

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 14th November, 1956.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### HOSPITALS.

*Metropolitan and Country, Finance for Additions, etc.*

Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What amount of money was spent on metropolitan hospitals for the years ended the 30th June, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956?

(2) How many metropolitan hospitals received additions and renovations during the above periods?

(3) What were the individual amounts?

(4) What amount was spent on country hospitals for the years ended the 30th June, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956?

(5) How many country hospitals received finance for additions and renovations for the years ended the 30th June, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956?

(6) What were the individual amounts?

The MINISTER replied:

These details are now supplied and, as they are rather lengthy, it is proposed to table them. The figures shown relate to Government expenditure.

### RAILWAYS.

(a) *Wheat and Super, Haulage Costs, Road and Rail.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

Following his reply to a question asked on the 6th November regarding freight on grain and superphosphate—

(1) What is the amount of subsidy paid by the Government to cover the difference between road haulage costs and railway rates on wheat and superphosphate for the past five years?

(2) How many ton miles of wheat and superphosphate does this represent?

(3) How many ton miles of wheat and superphosphate were actually carried by rail in the same years?

(4) What would be the amount of subsidy for the same years had the wheat and superphosphate carried by rail been subject to the same average subsidy?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Separate figures are not readily available for wheat and superphosphate but the combined subsidy payments for those items during the years specified were—

Year.	Wheat & Superphosphate £
1951-52	132,968 (including £123,214 on long distance haulage of superphosphate.)
1952-53	8,584
1953-54	12,728
1954-55	18,449
1955-56	27,394

In addition, some wheat and superphosphate transport would have received assistance under general subsidies paid to road transport operating regular services.

(2) It is not possible to state ton mileage figures without weeks of research but the tonnages carried under subsidy were—

Year.	Wheat tons.	Superphosphate tons.
1951-52	16,049	165,546 (including 162,252 tons long distance)
1952-53	11,242	3,325
1953-54	47,164	3,315
1954-55	38,116	3,935
1955-56	63,486	2,999

(3)

Year.	Wheat tons.	Superphosphate tons.
1951-52	97,725,388	35,576,403
1952-53	73,294,382	40,371,025
1953-54	92,111,274	55,892,565
1954-55	110,358,490	55,121,535
1955-56	134,137,547	49,162,106

(4) The average subsidy per ton mile on road haulage is not readily available, but it does not necessarily follow that such an average would have been applicable had all wheat been road hauled direct to ports and all superphosphate carried by road from the works.

*(b) Meekatharra-Wiluna Line.*

Mr. O'BRIEN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many fettler gangs are employed on the Meekatharra to Wiluna railway section?

(2) How many trains per week run over the same section?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Three.

(2) One each way.

**TEA.**

*Adequate Reserves.*

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

Can he give an assurance that tea reserves are adequate to avoid rationing in this State?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE replied:

Wholesale distributors advise that present stocks are adequate for normal requirements.

**W.A. RETAIL SALES.**

*Adjustment by "C" Series Index.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Treasurer:

Will he please supply for the past seven years—

(1) The retail sales total for Western Australia?

(2) The amount per head of population?

(3) The amount in No. (2) adjusted by the "C" series index?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Treasurer) replied:

(1) Total retail sales for Western Australia (excluding motor-vehicles, parts, petrol, etc.)—

	£ million.
1949-50	76.3
1950-51	94.4
1951-52	117.1
1952-53	127.3
1953-54	139.8
1954-55	147.0
1955-56	151.7

(2) Amount per head of population—

	£
1949-50	139.97
1950-51	165.51
1951-52	198.51
1952-53	208.28
1953-54	221.66
1954-55	226.53
1955-56	226.72

(3) Amount per head of population adjusted by "C" series index numbers. (Base equals 1949-50)—

	£
1949-50	139.97
1950-51	145.73
1951-52	143.90
1952-53	136.79
1953-54	138.46
1954-55	133.08
1955-56	129.49

**STATE LAND TAX.**

*City and Leederville Values.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Treasurer:

The revaluation for State land tax shows—

Leederville: Value 1951-52, £1,340,759; 1954-55, £2,130,950.

Perth City: Value 1951-52, £22,259,827; 1954-55, 1955-56, £32,865,174.

(1) Are values in Leederville rising faster than in the city area?

(2) If so, why is the city becoming less popular?

(3) If not, are the two valuations made on different bases?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Treasurer) replied:

(1) Yes, for some residential lots; no, for business lots.

(2) Unaware city is less popular.

(3) All valuations are made on the same basis.

### SALK VACCINE.

#### *Supply to Schools in Bunbury District.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is it a fact that to date the children attending St. Joseph's Convent at Bunbury have not received any of their polio immunisation needles?

(2) If such is a fact—

(a) Why is it so?

(b) Could an additional supply of Salk vaccine be made available so that the children attending this school are treated prior to the Christmas vacation?

(c) Are there any other schools in the Bunbury, South Bunbury, Rathmines, Carey Park, and Picton Junction areas in which children have not been treated?

(d) When is it contemplated the immunisation of all the present school and pre-school children in the aforementioned areas will be completed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Because the supply of vaccine is limited and it is not possible to do all schools at once.

(b) No.

(c) Yes. The South Bunbury State school, Marist Brothers College and Bunbury high school also remain to be visited.

(d) By May or June, 1957, all children in the areas mentioned should have received two injections.

### ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

#### *Retrenchments at Bunbury Power House Project.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that contractors on the Bunbury power house project have retrenched, or are about to retrench, some of their employees?

(2) If so—

(a) What are the reasons for such retrenchment?

(b) How many employees will be affected between now and Christmas?

(c) What are the names of the contracting firms affected, and the number of proposed retrenchments from each such firm?

(d) Will the retrenchments result in the planned completion of this project falling behind schedule?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Some minor contractors have completed, or are nearing completion, of their portion of the work.

One major contractor may retrench approximately 20 men, consequent on the extension of the construction time due to reduction in available loan funds. Other contractors are about to increase staff to meet immediate demands of their work.

