members in another place when you say that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes.

The Minister for Native Welfare: That is a change.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I trust the Government will give ample consideration to the views of the Opposition and not adopt a one-sided attitude. If this is carried out then I feel a satisfactory solution will be found to the legislation now before the House. Let me remind the Minister that there are two sides to this question.

The Minister for Native Welfare: There are always two sides to every question.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am glad the Minister recognises that:

The Premier: There are more than two sides to some questions.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I cannot follow that.

The Premier: There is the left and right side, the front and back or the inside and out.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Here the Premier is getting into a facetious mood. I want him to take things much more seriously. He will be much better off if he does so. I know he has a sense of humour and I appreciate some of his jokes, but he has so much to occupy him that he had better take a serious view of the position all round. If he does that, his Government will be all the better for it. I do not like some of his serious views either, but nevertheless I prefer to see him in a serious mood rather than in a flippant frame of mind, particularly at a time when Parliament has been called together for a specific purpose—to consider this important legislation. I have no desire to say anything further, and I now conclude my remarks.

Hon. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [5.58]: My contribution to this debate will not be lengthy because it was not so very long ago when we had an opportunity to vent our complaints and voice our views on a great variety of matters. But there are one or two things to which I would care to refer, even at this stage in 1954.

Perhaps I should follow the sequence I have in mind. First of all, I would extend congratulations to the Under Secretary of the Premier's Department and State Director of the Royal tour, Mr. Doig, and to those assisting him and associated with him in that matter, on the very excellent work they did and on the very high efficiency they displayed in the management of that extremely difficult undertaking. I congratulate Mr. Doig and the others who have received honours which they fully deserved.

I feel, as did the member for West Perth, that the impression created in Australia, and particularly in Western Australia, by the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, was an extremely happy one. We were all impressed by Her Majesty and her consort, the Duke of Edinburgh. We feel, as did the member for West Perth, that this State's welcome was one which, although it did not distinguish us from the remainder of the continent, did at least bring us to a very high level alongside of them.

To turn to more mundane matters but some which in the long run will be of greater importance to this Assembly, I, too, appreciate greatly the undertaking or assurance given by the Premier yesterday that there would be no further increase in railway freights. Had he not felt capable of giving that assurance, my remarks on this subject would have been

much longer than they will be, but there are one or two aspects that I must mention for his future guidance.

Last year I expressed the opinion that the increase in rail freights was so severe that it was bound to build up a consumer resistance; that is to say, a reluctance on the part of people to make use of railway services if that could possibly be avoided. During the intervening months, from all I have seen and heard, not only in my own extensive district but also in other parts of the State, that is undoubtedly the case.

In my opinion the farming community are in every way possible taking advantage of opportunities afforded them to use other forms of transport, and therefore refraining from using the railways. In individual cases this may result in a very small loss to the railways, but collectively the amount would be substantial. This consumer resistance is partly responsible for the fact that apparently the additional revenue expected to be received this year from the increased charges will not be realised as was thought when the Estimates were presented.

There is no question that this state of affairs does exist and I cannot for one moment blame the people who feel that they are entitled to take such action. In fact, I would say that the margin in a number of instances between the cost of road transport and rail transport is becoming so narrow that when one considers the difference and the comparative speed and effectiveness of road as against rail transport, road transport is the more profitable.

I realise to the full the situation in which the railways throughout Australia find themselves. I appreciate thoroughly that, in the existing state of affairs, we cannot do without them and must make the best possible effort to ensure that full use is made of them. At the same time, I decline to be a party to regimentation of those who desire in a reasonable way to use other forms of transport, but it seems to me there is scope for greater efficiency and higher regard for the position of customers by the Railway Department. The department must regard itself as being in open and indeed in fierce competition with road transport and must, wherever possible, speed up its activities and better its facilities to the utmost extent practicable in order to meet the fierce competition to the nth degree. This, I believe, is not being done.

In many places—I have not time to recite them except to mention the general fact—one hears of the difficulties and delays that are being experienced by consignors on the railways in regard to the transport of goods. I am not saying that improvements have not been made in some directions. I know there have been improvements; there has been a continual

effort in some directions over quite a long period, but it has not gone far enough and there is room for more.

One case brought to my notice I may find time to recite. A farmer consigned a truck-load of wool to Fremantle for sale. When it reached Fremantle, two bales were missing. Inquiries revealed that they had fallen off the railway truck and were lying alongside the line 50 or 60 miles from the place where they were consigned. Instructions, I am informed, were issued by the department that as soon as a train with an empty truck passed the spot, the wool should be picked up. For some days it was not picked up. Finally one bale was picked up and, in the interim, the other bale was stolen. This certainly does not smack of the efficiency that we expect the department to display.

Thus I feel there is great room for improvement, and if such improvement can be made, it will, to some degree, induce consignors of goods to refrain from making use of road transport or other forms of transport on every conceivable occasion and, instead, make some contribution to the betterment of the railway revenue and the improvement of the State's transport system without, on the other hand, increasing charges on those who, as the Leader of the Opposition said, have sufficient problems to contend with in their production costs, and this at a time when, in some directions, there is a grave doubt about the continuity of profitable market prices for their products.

Those things can only be determined in the future—some perhaps in the immediate future. If there are indications in the direction of a decline to some extent at least in the market price for products and by no means an increase in them, it will be the more necessary that the costs of production, which include those of the various forms of transport, should be kept down to a minimum. I have nothing more to say at present about the railways; there will be time and opportunity on some future occasion to speak on the subject again.

I was greatly interested yesterday to hear the Minister for Housing refer to 576 flats which, he said, were built during the term of office of the preceding Government. He was speaking at the time of the proposed flats at Subiaco, which are to be in one block of buildings to accommodate something like 240 flats, and he made the assertion I have mentioned, doubtless to create in the public mind an impression that somewhere at some time the previous Government had erected somewhat similar flats.

The Minister for Housing: That was not the intention. I mentioned it to demonstrate that the Commonwealth does allow the erection of flats under the Commonwealth-State agreement.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: There is a great gulf between the type of flat the Minister wishes to build and the type that was built during the period 1947-1952.

The Minister for Housing: It would be ever so much better.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That is a matter we can discuss later on. The great majority of the flats to which the hon. gentleman referred were designed to accommodate two, three or four families at the most and covered a relatively vast area of land. These were located behind the Belmont-road and in other parts of the metropolitan area. In the main, they were erected as triplex and duplex houses, if I remember aright, for the reception of tradesmen who were being brought from the Old Country to add to the building force of the State and so enable the provision of housing to proceed at even greater speed. There is no resemblance whatever between the two propositions. Goodness gracious me, there have been duplex houses in every State of the Commonwealth and very few people call them flats, though they are self-contained for two families.

The Minister for Housing: Those your Government built were not self-contained.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: To my knowledge some of them were.

The Minister for Housing: They had communal laundry facilities.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Some had, but some were built on comparatively large areas of land, and the proposition was an entirely different one. The Minister should realise that he has received very little criticism from me, and I formed the opinion that he quoted the figures to convey the impression that something similar had been done by the previous Government. As I have explained, that was not so.

