

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I think my view is shared by a good many other members that the question could be asked, "Is it better for a man to say that he must vote on Saturday next because voting is compulsory"; or to say, "I think I shall vote on Saturday because I have a moral responsibility to my country?" I suggest that the latter would register the better vote.

I saw a pamphlet issued about 18 months ago dealing with the question of the Council franchise. In addition to referring derogatively to Liberal and Country Party members of the Council, it stated at the bottom in large print, "Voting is compulsory." Beneath the word "Voting," and in print about as large as that on Council enrolment cards, was the word "morally," so that when read properly the statement was "Voting is morally compulsory." I am sure members will agree that that pamphlet was an endeavour to mislead the electors; on the other hand, it was a frank admission by those who issued the pamphlet that voting was a moral responsibility.

I defy any member to contradict my statement that in any post office are to be found enrolment cards not only for the Council but also for the Assembly and for the Commonwealth Houses. I have seen placards in many post offices at the time when Council elections were pending stating that enrolment cards were available and that voting was not compulsory.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Electoral Office notices are posted there, too.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes. It is purely a question of principle as to whether the franchise for this House should be extended or not. I consider that the Legislative Council has proved itself under the existing franchise. It is not a difficult franchise. We have been told that people do not understand the franchise.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Members in opposition to the Government try to play it down.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not agree with that statement, but there are thousands of people who are entitled to be enrolled for the Council but have not enrolled. However, I have no doubt that in the elections that will take place next year, the numbers will be built up very considerably. We have known of people being elected on the present Council franchise who have stated that, under that franchise, it was impossible for them to be elected. I believe that the Legislative Council has been a good custodian of the people's interests. I think the Constitution should remain as it is and, in conclusion, I would express the sincere belief that on the experiences of the past three years, the Legislative Council has proved to be a protector of the people of

Western Australia from socialism. Therefore I hope that the Bill will not be agreed to.

On motion by Hon. H. Hearn, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 9.10 to 9.16 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I desire to thank you, Mr. President, for the courtesy you extended to us in order to allow us to arrive at our decision regarding tomorrow's sitting. I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 7.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 8th November, 1955.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1955. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTIONS.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Perth City Council Surplus.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Did the Perth City Council—

(a) budget for a substantial surplus for the financial year just closed?

(b) If so, how large a surplus resulted?

(2) Did the Perth City Council do the same the previous year and with what actual result?

(3) If so, is this not contrary to the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act?

(4) Is any corrective action possible?

(5) Is any corrective action contemplated?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

(1) (a) The Perth City Council budgeted for a surplus of £1,170 on all accounts for the financial year just closed, this being made up of an estimated surplus of £1,421 on the Health Account and an estimated deficit of £251 on General Account.

(b) The approximate surplus on all accounts was £140,000.

(2) For the preceding year the council budgeted for an apparent surplus of £47,000, and finished the year with a surplus of £172,412 4s. The council claims, however, that the surplus of £47,000 budgeted for was really cancelled by the presence of trust accounts, etc.

(3) It is contrary to the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act to budget for any surplus. The surplus actually budgeted for in 1954-55 was so relatively small as to be negligible. The surpluses which have resulted since 1950 have been due in great part to the fact that at the close of the war there was a postwar works reserve fund which has been taken into the General Account. Strict compliance with the Act could have been achieved by placing this sum and other receipts of a capital nature, such as those from electricity and gas, into special reserve funds. Had this been done the result would have been no different from that now achieved but no technical breach would have occurred.

(4) Corrective action is vested in the ratepayers who have the right to change the personnel of the council if they disapprove of the council's policy and practice and also have the right to challenge the validity of any rates imposed if they consider these invalid.

(5) I have no knowledge as to whether any ratepayers contemplate any corrective action.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

Result of Loan.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Treasurer:

(1) What was the total amount received as a result of the last State Electricity Commission loan?

(2) Was the loan over-subscribed? If so, to what amount?

(3) If the loan was over-subscribed, will the over-subscribed amount be available to the commission?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) £1,000,000.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

LOAN WORKS.

Commitments from Trust Funds.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Treasurer:

(1) To what extent have bills of exchange, and/or treasury bills been entered into, regarding loan works, which normally would be included in next year's Loan Estimates?

(2) Are any further commitments of this kind to be entered into before December, 1955?

(3) If so, to what amount?

(4) What is the total amount to be repaid, as the result of drawing on the trust funds?

(5) What amount will be required to refund deficit payments?

(6) Are there any other deferred payments which will require to be met from next financial year's loan funds?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) Bills of exchange to the extent of £3,000 have been accepted to date.

(2) Yes.

(3) Approximately £47,000.

(4) £1,594,000.

(5) If this question refers to the funding of Consolidated Revenue Fund deficits, then an amount of £158,000 is required to clear the deficit for 1952-53. An allocation has been made from the current year's loan funds for this purpose.

A sum of £78,000 is required to clear the deficit for 1953-54 for which provision will be required in next year's Loan Estimates.

No action can be taken in respect of the deficit for 1954-55 until the Commonwealth Grants Commission investigates and reports on the State's budget results for that year.

(6) Yes.

	£
(a) Bills of exchange in respect of works which it is anticipated will be financed under the deferred payment scheme between the 1st January, 1956, and the 30th June 1956	730,000
(b) Loan from Australasian Petroleum Refinery Ltd.	500,000
(c) Loan from Commonwealth Bank for Royal Perth Hospital buildings	150,000
(d) "V" Class locomotives for Railways (estimated)	543,000
	<hr/> £1,923,000 <hr/>

HOUSING.

Funds for War Service Homes.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Would he be willing to investigate the allegation contained in question No. 7 on the notice paper of the 3rd November, 1955, with regard to information given to an applicant for a war service home by an officer of the State Housing Commission provided he is given the name of the applicant and officer of the Housing Commission concerned?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," will he advise the House of the result of his investigation?

The MINISTER replied:

As previously advised, if the hon. member requires any matter investigated, he is at liberty to discuss it with me or any administrative officer of the State Housing Commission.

FREMANTLE YOUTH CENTRE.

Use of Funds Raised.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is the £8,000 that was raised some years ago by public spirited people for the specific purpose of building a community youth centre in Fremantle, to be taken over by the Government and used in the total amount that will be provided for the construction of the John Curtin High School?

(2) If so, does he not agree that it would be practically impossible to guarantee that the school or its facilities will be available to youth clubs of Fremantle, such as the Fremantle Police Boys' Club?

(3) Would not the acceptance of the £8,000 and its intended use in the construction of the John Curtin High School condone what virtually amounts to a breach of faith with those people who initiated the fund, and those who worked so hard to augment it, and contradict the purpose for which the fund was raised?

(4) Was this financial arrangement made following properly constituted meetings with the trustees of the fund?

(5) In all the circumstances involved, will he reconsider the apportionment of the £8,000, and suggest to the trustees that the money should be spent in building a community youth centre run by the Fremantle Police Boys' Club?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) This arrangement was made with the full knowledge and concurrence of all the trustees. The Crown Law Department is at present drawing up an agreement giving effect to the proposals put forward by the trustees.

(5) No.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Public Works Act Amendment.

2. Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation).

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

BILL—FERTILISERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [4.40]: I have carefully read through the speech of the Minister for Agriculture and the statement prepared by his technical officers. I have no reason to doubt that the statement which he made to the House is a fair and accurate exposition of the purposes of the Bill. A copy of it has been sent to the Farmers' Union but it has raised no objection, therefore I suggest we can accept that statement as to the purposes of this measure and I propose to support the second reading. I know of no amendments which will be required at the Committee stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [4.46]: Although the Minister for Education said when introducing this measure that it was a small Bill, I think it is one which must be taken seriously and given careful consideration by the Legislature. I might say at the outset that I propose to support the second reading.

As I see it, the situation is that we have, for quite a number of years, starting from the time when I was the Minister for Education, been accustomed to assist, through the parents and citizens' organisations which are attached to the majority of Government schools, in the purchase of projectors and radio or public address equipment in Government schools. It is quite clear that as modern ideas on education have come into being, and the benefits to be derived from visual education have become more apparent, the use of the projector both for moving pictures and for stills has been proved to be of substantial advantage in the education of children, provided that it is used as an adjunct or for assistance to the teacher and not made use of as a method of teaching in itself.

There has been a very great demand in practically all schools in Western Australia for projectors and, of course, the activities of the film section of the Visual Education Branch of the Education Department have made it comparatively easy for the advantages to which I have referred to be made available to schools throughout the State. To serve those schools which were unlikely to be able to provide their own equipment, mobile vans managed by the Visual Education Branch have travelled from place to place from time to time to make these facilities available.

It is not to be wondered at that non-Government schools should, during the period of something like nine years that these activities have been substantially developed, come into line and desired to participate in the advantages thus derived. I know that a number of these schools have already been provided, through their own efforts, with projectors, for example, and there have been available to them the services of the technical experts of the Visual Education Branch, whenever it has been possible to render assistance. Although I have no data—the Minister did not provide any—I presume that there are quite a number of non-Government schools which so far have not been in a position properly to equip themselves in this way, but would like to take advantage of the opportunity to do so.

So it was not surprising to hear the Minister say that a deputation representative of all sections of non-Government schools in this State should have waited upon him with the request that has given rise to this measure. Without labouring the question, very similar remarks would be applicable to the use of radio equipment which is referred to in a later paragraph of the Bill, because there has been a growing demand for the use of such equipment, and it has proved to be of considerable benefit both to the teachers and to the scholars in enabling many things to be done quickly and efficiently which otherwise would have been beyond their capacity, and more particularly to enable them to take advantage of some of the excellent broadcasts of an educational nature provided in co-operation with the Education Department over the network of the A.B.C.

I do not know how many members have listened to some of these broadcasts from time to time, but those who have will doubtless have been struck by the very attractive way in which the subjects have been presented. I have no doubt that similar facilities are also sought by the non-Government schools of all types, and it only remains for us to decide in regard to these two matters whether or not the existing law should be amended to enable them to be provided to the extent referred to in the Bill which, in the case of projectors, is one-half of the total cost, and in regard to radio equipment, to the extent of one-half of the cost up to a maximum of £50 for any one school in any one year.

To the best of my knowledge, that is precisely the same type of assistance as has been afforded in recent times to the parents and citizens' associations working in connection with Government schools. To make this assistance available to non-Government schools, it is necessary to amend the law, and that, I understand, is why the Bill is before us, because in 1895, a law was put on the statute book entitled the Assisted Schools Abolition Act which, in short, provided that after the passing of that measure, no grant-in-aid should be made to any non-Government school. That measure has been on the statute book for just on 60 years, and I understand that no attempt has been made in the meantime to amend it.

It has not only been since these additional items, as I may term them, referred to in the two paragraphs of the Bill, came to be in common practice in Government schools that there was any agitation for the assistance which this Bill proposes to give. I intend later on to make some reference to the reason why the Act of 1895 ever found its way to the statute book, because it is a matter of considerable historic interest which might be taken into consideration when discussing this measure, and it also gives some

interesting information as to the relative position at that time in the Government and non-Government schools which may be sharply contrasted with the position at the present time. Notwithstanding the considerable increase in the number of children who are attending non-Government schools of various types, there has been a much greater increase in the number of children attending Government schools. The expansion in the latter case has assumed astronomical figures by comparison with the position in 1895, that is to say, in proportion to the number of children concerned.

Before dealing with that, I wish to refer to a third provision in the Bill to permit the use by schoolchildren of school stationery and of Government publications prepared especially for use in schools. In more recent times, the books that children attending Government schools were supplied with by way of readers have developed along lines totally different from those that operated even a decade ago: They are now written and set up by Government officers and Government technicians and are produced at regular intervals, and they display, I think, a very remarkable change in the reading material for children as compared with what they had before.

The officers of the department and the other people concerned in the getting up of these periodicals are to be heartily congratulated on the great success that they have made of them, and I am perfectly certain that the majority of the children and also of the teachers who have had the benefit of them in recent times hold precisely the same view, even if they could not bring themselves to express it, as we do in this House. I have not the slightest objection to the extension of the use of that particular type of publication to the non-Government schools, nor do I feel it necessary to take any exception to the proposal to provide school stationery to the limited degree referred to by the Minister in his speech.