(b) None of the major contractors' employees.

(c) Riley Dodds Ltd.—present indications are approximately 20 men.

(d) The schedule has been extended.

### NATIVE WELFARE.

#### *Allowances at Kurrawang Mission.*

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

In answer to my previous questions he advised that the average amount per week per native spent on rations was £1 9s. 4d.

What is allowed for natives at Kurrawang mission—

(a) for rations;

(b) for clothing;

(c) for other items?

The MINISTER replied:

The average of £1 9s. 4d., was in respect of all natives rationed in the Kalgoorlie district (including Kurrawang mission) over a given period, namely eight weeks. There were no fixed amounts to cover costs of rations, clothing and other items, which would vary according to the number of natives assisted, the manner in which they were assisted and the cost of the commodities provided. Clothing and blankets are issued on an annual basis.

At Kurrawang mission, assistance to natives is provided on the following basis:—Child inmates—cash subsidisation at a rate of 40s. 9d. per child per week; Temporary relief—4s. per person per day; Adult inmates—25s. per person per week.

The department pays for transport, medical, dental, etc. costs, hospitalisation and incidental expenses, in addition to the foregoing rates.

### INTERSTATE RACING BROADCASTS.

#### *Correspondence Between A.B.C. and Government.*

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

Will he table the file covering correspondence between the A.B.C. and the State Government regarding broadcasting to Western Australia of interstate races?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Premier) replied:

Yes. I have the file here and present it for tabling.

### WATER SUPPLIES.

#### (a) Average Annual Consumption Per Head.

Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

What is the average annual consumption of water per head of population in the following—

- (a) metropolitan area;
- (b) Collie;
- (c) Waroona?

The MINISTER replied:

- (a) 38,347 gallons.
- (b) 15,500 gallons.
- (c) 16,250 gallons.

These figures include industry, public gardens, etc. and relate to the financial year 1955-56.

#### (b) Kalamunda Scheme.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What amount has been allocated from loan funds for the Kalamunda water scheme for this financial year?

(2) When is work likely to be resumed on this project?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) £24,000.
- (2) Week commencing the 19th November, 1956.

### P.W.D. APPRENTICES.

#### Security of Future Employment.

Mr. JAMESON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) In view of the extensive departmental propaganda to attract apprentices in the immediate postwar years, to make a trade their career with various sections of the Public Works Department, is special consideration being given to those persons who, after completing their indentures, continued as tradesmen, when retrenchments are made?

(2) If not, will he request the departments to give this matter attention before any future retrenchments are made?

The MINISTER replied:

There is no present intention of effecting retrenchments in the Public Works Department, but should this be necessary, every aspect will be considered, including the claims of those who have completed their indentures and continued as tradesmen.

### COAL.

#### Westralia and Black Diamond Mines, Finance and Immediate Supply.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Were the Westralia and Black Diamond coalmines developed by Amalgamated Collieries with finance derived under the cost-plus system?

(2) Having regard to the unsettled condition in the Middle East, is there a possibility of a shortage of oil being transported to Australia, which will mean coal fuel will have to be resorted to, and in such circumstances is it advisable to have all existing coalmines at Collie in a condition that would permit the immediate supply of coal to satisfy this State's needs?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (for the Minister for Mines) replied:

(1) As the Westralia and Black Diamond mines were developed from the company's own resources, I am unable to state the source from which the finance was derived.

(2) The potentiality of the coalmining industry at Collie is such that all of the State's requirements can be supplied as and when required.

### MARKETING OF POTATOES.

#### Introduction of Amending Legislation.

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Is the Government considering the introduction of any further amending legislation this session in connection with the marketing of potatoes?

The MINISTER replied:

A great deal of consideration has been given to this matter in recent weeks, following a suggestion made to me by the member for Blackwood, which has been very closely examined not only by the department but also by Crown Law authority.

Whilst it is actually possible to effect an amendment to the Act by way of personal contract between the grower and the board, which would preclude the grower from selling potatoes to any other party or to any other place, nevertheless the Crown Law opinion is that any alteration to the Act to bring that circumstance about will be so drastic that there will be no orderly marketing left in Western Australia.

That is the opinion I have been given. Because I did not know this question would be asked today, I cannot say anything more. The matter is still under consideration. In my view, unless something should arise in the near future, there would be no advantage to the industry or to the State generally in effecting any amendment to the Act.

## RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES SELECT COMMITTEE.

### *Extension of Time.*

On motion by Hon. A. F. Watts, the time for bringing up the report of the select committee was extended for three weeks.

## BANKING INDUSTRY SELECT COMMITTEE.

### *Report Presented.*

Mr. JOHNSON: I bring up the report of, and the evidence given before the select committee, which inquired into the desirability of establishing a five-day working week for banks operating in Western Australia. I move—

That the report be received.

Question put and passed.

### *Printing of Report.*

Mr. JOHNSON: I move—

That the report be printed.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I oppose the motion for the printing of this report because, in my opinion, the report is not worth the cost of printing. The member for Harvey and I dissociated ourselves from the report as submitted. I feel it would not be worth while proceeding any further with it. This is brought about by the fact that, in my opinion, the report does not present a true expression of the evidence, and its conclusions are therefore based on wrong premises.

The committee was appointed to inquire into the desirability of establishing a five-day working week for banks operating in Western Australia; the effect of such proposal on commerce, industry and the public generally; the question of banking hours most suitable to the industry and the general public; and the effect of the present six-day working week in the banking industry.

Certain facts have been presented to this committee. Firstly, we observed the functions of banks as presented in evidence. In general there are two functions; as an auxiliary to commerce the two are linked together. The whole business is wrapped up with service to the community whether engaged in commerce or otherwise; in detail, the receipt of money to be repaid on demand or fixed, or determinable at some future time; the lending of money; cheque-clearing service; the transfer of funds between points in Australia, both intra-State and interstate, and between Australia and overseas countries; finance of intra-State and interstate and overseas—

### *Point of Order.*

The Minister for Works: I desire to point out that the speech which the hon. member is making is in no way relevant to the motion before the House.