Much has been said during the past month, and something has been said today, about the goods that were ordered and not paid for at the end of the financial year 1952-53 by the Government of which the present Leader of the Opposition was the head, and he indicated that he had not expected members opposite to offer any objection to the goods thus ordered as being unnecessary or undesirable. I would go further and say that, if some of those goods had not been ordered and brought to Western Australia at a time when, unfortunately, financial resources were unexpectedly very strained, the situation of some of our public services would have been very much worse.

For example, I refer to the pre-fab. school buildings, for which I believe a sum of something like £540,000 was outstanding. I regard the Minister for Education as a very fair-minded man, and I think he will agree that, without those buildings, the difficulties against which he has been battling—I fully appreciate them be-

cause I had to battle against them—would have been almost insuperable. Conditions are bad enough as it is, but had not something like 160 pre-fab. classrooms been erected in various parts of the State, the accommodation for schools would have become almost intolerable.

If I remember aright, at the time notification was given of the fact that the Government had ordered certain diesel locomotives three-and-a-half years ago, some exception was taken. I hope that I am not accusing the present Minister for Railways wrongly, but some exception was taken by members of his party when sitting in opposition and statements were made as to the disadvantage that would result to the coal industry and so forth. The position now is that we have had a paean of enthusiasm from the Minister for Railways about these diesel locomotives ever since there was any real prospect of their actually arriving in the State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: As I was saying before tea, since these diesel engines have appeared in this State, the Minister for Railways has greeted them with considerable enthusiasm. There are undoubtedly very sound reasons why those locomotives should have been imported, one being that the Railway Department was carrying a very heavy burden in carting water for steam locomotives in various parts of the State. In some areas that problem is by no means easy of solution. I do not think any figures have been available as to what the carting of water for the use of locomotives has cost, but I venture to suggest that the transporting of the many millions of gallons of water required by the steam locomotives must have run the department into an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds in some years.

That was, of course, inescapable if the trains were to run at all, but it must have increased the operating cost, and therefore the railway deficit, considerably. That was one reason why we decided that the diesel locomotives should be acquired. At that time, when they were ordered, there was another aspect of the matter which struck me very favourably, and that was that they could be used with advantage during the summer months, particularly in areas where the risk of fire caused by steam locomotives was great.

I do not know whether the Minister for Railways and his department intend to make use of them to reduce the risk of fire caused by steam locomotives, but that is a matter which they will have to determine for themselves, although I am strongly of the opinion that it would be wise if that were done, at least in certain districts. With the increasing growth of pastures in Western Australia and in certain periods of the year, particularly, I would say, in December and January, the

risk of fire being caused by railway locomotives—especially those using Collie coal, unfortunately—appears to be great.

We all know that as yet no spark arrester has been made which can entirely prevent the emission of sparks from locomotives of that character, as if such a spark arrester were made and put into use the progress of those locomotives would finally come to an end, because, to put it shortly, the locomotives could not breathe as there would be no apertures whatever for the required draught and ventilation. I think the Railway Commissioners have a responsibility to put an end to, or at least to minimise to the utmost possible extent, the losses which are suffered annually through fires caused by locomotives.

In the present position it would seem that unless the injured person can establish that there was some negligence on the part of the Railway Department or its officers, his hope of receiving compensation is nil. To establish that negligence is extremely difficult as in some cases there is no negligence because every precaution possible has been taken, and in other cases, the negligence is virtually impossible to prove. In neither of those instances does it do the slightest good to the farmer whose property has been seriously damaged or who has been burnt out as the result of a fire occurring on a day of hot winds, when fires travel rapidly. I think there is something strongly to be said for consideration being given to the use of diesel locomotives in areas such as I have mentioned during the most risky periods of the year.

To return to what I was saying, the Minister is now enthusiastic about these diesel locomotives and when I look at them and realise the difference between the conditions of the drivers operating them and those of the drivers of the older types of steam locomotives, I wonder why the engine-driving community does not, as a body, ask the Minister for Railways to adopt the diesels as a standard type of locomotive for the Western Australian Government railways as they involve a minimum of unpleasantness—in fact, there is none attached to them.

Operating a diesel locomotive is like sitting in a modern high powered motor vehicle and driving under the most pleasant conditions. I am therefore not surprised at the attitude of enthusiasm which the Minister for Railways now appears to be taking up in regard to these locomotives. There are indeed many reasons why they should be the subject of congratulations, but I do not forget—I do not propose that anyone here should forget—that they were among those things ordered by the preceding Government, mainly for the first two reasons I have mentioned, and were to be paid for in the future and have been the subject of so much comment in this House. It is therefore no wonder

that members opposite are unable to say that the things that were ordered in those circumstances were not justifiably and reasonably ordered and that if they have not already done so, they are not about to perform a very useful service for this State.

I asked some questions today concerning the transport of children to the spastic centre. When the Sir James Mitchell School was opened by the preceding Government at Thomas-st.—being the first attempt by any Government in Australia, as far as I know, to do anything for the educable spastic child—it was necessary, in order to bring the children to that centre, to provide certain buses which went to various parts of the metropolitan area and transported the children to the school. I am glad to find that I had been misinformed and that the bus services had not been, and were not proposed to be, discontinued, but there are still one or two things I would like to say on that subject.

As we all know now, the centre, and the school which is part of it, is situated at the corner of Vale-rd. and Rookwood-st., Mt. Lawley. The centre was opened by His Excellency the Governor last Saturday afternoon, and I had an opportunity of looking at it. I must say that the Spastic Welfare Association is to be congratulated on its activity in regard to the matter, and the Governments that have been in control of the State's finances in the last three years are also to be congratulated on the support that they have both given to the centre.

Apparently, the buses today carry some 48 of the 110 children who are receiving care and attention at the centre; doubtless some of those children are not in the educable class and some, presumably, do not require transport. But the Minister's answer was that 48 are being transported and that there is one bus from Cannington and intervening districts, another from Midland Junction and intervening districts, and a third from Mosman Park and intervening districts. But there are children who are attending the centre and who are not catered for by any of those three buses, and a great deal of voluntary work is being done by public-spirited citizens to arrange for the transport of those children to the centre.

There are several in the suburbs of Fremantle, to name some with whom I am acquainted. These persons, either one or two days a week, provide voluntary transport for distances up to 80 miles a day; I say 80 miles a day advisedly, because it will be realised that it is the best part of 20 miles from the centre to Hilton Park where two of the children, if my information is correct, are situated. That means that a person living in Mt. Lawley, as one of them does to my knowledge, must travel 20 miles down to Hilton Park and 20 miles back in the morning, and the same distances again in the afternoon, a total

of 80 miles in one day. That may be the maximum distance travelled by any of the volunteers, but many of them do 40 and 50 miles.

The volunteers change from time to time because the people concerned, I am told, find they cannot maintain the work as it is too great a strain on them in one way or another. Therefore it seems to me that in all the circumstances of the case, and bearing in mind the extremely difficult position of these children and the fact that this is the only centre in Western Australia which can give them any real service, one could legitimately ask the Government to make investigations and consider whether these bus services could be extended to pick up a greater number of children, especially those living some distance from the centre. It would not be difficult to arrange for an extension of the service of the bus which goes to Mosman Park; it could run the extra five, six or seven miles that would be entailed in going to the Fremantle district.