I would like to return to the historical aspect before I proceed to raise the only objection that I have to a portion of this measure, and I would refer to "The History of the Development of Education in Western Australia from 1829 to 1923," by one Donald H. Rankin, which is available to members, if they wish it, in the Parliamentary Library and which was published in Perth in 1926. I might add that it was dedicated to the then Minister for Education, Hon. J. M. Drew, the members of the Teachers' Union of Western Australia, the teachers of all schools, public, secondary, private and religious and Hon. Sir Walter James—"whose keen appreciation of my work has prompted me to be interested in matters appertaining to Western Australia."

On page 83 we find the heading, "Discontinuation of Grants to Assisted Schools," under which appears the following:—

On the 8th October, 1894, Mr. Simpson, M.L.A., in accordance with notice, moved that "In the opinion of the House it was undesirable to extend further the system of State aid to assisted schools". On a vote the motion was rejected by 14 votes to 11.

In another place on that page we see the following:—

This incident may have given stimulus to the idea that was beginning to gain ground, that the time had now come to consider education as a national affair. Most people felt that the State ought to control, direct and govern the whole machinery of education and that it was a weak principle to assist any section. A system should be used which included all the people. The national system should supersede the dual.

Of course, what was taking place, as I understand it, was that there were Government schools and a large number of non-Government schools in various places which were assisted on a recognised and regularised basis by the Government of that day. To return to the record—

The same year Sir John Forrest moved for leave to introduce a Bill to further amend the law relating to public elementary education. In moving the second reading of the Bill he said that the past Act had done well for 24 years. The Roman Catholic body had largely availed itself of the advantages of the Act. The Act was not a perfect one yet it did bring peace to the community. In 1894 one third of the children being educated were attending the assisted schools. There were 3,552 attending the State schools and 1,815 attending the assisted schools. The cost of education for the children of the State schools was £11,356 and for those attending the assisted schools it was £2,093.

As I said, I would like to compare that £11,356 with the something over £5,000,000 which is involved today, quite apart from capital costs, which I presume are not included in that sum and that, I think, gives us a lot of food for thought as to the progress and development that has taken place in Western Australia. It is recorded that Sir John went on—

The managers of the assisted schools had to find their own buildings while the Government had to erect its own. The Government hesitated to overturn an institution which had given satisfaction for 24 years. Only some great public demand would necessitate the

overthrow. In the Eastern States education had become a national affair. Western Australia was anxious to fall in with the other States.

On the 27th August, 1895, the Legislative Assembly acquainted the Legislative Council that it had that day agreed to the following resolution:—

- (1) That it is expedient that the assisted schools should no longer continue to form part of the public educational system of the colony.
- (2) That the contribution from the public funds towards the maintenance of the assisted schools shall cease on December 31st, 1895.
- (3) That a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament be appointed to consider the terms and conditions on which it will be equitable to amend the law to the above effect having regard to the vested interests which have been legally created.

A commission was accordingly held, consisting of 15 members of both Houses, with Mr. S. H. Parker, M.L.C., as chairman. On September 2nd, 1895, evidence was taken by the commission.

Later on we read—

Sir John Forrest proposed to give £20,000 as compensation. Actually £15,000 was given. This money was payable in three yearly instalments, but from the 31st December, 1895, no elementary school not belonging to the Government, other than a school in connection with an orphanage or other institutions certified under the Industrial Schools Act of 1875, received any grant in aid from the public funds.

So that was the position and that situation was brought about by the Act of 1895 and has remained ever since. Because of that it has been necessary to bring down this amending Bill in order to clear up any doubt that might exist as to the legality of any payment that might be made and which was not made for the benefit of a purely Government school. It seems to me that it is one of the duties of Parliament to consider from time to time whether legislation, no matter how soundly based at the beginning, should continue in the form in which it exists on the statute book or, alternatively, whether any alterations to the law are justified. As I have said, in dealing with the specific items mentioned in the earlier portions of the main clause of the Bill, it seems to me that circumstances are such and that there have been such alterations in conditions that we are justified in giving some consideration, at all events, to changes in the law.

But I think, without any question whatever, that the changes should be only those that Parliament actually approves. I do not think we are justified in incorporating in the Bill the last paragraph thereof which authorises the provision of such other things as are prescribed by regulation. That, at any time, could, in my opinion, place Parliament in a false position and I trust that will be the opinion of the majority of members of this House. I feel that there may from time to time be other things that might legitimately be added to this measure by way of further amendments to the Act of 1895.

They do not come readily to my mind at the moment, but it is not unreasonable to assume—in fact, the last paragraph of the Bill obviously does assume—that there might be such things, and I think that if there are going to be those things the proper time to deal with them and the proper method is when Parliament is sitting and by an Act of that Parliament. So I am going to express my disapproval and later seek the co-operation of members of this Chamber in striking out the paragraph in proposed new Section 9A dealing with the provision of such other things as are prescribed by regulation.

Quite apart from the fact that some of us feel from time to time that too much is being done by regulation—which point of view I expressed on another subject the other evening—we all know that if a regulation is made when Parliament is not sitting it can be quite lawfully made and the Executive Council is well within its rights. Indeed, I should say that at least 50 per cent. of our regulations and perhaps more are made at a time when Parliament is not sitting. The regulation is approved by Executive Council and advertised in the "Government Gazette" and thus becomes the law of the country. It is perfectly lawful to act under such regulations until they are disallowed by Parliament, if they ever are, and so it would be possible for the regulations to be issued, when Parliament was not sitting, providing under this measure for the provision of something else.

Immediately after the regulations were issued application could be made to the department for the provision of those things and they could be actually supplied to certain schools, but not to others before the assembling of Parliament and the laying of the regulations on the Table of the House. Then one House or another of the Parliament could decide to disallow the regulations and so those schools which had not had the things could not have them because they would be no longer legal. Those schools that had them, and which got them between the time the regulation was gazetted and the time it was disallowed, obtained them lawfully and as a result those items could not be taken away from them. What is more, it could

be assumed, if Parliament has disallowed a regulation, that Parliament did not approve of such supplies being made available in the first place.

So, quite apart, as I said, from the general undesirability of dealing with such matters by regulation, it is obvious that regulations of this character could provide an injustice on the one hand or, on the other hand, be acting entirely contrary to the wish of Parliament, as disclosed subsequently by the disallowance of one or other of the regulations. On the other hand, if the matter was submitted to Parliament by way of a further amendment to the law, in the same way as this proposal has been brought before us, the views of Parliament could be obtained immediately and a decision reached which could not be controverted. In all probability the decision reached would be on much the same lines as I opine will be reached on the major portions of this measure during the current sitting.

I have expressed my intention to support the second reading of the Bill and have taken exception only to the final paragraph thereof, so I think it could reasonably be assumed that there will be at least a majority opinion, if not a substantial majority opinion, in favour of the passage of the greater part of this measure. I would suggest to the Minister, not in a spirit of carping criticism but in good faith, that he should not press the House to accept the final provision in the Bill but be satisfied to allow it to be struck out, leaving the generally acceptable provisions of the remainder of his Bill to pass and avoid all the possibilities to which I have referred and which I think are of sufficiently serious a nature to warrant the Minister's consideration of my suggestion.

Personally, I am most anxious that we should do the right thing in this matter and, moreover I am most anxious that we should know exactly what we are doing. I feel that the insistence by the Minister on the retention of the last paragraph of the Bill would genuinely be unwise in all the circumstances of the case. I am well aware that there is quite a considerable demand not only in the larger non-governmental schools but also in those of a smaller kind—perhaps in some cases more particularly there—for some such assistance as is contemplated by this Bill.

In general terms, as I have endeavoured to explain, I think that provided each alteration in the existing law has parliamentary approval, there can be no sensible objection taken to the proposals. But I hope that the Minister will be good enough to cut out the last paragraph so that there will at least be some measure of unanimity among us in regard to the proposals. I support the second reading.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [5.20]: I rise to support this important measure and I listened attentively to the speech of the Leader of the Country Party. Throughout

my electorate over the years, parents' and citizens' associations have raised funds and have been assisted by the Government in providing projectors and radios in the schools at the various centres. These facilities have proved to be of great benefit in the education of the children and as one visits the schools from time to time, one can notice a marked improvement.

There is little I can add to what has already been said by the hon. member but I think this Bill will be of great importance to the non-governmental schools and, after all, the parents of children attending those schools pay taxes in just the same way as the parents of children attending State schools. Until a few years ago, the non-governmental schools received no assistance—not even a stick of chalk—and consequently this measure will be of great benefit to them. I support the Bill.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [5.22]: At the outset I want to make it quite clear that anything I may say with respect to the second reading of this Bill is entirely my own opinion because I have not as yet discussed it with the members of my party. Like the member for Murchison, I was interested in the remarks of the Leader of the Country Party but I cannot go as far as he did in his attitude towards it. I have taken a firm and definite stand as regards the subsidising of private schools. I believe that this measure is only the thin end of the wedge and that further action will be taken either by legislation or regulation, as is proposed by the Bill.

In my opinion, it is the responsibility of the Government of Western Australia to provide educational facilities for the children of the State. Many of us were educated at private schools and at present, and in the future, there will be no shortage of students for those institutions. Only recently I heard of two children, the eldest being four years of age, whose parents had to make application for their admission to a private school when the children reached 12 years of age. So there is no necessity to encourage the filling of private schools or for the introduction of legislation of this nature.

I agree that the sum of money involved, if this Bill were passed, would be only small but when one listens to the Minister for Education, or the Treasurer, when more money is required for educational purposes at the State schools, one hears the constant cry that the money is not available; so the additions or new schools cannot be provided. As I have already said, this measure does not involve the expenditure of much money, but it does involve some, and I am of the opinion that it could be better spent at the State schools.

In the Dominion of Canada all the educational facilities are in the hands of various religious organisations and the curriculum in each school is so different

that the educational standard of the children varies as between one school and another. If the Government makes money available for educational purposes it should, of necessity, control the curriculum adopted by the various schools. I can see no reason for any other attitude to a measure of this kind and as far as I am personally concerned—and as I have already said, this is only a personal opinion—I must oppose the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

(Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn—in reply) [5.28]: The Leader of the Country Party set out the history of the Assisted Schools Abolition Act, to which I made brief reference. I think all members know the history of it and it is true, as the Leader of the Country Party pointed out, that of late years teaching aids such as projectors and radios have been introduced into the field of education. Before dealing with the objection expressed by the member for Stirling, I would like to say that I sincerely respect the views of the member for Moore. However, I would like to point out that when he makes reference to a shortage of loan funds and the fact that the items enumerated in this Bill will be paid for by that source, he is not correct; those items will be paid for from revenue.

Mr. Ackland: Did I mention loan funds?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes. Loan funds are used to build schools. I think the Leader of the Country Party will agree with me when I say that these teaching aids and the pads, stationery and school publications referred to, will not be for the benefit of the school but only for the benefit of the children. There is a fine line as to what is of benefit to the school and what is of benefit to the children. I would like to give members a few instances. The Leader of the Country Party was instrumental in arranging for or extending permission to students of private schools to travel on school buses.

The Minister for Works: It was done before his time.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am not sure when the introduction of the system took place but the point is that it is competent, and customary, nowadays for children attending private schools to travel on school buses, contracts for which are let by the Government, and paid for from the Education Vote. There is another apt illustration I would like to quote, and that is that scholarships from Government funds are available to children of private schools. As a matter of fact, the superintendents of the Education Department, who are at times called recruiting officers, visit private schools and Government schools to try to encourage apt pupils subsequently to enter the Teachers' Training College and later on to equip themselves with knowledge to enable them to help

staff the Government schools. That is another medium of Government expenditure.