The Speaker: I take it that the member for Narrogin is opposing the motion that the report be printed. I think he is in order in giving reasons why it should not be printed. I rule accordingly.

### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING: To continue—safe custody service; trade information service; travel service. The second heading under the staffing of banks is that bank officers contend that bank staffs now being recruited are not of the higher standard—

### *Point of Order.*

The Minister for Works: On a point of order, if this motion is carried, would the hon. member then be in order in repeating the speech he has made in the debate on the motion appearing on the notice paper? I submit he is discussing the merits of the question and the merits of the report, and not discussing the question as to whether or not this report should be printed.

The Speaker: The matter before the House is that the chairman of the select committee has brought up the report. That has been received. The hon. member who submitted the report has moved that it be printed. I have already ruled that the member for Narrogin is in order in giving reasons why the report should not be printed. I understand he was a member of the select committee concerned, and he is submitting reasons why the report should not be printed. Therefore in regard to the fact that there is another item following—that notice has been given of a Bill—I must rule that it is only a notice of motion appearing on the notice paper and is not properly before the House for consideration. I must therefore rule that the hon. member is in order.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Order! I have ruled that the hon. member is in order and unless the Minister intends to disagree with my ruling I cannot allow any further discussion.

### *Dissent from Speaker's Ruling.*

Mr. Jamieson: I move—

That the House dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

I feel it is quite competent for the member for Narrogin, if he so desires, to ask that a minority report be printed. He has not attempted to do that, but has attempted to speak on the merits and demerits of the evidence, or whatever it was. I feel that he is not in order.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I would like to agree with your ruling, Sir, and disagree with the motion moved by the member for Beeloo. I feel you have just given an example of impartiality that is much to be admired.

The Speaker: We are not discussing that aspect, but the opposition to my ruling.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I think, Sir, your ruling is correct and you exhibited impartiality to a marked extent. I feel that the member for Narrogin is perfectly entitled to speak to the motion. I cannot agree that your ruling is wrong; indeed, no proof has been given to that end. I shall be interested to hear from other members as to how it can be proved.

The Minister for Works: I suggest, Sir that you might give further consideration to the question because I feel that you were called upon to give us your ruling without having an opportunity to consult Standing Orders. I direct your attention to Standing Order 361 which provides —

Upon the presentation of a report, no discussion shall take place; but the report may be ordered to be printed with the document accompanying it. This discussion is taking place on the presentation of the report.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: No.

Hon. A. F. Watts: No; on the motion that the report be printed.

The Speaker: Order!

The Minister for Works: The hon. member, in speaking to the motion that the report be printed, is dealing with the subject matter of the report of which members have no knowledge. So, generally, members cannot participate in the discussion, they not having seen the report and so not having any knowledge of its contents. It is therefore competent for members of the committee to discuss what is in the report, but other members are at a distinct disadvantage because they cannot be aware of the contents of the report, and therefore cannot possibly take part in a discussion on it.

I suggest, therefore, that if a debate on the question is in order the only argument which a member can bring forward in connection with the matter is that the report should not be printed because of the expense involved, or because the subject is of such slight importance as not to warrant the expense, but I submit for the reasons I have already given, that he is not entitled to discuss the contents of the report.

If the hon. member wants to debate the contents of the report, and the various aspects of it, he will have his opportunity on a subsequent motion dealing with the report. Surely, Sir, you will appreciate that if members of a select committee are to be permitted to discuss the contents of a report, which is unknown to other members, then members are unable to judge whether what the member discussing the report is saying is in accordance with the report or not. Because of this, I feel that the discussion along the lines adopted by the hon. member should not be permitted.

I am reluctant to disagree with your ruling, Sir, but I feel you were called upon to make your decision without having an

opportunity to consult Standing Orders or to consider the position. I ask whether you would, at this stage, reconsider the matter along the lines I have submitted.

Mr. Perkins: I am pleased, Sir, that you have given the ruling you have. I am afraid I cannot follow the reasoning of the Minister for Works. We have already received the report; the motion has been agreed to. I understand the position is that we are now considering whether the report should be printed. Obviously, if one of the members of the select committee thinks that the report is not worth printing, this is the stage to take action because once the House agrees that the report shall be printed, the officers of the House have no option but to see that the report goes to the printer; and the expenditure is incurred.

The argument of the Minister, who is also the Deputy Premier, is, as I understand it, that whether the report is worth printing or not, the House ought to carry the motion and authorise the expenditure. It is rather peculiar reasoning coming from the Minister representing the Treasurer.

The Minister for Works: The House can refuse to print it.

Mr. Perkins: Before I agree to oppose the printing of the report, I would like to hear some reasons why we should not agree to printing it.

The Minister for Works: So would I, but not the merits of the question.

Mr. Perkins: What is the use of producing reasons after the House has agreed to the printing of the report? I think the member for Narrogin is perfectly in order in producing the reasons at this time.

The Minister says that we do not know what is in the report. Well, how will we ever find out what it contains unless the members of the select committee have an opportunity to tell us? On that committee there were members from both sides of the House. If the member for Narrogin and the member for Harvey think the report is not worth printing, they can tell us, and the chairman of the committee and the other members of it will have an opportunity of rebutting those arguments, and the rest of us will have an opportunity to judge what they put forward and decide whether we will vote for or against the motion to print the report.

The Minister for Lands: You never know what is in a Bill until it is printed and read a second time.

Mr. Perkins: That is not analagous because the only person who knows what is in a Bill is the Minister who introduces it. In this particular case there are five members of the committee and they all know exactly what is in the report.

The Minister for Transport: There are eight Ministers who know what is in a Bill.