I would like either the Minister for Health or the Minister for Education, or both, if they would be good enough, to have the matter investigated to see if some further relief could not reasonably be granted to these children, in order that they might have the recognised form of transport to convey them to the centre, even if they are not actually included among the educable spastic children who attend the school. While the first attempt was made only for educable spastics, because obviously there were no facilities available at the time for anything else but education at the school, the work of the centre has so far progressed and been encouraged by the Government that it has now gone far beyond mere education, as indeed it should.

Today, of course, there is physiotherapy treatment, and many other forms of treatment which are beneficial to these children. I do not offer these remarks in the least spirit of criticism and am merely suggesting that the two gentlemen I have mentioned may not be aware of all the circumstances and that an investigation would be well worth while. While it may not solve all the difficulties to which I have referred, it might at least minimise them to some degree, and at least it would be something attempted and something achieved.

The Minister for Health: I am looking forward to the day when we can give the same good service to our children in the country.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am too. I can remember the time when the Mitchell School was started at Thomas-st., and some inquiries were made as to the number of spastic children in the country districts. They were not as numerous as in the metropolitan area. If my recollection is right, the only place where there was more than one was at Bunbury and at other places there is usually only an individual child

and that, of course, makes the problem much more difficult. I agree with the Minister that we must consider the problem of such children in our country districts, and I feel sure, from his remarks at the opening last Saturday, that he has that aspect of the matter well in mind.

I want to dissociate my next remarks from anything connected with the Royal visit. I wish to make it perfectly plain at this stage that what I am about to say is not in any way connected with the visit of Her Majesty to Western Australia; I have already said that I think all concerned are to be congratulated on the efficiency and achievements during that visit. But I am somewhat astounded at the suggestions that have obviously got abroad in Australia and in other parts of the world that Western Australia is a plague-ridden spot with a disease known as poliomyelitis. I asked some questions this afternoon which were directed at ascertaining just what had been the position in other parts of the Commonwealth with regard to this malady. The answers I received were extremely illuminating.

Before I proceed to deal with those answers, I would like to say that no other State of the Commonwealth has been subjected to the publicity that Western Australia has been subjected to in the Eastern States papers—some of which I have already looked at—and I believe, from what I hear, in the overseas Press as well. In all the circumstances of the case, it seems to me that either the handling of the matter in Western Australia by the Public Health Department was of such a nature as to have occasioned quite unnecessary panic and unfortunate propaganda or, alternatively, the Press of Australia, for some obscure reason, which I could not fathom—and therefore I am not inclined to think was a fact—decided that it was going to give Western Australia, as they say, the gun in this matter because the Capital Territory of the Commonwealth, in which Canberra is situated, has a population of a little over 30,000—approximately 1/20th of the population of Western Australia—and, in two months—February and March—there were 19 cases reported in the Australian Capital Territory which, on a population basis, is equal to 380 in Western Australia.

For the whole of the period, from the 1st October to the 20th March, there were 379 cases in Western Australia. So in a period of six months we have, in Western Australia, a proportion less than the same calculated proportion in the Federal Capital Territory over a period of two months. I wish to correct the figure I have given for Western Australia. The numbers in Western Australia were 354, not 379.

Mr. Bovell: Those are suspected cases, are they not?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Those were all the cases reported in Western Australia.

Mr. Bovell: Why are the figures of the cases that were reported and which subsequently were proved not to be poliomyelitis, not published?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will have a word to say about that in a minute. In that same period of six months there were also 379 cases in New South Wales. That was approximately 25 more than the reported cases in Western Australia.

The Minister for Health: Of course, it has a population of 3,500,000.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I was about to add that it has a greater population and therefore the incidence is very much less than in this State, but that is not so in the Capital Territory. I suggest that if the position in Western Australia justified some concern, then the 379 cases in New South Wales, where the figures rose from 78 in February to 108 in March, would have justified some concern also, but apparently it is not justified in either case.

If one looks through the Eastern States Press, as I have done, one will find continual paragraphs head-lined about the position in Western Australia. One might find about two or three lines at the bottom of the page referring to cases in New South Wales and the Federal Capital Territory or somewhere else. They even got down to one paragraph which was headed, "One every three hours" which referred to the cases in Western Australia. Of course, those of us who are reasonably accurate in our thoughts know that one case every three hours means only eight a day, but to the average person a Press statement of one every three hours means something pretty bad.

The Minister for Health: The Eastern States wrote themselves down and us up.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: As I have said, they gave us the gun. However, there is something to be said of the fact that it might be the bad handling of the propaganda in Western Australia.

The Minister for Health: How do you make that out?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: One has only to read the Press columns which have appeared over the last couple of months to see a rising crescendo of excitement. There is no question about that. On the one hand, we had Dr. Cook, who was the Commissioner of Public Health in Western Australia at one time, saying that the outbreak was not nearly as bad as the 1948 epidemic because there were no more cases in number reported and a much larger proportion were not as serious or, in other words, were non-paralytic. On the other hand, we had the statement issued and attributed to the present Commissioner of Public Health pointing out that the outbreak is worse than that of 1948 and is likely to grow progressively worse.

The Minister for Health: It did, in fact, become worse, too.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Since that date, that statement has not been justified. That was issued about the middle of March. As the days have gone by, the numbers have become less instead of more as I am very glad indeed to hear. There is no question in my mind whatsoever that the result of all the activity, the propaganda, the public statements and the other efforts of the Public Health Department did create the impression—which impression was well played up, I admit—that the state of affairs in Western Australia was such that it was virtually a plague-ridden spot. On the contrary, I do not suppose there is any community in Australia or even in the world which, in the main, is more healthy than Western Australia is today.

The Minister for Health: There is no healthier country in the world.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am glad to hear the Minister's confirmation of that statement. The net result of all this propaganda is that Western Australia has been given a label which is neither justified by the facts nor fair to the people of this State and as far as I can see precious little attempt was made by the Public Health Department to remedy the position. In the recent edition of the Eastern States Press I do not find much information about the slackening of the so-called epidemic. On the contrary, I find virtually nothing.

But I do find, day after day, that the principal headlines in "The West Australian" all have something to do with poliomyelitis. Instances of such headlines are, "Polio Cases Grow" and "Experts will Confer" and these are generally followed up by an exposition from an officer of the Public Health Department. There is one page taken up with explanations about polio symptoms; some of the symptoms being those which one would experience if one had a bad cold. I know of children who imagined they had it because they thought they had one of these symptoms and who were rushed off to a doctor to find out about it.

We had a great deal of such statements published all over the place, whereas on the evidence of Dr. Cook, who occupies a prominent position in health affairs in Australia today—and indeed on all other facts that one can find—the epidemic is much less than it was in 1948 in its severity and no greater on the numbers. In fact, I think they are even slightly less than they were in 1948 because, in answer to my question, the Minister said that 19 cases out of the 354 reported had been subsequently ascertained not to be polio.