In addition, as all members are aware—there are a number involved from your electorate, Mr. Speaker—there is a scheme whereby the Education Department pays a fair sum of money to parents whose children are living in such localities as preclude them from attending school without their having to board away from home. There are a number of people in the North-West, the South-West and the eastern areas whose children are at school in the metropolitan area, or at Geraldton, Carnarvon or Albany, who board their children and receive up to £80 per head a year to enable the child to be educated. The money is paid to permit the child to obtain the requisite education. Accordingly, I feel those few remarks will clear up the matter raised by the member for Moore.

I would now like to turn to the objection raised by the member for Stirling, and would point out that the idea underlying the addition of the paragraph providing that other requirements may be granted as prescribed by regulation, is for the purpose of providing for stationery and Government publications, such as the high school magazine and school papers. If members will read the previous paragraph, they will see that reference is made to such requisites as stationery and Government publications. I was very interested in the remarks made by the member for Stirling, particularly when he mentioned school papers. As a matter of fact, during the last couple of years, I have spent quite a lot of time reading every article in the high school magazine, and also a number of the school papers provided for the primary schools of the State.

Hon. A. F. Watts: You can, too. They are very easy to read.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I agree. The reading is most interesting and diversified. It is evident that these papers are compiled by competent officers. The main reason for the last paragraph is that either this Government—which will continue indefinitely, of course—or the Government that follows, may feel disposed to extend the policy of free school books to children and may, for instance, decide to supply some book or books which are not Government publications. If that were the case, it would be common practice for all the Government schools, and it could be done by regulation for private schools. That is the idea underlying the insertion of that paragraph. I appreciate the objection raised by the member for Stirling, but the provision would obviate a Bill having to be introduced into Parliament each year.

However, as is well known, I am quite reasonable in all these matters, and if the member for Stirling and other members object to the paragraph remaining in the

Bill, I would be quite happy to accept an amendment in the Committee stage to delete that provision. It will mean, of course, that if any Government proposes to extend the policy to supply free school books, it will be necessary to decide whether those books are to be supplied to State schools only, or to all efficient schools; and, of course, it would mean an amending Bill having to be submitted to the House each time there was a proposal to grant free school books to efficient schools. I am pleased with the remarks of the Leader of the Country Party and respect the views of the member for Moore who spoke against the measure. I do hope, however, that it will go through the second reading stage and be passed, even in an amended form.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—New Section 9A added:

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (c), page 2, be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Superannuation and Family Benefits Act Amendment.

With an amendment.

2, Soil Conservation Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1955-56.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 3rd November on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £7453:

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [5.41]: When the Treasurer introduced these Estimates, it seemed to me quite clear that he was most anxious about the financial affairs of the State, and that he sought, as the saying goes, to put the best side to London. I remember, approximately three years ago, when the hon. gentleman was sitting where the Leader of the Opposition sits today, he was addressing himself to the Estimates which were then before this Chamber, and he expressed the opinion, if

I remember the words aright, that the financial position was grim. If it was grim at that time, I wonder what he would consider it is today. I have hunted around for the last two or three days for a suitable adjective to describe the position on this occasion, but I have found it extremely hard to find one.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Use "grimmer".

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I was about to say that it was grimmer.

Mr. Heal: Grimmer!

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Or more grim, if the hon. member prefers it.

The CHAIRMAN: That would be more grammatical.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That observation, Sir, may be correct. Suffice it to say, however, that although the Treasurer seems to be handling a great deal more money, he does not appear to be reaching that stage where he can safely say that he will come anywhere near the deficit he has estimated.

While I do not propose to hunt up the exact figures, I notice in his last monthly statement that the deficit stood at some tremendous figure, in the vicinity of £2,500,000. I feel that the optimistic utterances he made were far too optimistic in the ultimate result, notwithstanding the fact that he extracted from the people of Western Australia vast sums which I do not think anybody else would have thought of extracting from them. I have distinct recollections of a most interesting policy speech he made about the beginning of 1953, when he indicated to the public, for example, that railway freights would not be increased except in certain circumstances.

Almost immediately he proceeded to increase them very heavily, with somewhat disastrous or dire results to certain sections of the community who were obliged to pay them. I know that rising costs make one face up to a position of that nature; but it is always wise, I think, not to indicate before one accepts financial responsibility, that one is not going to burden people to any great extent, and then, when the time comes, sock them for all one is worth! There is no question that that is what the Treasurer did so far as the public of this State are concerned with regard to railway charges.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He is sending out drainage notices at present and giving the people a few shocks there.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will endeavour to remember one or two other things that have occurred to me, but I must not just yet leave this railway question. As most of the traffic in this country of centralisation moves from the metropolitan districts to the rural areas in respect of the commodities which the people there require for their sustenance and the carrying out

of their normal occupations, the further they are from the centres of population, the more they feel the burden.

Of course, I can readily imagine the distaste with which the member for Murchison must have viewed the increased charges that were put upon his constituents. Though I believe the policy of telescoping to some degree the charges for the furthest out distances—which was inaugurated, I think by the Leader of the Opposition during his term as Treasurer—was not abolished, nevertheless the increases must have been considerable. Yet I do not recollect, with great respect to the member for Murchison, that he has at any time registered any substantial protest against this; whereas I remember that within three or four months of the increases being made, members on this side, including myself, were expressing our distaste for what had taken place. Jokes aside, it has made a very considerable difference to the success or otherwise of certain people resident in country districts; and, above all, I would say it has made it harder to maintain any sort of secondary industry outside a radius of 20 miles from the Perth Town Hall.

Mr. Nalder: Passenger fares have not been increased very much in the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not recollect their having been increased at all.

Mr. Brady: Why should they be?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Why should they not have been, when everything else was being increased? If it was essential to the carrying on of the railway system that there should be a 35 per cent. increase in charges to people endeavouring to get a living in the back-blocks in industries established 300 or 400 miles from Perth, there was no justification for failure to make some increased charges to be paid by those using the railways within a radius of 20 miles.

Mr. O'Brien: The present Government may have charged extra, but is has not pulled up any railways.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not know about that. I have a distinct recollection of the member for Darling Range having made some complaints in that direction. But for the moment I will forget that.

The Minister for Housing: That is within 20 miles.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will go on to say that I think there would have been ample justification for an increase in passenger fares in the metropolitan area. However, we will turn now to the question of the entertainments tax, another imposition that was placed upon the people of this State after a graceful Federal Government had decided to abandon that medium.

The Minister for Housing: A disgraceful Government.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Although my recollections of the statutory or legal position are a little hazy at this juncture, I seem to recall that the Treasurer in introducing the measure, had us in a bit of a cleft stick; because if we had not agreed to his proposals, we would have had to revert to the statute we had, but the operation of which had been suspended for some years; and the provisions of that measure were a little grimmer than the ones the Treasurer proposed in the legislation he brought forward.

So if we had succeeded in defeating his legislation we would have had the original statute for our pains, which was slightly worse. We were hoping, of course, that the hon. gentleman would decide to abandon the entertainments tax. However, he did not see fit to do so. In that respect, I cannot charge him with any breach of promise, because at the time he was making his promises, the Federal Government was still imposing the entertainments tax. So it was not a matter for thought at the time that the State might be able to impose such taxation again. Everybody imagined it was a Federal tax for an indefinite period, and the least said about it the soonest mended.

Then we have had a very considerable increase in water rates, which has been achieved by complete revaluations, and then juggling around with the amount of the rates. As I understand the situation, the rates were reduced, but the valuations increased so much that, in the end, people paid more but got less water. That seems to have been a very successful proposition for the Treasurer, but not over-satisfactory for the public.

Next we come to this magnificent tax now being collected—the tax on starting-price betting turnover. That has yielded, as I fully expected it would, more and more every month. I was one of those who, when the Bill was before the House, prophesied that, as a result of our legalising betting shops, betting would greatly increase. And obviously, if betting very greatly increased, the tax calculated at 1½ per cent. on the turnover would keep on increasing also.

We have certainly had every indication that betting in the shops is regularly increasing week by week. So it is to be assumed that the tax will increase week by week also. That must be providing the Treasurer with quite a substantial sum of money from something of which I entirely disapprove. I do not like the idea any more than I did a year ago of lending an air of respectability to betting shops. I carefully explained then, and I repeat now, that I realise the problem that faced the Government. I did not think we could wipe out betting by legislation, and I had the strongest objection

to giving it a cloak of respectability by making it legal, because I believed it would increase the number who indulged in betting; and that has come to pass, without question.

The Minister for Housing: No.

The Minister for Works: What actual evidence is there that it has increased off-the-course betting?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: It appears to me that it has done so on account of the slow but steady rise in the turnover. Granted there is no figure to work on with respect to past years; but there is a figure to work on for the first month of this activity, and it is to be assumed that the first month was about the normal; because I do not suppose that the people who had been accustomed to using illegal shops stayed home in the first month of legal betting. Those accustomed to using illegal shops would have gone to the legal shops as fast as they could, and thereby would be disclosed what could be regarded as normal off-the-course betting.

The Minister for Works: There are some factors you have overlooked—bad weather conditions and no race meetings being held on certain days.

The Minister for Housing: And no trots.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not think the weather conditions had anything to do with it; and had there been trots, the volume of betting would have been greater. While I am not going to have a select committee of inquiry at the moment or engage in something of that nature with members opposite, I think I can say that if such an inquiry were held, it would be found there was justification for the statement I have made.

The Treasurer: Do you think the turnover this week would have been less than last week?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The Treasurer's guess would obviously be as good as mine. Let us now turn to something else. I remember that two or three years ago the present Minister for Works expressed the opinion that while he knew perfectly well that the efforts made by the Education Department to cope with the problems facing it in regard to education in this State had been very great, nevertheless it had not done nearly enough, and the position was drifting steadily.

If it was drifting steadily then, it has drifted more steadily since, because the situation is considerably more catastrophic than it was three years ago. In the course of inquiries I have made in this House from time to time, I discovered the other day that there looks like being a shortage of orthodox classrooms of 237. Allowing for what it is expected will be built between now and the beginning of the next school year, there will still be 237 short.

That, without the slightest question, is a substantial percentage worse than three years ago.

I know, of course, what the reason is. The population of our schools has been increasing very rapidly indeed. But it was increasing very rapidly in 1952, and had been doing so for two or three years. I remember explaining at some length that the effect of migration and the increased birthrate had brought in children to the schools in greatly increasing numbers; and although the expenditure had vastly mounted and the number of school classrooms had greatly increased, it was quite impossible to catch up with the full number required. That position is worse today than it was then. So, by no manner of means can the present Government claim—if it feels so disposed—that it has solved that problem, because it very certainly has not.

The Minister for Works: What it can claim is that in one year it built more classrooms.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: And some were pretty punk, if I may be allowed to express that opinion.

The Minister for Works: You were talking about the number.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: It is a pity that we had to fall back on the type that some of them were, because they got mighty near to those that we had a quarter of a century ago which, in my opinion, were most unsuitable.

The Minister for Works: Would you mention a school to which you object?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I cannot mention one, but some of the timber-framed classrooms are not very pleasing to the eye or to anything else.

The Minister for Works: Where are they?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I have seen quite a number.

The Minister for Works: Mention one.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will cite two at Gnowangerup.

The Minister for Works: The people have not complained about them.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: They have to me.

The Minister for Works: Not to me.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Perhaps it is just as well that they have not. It did not strike me that it was any use carrying the complaints further. The rooms were there; they were useful, and that was all there was to it.

The Minister for Works: What is wrong with them?

Hon. L. Thorn: You are under cross-examination.

[*Mr. Hill took the Chair.*]

Hon. A. F. WATTS: No, I am not. I have stated what I think about them; they are poor types. If the Minister expects me to give an architectural review of them, I tell him I am incapable of doing so.

The Minister for Works: They are of a type extensively built in Victoria.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That does not necessarily mean that they are any good in Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: Contrary to the view you are expressing, the parents in the places where they have been erected, have expressed appreciation.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: When the Minister has quite finished making his speech—

The Minister for Works: I cannot let you get away with what you are trying to put over.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: —I will continue with my remarks. Interjections of this kind are highly disorderly, and it is time, Mr. Chairman, that you stopped them.