Mr. Perkins: The case is not analogous and I do not want to offend Standing Orders by discussing something that is not analogous to the question under discussion. The point I make is that five members in this House know what is in the report; two of them are on this side and one of them is attempting to tell us something about what is in the report to enable the rest of us to form our own opinion as to whether we should go to the expense of printing it or not.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will continue to exercise the impartiality you have shown and that you will continue to uphold the prestige of this Chamber by ensuring that all members get the opportunity to express their views. I must say that I am amazed at a Minister of the Crown opposing a motion which questions expenditure for something which some members consider is not justified. We should know something about it before we are asked to vote on this expenditure. Some members have suggested that we vote in favour of the report while another member is trying to tell us that it is not worth printing. I think we should know the reasons why it is not worth printing and, consequently, I support your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I did give consideration to this proposition because I anticipated that something like this might happen. Standing Order 361 states—

Upon the presentation of a report no discussion shall take place . . . and no discussion did take place at that stage. The Standing Order goes on—

. . . but the report may be ordered to be printed with the document accompanying it.

The member concerned then moves the motion regarding the printing, and the Standing Order does not say that discussion shall not ensue at that stage. The member for Leederville moved that the report be printed and generally the motion includes the words "and the consideration of the report made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House."

In this matter, I had recourse to precedent established on a similar question by the late Hon. A. H. Panton, who was then the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. A similar motion was moved and he allowed a discussion on that motion. The present Leader of the Country Party, at that time disagreed and moved an amendment to the motion put forward by the then member for West Perth, Sir Ross McDonald. I refer to Hansard No. 2, 1937, regarding the Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment Bill Select Committee. Sir Ross McDonald presented the report and the present Leader of the Country Party, who was a member of that select committee, moved an amendment to the motion. The then member for West Perth moved—

That the report and evidence be printed.

The Premier of that day said—

Do you want the evidence printed? to which Sir Ross McDonald replied—

I am not so much concerned about the evidence, but a request was made to me that the evidence be printed. I think it might be left until a later stage when the honorary royal commission, if such a commission is appointed, has completed its examination of the matter. I move—

That the report be printed and that consideration of the report be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting.

The present member for Stirling, who was then the member for Katanning, moved—

That all the words after the word "printed" be struck out.

At a later stage the then Speaker, Hon. A. H. Panton, intervened, but the present member for Stirling was allowed to continue and, to my mind, this established a precedent.

Secondly, I cannot see that the Standing Order precludes a member from speaking to the motion moved by the member for Leederville. I cannot see how any member can oppose a motion without giving reasons for so doing. Conversely, if a member favours a motion he must give reasons for it. Apparently there is some difference of opinion in that regard but I have given the reasons why I ruled the member for Narrogin was in order.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I must say that I am somewhat astonished that the member for Beeloo should have moved to disagree with your ruling on this matter, Mr. Speaker. You have made it perfectly clear, as indeed should have been clear before, that Standing Order 361 has been complied with in that the report has been presented for discussion. Surely, the motion, that the report be printed is a substantive one; and I have yet to learn that members are to be prohibited from debating a motion of this character.

The Minister for Works: Nobody sought to do that. But you cannot say what you like on any question.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I think we can, and the Speaker gave his reasons for ruling in the way he did. The member for Narrogin was trying to give reasons why he thought that the report should not be printed and the only way to do that is to give reasons why, if I may use the term, the report is unprintable. That is what the hon. member was trying to do.

Let me go a little further in regard to this matter. I support your ruling Mr. Speaker, not because I care two hoots whether the motion is debated at this stage or not, but because I believe that the rights of members of this House have been properly protected by you and that the member for Narrogin has not overstepped any limits. In fact, he had very little time to overstep anything, if I may be permitted

to say so. He was endeavouring, to the best of his ability, to show some reasons why he thought the report should not be printed.

In the course of his fluttering from bough to bough the Minister for Works observed that the alternative was before him of debating the next motion on the notice paper, which is a motion for leave to introduce a Bill. I daresay the member for Narrogin could have taken steps to speak on that motion. But I see no reason why he should be obliged to do so for two reasons: Firstly, this motion is before the House and is easily debatable and he has no guarantee, notwithstanding that the item is on the notice paper, that the member for Leederville will move for leave to introduce the Bill because it is practicable for a member to decide not to do so. Therefore, a member is well advised to take action on a motion that is before the Chair, if he is within the Standing Orders in doing so. Secondly, the Minister suggests that it is wrong to debate the matter of printing a report because so many members of the House have not seen it.

According to the Minister, I have no doubt that when the time came it would be equally wrong to debate the motion for leave to introduce because nobody has seen the Bill. Everybody knows perfectly well that a member can debate a motion for leave to introduce a Bill. It would not be the first time, if such motion were rejected by this House, that such a course had been taken. So it seems to me perfectly clear that what we have done this afternoon is spend 20 minutes or so on a debate, which has held up the business of the House, when the whole matter could have been over by now.

I support your ruling, Mr. Speaker, not because I care twopence whether the motion is debated or not at this stage, but because I am perfectly convinced that you are right in regard to both precedent and commonsense. You are upholding the rights of members to debate a question that is before the House.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I have never pretended to be an authority regarding Standing Orders, although I have heard many discussions upon them during the many years I have been in this House. I cannot help but agree that your ruling is the correct one on this occasion, Mr. Speaker. As the Leader of the Country Party pointed out, a motion is before the House. Does it follow that we should automatically accept that motion? Standing Order 361 says—

Upon the presentation of a report no discussion shall take place . . . . and as you pointed out, Mr. Speaker, no discussion took place. But the Standing Order goes on—

but the report may be ordered to be printed with the document accompanying it.

It does not say that the order "shall" be printed. The Standing Order leaves it optional as to whether the report shall be printed or not. In the definition, the word "may" means "optional." Therefore, surely the member for Narrogin has a right to discuss this motion!

The Minister for Works: Nobody wants to deny him that right so long as he discusses the motion.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I thought he was giving reasons as to why the report should not be printed.

The Minister for Transport: He was giving a summary of the report.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No, he was not.

The Minister for Transport: Yes, he was.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I do not know what is in the report but the member for Narrogin does, and surely—

The Minister for Lands: He wants to stop other people.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: —he has the right to give reasons why this report should not be printed. I think it is quite clear from the wording of the Standing Order that there is scope for debate on whether the report should be printed or not. I agree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I hope it will be upheld. Also, you have quoted a precedent regarding a similar motion which was before the House some years ago.