The Minister for Health: But there were a number that were never reported, which would offset the cases that were subsequently found not to be poliomyelitis.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: According to the answers given to my question, they were diagnosed as not being poliomyelitis and therefore there were only 335 cases. However, I have not seen any mention of the fact that some cases were subsequently reported as not being poliomyelitis and that of this total of 354 only 127 were admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. That is a very different position from that which eventuated in 1948, when something like 60 per cent. of the cases, at the very least, were admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. So it is high time that the Public Health Department of Western Australia decided to acquaint the Eastern States Press, and the other people who have been filled with the idea that Western Australia is a plague-ridden spot, with the facts in the hope that they will be as eager to publish the corrected statement as they have been to publish and expiate upon the earlier statements with regard to this malady.

The Minister for Lands: They cannot guarantee that the Press will write it up.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not asking anybody to guarantee anything. I cannot imagine, and I do not believe, that any sensible newspaper in Western Australia would create an imaginary state of affairs. I have no doubt whatever that the published statements, or at least 95 per cent. of them, bear out the fact that there was an element of hysteria in this business which was not justified by the actual facts. I will leave the matter there.

Mr. JOHNSON (Leederville [8.1]): I, too, would like to join in congratulating all concerned in the Royal tour. I would congratulate them for the way it was handled in this State, with particular reference to the manner in which the traffic problems were dealt with. Coming a little nearer home, I would like to express my appreciation for the manner in which the parliamentary function was managed. This was a most enjoyable evening and I really think we should have more of it. I would like to congratulate the members of the House Committee and the staff concerned on an excellent performance. I will not continue in this strain because I feel that every member who speaks to the debate on the Address-in-reply will add one or two more expressions of congratulation to the people of Western Australia on the subject. It has been a great and historical occasion and there will be even more written about it than has been said.

There is one subject on which I wish to speak briefly, and it is a very important one—the subject of money. It was my experience last night to attend a meeting in my own district—people from the surrounding neighbourhood concerned were

also present—on the very considerable increase in rates. If there is one thing that makes all people brothers it is an attack on that most vital of all nerves, the pocket nerve. We had a very large and enthusiastic meeting which protested against an increase in the cost of our rates and, as a matter for the record, that meeting did pass resolutions complaining about the amount of the increase and the method of the increase.

A committee has been formed to press for the passage in the next session of the House of legislation dealing with the Municipal Corporations Act, particularly that section which refers to the method of assessing rates on the unimproved value basis. I would like to record now that that resolution was passed by an enthusiastic gathering of persons from all parties in all walks of life. It was passed by people who owned their own homes, people who owned nothing of their homes but the mortgage, young people and old people and people from all political parties. There is a general demand for a change in the valuation method.

The enthusiasm with which people get together on the subject of money illustrates the major topic with which I wish to deal. I have been concerned with the handling of other people's money all my working life, and I considered when I entered this new trade of politics, that I should have no difficulty in dealing with public accounts when they were placed before us. I find, however, that the matter of public accounts is a very difficult subject. I did not find them easy to follow and I discover that I am not the only one who finds the public accounts of the State a difficult subject. People who have been here a great deal longer than I have, also tell me that they have considerable difficulty in getting a clear picture from the accounts as they are published.

When the Commonwealth Grants Commission was here at the end of last year I took the opportunity of attending practically all the sessions. I listened to the evidence and found it most interesting and illuminating. I discovered that most of the questions which I had wished to put into shape during the last two Budget debates in which I have taken part were asked by the members of the commission of the various departmental heads. This year in the month of January I went East for a short visit and made inquiries at the Parliaments of Victoria, New South Wales and Canberra, and discovered that members in those Parliaments have a very similar problem to that which confronts me, namely, difficulty in following and understanding public accounts.

The most interesting documents that I was able to obtain were the reports of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Committee

on Public Accounts which is headed by Professor Bland, who is a member of that Parliament. Of those reports the most interesting are No. 5 on the administration order and Nos. 4 and 10, which deal with the Department of National Development. These three reports between them show how a great department grew like Topsy, without any real parliamentary authority, and without any direct ministerial direction. That is a well-documented case of people doing what they thought right and doing it with the best of intention and in complete honesty in the name of Parliament, although Parliament had not directly authorised it. That, I feel, could happen in Parliaments other than the Commonwealth Parliament.

I have discovered that the Estimates, the Budget papers and the Auditor General's reports of each State, and of the Commonwealth, are in substantially the same form. The form in which the Estimates have been presented in this State have not altered materially since the Legislative Council was first established, that is, long before this Chamber was formed. The form has continued substantially unaltered all that time. The documents are available for inspection in the corridors of this Chamber from the first printed report of the first Government in Western Australia. Since that time there has been almost a revolution in the science or art of accountancy. In the early days clerks wrote in beautiful copperplate hand; I do not doubt that some used the quill pen.

Ledgers were posted in lovely handwriting in leather-bound volumes that weighed anything up to one cwt. In my earlier days in the bank I handled some of these myself. Every calculation in those days had to be made by hand. But nowadays there is the electric typewriter, the system of posting card-ledger by machine which is almost fool-proof, the electronic calculator which will solve mathematical problems faster than the human brain can form them, yet in all that time and with all the changes in the method of accountancy, no material progress has been made in the form in which accounts are placed before us.

It is not my intention to give the impression that there is anything wrong with the accounts or that there is any misappropriation; all I desire to indicate is that the form of the accounts is very old-fashioned and indeed hard to follow. In my opinion, they should be recast in modern form. I believe that one of the reasons why there is so little interest in public finance is that people outside this Chamber as well as folk inside, find it extremely difficult to follow the accounts. They include people with life-time training in accountancy and people charged with public duty and responsibility.

The speech of the Leader of the Opposition earlier today indicated that he also found some difficulty in following the intricacies of Government accounts, and he has acted for years as Treasurer. I doubt if any Treasurer, Under Treasurer or Auditor General desires to use the figures presented to the Government to obscure the real position. But there is no doubt that the situation is obscure, and therefore I feel certain that an articulate expression in this Chamber of a desire to receive the accounts in a modern form would be readily complied with by those responsible for supplying the accounts.

This is not an urgent matter; after all it has been going on for some 70 years, but I suggest the problem should be systematically examined in time to allow the 1955 Budget, to be presented in about 15 months time, to be produced in a modern form.

To my mind the appropriate body to examine the accounts would be a small commission consisting of three or five persons empowered to call evidence, make recommendations and report to this House. I suggest the most suitable person to act as chairman would be the chairman of the Grants Commission, Mr. Fitzgerald. He has had wide experience of Government accounts, has an outstanding record in public accounting and is highly regarded by all persons. Other members of the commission should, in my opinion, include a representative of the State Treasury—possibly one of the assistants to the Under Treasurer—a representative either of the Accountancy Institute or stock exchange, or one of the bodies dealing exclusively with finance. If thought necessary, a member from each side of the House could be added.

I consider that persons whose views should be sought by the proposed commission should include a representative of the Treasury officers who have to deal with accounts, the Civil Service, the Auditor General—in which respect the Act affecting him might require considerable amendment—the Taxpayers' Association, which should have a complete understanding of Government finances, and, lastly, the financial writers of our leading newspapers, part of whose duties is to explain public accounts to the people of the State. Many other people could be heard with profit, but I feel those I have named should be called to give their views.