The Minister for Works: I know that—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Nor do I fancy that the Education Department has entirely solved a great many other problems. The result of the bursary system, which was commenced during my term of office, has undoubtedly brought into the department a great many young people who are anxious to become schoolteachers. One thing I am heartily in agreement with is that the position of the schoolteacher as a salary earner, has been made sufficiently attractive to bring into the service a large number of people who otherwise would not have contemplated it. So it has enabled the position to become a bit better than it otherwise would be.

The other saving grace is the supply teacher of whom there are still a considerable number doing yeoman work. I look with admiration on some of the people who have been called back from private life in order to take up again the vocation which they followed in their younger days; that of teaching children. I must say that they have done a very good job, and have made it possible for the department to carry out its function in a manner which would have been impossible had they not been available. So, there is nothing but praise for them, and, I would say, for the department for having made the conditions sufficiently attractive to induce them to remain, sometimes at considerable inconvenience, in the service.

I would like to say a word or two about the necessity to do something to attract nurses to the country hospitals. I do not propose to go into the details of the hospitals that have come under my notice

where staff is extremely difficult to obtain, but there are quite a number of them. In a discussion the other day with one of the senior officers of the Department of Public Health, I was informed that four or five qualified nurses had come here from England, and the department had the intention of getting them to accept employment in some of the more substantial rural hospitals. But they refused such employment because one of them had obtained employment in the Commonwealth hospital at Hollywood and the others in various other metropolitan hospitals.

In some of the country hospitals—particularly in one or two that are in my mind at the moment—there are comfortable quarters and reasonable amenities. Some of them are quite close to holiday resorts and other attractive places, yet apparently it is impossible to induce nurses, so long as employment is available in the city, to go there. No matter how good or reasonable the conditions may be in the country, the nurses do not seem to want to go to those hospitals. So far as I know, there is no means of compelling them to accept employment in those places.

It seems to me, therefore, that we are reduced to the position that we have to make their conditions of employment more attractive. There is a difference between the situation in the Education Department and that which applies to the nursing profession. As I understand the position in the Education Department, the Minister makes the classification and if the unions or the individuals are dissatisfied, the matter is subject to appeal to the Public Service Teachers' Appeal Board which sometimes upholds the Minister's classification and occasionally increases it. This has not been very noticeable in recent years because on the last two occasions the Minister's classifications have been quite generous.

Under this system the Minister, with a full knowledge of the requirements of his department, endeavours to assess the remuneration of the teachers, but that is not so with the nurses. It seems that they come under an award which is made after a hearing by the Industrial Arbitration Court or, alternatively, by an agreement registered in the same court. It does not seem to me that the resultant remuneration of the nursing profession is anything like commensurate with the job the nurses have to do. So it seems that there is going to be a diminution rather than an increase in the number of candidates for the nursing profession. If this should be a tenable forecast, then we are going to be in serious trouble in regard to the manning of our rural hospitals.

I am not attempting at this stage in my remarks to attach blame to anyone in regard to this matter. It is something which, I think, has grown like Topsy and it has now, as it were, become visible to us.

We have, I fancy, to adopt a new line of approach in regard to the remuneration and conditions of the nursing profession in order to make it possible for our hospitals to function more normally than they have in recent times. Again, although the bursary system has at last been started to induce trainees to come into the nursing profession, it does not seem to have acted in the same manner as it has in the Education Department.

Comparing the Teachers' College with the training hospital, we find that the trainee-teachers virtually do no work, but mostly study; and they receive a reasonable allowance for the time during which they are studying. As I understand the position of the trainee-nurse, she does a great deal of work during her training period. In consequence, a large proportion of her time is not devoted to the theoretical part of her work; and she is not paid any better than, if as well as, the trainee-teacher in the Teachers' College. Some of the trainee-nurses contend that their position is much more difficult than that of the trainee-teachers.

If that is so, and I believe it is so, the position is well worth a close examination and the consideration of making some change in the set-up so that we may achieve a more rapid solution of the problem than is likely in the present circumstances. In the main, the country hospitals are in grave difficulty in regard to the double-certificated sister. There is such a demand for maternity cases in most country hospitals that it is essential that such persons should be available, but they seem to be the ones who are least available. The hospital boards and committees are having a difficult time, and anything we can do to remedy the present state of affairs, we should certainly do.

The Minister for Health: I agree with you there.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I have had many talks on the subject with the Under Secretary of the Minister's department. I am not offering any criticism of anyone but am merely endeavouring to state the position as I see it and put forward some suggestions that have been made to me so that they might be examined with a view to developing more interest, firstly, in the nursing profession and, secondly, in the rural hospital. In regard to the latter, I have thought it might be necessary, at least temporarily, to offer some bounty or special living allowance to those who work at some of these country hospitals in order to attract people to them.

The Minister for Health: The greatest trouble with the nursing fraternity is that so many of them get married when they qualify.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I know, and allowance has to be made for that position in all our calculations. This means there is a tremendous wastage so that the number

who must be trained in order to maintain the balance must be much more substantial than otherwise. But there can be no blame attachable to these people on that ground. I am pointing out that the people who are available to go to these places just will not go because there is nothing to attract them. The conditions may be all right but they are no better—possibly a little worse—than where a nurse is already working, and there is nothing to balance up the position by way of extra remuneration; and this seems to be the chief point. I suggest to the Minister that he consider whether it would be possible to make a special allowance in these cases in an endeavour to put an end to the present state of affairs.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: There is only one other item to which I want to refer and that is in connection with the operations of the Western Australian Transport Board. I find that this board, in regard to some of its activities, is facing a considerable number of extremely difficult problems and they are growing, in my opinion—and I think it is correct—because of the substantial development that has taken place in various parts of Western Australia.

I will cite an example in one district where, in consequence of war service land settlement a great degree of transport of goods will be necessary in the area east of Ongerup, known as Jerramungup. When that area is fully developed there will probably be 150 farms occupied. At present there are 20 or so of the war service land settlement scheme farms developed and it is anticipated there will be something like 7,000 tons of grain coming from that area this season. One can imagine what the quantity will be when the whole of those 150 farms are in production.

There is no railway to Ongerup and I do not think that anyone expects that there will be one in the future. However, the question arises as to some convenient means of transporting the produce from that area both now and on a growing scale in the future so that it may reach its destination for disposal. Suggestions have been made, in regard to grain in particular, that bins for handling in bulk should be installed in the Jerramungup area, but that seems to be impracticable under the existing law which provides only for the erection of these bins at railway sidings.

In consequence, the present position is—regardless of what the future may hold—that the existing large quantity of grain will have to be transported into Ongerup. I understand that at the moment the Transport Board is arranging for a subsidised transport service in order to place those settlers in the position they would be—so far as the cost of transport is concerned—if they were able to use railway freight vans. I understand that that is

likely to cost the funds this year something in the vicinity of £3,500. However, when the district is fully developed it would appear that there will be approximately 50,000 tons available if the balance of the properties can produce at the rate those few that are occupied at present seem likely to do. Fifty thousand tons represents a tremendous cartage problem, not only so far as the vehicles are concerned, but also so far as it will increase the subsidy involved.

So the Transport Board, at the present time, not only has to consider the question of an increased subsidy, but also the provision of sufficient suitable vehicles at a reasonable cost to undertake the work that is involved and, in addition to that, to co-operate—so far as it can—in ensuring that the road structure in Jerramungup and to Ongerup is suitable to carry this considerable load—which certainly it is not at present—and, further than that, to arrange that the roads within the settlement itself are improved—because the farms are of a substantial size and the internal roads are considerable—so as to enable the vehicles to transport the produce not only from the centre of Ongerup, but also from the several properties concerned to the rail head.

All this is imposing upon the Transport Board and upon the Main Roads Department a very considerable obligation because, in respect of the roads it is quite impossible, obviously, for the local authority to undertake the cost of the work. It must not be lost sight of that this development is directly a result of Government policy; that is, to develop what is obviously and actually an extremely desirable area for land settlement and to increase production; but it should also—and I have some reason to believe that it is—be a matter of Government policy to ensure that there is co-ordination in the activities necessary to enable this work to be carried out.

I have made requisite representations, I think, to all the departments concerned, but I hope that as little delay as possible is allowed to elapse before the necessary funds are provided to enable the essential work to be put in hand. It is not only essential in my opinion, but also in the opinion of the Transport Board because its officers have examined the area in recent times and have arrived at that conclusion. It is vital that everything should be put in train as early as possible to ensure that these facilities are made available because without them problems of great magnitude face the settlers concerned and ultimately, if they are not solved quickly, considerable pressure will be put on the Government to make provision for the handling of substantial quantities of grain at Jerramungup and also in respect of assistance for the transport of other commodities. However, I will leave the matter at that, and I trust the Government

will not delay in formulating a plan for the improvement of these transport facilities.

Progress reported.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Moir in the Chair; the Minister for Police in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 74A added:

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: This is the vital clause. The proposed new section provides that, by prescription, certain offences may be dealt with by the Crown Law Department in the first instance by imposing a penalty and then the accused has the option of admitting the offence and paying the penalty or he can object and be dealt with by the court. However, heavy penalties can be imposed in respect of many of the offences, as indicated by the Minister when referring to the draft regulations.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What are the offences?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: There are several. Parking is one. The maximum penalty for parking is £20.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: £20 for parking!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: It is not imposed, of course.

Mr. Bovell: It could be.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes. Section 25 of the Act provides that no person shall drive a motor-vehicle on the road without being duly licensed.

The Minister for Police: But this does not propose that a person shall be fined £20 for parking.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know it is not proposed, but that is the Government's intention. The penalty limitation should be in the Act itself. As the Minister explained, if the Crown Law Department felt that the offence should be dealt with by the court it could send it on. The regulations should not limit the penalty because they can be altered from time to time. The Minister has not suggested that the penalty shall be greater than £1. But I am making allowance for a margin in case he or a future Minister might wish to increase the amount to be imposed to £50. I move an amendment—

That the following new subsection be added:—

(3) The maximum penalty that may be prescribed under this section shall not exceed the sum of five pounds.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: I have no objection to the amendment, but I think it is redundant. The draft regulations limit the penalty for the specific

offences set out, which number in all 20-odd. The limit is £1. That is the undertaking given by the Government. If the hon. member thinks that the Government or any future Minister may impose a penalty of over £5, and he wants to prevent any increase beyond that amount, then I have no objection to the amendment. If a person consistently commits offences in respect of which the penalty is £1, the Crown Law Department may elect to take the case to court where the penalty will be imposed. Generally the penalty for parking offences is in excess of £1 for cases that are dealt with in courts today.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Rejected.

Debate resumed from the 27th October.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [749]: In introducing this Bill, the Minister stated that in his opinion there was nothing contentious in it, but I think it is a very contentious measure and I intend to oppose it strongly. The first amendment clarifies the definition of a shop in regard to hairdressers. That can be agreed to because it is necessary.

Another amendment proposes to fix the maximum working hours of adult males in or about factories. Working hours are mainly fixed by industrial awards, but the Factories and Shops Act applies to those workers who are not covered by awards. The limitation of hours seeks to establish a limitation for all employees. The Act already defines the limitation of hours for all women and boys. The result of this amendment will mean that persons like night-watchmen, not covered by awards, would work only 40 hours per week before they become due for payment of overtime, whilst others bound by awards would work more than 48 hours before overtime was paid. They would also be limited to eight and a half hours per day and overtime would be payable on Saturday afternoons.

Of course this limitation will impose a very heavy cost on firms that employ night-watchmen. If that occurred, it would mean that adult males in factories doing work not covered by an agreement—that is another amendment to the Act—would be entitled to overtime for all work in excess of 40 hours. Thus staff and executive can conceivably be included. Generally they are compensated for excess or overtime hours by bonuses or other concessions. To bring those people under arbitrary overtime conditions would increase

production costs and selling costs immensely. In fact, the results would be too serious to contemplate.

There is another amendment that alters the time after which no women or boys may work on Saturdays or holidays from 1 p.m. to 12 noon, and extends the provision to cover adult males. This would prohibit all overtime from being worked on Saturday afternoons and holidays, and reduce the hours worked on those mornings by one. The watchman would get overtime rates for Saturday afternoons; continuous process workers not bound by awards would get overtime rates, whilst those under awards would get the maximum of time and a quarter.