Mr. May: At least 45 members of this Chamber are being asked to vote on the motion when they have no knowledge of what is in the report. Obviously, only five members of this Chamber, who were members of the select committee, know what is contained in the report and how would the other 45 know whether they were justified in supporting a motion for the printing of the report unless they saw it? I say that we are fully entitled to know what is in the report and I think we would all be justified in voting against your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hearman: I oppose the motion to disagree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker. It seems that an extraordinary situation has arisen because we have a motion ordering that the report be printed and a member of the select committee, who obviously has some objection to the report, has said that, in his opinion, it is not worth printing. He then went on, briefly I thought, to cover some of the ground investigated by the committee.

But the Minister got up on a point of order and you ruled him out, Mr. Speaker. He did not move to disagree with your ruling but the member for Beeloo did, and I take it that that places the Minister in a rather difficult position. I think his position is rather difficult and, in my



opinion, he was most illogical. He complained that he did not know what was in the report; but he said that the member for Narrogin was discussing its contents. How does the Minister know whether the hon. member was discussing the contents of the report, if he does not know what is in it?

The Minister for Works: It was obvious from what he was saying.

Mr. Hearman: Not at all; I certainly did not take it that way.

The Minister for Works: He was not discussing the weather.

Mr. Hearman: He was discussing the course of the investigation made by this committee, and so far as I am aware he made no reference to the contents of the report beyond saying that he did not think it was worth printing. He seemed to be discussing the question of the manner in which the investigation was carried out.

Then again, the member for Collie takes the point that because we do not know what is contained in the report, we cannot say whether it is worth printing or not. That is true. Unless we hear the explanations of the various members of the committee who know what the report contains, obviously we will not be able to form a sound opinion on its merit. It seems evident that there is some objection to the contents of this report so far as the member for Narrogin is concerned, and he must be given an opportunity to voice his opinion. The Minister for Works suggests that he does so on the next motion, but if he did, the Minister would no doubt take the point that it had nothing to do with the motion. The question of whether a Bill be introduced or not is hardly the occasion to object to the printing of a report.

Furthermore, it seems to me that the member for Narrogin has some objection to what is in the report. What the objection is I do not know; nor do I know what the report contains. Obviously at some stage he should be given the opportunity to voice his objection, and I think this is the appropriate time for him to do so. Your ruling, Mr. Speaker, enables him to do so, and for that reason I think it should be upheld.

The Minister for Transport: The merit to be found in your ruling, Mr. Speaker, so far as the Opposition is concerned is, I think, that it happens to favour their particular point of view at the moment. In my opinion, it ill becomes any member to accept a position on a select committee and then seek to refuse the House the opportunity to receive the report, majority or minority, to enable the members to make a determination on the information submitted according to their own viewpoint.

Mr. Court: Can you bring a minority report to this House?

The Minister for Transport: A minority report, or dissent, appears on the report that is submitted.

Mr. Court: I do not think so. This is their only method of protesting.

The Minister for Transport: Any matter can be adopted at any time, and I have seen reports where there have been dissents from certain aspects of the report. In any event, the question at issue is whether the member for Narrogin was discussing the motion that was moved. I submit without any shadow of doubt that he was not.

Mr. Hearman: He did not move any motion.

The Minister for Transport: I refer rather to his disagreement with the motion submitted; in other words, his objection to the printing of the report. The member for Narrogin was telling us that banking was at the service of commerce. What that had to do with whether a document should be printed or not I do not know! He was giving us a dissertation on banking.

As the Minister for Works pointed out, had the member for Narrogin explained to us that the cost would be too heavy, that there was a shortage of paper or something of that nature; or that something completely untoward had occurred to render the document worthless, and for that reason it should not be submitted to us, there might have been some merit in his case. But what he was doing was delivering to us a lecture of his viewpoint on the question of banking as related to trading hours, which is a totally different matter, I insist, from a discussion on the subject matter of the report.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: He said it was not in accordance with the evidence.

The Minister for Transport: Who is in a position to judge that?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: He is.

The Minister for Transport: The point is that the motion before the House was whether the report should be printed, and all we can discuss is whether it should be printed or not. If you, Mr. Speaker, allowed every member in this Chamber to proceed along the lines of the member for Narrogin, it would mean there would be a volume of words poured out equivalent to that taken on the select committee on banking; everyone of us would express his views. The Speaker himself is unaware of what is contained in the report, and if the member for Narrogin were allowed to get away with this, I could discuss anything at all on banking and nobody would be aware as to whether the matters on which I touched were contained in the document or not.

Mr. I. W. Manning: The member for Narrogin was a member of the select committee.

The Minister for Transport: That is obvious because we selected him a few weeks ago.

Mr. I. W. Manning: I know that.

The Minister for Transport: I thought the hon. member was trying to give us some fresh news by means of his interjection.

Mr. I. W. Manning: Now do not get nasty!

The Minister for Transport: I do not mean to be nasty; the member for Bunbury found out that 49 other members were aware of it for weeks. I do not think it can be emphasised too strongly that the motion deals with a particular matter and that surely does not give licence to a member, or any members, to traverse or be given such wide scope in connection with the subject matter of the report.

With all respect, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the example you gave was from the Hansard of 1937—a debate which took place 19 years ago—and it is in no way related to the present issue because the question of the printing of the report was not being debated. The member for Stirling, as he now is, interested himself in the point as to whether the matter should be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House. It was that aspect, and that aspect only, that was debated because it was the words appertaining to that matter that he sought to have deleted from the motion submitted by the then member for West Perth.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, you have, I submit, chosen badly in the example you have placed before us despite your inkling that something along these lines would occur; because, I repeat, it has no relevance, whatever to the question of whether we shall or shall not agree to the printing of a certain document in respect of which we agree or disagree. We would have the right to disagree if we felt so disposed. It is the question of the printing, and the printing only of that report with which we are dealing. Any member who has regard for the motion before us, irrespective of where his sympathies might lie—and it does not give me any pleasure to support a motion disagreeing with your ruling, Mr. Speaker—should not seek to gain some political advantage. The question should be decided on its merits, and there is no doubt what the majority decision will be.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What political advantage are you talking about?