Having stated my difficulty in following the accounts, to make the position clear I would like to give some illustrations. Taking the Department of Education as an example, in the 1954 Estimates £4,902,486 was provided. The Public Works Department carried out maintenance of school buildings. The Loan Estimates provide for the construction of new schools and extensions. What then is the cost of edu-

cation? Looking under the item of "Treasury Miscellaneous," the following can be found:—

	£
Kindergarten	17,000
To my mind this is an educational cost.	
Blind Institute	2,800
Slow-Learning Children's Group	2,000
Australian Council of Educational Research	346
University of W.A.	243,712
Faculty of Dental Science	14,002
Adult Education	750
Adult Education Board	1,100
Chair of Education	9,339
Public Library and Museum	34,720
Country Free Lending Library	1,500
Post-Graduate Course, B.M.A.	500
Library Board of W.A.	17,500
Purchase of School Sites	10,000

That last item should be a loan and not a revenue item. Or should it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I would say loan.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is a recurring item in the "Treasury Miscellaneous" Vote. Then there is this item—

	£
Zoological Gardens	17,250

All these items total approximately £400,000. To my mind, they are part of the cost of education and I think should appear under that heading in the financial reports. They make up approximately 10 per cent. of the cost of education as shown in those accounts.

Other departments are treated somewhat similarly. For Child Welfare, the estimate is £259,948, but "Treasury Miscellaneous" includes £6,000 for the Alexandra Home. Should that be allocated to Health or should it go to Education? I doubt whether the Treasurer should be considered to be solely responsible. Donations to Girl Guide and Boy Scout Associations and Spastic Welfare, £15,000, should come under Child Welfare, too. So should the item Wanslea Home, £3,000. Should not the £2,200 grant to the St. John Ambulance Association be a charge on the Health Department? The £85,000 additional grant to the Royal Mint should come under the item for goldmining in the Mines Estimates.

An amount of £130,000 for Reforestation Fund should be in the Estimates of the Forests Department, and not under the heading of "Treasury Miscellaneous." The Minister for Transport should handle the items: Lakes District and Ravensthorpe Transport, £9,000; Bulk Wheat Installation in the same area, £14,500; Air Transport of Beef, £13,500, and Emergency Aerial Transport Perishables, £15,000. Perhaps the last-named should be included in the Estimates of the Department of the North-West.

I point out that we have separate estimates dealing with revenue, with expenditure, and with loans. Yet it is practically impossible for anyone to be absolutely certain which of these estimates is responsible for any particular expenditure. Does a £1 note look any different if it is revenue expenditure or loan expenditure? Does a tree grow any better if planted from funds under "Treasury Miscellaneous" or Forestry Loans? Does it grow any taller or wider and does it yield more timber or less? This is a query we are entitled to raise.

While dealing with this subject, I direct attention to the Auditor-General's report for the State of South Australia and the manner in which the accounts are dealt with there. Each department or section or enterprise mentioned in the report has a statement of receipts and payments showing the effect on the Revenue Account of that section, and a balance sheet showing the nature and source of funds and how those funds have been expended; that is, where the money came from and where it has gone.

Finally, there is the matter of loan funds. The Commonwealth Grants Commission has laid down fairly rigid rules as to precisely what expenditure should be included in loan funds, and what should be included in revenue. Yet, if revenue is overspent, it matters not on what or why, and a deficit occurs, it is financed from loan funds. The impression I have is that if we spend £2,000,000 on renovating railway track—and that is or should be revenue expenditure—and finish the year with a £2,000,000 deficit, it has to be met out of loan funds. Hence, what is the difference?

I can see no need for the two sets of Estimates to be introduced and considered separately. To my mind this causes confusion. Each department should be dealt with separately, and one consolidated set of figures should be produced and dealt with in one debate per department; that is, a debate per department instead of a debate per estimates.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How would the Treasury officials like that?

Mr. JOHNSON: Their opinion should be ascertained by the proposed commission. When a large company holds its annual meeting, a balance sheet, revenue and expenditure account, and normal accounts are submitted to the meeting, and the majority of people dealing with finance can understand the balance sheets fairly well, except those produced by a bank, which are perhaps the most abstruse of any. The accounts of trading companies are as a rule fairly easy to follow. I have no doubt that something in similar form with variations to meet the needs of Government accounting could be produced for the edification of members and of the public. It would then be

a good deal easier to determine whether we were balancing our expenditure correctly or whether, for instance, we were spending too much money in the Education Department on school buildings and not enough on teachers, one of which is loan expenditure, and the other normally revenue expenditure, though for the child in the school and the parent of the child, it is an education expenditure.

I understand that the Joint Committee of Public Accounts of the Commonwealth is studying the possibility of new methods of presentation of accounts. When a report is likely to be produced, heavens only knows! The committee is dealing with a very large and complex set up, but in our State, it would be a good deal smaller and we should be able to do it more readily and with less disturbance to the officers who have to deal with the figures. Western Australia appears to be on the threshold of large industrial expansion and, if we are ever going to modernise our accounting, its set-out and its presentation, it would be better for us to do it before that expansion occurs than afterwards.

As I said before, the very first Budget ever produced in Western Australia was in substantially the same form as that presented to us last year, and surely what was good enough for our great-great-grandfathers is not necessarily good enough for us. Things have changed considerably since that time. Therefore I recommend the Treasurer to consider setting up a commission of three to investigate the public accounts, their form and their presentation and the method of dealing with them in Parliament, and to hear the opinions of all who may be desirous of expressing themselves on the subject and make recommendations as to what changes are needed in any Act, including the Audit Act, and perhaps in our Standing Orders.

Such a commission should have power to make interim reports, if desired, as the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee is doing, and call for such evidence and papers as it may require and, if necessary, travel outside the State and seek information from other places. If consideration were given to the appointing of such a commission, I would suggest that the first person with whom the subject should be discussed is the chairman of the Commonwealth Grants Commission who, I believe, would take considerable interest in such a proposal. I know that the subject is a dull one and I thank those members who have remained in the Chamber to listen to me.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [8.30]: I should like to join with other speakers in expressing my appreciation of the manner in which the Royal tour was conducted. I suppose there are various facets or aspects of these occasions that appeal

to us. Personally I feel that there is nothing that could compare with the Royal visit to give a completely tangible expression of our loyalty, to our Queen; and not only that, but of the unity within the Empire to nations outside its confines. I know that most of us who have come in contact with foreigners have on occasions been asked why we in Australia still remain within the Empire; why we have an English Governor General and English State Governors. It is something which many foreigners fail to understand, but nevertheless they seem to accept the fact that we are loyal within the Empire, and an occasion like the Royal visit enables us to give a thoroughly tangible expression of that loyalty, which is incapable of misinterpretation by foreign nations which might wish to sow seeds of dissension amongst us. That is one particular aspect of the Royal tour that has appealed to me, and it is why I am glad that the tour in this State was the success that it was.