The Bill aims to prevent women employed in factories from working after 5.30 p.m. until 8 a.m. the following day. The Act already prohibits women from working on night shift but this Bill proposes to reduce the hours in which they can be employed by half an hour.

The Minister for Lands: Who supplied you with your notes, the Employers' Federation?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Who gave you your notes when you spoke on other matters?

Hon. L. THORN: After all, one is entitled to analyse the Act and the Bill and to consult the parties concerned with proposed legislation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And any other people you like.

Hon. L. THORN: The Act at present provides for payment of time and a quarter for the first two hours of overtime worked, and for time and a half thereafter. A provision in the Bill would amend the corresponding part of the Act to make the rates time and a half for the first four hours of overtime, and double time thereafter. So it goes on. Practically the whole set-up seeks to reduce the hours. There is also provision for meal money. In some awards it is 1s. 6d. for meal money, but in most awards it is 3s. 6d.

From what I can gather from the provisions in the Bill, they seem to cut into awards which establish conditions of employment. One thing that does puzzle me very much is the action of the Labour Government in attempting to restrict the hours of trading of small shopkeepers. I might inform members that the Bill will have a bearing on petrol stations. Under the Bill they will be compelled to close at 5.30 p.m. on week-days, and at 12 noon on Saturdays. That would be the law if this Bill is agreed to. It was only through the decision of the High Court that resellers of petrol were able to trade for longer hours.

Mr. Nalder: Will the restriction of hours apply to petrol stations in the country also?

Hon. L. THORN: They will apply to petrol stations in the country.

Mr. Bovell: Does that mean that delicatessens will also be prevented from doing business after 5.30 p.m.?

Hon. L. THORN: The Bill states that all shops will close at 5.30. The position is that today the law states that shops shall close at 5.30 p.m., but the small shopkeepers are allowed to remain open until 6.30 or 7 p.m., but overtime is paid to the employees after 5.30 p.m. So the employees are being treated fairly.

It amazes me that a Labour Government should bring in legislation to restrict the trading hours of small shopkeepers. I can see that the Labour Party is looking after the interests of the big businessmen and the big stores. I have the greatest respect for firms like Boans and other large retailers. They render a great service to the community. They close at 5.30 p.m. In many instances the period after 5.30 p.m. is the time for the small shopkeeper who is struggling in the suburbs to pick up any trade from businessmen or workers on their way home. If they desire to purchase foodstuffs or tinned goods they can go to the small storekeepers in the suburbs. Why should they not?

Many of the small shopkeepers today are struggling to make a living. There is no doubt about that. They need all the assistance we can give them. If they want to render this service to the community after 5.30 p.m., why should they be restricted?

Mr. Bovell: Will the Bill affect the beach-front shops?

Hon. L. THORN: It will affect them. The week-end is the harvest for those shops. They have a very quiet time during the week but thousands of people flock to the beaches during the week-ends. Some people contend that full provision should be made for one's requirements, but all of us are human. It happens that often one forgets an item of foodstuffs, a tin of jam or milk. We find that the grocery section in these shops will have to be wired off and locked and the shopkeepers will not be permitted to sell grocery items. When I was Minister for Labour I admitted freely and with a great deal of pleasure that I gave instructions that small shopkeepers could sell their goods over the week-end.

The Minister for Housing: Did you think about your oath of office at the time?

Hon. L. THORN: If the Minister had thought about his oath of office, he would not have dived into the trust funds of the State.

The Minister for Housing: We followed the example of your Government.

Hon. L. THORN: The Minister has dived into the trust funds and spent them in a direction he had no right to do. As far as my oath of office is concerned, I kept that faithfully, but there is such a thing as commonsense and discretion. I definitely allowed these people to trade. When the change of Government took place, one of the departmental inspectors paid a visit to a certain seaside resort. He challenged a grocer in these words, "You have not got your screens up." The grocer replied, "No; I understand that we do not have to put them up. When Mr. Thorn was Minister, he gave us a crack of the whip." The inspector replied, "He is not Minister now."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You would be pretty popular out there.

Hon. L. THORN: I do not know about being popular, but I like to treat people fairly and give them a chance to earn a crust. In saying that, I think I should have the support of the member for Fremantle. We have these laws to use if the occasion arises, but there are many instances in which we can extend a little leniency to the public, and I think it should be done.

Here we have the Labour Government bringing down this measure. I am surprised that the Premier should have agreed to it—a measure to restrict trade at a time when these shopkeepers have an opportunity to do a bit of extra business with people returning home at night. From now on, they will not be able to do this business. Therefore, I cannot too strongly oppose the Bill. The Minister would have been well advised to leave this matter alone. The whole policy seems to be to police people. We keep on amending our laws to restrict the activities of the people, and here is a blatant instance of restricting the activities of small shopkeepers when that restriction makes all the difference between their being on the breadline and earning a living. I shall move that the Bill be read a second time. This day three months.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You will not be here then.

Hon. L. THORN: One never knows.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will first have to move to delete the word "now."

Hon. L. THORN: Then I move an amendment—

That the word "now" be struck out.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn—on amendment) [8.21: I am amazed at the amendment moved by the member for Toodyay. His attitude to the Bill is astounding, so much so that it almost takes my breath away. I stated, when moving the second reading, that these amendments were not

of a contentious nature, and I am amazed that the hon. member should adopt such an attitude.

In order that there may be no misunderstanding, I shall deal firstly with his reference to shops on the beach front, which matter was also mentioned by interjection by the member for Vasse. It is true that any Act should be administered with discretion. That is being done at the present time. The hon. member has adopted an entirely negative attitude, but if the Bill were taken into Committee, I would be prepared to invite any member to move a reasonable or appropriate amendment to deal with beach-front shops.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that this is a very live question at Mandurah. It may be a live question also at Bunbury, at Marmion Beach and at other places where the Factories and Shops Act operates. There are beach-front shops within a stone's throw of the business community at Bunbury. Where is the line of demarcation to be drawn? If we had a special arrangement for Mandurah, we must have an arrangement for Rockingham and one for Naval Base, and then it must be extended to South Fremantle, and so on. It could not be applied to Busselton and not to Bunbury, or to Albany and not to Esperance.

The member for Toodyay and the Leader of the Opposition know that what I am saying is correct. It is most difficult to administer the Act with discretion and to be fair to the travelling and holiday public as well as to the traders in any given area. The Leader of the Opposition has made representations to me regarding the position at Mandurah. Officers of the department went to Mandurah to discuss the matter with the local traders in an effort to arrive at some reasonable decision that would overcome the difficulty there. I reiterate that I invite the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Vasse or any other member to put amendments on the notice paper designed to meet the needs of beach resorts.

Mr. Bovell: The small beach resorts.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am referring now to Mandurah, which is a very popular resort. It is known that a number of people are engaged in a diversified form of trading. They sell such articles as fishing lines, tinned milk, chemical goods and general merchandise. The same applies to other beach resorts, only I mention Mandurah as a classical example. I invite any member to submit a reasonable amendment to overcome the difficulty that exists, particularly in the summer months. The department has been eminently reasonable in trying to overcome the difficulty in regard to shops at seaside resorts.

The member for Toodyay stated that the Bill would have the effect of considerably increasing costs. Speaking on general

principles—and here I say that the matter is not contentious when examined dispassionately—all the Bill seeks to do in altering words or figures is to bring the working hours into line with present-day practice and conditions.

Hon. L. Thorn: Would that apply to night-watchmen?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Perhaps the hon. member could pick a hole here and there, but the whole question has to be approached in a reasonable spirit.

Mr. Court: Is it not the other way round?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: What I said was that the amendment in the Bill is designed to bring the provisions of the Act in relation to working hours into line with present-day practice and conditions in industry. The working week throughout Australia for seven or eight years has been one of 40 hours. Anyone who examines the records will find that the Act, which was introduced in 1920, has not been altered in relation to working hours since the working week was 48 hours.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: What about the small shops that do not employ labour?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I shall answer that question presently. Forty hours is now the standard working week whereas it was 48 hours when the original legislation was passed. If we compare the provisions in the Bill with the sections in the Act, we find that the measure is only an attempt to bring the working hours in factories and shops into line with Arbitration Court standards.

Mr. Court: But the working hours of individual employees do not necessarily have to coincide with the trading hours. The tendency is to stagger the hours.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The member for Toodyay has certainly staggered me by his attitude. The hon. member referred to night-watchmen and he picked on a weak item. Throughout the metropolitan area, the cleaners, caretakers, watchmen and similar workers are working either under an award or under an industrial agreement having the effect of a common rule, and so the provisions of the Factories and Shops Act do not apply to them. I wish to emphasise the point that the Act applies only to employees in factories or shops who are not bound by an industrial award or by an agreement that has been made a common rule and has the effect of an industrial award.

To deal now with the matter of garages, all that is sought by the amendment to Section 100 of the Act is to alter the time from 1 o'clock to 12 o'clock to bring it into line with the finishing time of factories generally, but the proviso to the section will remain and the times for the opening and closing of garages will

still remain. I invite the member for Toodyay to re-read the section of the Act and incorporate with it the proposed amendment, and he will find that we are not tampering with the opening or closing times of garages. What is proposed is in operation today. The garages are open on Sundays. I have mentioned that section of the Act because it was referred to by the member for Toodyay.

Regarding the interjection of the member for Subiaco, I interpret her remark to mean that this measure would apply to small shopkeepers or to people who are self-employed in shops. If members read the provisions of the Bill, they will find that the Fourth Schedule shops are not being tampered with other than where a shopkeeper employs labour, and then the employee shall be entitled to what is generally regarded as penalty rates if he works on prescribed public holidays.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Such shops seldom employ labour.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Then they will not be affected by the provisions of the Bill to any extent. Now, I wish to deal with the question of meal money. The Act for approximately 30 years has contained a provision that, when employees work beyond the prescribed hours, they shall be entitled to 1s 6d. meal money. I ask any member to say whether a reasonably substantial meal could be obtained in Perth nowadays for 1s. 6d.

Mr. Bovell: Has not arbitration altered that?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am glad of that interjection. The proposal in the Bill is to increase the amount to 3s. 6d. In reply to the member for Vasse, where an arbitration award or industrial agreement applies, the provisions of this measure will not apply. All that we have tried to do by incorporating the amount of 3s. 6d. for meal money is to bring the figure into line with the common condition in a number of industrial awards and agreements.

Mr. Court: What is the provision in the metal trades award?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I believe it is 3s. 6d.

Mr. Court: Was it not 2s. 6d. in December, 1954?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am open to correction but I think the shop assistants get 3s. 6d. and the metal trades 3s. 6d. meal money.

Mr. Court: The waterside workers receive 5s. but that is a Federal matter.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That is so. A substantial meal would cost much more than 3s. 6d. in the city but a point sometimes raised against an increase is

that when the employee is obliged to pay for a meal under these circumstances, the domestic responsibility is relieved to a certain extent. That is why the actual amount is not prescribed.

Hon. L. Thorn: There are overtime rates, also.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Every provision in this measure can be substantiated with reasons and those relating to overtime have been lifted from the metropolitan shop assistants award to which all employers bound by that award are obliged to conform. The other provisions in the Bill are more or less of a machinery character and I am surprised that a Bill such as this, designed primarily to clear away the dead wood in the Act and including provisions to conform to present-day conditions and practices should be objected to by the member for Toodyay. I must oppose the amendment.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling—on amendment) [8.17]: I am inclined to agree with my colleague, the member for Toodyay, in regard to the contents of this Bill, much of which seeks to alter 1 o'clock to 12 o'clock and 6 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. The clause which seeks to amend Section 101 of the principal Act deals, as I see it, expressly with small shops, excluding those in the Fourth Schedule. Section 101 of the parent Act reads—

The closing time for small shops (not being shops mentioned in the Fourth Schedule) shall be, in every week—on one week-day, 1 o'clock; on the other five week days, 8 o'clock.