The Minister for Transport: Trying to bolster up a broken reed.

Mr. Nalder: I support your ruling in this matter, Mr. Speaker. The last outburst by the Minister for Transport—

The Minister for Transport: Not the last.

Mr. Nalder: The last outburst up to the present—

Mr. Andrew: You try and answer what he said.

Mr. Nalder: If the hon. member would wait half a minute, I will endeavour to do so; it will cause him much pleasure, I hope. The member for Narrogin had hardly begun to give the reasons for his disagreement to the printing of the report before he was interrupted. The statement made by the Minister for Transport to the effect that the member for Narrogin was lecturing the House is an extreme exaggeration, to put it mildly.

The member for Collie said that the members of the select committee were the only ones who had any information on this matter. That is quite correct. But there are plenty of Bills of which only two members of this Chamber, as a rule, have any knowledge; the member who introduces the Bill is one and the member who secures the adjournment is the other. The rest of us generally accept the explanation given by the Minister or the hon. member introducing the Bill.

The Minister for Works: That is a lot of nonsense. The Bill is circulated among members before the debate takes place.

Mr. Nalder: It is not nonsense. The only members who have any knowledge of what the Bill contains as a rule are the two members to whom I referred.

The Minister for Lands: You were getting on all right until you started speaking.

Mr. Nalder: I was wondering when the Minister for Lands would wake up, and apparently he has now done so. I would like to hear what the previous Speaker has to say on the matter, because I feel that he is one who must agree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I consider this to be a vote of no confidence in the Speaker, and I would appeal to those members opposite who have not spoken to reconsider their attitude. I uphold your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the member for Narrogin will be permitted to give his reasons why he feels the report of the select committee should not be printed.

The Minister for Education: You and I, Mr. Speaker, have differed very often during the years, but this is one occasion on which I believe your ruling is sound.

Members: Hear, hear!

The Minister for Education: I do not want any "Hear, hears" from the Opposition; otherwise I might re-examine my conscience. I do not think the remark made by the member for Katanning was justified; surely it is not tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the Speaker if a member moves to disagree with your ruling! The Standing Order quoted sets out that there shall be no debate on the presentation of the report. The member

for Leederville presented the report and the motion was duly carried that the report be received. In the same Standing Order there is another paragraph which reads that the report may be ordered to be printed. Who is to order the printing of the report? The House must do the ordering; and the House must by resolution decide whether the report be printed or not. I think debate should ensue on the resolution for the printing of the report. If nobody spoke—

Mr. Heal: It would be a good thing!

The Minister for Education: It would, and I hope the member for West Perth will set the example. As I was saying, if nobody spoke the House would be deciding on a motion without any evidence and without having the opportunity of hearing the five members who constituted the select committee. I have a fair idea of the attitude of the member for Narrogin to this proposition which was the subject of inquiry by the select committee. I have an idea what he is going to say. Probably I will disagree with 90 per cent., if not 100 per cent., of his remarks. But I do not propose to deny him the right to make them.

The Minister for Transport: At the right time.

The Minister for Education: I think this is the proper time. The Standing Orders give him the right to do so, and also the right to any other member of the select committee to submit his reasons as to why the report should be printed. I think that the good sense of the majority of the members of this House would lead them to arrive at the right decision. I know that I would vote for the printing of the report so that I could inform my mind on the matter after the arguments had been submitted by the members of the select committee. I consider that the ruling you have given, Mr. Speaker, is the correct one, and that Standing Order 361, in the wide interpretation, gives the hon. member the right to speak to the motion.

Mr. Johnson: I think it would be proper for me to say a few words on this matter because, as will be realised from the notice of motion on the notice paper, I have given some consideration to the procedures that are being adopted. While I feel that I must support your ruling, Mr. Speaker, with which the member for Beeloo has disagreed, in doing so I must to some extent disagree with your earlier ruling. Not only Standing Order 361, but also Standing Order 362 govern the situation, and they should be read together. No. 362 reads as follows:—

If any measure or proceeding be necessary upon a report of a committee, such measure or proceeding shall be brought under the consideration of the House by a specific motion, of which notice must be given in the usual manner.

It will be remembered that yesterday I gave notice in a proper manner of a Bill covering this subject, and the notice of motion stands in my name as the next item on the business sheet.

While agreeing that some degree of debate is permissible on the motion that the report be printed, I feel that the only degree of debate that is permissible must be as to whether the report has been duly made in accordance with the forms of the House; whether Standing Orders have been complied with; or whether someone has exceeded or departed from the proper procedure in preparing the report. The matter of the evidence on which the report is based can be discussed only, I think, in relation to that part of Standing Order 362 which reads—

brought under the consideration of the House by a specific motion, of which notice must be given in the usual manner.

Had it been my intention or desire that a debate should take place on the motion, I would have moved that the report be printed and its consideration made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House, and the consideration which the House would have given would have been a debate taking place after every member had had an opportunity to read the evidence laid on the Table of the House. But in order to save the time of the House and of members, I framed my motion to provide that the report be printed, and gave notice of my intention to introduce a Bill in the belief that in that way the debate would not be in the least stifled but that it would take place and everyone would have time to consider not only the report but also the evidence.

As the one who prepared the report, I can indicate that the hon. member who opposes the motion for the printing of the report has his name mentioned therein as dissenting from all but two paragraphs—the introduction and the vote of thanks to the staff who produced it. That information is something which I think the House should have before it. It indicates that due notice has been taken of procedure all the way through. The hon. member's dissent has already been noted and an opportunity is available under the various motions that are before the House or on the notice paper for a discussion of the evidence. So while agreeing with your ruling that a discussion can take place at this stage, I must disagree with your earlier ruling that the debate can go all over the evidence.