It seems to have become a habit with me to discuss the railway service during the Address-in-reply debate. The Minister was good enough during the last session of Parliament to concede that I had endeavoured to make some constructive suggestions. I think that the question in regard to increased freight rates was discussed very fully during the last session and, whilst I am one of those who recognise that during an inflationary period costs must go up—I do not wish to dissertate at length on the question of freight increases—I do point out that, if there is to be an increase in freights, we are entitled to a satisfactory service.

After all, the cost of any service depends to a great extent on the efficiency of the service that we get. I have been in contact with various executive officers of the department for quite a period, and I must say that I have received every courtesy and assistance from them. I believe that on an executive level there is a genuine desire to improve the service given to the public, but unfortunately, in far too many cases, I find that, in spite of that wish, their efforts seem to founder because the same spirit of enthusiasm does not permeate the whole service. It seems to break down on the lower level.

To illustrate what I mean, I recall the instance quoted this evening by the Leader of the Opposition when he mentioned the length of time it took for a truck of cattle to get from Harvey or Waroona to Midland Junction. I was constantly assailed in my electorate because of the slow transport by the railways. I made representations to the Chief Traffic Manager, with the result that the schedule of trains was altered and additional trains were put on. A genuine effort in fact was made to improve the service. I was feeling rather pleased about this until I found, the next time I went into the area from where most of the complaints had come, that, instead

of most of the people being appreciative of the better service, they considered that, despite the fact that I had assured them it would be better, it was no better at all.

I checked up and found that the improved service that had been initiated was actually operating and was getting the stock to Perth in plenty of time, but the stock was waiting in the Perth yard for hours before it went to Midland Junction. We got that one tidied up. The department arranged rapid transit from Perth to Midland Junction. I thought, "This must just about sew it up", but about a month later I got a ring from my next door neighbour who complained bitterly that his stock arrived for sale at 2.30 in the afternoon, but the sale had started at about 8 o'clock in the morning.

Again I checked on the question and found that when the trucks got to Midland, they were not shunted to the stockyard. I think this point has been tidied up now; unless, perhaps, the case mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition means that it has started to break down again, but no cases from my own electorate have been brought to my notice. It seems to me that this indicates that there is need for inspiration among the railwaymen who have the actual detailed handling of a lot of the traffic. They need to be imbued with the idea of giving service.

Of course I make no actual criticism of the executives, such as the traffic managers. I have had every courtesy from both the Chief Traffic Manager and the district traffic managers. It does seem to me, however, that, despite their genuine efforts to give an improved service, those efforts have been bogged down because the actual train crews, shunters and people like that continue just not to bother very much whether they give service or not. If we are to get value for the money we are paying in rail freights, this is a matter which the Government generally and the Minister in particular will have to tackle. I believe that the rank and file of the railwaymen need to be inspired to give a service that has not previously been rendered.

There are numerous instances of this sort of thing. I will have a couple of questions on the notice paper tomorrow concerning the handling of fruit. The Minister probably realises that I have a fair idea of what went wrong. In this particular case, it was stated that because they had to put a gang off at a certain time, they put it off and were not concerned whether the fruit was unloaded in the market or not. I believe that if the customer wants a certain service he should be given that service; he should come first, and not the convenience of the railways.

I am pretty certain that the Minister will find tomorrow there is no difficulty there that cannot be overcome. The position would never have arisen if the people

concerned with the allocation of gangs and goods in the No. 4. shed had been imbued with the idea of giving service to the public. After all, it is the man who supplies the goods for the railways to cart who is assisting to keep the railways running, and he is deserving of service.

This is purely an administrative fault, I believe, and one that the Minister will be able to tidy up. These things, however, are happening rather too frequently: I am not trying to be critical of the railways or endeavouring to condemn everything they do. As a matter of fact, I think the more one goes into the question of the railways, the more appreciative one becomes of the problems. Only comparatively recently, a member of another place, who has been most drastic at times in his criticism of the railways, enlisted my assistance in connection with certain matters, and we had them satisfactorily adjusted through the district traffic manager at Bunbury.

He, having then had a little more experience of these things, told me that perhaps in many instances the railways were blamed for things they did not do. I feel that that is true, but unfortunately there have been so many instances in which the railways have been to blame that it is easy for other people to shuffle the blame on to that department. I realise that attacks on the railways in general terms are not of great assistance to the Minister and have a bad psychological effect on the average railway man, but it is my experience that in the country where one is dealing with a smaller number of individuals and can interview the station-master, the district traffic manager, or a train crew, it is easier to secure co-operation than is the case at the Perth Central Station where there are hundreds of men, station-masters, foremen, sub-foremen and so on.

Under those circumstances there does not seem to be the capacity to inspire the rank and file with the importance of doing a good job or with a realisation of the fact that the railways are a business, just as any other undertaking is, and that the customer should at least appear to be right fairly often. Of course they have their difficulties to overcome and in the case in point, the handling of fruit, there are some obstacles which I do not think will be overcome until a new goods terminal is completed. That, however, is not to say that the best should not be made of the facilities offering.

Today a truck from Bridgetown was unloaded by 11.30 although the fruit sales start at about 8.30 and end at about 11.30. People sending perishables such as tomatoes—there were tomatoes in that truck—are placed at a great disadvantage and must lose money in such circumstances. As the Minister knows, I have endeavoured to secure more freight for the railways in my electorate and have met

with some success, but it is disappointing, especially in a fruitgrowing district, when one knows that there is a desire on the part of senior executive officers to render good service, to see this sort of thing occurring not once or twice, but over a number of years.

Such occurrences make much greater the burden of those who are endeavouring to assist the railways and I would appreciate it if the Minister would examine the position with regard to the handling of fruit generally. I know there are many factors involved, and I think I am as well informed on the subject as is any member of this House, but I am endeavouring to place before members some of the difficulties that are experienced in this regard. Only recently the district traffic manager at Bunbury asked me to take certain action, which I did, and we achieved some good. I am not in any way unwilling to assist in this matter, but do not think such questions should be dealt with on a party basis or that when one makes an effort one should be let down by people in the Perth yards. I am certain that if the railways render good service they will secure the freight.

The special trains put on to handle perishables out of the South-West two or three years ago ran two trains a week to begin with. They now run five per week fully loaded and there are occasions when they run two divisions, indicating that if the service is given the railways will be supported. In the absence of service people naturally lean to other forms of transport, and I feel that we can go a long way yet in improving the service given by the railways to the users. It seems to me that there is in the department too much of the spirit of "We have always done it this way and could not possibly do it in any other way."

Members may recall that last year I interested myself in the question of the haulage of super. I will not traverse the details again as I gave members last year particulars of what was achieved in that regard. On that occasion I was informed that the super had always been hauled via Katanning, but eventually the matter was adjusted satisfactorily with the result that the time for the turn-around of trucks was exactly halved, and that result could have been achieved years ago when we were really short of trucks, had it not been for woolly thinking.

I do not think the Minister or anyone else would deny the savings that would flow from improvements of that nature, because obviously the earnings of that line must have appreciated very much. One of the factors that held back those earnings to some extent this year was the necessity for water haulage. Fantastic as it may seem—the driest part of my electorate has a 26 inch rainfall, the heaviest average being 37 inches—we find the railways hauling water all over the place in that area.