I understand that that has subsequently been further amended but the 1 o'clock still stands and the Bill seeks to alter that to noon. I confess that the provision regarding the hours for which the small shops shall remain open seems to me to be unnecessary. I do not propose to enlarge on the points made by the member for Toodyay as I think they are self-evident.

Section 99, which is also sought to be amended, provides—

Subject as hereinafter provided the closing time for all shops except those mentioned in the Fourth Schedule and except registered small shops shall be in every week—one week-day 1 o'clock; on the other five week days 6 o'clock;

and again this clause in the measure, which has about eight or nine subclauses, seeks to amend 1 o'clock to noon and 6 o'clock to 5.30. Once again, I think it is entirely unnecessary, at this stage of the world's history, to alter those times because, as I see the position, there are very few people—dealing with the other matters the Minister has raised—who are not subject to awards, and I believe that

this Act in its present form at the present time is entirely suitable to meet the position that exists.

Then there is Section 100, which deals with service stations, and although it is a well-known fact that, as a result of the judgment of the court and the proviso which is to be found somewhere attached to Section 100, the provisions of the Act to a great extent are not enforceable, nevertheless here is a proposition to alter 1 o'clock to noon and 6 o'clock to 5.30 and once again it seems to me to be completely unnecessary to amend the law in this way.

If we are to attempt to amend the Act, seeing that each of these clauses which deals with the sundry amendments contains paragraphs up to (f), (h) and other letters of the alphabet in large numbers, it is obvious that the proposition will be one of considerable difficulty, and quite apart from one or two other objectionable features which there are in the Bill and to which I have not referred but which have to be dealt with, it seems to me that the right course to adopt is that taken by the member for Toodyay, at least to vote against the second reading. I think the proper way is provided under our Standing Orders, and if we feel that the majority of the principles in the Bill are not suitable we should advocate that it be defeated on the second reading and that is what the hon. member has done.

I cannot see that, with the utmost goodwill, one could amend this Bill to fit in with other ideas, because in the majority of instances there is no reason whatever given—no reason which appeals to me—for the amendments, particularly in regard to the half-hours, hours, 1 o'clocks and noons to which I have referred, and so I support the amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—on amendment) [8.22]: This Bill has been on the notice paper for some considerable time and any member who desired to develop amendments has certainly had reasonable time in which to do so and could have had them placed on the notice paper. I have much more confidence in the ability of the member for Stirling in that direction than he appears at the moment to have in himself. I am sure that had he devoted himself to the task he could have completed it in a comparatively short time and his amendments, whatever they might have been, would now have been sitting prettily on the notice paper and would have been there for some days prior to this. We did agree to delay the resumption of the debate on the Bill at the request of the member for Toodyay, as I think he will remember.

Hon. L. Thorn: I admit that. It was introduced on the Thursday and I was to go on with it the following Tuesday but was not ready.

The PREMIER: That is so, and at the hon. member's suggestion and request we readily agreed to delay resumption of the debate until he could make himself ready to proceed.

Hon. L. Thorn: I got a terrible shock when I went through the Bill.

The PREMIER: I think the member for Toodyay has reached a stage and age in life when nothing would shock him and certainly not a comparatively small Bill of this description. Had we followed the normal course and agreed to the second reading, the Bill would now have been well into the Committee stage, and if members had then defeated certain clauses, that would have been unfortunate from some points of view. However, that seems the reasonable procedure to follow. If the Bill is to be defeated at the second reading stage, let it be defeated there. This move to delay the taking of the second reading for three months is obviously a sort of around the gooseberry bush business.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It has the same effect under the Standing Orders.

The PREMIER: I readily admit that, and that is why I wondered why this procedure is being adopted as against a straight-out vote on the second reading. Had we followed the usual practice a vote on the second reading would have been decided one way or the other at least half-an-hour ago. This procedure seems to me to be merely absorbing time, more or less uselessly, which could have been applied more effectively to something else. I hope the move will be defeated and that we will have a straight-out vote on the second reading.

Mr. BOVELL: I move—

That the House do now divide.

Motion put and passed.

Amendment (to strike out word) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	....	24
Noes	....	....	....	....	23
Majority for	....	....	....	....	1

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Brand	Mr. North
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Owen
Mr. Court	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doley	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Watts
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wild
Mr. Manning	Mr. Yates
Sir Ross McLarty	Mr. Bovell

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Brady	Mr. Molr
Mr. Graham	Mr. Norton
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Heal	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Styants
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Kelly	Mr. May
Mr. Lapham	

(Teller.)

Pair.

Aye.	No.
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Lawrence

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. L. THORN: I move—

That the words "this day three months" be inserted in lieu of the word struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Bill rejected.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1955-56.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 27th October, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Railways, £4,000,000:

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [8.32]: Before I address myself to the Loan Estimates, there are one or two things I would like to say, especially to the Treasurer. I wish to let him know at this stage that the Opposition is willing to facilitate the passing of Supply at the earliest possible time, as well as certain Bills which the Opposition considers can be passed in the public interest. I think it is the duty of the Government to have the present parliamentary situation resolved at the earliest possible date; by that I mean the holding of a general election. A Government which no longer commands a majority in this Chamber should, after ensuring Supply for the necessary services of the State, place itself in the hands of the people.

The Opposition is willing that Supply should be granted. We realise that certain essential services have to be carried on and people have to be paid. At Bunbury, during the recent by-election, I told the people that the Opposition would be prepared to grant Supply to the Government to tide it over the period of an election. I think that everybody will admit that the present set-up in this Chamber is unprecedented and highly unsatisfactory.

The Minister for Works: You forget the time when you had only 23.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We carried on.

The Minister for Education: And ran for cover.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We carried on.

The Minister for Education: You carried off.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Every time the then Opposition tried to embarrass us, we provided a majority.

The Minister for Education: You closed Parliament at the end of September and allowed two electorates to be without representatives for six months.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If Ministers are going to argue that the present state of affairs should continue, despite the fact that they have not a majority—

The Minister for Works: We are saying that it is not unprecedented, that is all.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is.

The Minister for Works: You kept two electorates without any representation.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is the first time in the history of this Parliament that we have had a Government sitting in office without a majority.

The Minister for Works: The first time in the history of this Parliament, yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, and the first time in the history of this country that such a situation has arisen. So I suggest to the Treasurer he is in duty bound to appeal to the people at the earliest possible date.

The Minister for Mines: What camouflage.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know that the Minister for Mines does not want to appeal to the people at the earliest possible date.

The Minister for Works: He will be back here again.

The Minister for Lands: What date would you suggest? The 10th December?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We will see who will or who will not come back. But let the people decide at the earliest possible date. Let the people decide now.

The Minister for Works: What do you mean, by "now"?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: At the earliest possible date. Surely the Minister does not want to cling on to his office under present conditions, fond of his office though he may be.

The Minister for Works: What date do you suggest as the earliest possible, having regard to all the circumstances?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have already suggested one date which could have been agreed to.

Mr. Andrew: The 14th January, when everybody is away on holidays.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I had this letter from the Treasurer today and if he has no objection I shall read it.

The Treasurer: I have no objection.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is not marked personal, or anything like that, and it reads—

Re Closing of Session and Election Date.

The letter which the Hon. Mr. Watts and yourself sent to me on the 2nd instant has received the careful consideration of Ministers and all members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. As a result I would now advise you both that the Government does not consider it practicable to finish the session on the 17th instant as suggested in your letter. Further, it is not thought at present that January 14th would be a suitable date for a general election in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Andrew: It is not.

Mr. Heal: Now we have heard it.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: All right. What is a suitable date in the Treasurer's opinion?

Mr. Andrew: About May.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer does not say. The Opposition is quite willing to accommodate him. Let us assume that the 14th January is a little early. When would he like it?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How do you like it?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think he will soon have to make up his mind. I am trying to be a little co-operative.

The Minister for Railways: Coercion.

Mr. Heal: Let nature take its course.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Having said that, I shall proceed to deal with the Loan Estimates. I think that anyone who is interested in the financial aspects of the State, both in regard to the Budget and the Loan Estimates, will agree that the time has well and truly arrived when there should be an election. The Treasurer is fond of using a particular word and talks about the finances being "grim".

Mr. Heal: Grimmer.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I would say that the financial position of the State has never been worse than it is today. This afternoon I asked the Treasurer a number of questions, the first of which was—

To what extent have bills of exchange, and/or treasury bills been entered into, regarding loan works, which normally would be included in next year's Loan Estimates.

His reply was—

Bills of exchange to the extent of £3,000 have been accepted to date.

I then asked him—

Are any further commitments of this kind to be entered into before December, 1955? If so, to what amount?

His reply was—

Yes, approximately £47,000.

I then asked him—

What is the total amount to be repaid, as the result of drawing on the trust funds?

The Treasurer replied—

£1,594,000.

I then asked him—

Are there any other deferred payments which will be required to be met from next financial year's loan funds?

And the Treasurer replied—

	£
Bills of exchange in respect of works which it is anticipated will be financed under the deferred payment scheme between the 1st January, 1956, and the 30th June, 1956	730,000
Loan from Australasian Petroleum Refinery Ltd.	500,000
Loan from Commonwealth Bank for Perth Hospital Buildings	150,000
"V" class locomotives for railways (estimated)	543,000
	<hr/> £1,923,000

Mr. Johnson: In your last year of office, did you overspend your advance to Treasurer?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer may want the hon. member's assistance. The hon. member knows he is the Treasurer's financial adviser, but he should just keep quiet for the time being.

Mr. Johnson: Did you overspend by £8,000,000?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If members have looked at those questions and added the amounts together they will find that they total £3,725,000.

The Minister for Works: That is about a quarter of the sum that you left swinging.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I saw on the notice paper of another place that the Treasurer is providing £100,000 for some other work. So it goes on. If the financial position of this State is not grim today, I do not know what the word means.

Let us have a look at the loan position generally. A total of £190,000,000 was made available to the States by the Loan Council. I have pointed out that the Commonwealth does not claim any of this money but leaves the loan field entirely to the States. It finances its own public

works from revenue. But if the Commonwealth insisted upon taking its share of the loan funds, as it has a right to do, the position of the States would be infinitely worse. Some people say that the Commonwealth could do more to help us, on the loan side, from revenue, and reference has been made to the last Commonwealth Budget.

The Commonwealth Treasurer indicated the position during the last Budget Speech and, of course, the sum of money which it was thought would be available, as a result of the Commonwealth Budget surplus, is not nearly so great as first anticipated, and the position is not as rosy as it looks. The Commonwealth underwrites our loans to a considerable extent; if it did not do this, the loan position would undoubtedly be much worse than it is at present. We are receiving £17,900,000 as our share of the loan funds. Of this amount £5,000,000 goes to housing, leaving £12,900,000 for public works. The Treasurer then tells us that loan repayments provide another £1,625,000, which brings the total amount of loan money for public works to £14,525,000.

Members who peruse the allocation of loan money will be able to decide if that money has been wisely allocated. Looking to the future, I would say it appears that the loan market is tightening; and with a fall in the value of our exportable primary products that is not to be wondered at. In the circumstances, therefore, it must be decided which of our loan works are most urgent. Another important matter for us to decide is what savings can be made in carrying them out. I feel that certain savings can be made in a number of directions.

I am mindful of the fact that we must guard against unemployment, and in this regard the encouragement and needs of private industry should be given constant consideration by the Government. This business of saying from a Government angle, "We are going to spend all the money we are to get; we are going to use all the materials we are to get without giving consideration to the needs of private industry," which in many cases is providing those essential needs, is not a good policy. There ought to be co-ordination in these matters, and, as far as I can see, there is very little of that co-ordination in this State.

For my part, I remember well that during the war period extensive plans were drawn up for a public works programme, which ran into hundreds of millions of pounds. The idea was to absorb thousands of men who would be discharged from the army. Many of those works have since been carried out. I refer to such works as water services, the rehabilitation of the railways, housing, land development and others of a like nature. At that time it was strongly advocated by certain thinking

people that private industry should be encouraged to expand, and thus relieve Governments of the heavy loan expenditure; that Governments should reserve their spending for the period when private investment slackened.