Mr. Court: I oppose the motion to disagree with the Speaker's ruling. It would appear that the Minister for Works has changed his grounds in respect of this matter because, if I heard him aright, he originally said there should be no debate on this matter.

The Minister for Works: Never, at any stage. I said the hon. member was out of order because he was talking about something that had nothing to do with the motion.

Mr. Court: Subsequently the Minister, in addressing you, Sir, referred to this Standing Order and claimed, if I heard him correctly, that no discussion could take place on the presentation of this report.

The Minister for Works: I did say that.

Mr. Court: Now he has apparently decided that a debate can take place on the motion that the report be printed.

The Minister for Works: Yes; that is my view.

Mr. Court: If we are on common ground there, I submit that the ruling you gave in respect of the member for Narrogin was the proper one. Here is a man who has a full knowledge of the contents of the report, and he has a duty to tell this House why the report should not be printed if he has a conscientious belief that it should not be. He is not going to be confined to just the mere fact of whether it is too costly to print, or whether there is a shortage of paper, or whether the issue is no longer current, and so on.

The Minister for Works: That means that he could say anything he liked, because the Speaker would not know whether it was relevant or not.

Mr. Court: He could say anything within ambit of the motion.

The Minister for Works: The ambit of the motion is that the report be printed.

Mr. Court: He can tell the House why he thinks it should not be printed, and one reason could be that the report is not an accurate one.

The Minister for Works: How would the Speaker know the hon. member was dealing with relevant matter?

Mr. Court: It could be that he believed the report was not in accordance with the evidence submitted. In fact, I think he made that statement. That is a very serious allegation.

The Minister for Works: He could spend his time dealing with the Royal Commission on Banking.

Mr. Court: He could spend it dealing with this particular select committee.

The Minister for Works: The Speaker would not know whether what he was saying was relevant or not.

Mr. Court: I submit any Speaker would have an idea—

The Minister for Works: How?

Mr. Court: —whether the matter was related to the inquiry of the select committee whose terms of reference were approved by this House and are printed on the notice paper. I consider that the hon. member was not going beyond the ambit of this motion.

I would point out to the Minister that the report and evidence have been tabled and are now public property. The hon. member has challenged the report. He was not permitted, in the ordinary course of procedure, to table a minority report; and this is the appropriate time we should be given an opportunity to defer consideration of the printing of the report until members have been able to read the evidence. The report is now public property. Anybody can walk into the Chamber when the House is not sitting and read that report; and I presume that the black-covered volume on the Table is the evidence taken by the committee, which can be perused. I oppose the motion to disagree with your ruling.

Question put and negatived.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I was presenting my reasons for opposing the motion for the printing of this report. The second point with which I was dealing was the staffing of the banks. Bank officers contended that the banks staff now being recruited is not of as high a standard as previously. Staff turnover has increased and there is difficulty in securing sufficient staff.

Secondly, the armoured escort service stated that they could provide change for cashing cheques, pay-in services, etc.; that they could handle the matter of traders' change in Perth when the banks were closed; and that they had no difficulty in securing staff who would work "any tick of the clock."

The bank evidence was that "the existence of Saturday morning work has not been a real deterrent to the obtaining of staff, either in sufficient numbers or of the desired quality. It is the bank experience that it is no more difficult to obtain recruits in Western Australia than in Tasmania where there is a five-day week, while the incidence of resignations is higher in Tasmania than in Western Australia."

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Rodoreda: Mr. Speaker, could you give us a ruling as to whether or not the hon. member is discussing the motion that the report be printed?

The Speaker: The item on the agenda is certainly all-embracing. It refers to the Bank Industry Select Committee to inquire into working days and hours. What I have heard so far has been a reference to the hours of banking, and I do not see how I can restrain the hon. member from giving reasons why the report should not be printed. I contend that he is in order.

The Minister for Works: He is not giving reasons.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Of course he is!

Mr. May: On a point of information, I would like the hon. member to inform us through you, Mr. Speaker, whether he is

speaking now from information gained as a result of being a member of that select committee?

### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING: My third point concerns the volume of Saturday bank business. The bank officers claimed that the volume of transactions on Saturdays in 1½ hours was from one-half to one-third of that of a normal day of five hours, and that the use made of banks was of a limited and sectional nature.

Actual figures were secured and here are some of the details: In the main city offices there is a considerable reduction in Saturday transactions compared to all other days and equal to just half those on the next lowest day, Tuesday. In six suburban areas the cheques cashed exceeded the totals of the full days of Tuesday and Wednesday. The number of deposits was less than on other days, but 12 per cent. of the total for the week. Local and foreign drafts issued were greater than on every other day except Monday.

In 12 country towns cheques cashed and number of deposits both exceeded the respective figures for Tuesday and Wednesday. Deposits were 14.7 per cent. of the week's total. Local and foreign drafts exceeded those of every other day in the week.

### *Point of Order.*

The Minister for Works: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is the member for Narrogin discussing the report or the evidence, because the motion is not: That the evidence be printed? If the hon. member is discussing the evidence, I submit he is out of order.

The Speaker: I do not think the hon. member is entitled to discuss the evidence but he can discuss the report. The committee arrived at a report and it is before the House for consideration. The hon. member is giving reasons why it should not be printed but is not entitled to discuss all the evidence.

### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I am endeavouring to show that the report is not consistent with the evidence and am making what I consider to be a fair statement of the position. The comments of managers, accountants, etc. in regard to Saturday business varied from "quite heavy", "a popular time", "moderate", "fully employed", to "fluctuates", "proportionate", and "not numerous". Figures secured under the heading of "night safe facilities", showed that a check on the use of these facilities was made, and of 88 wallets lodged on Friday, 65 depositors required them and picked them up on the Saturday, thus leaving only 23 which were not required till Monday.