The figures the Minister supplied last session showed, I think, something like £20,000 for the hauling of water to Bridgetown, a centre with a rainfall of about 35 inches. The efficiency of the Boyup Brook line was considerably curtailed because even the "W" class engine handles only 240 tons on that run. That means it can handle approximately 12 trucks of super, but in many instances, when hauling two water tanks, the effective pay load is only 10 trucks. On one occasion we had the spectacle of a loco. running out of water at Boyup Brook. The railway people had to ask the P.W.D. engineer at Bridgetown, who was responsible for the water supply at Boyup Brook, to supply them with enough water to get the steam up on this loco. It seems fantastic that an area such as mine should be in such a parlous position as regards its water supplies.

There seems to be a common belief that because there is a good rainfall in the South-West we have no water problems. I am quite prepared to concede that the engineering problems associated with obtaining adequate water supplies in the South-West are much simpler than those in other areas. Projects in the South-West do not involve the conservation of water hundreds of miles away. In every major town in my electorate there are adequate sources of water and all that we require to do is to harness that water.

The Minister for Health: The people of this State have never been water-minded enough.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am inclined to agree with that and, to my mind, ever since the construction of the Goldfields Water Supply scheme, successive Governments have been far more interested in extending that system, at considerable cost, than they have been in providing adequate facilities for a great number of people at a much smaller cost.

Recently I heard from the Minister that he hopes to do something about making a start on the Bridgetown scheme this year. Even if a start is made this year it will be at least two years before we can hope to get any relief, and I would point out to the Treasurer that he will be about £40,000 poorer by the time the scheme is completed. It is not often that we are in a position where we can say that the saving on the railway haulage of water will provide interest and sinking fund on the money required for a water scheme; but that is the position in Bridgetown. I think the scheme can stand on its own merits in comparison with any other case that members care to submit.

As everybody knows, the Minister for Housing informed us last night that we are facing a crisis as regards housing and yet in many country areas the housing position is not nearly so desperate as the Minister

would have us believe it is in the metropolitan area. Last night the member for Moore, by way of interjection, indicated that there were empty Commonwealth-State homes in his electorate; there are empty homes in my electorate, too, but it is not possible to get people to go into them. There is a tendency for people to flock to the city and they will not occupy these houses unless we can provide comparable facilities with those that they can get in the city. We have the South-West power scheme operating, yet there is not electric light in every home in the South-West; but it is a start in the right direction. All the towns are served and in many centres electric power can be provided. Adequate transport is available, but we cannot supply water.

People in Donnybrook, my own home town, are paying 10s. a thousand gallons to have water carted. Tenants of Commonwealth-State rental homes are allowed 2,000 gallons of rainwater storage in their homes, but we have no town water supply and those people pay exactly the same rent for their homes as people who occupy similar houses in the metropolitan area. The people in the country are not even provided with adequate storage facilities for their own immediate domestic needs such as bathing, let alone for garden purposes. Yet these people are paying the same rents as people are paying for similar houses in the metropolitan area. In fact, they are paying a little more and with fewer facilities.

There seems to be an idea abroad that because these people live in the country it does not matter. We are constantly being told that additional loan funds will be needed for further housing projects in the metropolitan area, for roadways, footpaths and so on. There are plenty of houses in Boyup Brook. A complete block of houses was erected by the State Housing Commission, but even though the houses are occupied no roads or footpaths have been built.

I am well aware of the fact that no Government can get all the money it wants; every Government uses the excuse that it cannot get sufficient money. But it seems rather a sad state of affairs that any Government should consider what is good enough for the country is not good enough for the metropolitan area. If we cannot provide facilities in the country such as are provided in the city, people will inevitably drift to the metropolitan area. Men will take jobs at places where their wives can get the best facilities. Wages men for example have no stake in any particular area and they are not greatly concerned as to whether they work at Boyup Brook or Bayswater. If their wives can get better educational and hospital facilities and better housing at Bayswater, they will obtain their jobs in that district.

I believe a number of houses are available in country areas and if people are so desperately in need of accommodation, as it is suggested they are, they ought to be prepared to go to the country to work instead of staying in the metropolitan area. I have lived in the country all my life, as other members have done, and it is not an unreasonable proposition to ask people to live in those districts. But it is unreasonable to discriminate in the treatment accorded by Government instrumentalities.

The other matter I wish to discuss concerns the availability of mill offal. I discussed this question with the Minister some two or three months ago after I had talked it over with the Chief Inspector of Vermin, Mr. Tomlinson. In my electorate we experienced considerable difficulty in getting sufficient supplies of bran and pollard for rabbit poisoning. That might appear to be a minor matter to some members but it is most important to those of us who have to deal with the rabbit pest. I know that the genesis of this trouble might be in what is known as the Interim Wheat Agreement under which Western Australian growers receive an extra 3d. a bushel. I have no particular objection to that because I believe the Western Australian grower is entitled to get all he can for his wheat in the same way as a fruitgrower is entitled to get all the money he can get for his fruit and the labourer is entitled to sell his labour on the highest market. But as a result of that extra 3d. a bushel, supplies of mill offal have become inadequate.

I realise that a number of stock owners have been able to find alternative feeds and I think some of those alternatives may be even better than mill offal. Broadly speaking, it has not caused any particular concern to the agricultural industry as a whole but I think such supplies of mill offal as are available should be directed into channels where they will do the most good. Unfortunately, with rabbit poisoning, substitutes for mill offal are not satisfactory; they will not go through the poison cart and the department has tried using substitutes on its own machines and has found them to be most unsatisfactory. In some cases the carts have been broken.

I had a long discussion with the senior officers of the Vermin Branch, following which one of them came out to my place and he carried out certain trials. Having gone to all this trouble with the officers concerned, I was rather amazed, when I approached the Minister with a view to having something done about the position, that he told me there was no official shortage, despite that, only a week before in his own electorate, publicity had been given to the fact that, through his own efforts, 15 tons of bran and pollard had been forwarded to Manjimup to assist the work of rabbit-poisoning in that area.

Yet it did not appear unusual to the Minister that representations had been made to him direct, which would indicate that there might have been a shortage. He, however, undertook to inquire into the matter to ascertain what could be done and a month or two later I asked him how things were going. I will admit that in the meantime a little more bran and pollard had been made available. The Minister told me that he had done nothing and did not think he could do anything more in the matter. I tried to explain to him how the 3d. a bushel was affecting the industry. Of course it must affect the flourmillers also.

I would like to stress to the Government the importance of ensuring that adequate supplies of bran and pollard are made available for vermin destruction. It is a complete waste of time to pass legislation in this House or anywhere else to eradicate vermin and discuss all sorts of penalties in an endeavour to get people to do their bit if we have not got the wherewithal to carry out the work. I was certainly disappointed to find that the Minister appeared to take so little interest in what I consider is an important matter.