But we know that the reverse has happened. During the last decade the position has been one of full employment. There has been a shortage of basic materials and, as I say, just the opposite effect to that which was anticipated has been our experience. We now face a different set of circumstances. The materials supply position is not nearly so acute, but loan money is becoming more difficult to obtain. Looking at the overall picture, it can be said that the present Government has been fortunately placed regarding Commonwealth money that has been made available to it during the time it has been in office. This year the Government will have £14,525,000. The State Electricity Commission has approval to borrow £2,100,000.

Mr. Johnson: What is the value of that money?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government will also be greatly helped from other directions. There will be an increased amount from the petrol tax; and we are informed that it will rise to £5,000,000. With reference to the comprehensive water scheme the Government is able to plan ahead because the Commonwealth has increased its contribution in that direction by £1,850,000. Even if the money is not available immediately, the Government knows that it will get it and can plan accordingly.

The Government also had other revenue from the Commonwealth which I have previously mentioned. But the Treasurer tells us that the Loan Estimates for last year were based upon an anticipated borrowing programme of all the States of £200,000,000. But that amount of loan money was undersubscribed—that is, on the loan market—by £20,000,000, and as a consequence the State's allocation was reduced by 10 per cent. Western Australia suffered a reduction in loan funds of £1,900,000.

The Treasurer had no right to budget for this extra amount. The Commonwealth Government gave a warning—and the Treasurer cannot deny this—that the amount of £200,000,000 might not be subscribed. The general impression conveyed to the man in the street, and in fact to everybody, was that the £200,000,000 or anything like it, might not be obtained from the loan market. The Commonwealth did guarantee, however, to underwrite £180,000,000. I also remember when the argument was in progress at the Loan Council meeting that Mr. Cahill, the Premier of New South Wales, moved that the amount that would be put on the loan market should be £220,000,000. I am sorry

to say that our Treasurer was irresponsible enough to support him, and yet he must have known perfectly well—and he did know perfectly well—that that amount or anything like that amount could not be subscribed by loan.

In this financial year the amount of loan money due for conversion is £85,000,000, the amount last year being £125,000,000. The new cash raisings from the Commonwealth loan during the past year produced £122,000,000. But there were large conversions and the net loan raisings were reduced to £90,000,000. Yet at the Loan Council meeting the Treasurer supported a proposal to raise £220,000,000 for this financial year when he knew the loan position would be even more difficult than it was in the previous year. Any Treasurer who goes ahead with a loan programme on the assumption that he might get a larger allocation than that agreed to by the Commonwealth, is behaving in an irresponsible manner.

The Minister for Lands: You ought to know as you had six years of that responsibility.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know that some State Treasurers have gone ahead on this assumption in the hope of being able to bluff the Commonwealth. Such a method of dealing with loan money can only create a chaotic state of affairs so far as the Loan Council is concerned, and could completely upset the Commonwealth-State financial relations, besides most seriously affecting all classes of private industry and earnings, no matter in which direction they might be earned. It is vital at Loan Council meetings to adopt a practical outlook, and the governing factor is the loan market.

Of course, I know the Commonwealth has other means of assisting, but the sound method is to do it from revenue, which it is doing. I am perfectly certain the people of Australia in the next few weeks will decide that they will not allow an irresponsible Government to come in and provide paper money, or Central Bank credit, in order that certain loan works may be carried out. The practical and commonsense view to take is to plan our loan programme to somewhere near what it is considered the loan market will provide.

This is especially necessary when it is well known to us that the great bulk of our loan expenditure is not revenue producing, and that we have to look to the Commonwealth to make good our revenue deficiency through the recommendations of the Grants Commission, which this year will be £8,900,000. I notice that the revenue deficiency on all public works loans was just about this amount, and through the recommendations of the Grants Commission a like amount of £8,900,000 has been provided. I think the time has come when we should have a serious look at this position.

We know the amount given to us through the Grants Commission has grown from year to year. It has grown at a much faster rate than any of us ever imagined it could. I feel sure the time will come when the Commonwealth will feel that there is a limit to which it can go on regarding disabilities grants. I would say, too, that the non-claimant States will also become concerned at the size of these grants. I am sure the Commonwealth is already concerned when one State alone is provided with a special grant of £8,900,000.

By the way the Treasurer is behaving at present I think he feels it is only a matter of form for this amount to be gradually increased next year. The Treasurer has already admitted that we are receiving generous treatment from the Commonwealth on the recommendation of the Grants Commission. I do not think anyone will deny that. The Treasurer told us that last year he spent £1,200,000 in excess of the loan moneys he received. I understand he took this money from the trust funds, a form of finance which he strongly criticised during the last election campaign. He featured this wherever he went; or he did so in a great number of places he visited. He stressed the fact that a Treasurer who used loan funds as I did was not to be trusted.

Hon. A. F. Watts: You mean trust funds.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, what did I say?

Hon. A. F. Watts: You said loan funds.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I meant trust funds. The Treasurer was horrified to think that I used trust funds. We have never had a Treasurer who has dipped so deeply into trust funds as this one has.

Mr. Johnson: Except the previous one.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I doubt whether the trust funds were ever in a worse position than they are at present. It would be interesting to know how far he has dipped into the main roads funds and to what extent work may have to be curtailed as a result of his having dipped into those funds.

The Minister for Works: You are on the wrong track there.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He has taken funds from somewhere.

The Minister for Works: You are on the wrong track. You are guessing.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have to guess because the Treasurer has not told me. It is just as wicked to take from one lot of trust funds as from another, according to him.

The Minister for Works: You can make a stab at it, but it is wrong.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He has taken those trust funds from somewhere.

The Minister for Works: I deny that he has taken the main roads funds.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have no doubt that the Minister for Works has watched him pretty carefully; I know it takes a good man to do it. I wish he had been more watchful of the Minister for Housing. Last year the Treasurer informed us that £15,300,000 was available to the State for the general works programme. This year he budgets to spend £2,000,000 less. I repeat that last year he spent over £1,200,000 more than he received; but he has told us that he will receive an additional £1,500,000 for housing, so he will obtain an additional overall amount of £800,000 this financial year.

Let us have a look at the position that will be created by the £2,000,000 less expenditure this financial year. He goes on to state that £900,000 will have to be allocated from loan funds to the State Electricity Commission. I asked him today whether the loan had been over-subscribed and he told me the amount subscribed was £1,000,000. When we come to Commonwealth-State housing, this is his story: He tells us that he received an additional £1,500,000 for Commonwealth-State housing projects. That is £5,000,000 all told. Then he goes on to say that £1,185,000 is required to clear the overdraft of this account at the 30th June last. I remember his replying to a question that he had had another dip into the trust funds.

So members can see that here he has spent £1,200,000 more than he received by way of loan and £1,850,000 more than he received for housing; and so he goes on. No wonder the people of this State—the thinking people—are becoming somewhat worried about this Treasurer, this care-free Treasurer who seems to be just as happy today as ever he was! I do not think he would worry very much if he had overspent £5,000,000 or £6,000,000.

The Minister for Lands: He has a better record than you.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What a wonderful fellow the Minister is! He is most helpful! Let him try to deal with the department with which he is struggling now, and never mind about anything else!

The Minister for Lands: Talk about irresponsibility!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I wonder how the State Government insurance fund is getting on.

The Minister for Lands: You go to sleep!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He has had a dip there.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And the miner's phthisis fund!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister in charge of that department does not say anything about that. He does not jump to it like the Minister for Works. How can he?

The Minister for Education: Ask the ex-Minister for Rottneest. He will go quiet.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know whether any member in this House is satisfied with the financial position today. If he is, I can only say he has given very little consideration to it. The Treasurer cannot deny that it is infinitely worse than when we left office in 1953.

The Treasurer: I will prove it is infinitely better.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer will be a very clever fellow if he does.

The Treasurer: I will prove it from your replies to questions in Parliament in 1952.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer will need to prove it.

The Treasurer: You can check it yourself. The 18th September, 1952, was the date.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: From the way he has been going on, I think the Treasurer was convinced that we were bound to strike oil. That is what happened. When oil was struck, he became so optimistic that he said, "I am going to let her go, boys!" Unfortunately for the State, we have not yet struck oil in payable quantities; though, naturally, I hope we will.

The Minister for Education: You are trying to spud in.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He decided to have another gamble, which has not come off. But he will need all the oil he can obtain. the way he is going on, in order to get us out of our difficulties. The total expenditure on the railways in 1954-55 was £5,882,000, or £760,000 less than for the preceding year. This year the expenditure will be £1,882,000 less than that of last year. So it will be seen there is a very big reduction in railway loan funds this financial year. This should be a diminishing expenditure, and the Treasurer will be saving money in that direction. I should say that no objection could be taken to the amount allotted for houses for railway employees. While providing a necessity, I presume this will be revenue-producing work as well.

I hope that the £2,100,000 that the Electricity Commission will raise, plus the £900,000 to be made available from loan funds, will enable the commission to proceed with its work. I know that great disappointment is being expressed regarding the cancellation of certain extensions that were promised. At Cockburn Sound, £132,000 less will be spent this year. Less money is to be provided for country areas

and town water supplies, but an additional £102,000 is to be spent on the comprehensive scheme. We should be grateful to the Commonwealth for the additional assistance it is giving in this direction.

The Minister for Lands: There is a streak of jealousy running through your speech.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: A streak of jealousy?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have not noted it myself.

The Minister for Lands: You would not.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think I am likely to become jealous of the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: You are jealous of the Government in office by the sound of you.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Jealous of the Government in office? Let us test it out! But Ministers are sticking to their seats like glue! I would say that the provision of water is a first priority. The amount of money allotted for much-needed drainage is disappointing, and there is much concern in some districts over the lack of drainage. Land cannot be farmed if it is flooded for the greater part of the winter. It should be remembered that a number of districts are heavily rated for drainage but are not getting value for the money they are forced to pay. The expenditure on public buildings will be down £319,000 this year. It is evident that there will be no loan money for regional hospitals at Albany, Bunbury, or Geraldton.

Mr. Brady: Or Midland Junction.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The expenditure in the North-West will be increased by £65,000 and the money will be spent mainly on water supplies and public buildings. That is a justifiable increase, but the total of £187,000 is not large when spread over such a big area. The expenditure on the State Shipping Service is to drop by £139,000. I hope that the new Commonwealth Minister for Supply and Shipping, Senator Paltridge, will have a look at the State Shipping Service with a view to obtaining first-hand knowledge of the difficulties confronting it and providing some assistance. I referred to Senator Paltridge. I think the Treasurer has a knowledge of him.

The Treasurer: All of him.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He has been towelling up the Treasurer.

The Minister for Works: You are a little astray about the comprehensive scheme.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Does the Minister think he is not getting help?

The Minister for Works: Not as much as we asked for. Apparently you do not know.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister never gets as much as he asks for!

The Minister for Works: We were limited to our expenditure for this financial year and are expected to find the rest on a £ for £ basis.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government has been given an additional £1,800,000.

The Minister for Works: Not this year.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Nevertheless, the Government is getting it and, because of that fact, will be able to plan ahead.

The Minister for Works: It is all right to say we are getting it! I will agree when we get it.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government will get it.

Mr. Cornell: Are you satisfied with the Commonwealth's contribution to the comprehensive water supply scheme?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The hon. member knows that, with the Leader of the Country Party, I made representations to the Commonwealth for a larger amount of money; I might say that, as a result of our representations, we did assist in getting more money for that scheme. When I was in office, we went on with the comprehensive scheme in the face of great difficulties. I flew East one day and came back the next day, and I told the Prime Minister of the difficulties we were confronting, and that we would never be able to keep within the figure originally provided. I can only say to the hon. member that I have done my best to assist with the comprehensive water supply scheme.

The Minister for Mines: That does not say you are satisfied with what we are getting.

The Treasurer: He is satisfied with anything Menzies gives him.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer says that Mr. Menzies would promise anything.

The Treasurer: I did not say that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer muttered something about Menzies. It was not complimentary.

The Treasurer: Yes; it was.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Was it? I am glad to hear it. I am sorry it will not appear in "Hansard."