Similar circumstances, I notice, are envisaged with what is called the Pollard plan, in connection with wheat marketing, which has been put forward by Dr. Evatt and, as far as Western Australia is concerned, it could quite properly be termed the "no pollard" plan, unless some steps are taken to remedy the situation. Again I reiterate that I have no grievance against the wheatgrowers; I say good luck to them. However, if a difficulty is created, it is up to the Government to cope with it and not try to suggest that it does not exist. If the party tries to perpetuate a plan that aggravates that difficulty, then it has an additional responsibility in trying to overcome the problem.

The last matter I wish to discuss is in relation to the remarks made by the Minister for Housing about "The West Australian." It might be said that such statements should not have been made during the debate on the Bill that was introduced. It seems to me that I have had previous experience of the Minister ranging all over the country whilst speaking on a certain subject. When I have endeavoured to reply to some of the remarks made by him, I have been called to order, quite properly, by you, Mr. Speaker.

As far as the remarks made about "The West Australian" are concerned, I am not in a position to say whether the Minister's version of the affair is the one that we should accept. I am not suggesting for a moment that "The West Australian" has not a viewpoint, and I think it is quite capable of looking after itself. It is not for me to take up the cudgel on its behalf. What did intrigue me was the extravagant

language that the Minister used in referring to what "The West Australian" should do, in common decency, to correct the false impression created.

If such is the case, I would ask the Minister what he has done to correct the false impression created at the last State election, when members of his Government said that the housing problem would be solved in three years; when they said that there would be no increase in rail freights. Surely, on the standards that the Minister has judged "The West Australian," it is obligatory on the Minister, as a member of the Government, to correct the mis-statements that were made during the last election.

Mr. Lawrence: You will have your photo. on the front page.

Mr. HEARMAN: I hope I do.

The Premier: Why would you hope that?

Mr. HEARMAN: I suggest that the Minister might at least be consistent, but, if he is not, he should not be hypocritical and suggest that "The West Australian" should do something that he himself and his own Government are not prepared to do.

The Minister for Housing: What false statement have I made?

Mr. HEARMAN: I said that the Minister's Government, prior to the last State elections, made promises to solve the housing problem.

The Minister for Housing: Who said it is not being solved?

Mr. HEARMAN: It was going to be solved in three years.

The Minister for Housing: The three years are not up.

Mr. Heal: We still have two years to go.

Mr. HEARMAN: If the member for West Perth is going to make such statements there is no justification for the Minister making the remark that he did last night. The member for West Perth cannot have it both ways.

The Minister for Housing: A house in two years' time is not much good to a man who is put out on the street tomorrow.

Mr. HEARMAN: Can the Minister solve the problem in two years?

The Minister for Housing: If you can help us to improve the position by a restriction on rents, we will.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not wish to go over what was said during the second reading of the Bill last night, Mr. Speaker, but a restriction on rents does not build more houses. If the housing problem is to be solved, it will be achieved by an accelerated rate in the building of homes. I have figures indicating that in the first year that the Government was in office there were less houses built than in the previous year.

The Minister for Housing: That is completely untrue! There were 1,000 more built.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Not according to your own published figures.

Mr. HEARMAN: No, not according to the figures published by the Minister. If the Minister or the Premier is satisfied that the housing problem can be solved in their three years of office that they anticipate they will have, well and good; but if they do not think it can be solved within that time, I suggest that the promises they made to achieve that object amount to misrepresentation of the position and, in the interests of common decency, which are the words used by the Minister himself last night, a correction of such statements should be made.

The Minister for Housing: I think, in common decency, you should wait until the three years are up.

Mr. HEARMAN: What about rail freights? They were not to be put up.

The Minister for Housing: You seem anxious to get off housing.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, that I am having a personal discussion with the Minister, which I know you do not like, but I want to make my point quite clear. If a person wants to judge somebody else, he should make quite sure that he will not be judged himself. If the Minister suggests that "The West Australian" or anybody else makes misleading statements, then I suggest he should have a look at some of the statements that he and his Government have made in the past. If any one of them is proved to be correct, well and good; but if they are not proved to be correct, I suggest that a correction should be made. I remind the Minister that I introduced a deputation to him some months ago, at which time he told the members of that deputation that the position was getting worse and that he did not know what the solution was.

The Minister for Housing: I did not say that.

Mr. HEARMAN: I was present and I am quite satisfied as to what impression was created in the mind of the deputation. If the Minister created that impression, he must accept responsibility for it and it is no use his saying he did not.

The Minister for Housing: I accept no responsibility for anything you might say or suggest.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is most convenient and "The West Australian" can say exactly the same thing in respect of the charges made by the Minister.

The Minister for Housing: Oh no! It cannot, because the Merredin Road Board will testify against it.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is not only the Merredin Road Board. In any case, I am only suggesting that if the Minister wishes to take "The West Australian" to task, and asks it for a retraction, then he should ask the same thing of his own Government regarding the promises that were made during the last election. In common decency and fairness, I think that should be done. I think it would be difficult for the Minister to squirm out of this matter and he would have a job in front of him to suggest that what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.

On motion by Mr. Hutchinson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.12 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 8th April, 1954.

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The Legislative Council met at 4.30 p.m.

ABSENCE OF PRESIDENT.

Election of Deputy President.

The CLERK: I have to announce that the President, Hon. Sir Harold Seddon, is unavoidably absent. It is, therefore, necessary for members to elect one of their number, now present, to fill the office, perform the duties, and exercise the authority of the President during such absence.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That Hon. W. R. Hall be elected to fill the office, perform the duties, and exercise the authority of the President during the absence of Sir Harold Seddon.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "B," 1953.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "B" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1953. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [4.37]: I do not propose to detain the House at any length. There are a few matters I wish to bring to the notice of Ministers so that necessary action may be taken. One matter came to my attention recently. I refer to the accommodation—consisting of a number of houses, which can hardly be called houses, but are mere shelters of a very temporary nature, principally old Army huts—provided for evictees. Some of the tenants have been there for many months, if not years. They make no attempt to shift for themselves, and the result is that in some instances the areas have turned into slums.

The decent type of persons who were evicted and desired to improve their condition have done so by making some effort for themselves in the way of providing self-help homes, or by paying a reasonable rent for a proper home to house their families. But there are others, not of a very good type, who prefer to remain on a cheap rental, and keep the extra money, not to spend on their families or to improve their conditions, but rather to waste on an undesirable type of living which very often means the hotel, races and trots. The result is that in some cases the children are getting by no means a fair deal.

The remedy I suggest is that for the first six months, 12 months, or some period in between, the initial rent be set, as it is now, more or less nominally, because the accommodation warrants only a nominal rent. After that fixed period the rent could be increased, and it should be increased as time goes on, to approximately the rent which tenants have to pay for ordinary dwellings. In that event these persons would be encouraged, perhaps with a little bit of push, to improve their conditions and not continue to live in a deplorable state merely because the rent is cheap.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Where would they get homes?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: We were told that the shortage would be overcome in two years.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What about a tenant that had to go out in the meantime?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the hon. member changed the Government, I could tell him, but I cannot answer his question because I have not the information that is in the possession of the Government. When I was a Minister, we were able to prevent the sort of thing I am mentioning.

The Minister for the North-West: Did you not put people into army huts?