Hon. D. Brand: Yes; it will.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I hope it will.

The Minister for Education: You will be sorry!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Loan funds for this financial year for metropolitan water supply, sewerage and drainage will be about the same as last year. That is

a work that must continue. The sum of £100,000 is set aside for agricultural research. That is very necessary. I am always willing and anxious to pay a tribute to the research workers, particularly in regard to agricultural development. Their work is worth millions of pounds, not only to Western Australia but to other parts of the Commonwealth and, indeed, other parts of the world. The money that is being provided for this purpose is justified.

For the Fremantle harbour, £500,000 is allocated; and we know that is a work that has to go on. Provision is made in the Estimates for £817,000 for the Rural & Industries Bank to provide for primary and industrial development. I should think that most of this would be needed for the assistance and development of primary industry.

Hon. L. Thorn: Too right!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We have to be extremely careful in providing money for certain industries that want to lean too heavily on the Government. If industries desire to become established, they should provide the greater part of the capital themselves, and not lean too heavily on Governments. Over the years a number of Governments have had the experience of certain people coming to them. They have asked for very substantial help and the Governments have been left lamenting.

I have been looking at the tables provided when the Treasurer introduced the Estimates, and I notice that some loans are due for conversion in London amounting to £7,000,000. I understand the Commonwealth has taken responsibility for those loans; but I would like to know from the Treasurer whether, if the conversion has to be made at a higher rate of interest, the State will be involved in any additional payments. The money is carrying a low rate of interest and the loans are redeemable.

Mr. Johnson: The Federal Treasurer arranges it and we foot the Bill.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know. Under the agreement that was made, it becomes a Commonwealth responsibility. While I cannot pick up the figure, it is over £7,000,000, and I was going to ask the Treasurer just what the State's responsibility was and whether it meant that we would be involved in a higher interest rate. I do not want to say anything more at this stage on the Loan Estimates, but I hope the Treasurer will make a note of what I have said.

The Treasurer: I have taken several notes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I repeat that this Government should not be governing. It is all very well to talk about why it lost certain seats, but the fact is that it

did lose them; that the Government candidates were not returned. The Government no longer has a majority on the floor of the Chamber and, for the time being, it is governing without a majority. I think the Treasurer should come out with some statement; or does he want to wait for the Leader of the Opposition, or the Opposition, to take a particular action?

The Treasurer: The Leader of the Opposition has been having plenty to say lately.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The numbers tonight were against the Treasurer, and he might have regarded this as a minor defeat; but under ordinary circumstances he would not permit it.

The Treasurer: The move is with the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes.

The Treasurer: That is what the Leader of the Opposition is for.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Perhaps the Treasurer is justified in saying this, but I feel that if I were in his position, without a majority, I would let His Excellency know.

The Minister for Lands: You were two short of a majority once.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Whether the Treasurer is going to cling to office to the very last minute, I do not know. I tell him again, we will grant him Supply.

The Treasurer: Thank you.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We will be willing to consider that legislation which we think is important.

The Treasurer: Thank you.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: And we think this session should close at the earliest possible date—

The Treasurer: Thank you.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY:—and that the Government should go to the electors as soon as possible. After what I have said to the Treasurer tonight and what has been said to him on the Budget about the finances of his Government, both revenue and loan, he will have something to answer for when he gets to the electors; and he will not be able to indulge in the extravagant promises, some of which the Leader of the Country Party referred to tonight, that he made when he was on the hustings the last time. This is shown to the Treasurer by the three recent by-elections. Was it a glamour boy who won the Goldfields seat in the Council?

The Treasurer: My word, yes; a real Clark Gable.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is another reason. Was it a glamour boy who defeated the Treasurer's candidate in the South-West Province?

The Treasurer: A real Adolph Menjou.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The next was the Bunbury by-election. I do not mind if our party finds these outstanding candidates who dwarf and put in the shade those put up by the Treasurer. If we get right down to the real facts, we find that the last three by-elections have clearly indicated that the Government has lost the confidence of this Chamber.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is on the way out.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government is well on the way out. Seeing that the Government has not a majority, the proper thing is for it to go to the country at the earliest possible date and obtain the verdict of the electors.

Progress reported.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £16,000,000.

Message.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Treasurer, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in the one day.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.21]: I move—

That there be granted to Her Majesty on account of the services of the State for the year ending the 30th June, 1956, a sum not exceeding £16,000,000.

A sum of £17,000,000 has already been granted for this financial year and that sum is made up as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	11,500,000
General Loan Fund	4,000,000
Advance to Treasurer	1,500,000

For the three months to the end of September, 1955, expenditure has been—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	12,294,406
General Loan Fund	2,957,013

The revenue collected during those three months was £10,752,298, leaving a deficit in the Consolidated Revenue Fund of

£1,542,108. In that regard, I would point out that the early months of a financial year are always months in which the expenditure far exceeds the revenue and the main reason for that would be well known to the Leader of the Opposition. In the early months of a financial year, the expenditure is equally proportionate to the expenditure throughout the whole of the year; in other words, the expenditure from month to month does not vary much. There is the same approximate total expenditure in the first month of the financial year as there is in the last month.

However, income is entirely different. In the early months of a financial year, revenue from some sources does not come in at all and comes in from others only to a small extent. So one cannot judge the final result of the year's financing upon the results of the first three or four months, or even of the first six months. Another important factor in this situation is that the payments from the Commonwealth disabilities grant, as recommended by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in the first instance, and as approved later by the Commonwealth Parliament, have not been coming forward in the due monthly proportion. I think at present we are some £600,000 behind in the payments from that grant by the Commonwealth to the State. It is anticipated that during the current month much of that leeway will be made up with a consequent improvement in the position of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The further Supply of £16,000,000, now sought, is required for—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	13,000,000
General Loan Fund	3,000,000

This additional Supply is to enable the services of the State to be carried on until the Estimates have finally been passed by Parliament. Copies of both Revenue and Loan Estimates for the year have been distributed to members and contain details of proposed expenditure during this financial year.

Progress reported.

BILL—LOAN. £11,604,000.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.28] in moving the second reading said: This is the normal Loan Bill and sets out the authority to the Government for the raising of a sum of £11,604,000 for the construction of certain public works and for other purposes.

Particulars of the purposes for which the money is to be raised, and for which it will be used after it becomes available, are set out in the schedules to the Bill.

Quite a good deal has been said this evening regarding loan moneys. I do not want to make a full statement about the loan situation during the debate on this Bill. It would be preferable for me to reserve much of what I would have to say when I speak during the debate on the Loan Estimates. I would point out, however, for the information of members, that the loan position in Western Australia, and to some lesser extent in all other States, is serious to an extremely considerable degree.

It is an easy matter for any person to irresponsibly criticise the position regarding loan expenditure by the Government these days; to criticise the fact that the total loan funds available are found not to be sufficient for urgent and vital purposes and, following that, to criticise the steps taken by the Government to try to meet, if not adequately, at least to some reasonable degree, the more urgent and essential requirements of the people. The total loan programmes of the departments for this financial year amounted to £28,500,000. The total loan money available to the Government with which to finance those programmes is approximately only half of that amount.

Therefore, it would be clear to anyone who was prepared to look without prejudice at the situation; to anyone who was willing to forget about the next election, that it would be impossible for any Government, even one led by the Leader of the Opposition, to finance £28,500,000 of public works with £14,500,000 worth of money. No matter how brilliant the Leader of the Opposition might have been as Treasurer of the State, he was never brilliant enough to do that. So the Government has been under the necessity of cutting down very considerably the departmental programmes. Even when we did cut them down severely, we found that the total expenditure required to finance the reduced programme was far beyond the actual loan moneys available to us.

Hon. D. Brand: Would you not concede that that position existed when our Government was in office and when we had to face similar difficulties?

The TREASURER: I am quite prepared to say that in the last year or so of the hon. member's Government's term of office considerable financial difficulties did develop. However, when the Government looked at the programmes, especially those of the Education Department, the Public Health Department and the State Housing Commission, and after these programmes had been considerably reduced, it was found the total amount of money

required to finance the reduced programmes was beyond the total loan moneys available to the State.

Members cannot have it both ways. They cannot argue, for political purposes, that the Government has plenty of loan money available to build schools, classrooms, hospitals, and to provide water supplies, houses and all the rest of it and then keep hammering away at the Government to spend even more money in their respective electorates for the provision of more schools, more classrooms, more hospitals, more hospital additions, more water supplies, more drainage schemes, more houses and all the rest of it. Members should take a fair and realistic view of the situation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But that has always been the case. You have had demands for four times and even five times as much loan money as you could get. Every Treasurer has been in that position.

The TREASURER: What does that prove?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are not the only one to find yourself in this position.

The TREASURER: I am not saying that I am. The Leader of the Opposition is having an argument with himself. He is in a very bad temper this evening. I hope he is in a better frame of mind at tomorrow's cricket match between the parliamentary team and the Governor's team.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I doubt whether I will have the time to attend.

The TREASURER: The Leader of the Opposition has all the time there is.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I would not say that.

The TREASURER: As I was saying, members cannot have it both ways. They cannot say that the Government has enough loan money and that therefore the Government is irresponsible if it has any public works carried out under the deferred payment system or uses that method to build more classrooms, more hospital accommodation, and to provide more water supplies and, at the same time, keep demanding of the Government that it do more in their own individual electorates.

Members should agree that they ought to be realistic and honest in their approach to this matter. The Government felt, after looking at the departmental programmes and cutting them down as much as was thought reasonable and safe to do in the circumstances, that it had to make provision to carry out a larger total programme of public works than could be financed by the actual loan moneys made available to it. So the Government has, as Parliament has already been informed, arranged to have certain urgent public

works carried out under the deferred payment system. These urgent works cover schools, classrooms, hospitals, hospital additions and some houses. So it is not enough for members to stand up and condemn a Government for making arrangements, outside of the actual loan moneys available, to carry out these works unless members are at the same time prepared to say that no provision—not one penny's worth—should be made outside the actual loan funds for schools, hospitals, water supplies or anything else.

It is the view of the Government in this matter that these schools and school additions; hospitals and hospital additions and these houses will have to be built because they are in short supply. We all know from our individual experiences in our own electorates that the volume of accommodation for schoolchildren is not nearly enough. We know that the pressure for hospital accommodation is far greater than that which is available. We know that more houses are required and so on. Therefore, these works have to be carried out. If they are not carried out to a reasonable degree this financial year under the deferred payment system, then they will not be carried out this financial year at all.

The shortage of school accommodation and hospital accommodation is greater for the rest of this financial year than it would be otherwise. If the work is carried out this financial year on that basis, then to the extent the work is carried out this year it will not be necessary, we would hope, to carry it out to as great an extent next year. I simply make those comments at this stage because it seems to me they are most appropriate in view of what was said earlier by the Leader of the Opposition. I also think it is advisable that the public should know just what the situation is in relation to the construction of schools, hospitals, houses, water supplies and other public works. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 7.30 p.m. tomorrow.

The reason for this motion is to give members an opportunity to have afternoon tea with His Excellency the Governor at the annual cricket match to be played between a Parliamentary XI and His Excellency's team.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.42 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 9th November, 1955.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 7.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Acts Amendment (Libraries) Bill.

QUESTIONS.

CROWN LANDS.

Availability for Pastoral Purposes.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Minister for the North-West:

In view of the replies given by him to Hon. G. Bennetts on Wednesday, the 2nd November, regarding Crown lands for pastoral purposes, and having regard to the news item in "The West Australian" the following day, headed "North-West Crown Land Withdrawn"—

(1) (a) Will he please indicate whether his reply had reference to the North-West only, or to the whole of the State?

(b) Does this action in any way affect existing leases?

(2) Is he prepared to clarify the attitude of the Government in regard to this matter?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) The whole State.

(b) No.

(2) The remaining Crown lands in Western Australia suitable for pastoral purposes in due course will be made available in areas not exceeding that required in each case to make a sound economic unit, subject to such reserves as may be required. The department is actively engaged in determining living areas in the various pastoral regions, but this only concerns unoccupied Crown lands.