The effects of the closure of banks on Saturday on various sections of the community are under several headings, the first of which is "bank staff", who claim, firstly, that they would benefit in health and well-being and have greater scope to give voluntary community service. Secondly, their employers would benefit by improved staff morale and efficiency, improved operative capacity and easing of staff problems. Thirdly, the question as to whether the closure of banks would bring benefit to any other workers except themselves, and in this regard the bank officers' witness could not think of any except their own wives and families. The banks themselves say they are not aware of any material benefit that would accrue to them and that only a very minor saving would be effected in such things as cleaning, lighting and heating. The functions of the bank, as already set out in the volume as also quoted, would not be available to the community.

Next we come to the effect on traders. The retail grocers and storekeepers considered it would definitely be detrimental to all types of trade, would cause widespread inconvenience to the public and would also have harmful effects on the economy of the State. They said there would be greater risks and more work for storekeepers in cashing cheques held by clients. Further, that it would increase retail overheads by carrying out portion of the banking business in cashing cheques.

They said "We would all like Saturday morning off but a lot of us are in occupations where we know it is quite impossible". They said that a good deal of the shopping on Saturday morning is closely associated with withdrawals from savings bank deposits and the cashing of cheques at banks. They added that the closing of banks would not mean the closing of shops but that the shops would operate under a severe handicap. The evidence of the housewife was that Saturday morning is the morning as far as the mothers are concerned; taking the children if buying clothes for them.

### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is the member for Narrogin reading his speech?

The Speaker: The hon. member is quite in order. As I know, after 23 years' experience of this House, half the members present read their speeches. The hon. member may proceed.

### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I am simply making sure that I do not make errors. The housewives say that Saturday morning provides the one opportunity during the week for furniture and carpet buying by husband and wife or engaged couples, and

for this purpose savings banks are frequently required. Several witnesses were of the opinion that lack of bank deposit facilities would lead to the spending of money not so wisely and they said that money banked is safer than in the pocket and suggested that perhaps this could be partly corrected by varying the pay-days.

In regard to the five-day week workers, the bank officers contended that it was a distortion of logic for such workers to expect bank service on Saturdays. Other evidence was that many workers, and especially those in industrial areas—and timber-workers, etc.—could not make use of banks at any time except Saturday morning. Asked whether he would favour the closing of all work on Saturdays including transport, catering, theatres, etc., the bank officers' witness replied "No, we claim that there are certain essential services, but that banking is not one of them."

The bookmakers stated that it would make no difference to them if the banks closed, provided they continued the practice of supplying their cash needs at 9.15 a.m. each Saturday. They said that only a tiny minority of the 218 members in the State could use the armoured escort as an alternative. In regard to farmers and farm workers the importance of Saturday banking varied from place to place but there was no evidence to show that it was of less importance on Saturdays than on other days. It does appear that when farmers drive distances into town they desire bank services just as much as other business facilities.

There are certain alternatives to Saturday banking and the first of these is for people to have their own safe facilities. This was suggested by the bank officers, but apart from the high cost of a burglar-proof safe, witnesses were not in favour of this and some of the comments were that no matter to what extent safe facilities are provided, they do not provide bank facilities and "safe as a tin can." Another alternative is night-safe facilities. Only 17 night-safes are available at banks in this State and they are not used to any great extent.

The next alternative is the armoured escort service, which is available in Perth and nearby only, not including the whole metropolitan area. It acts as a mobile cash and security unit for hotels, racing clubs, transport concerns, theatres, banks and retail stores. It will deliver cash for pay-rolls, cash cheques, provide change and make bank deposits for clients. Another alternative is savings bank agencies in stores, and the evidence shows a growing tendency to establish savings bank agencies in retail shops, especially chemists', which have longer trading hours than banks. The evidence has shown that much banking business could be handled by these alternatives where available, but it must be noted that in the case of the armoured escort services and savings bank agencies,

the alternative service involves the employment of staff, other than bank employees, on Saturdays.

I have endeavoured to give some of the reasons why I think the printing of the report is not justified. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is no provision for the presentation of a minority report in the case of select committees and I am bringing to your notice the reasons why the report of the select committee should not be printed.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: I desire to oppose the printing of the report. I believe that the chairman of the select committee and the members who signed the report were wrongly influenced by the evidence which was brought before the committee. The select committee examined some 28 witnesses and a wide variety of sections of the people came and gave evidence. In addition to taking evidence from people in the metropolitan area, the committee obtained evidence at Bunbury and Donnybrook and made some observations at Harvey.

The case for closing the banks on Saturday morning was presented to the committee by the Bank Officers' Association, which represents the employees of the banks. They based their submissions on the fact that it would benefit bank officers to give them two unbroken days of leisure each week. They also claimed that it was an overdue industrial reform because there were many other industries working 40 hours in five days. They also claimed that the banks did so little business on Saturday mornings that it mattered little if they did not open.

In opposition to the closing of the banks on Saturday morning and seeking to have them remain open, there was a great volume of evidence from sections of trade, commerce and industry; from business people, from an s.p. bookmaker, a city housewife and the Associated Banks. The committee sought and received evidence from people who were directly or indirectly affected, such as the armoured escort service and the police.

Possibly the most seriously inconvenienced by the closing of banks on Saturday morning would be the retail trade because of their need for great quantities of change and the cashing of cheques and notes of high denomination. Then there are the different effects of the closing of banks on Saturday morning in the city, as against the country. In the country there are no alternative facilities such as were outlined by the member for Narrogin as operating in the metropolitan area.

It appears that in Bunbury the banks have their busiest time on Saturday morning. Bunbury is a city which not only has a tourist trade but is also a major business centre with a large farming hinterland. The view of the Associated Banks was that they felt in view of the great use

made of their services on Saturday morning, they were fulfilling a need. The banks submitted lengthy evidence in the form of facts and figures to support that view. They were emphatic that they desired to give service not only to trade and commerce but also to the public generally. They employ staff to provide that service and while there is a need for banking facilities on Saturday morning, they desire to give that service. The member for Narrogin and I dissented from the whole of the recommendations and findings of the select committee, but, as he mentioned, agreed to the first and last paragraphs.

The member for Leederville has presented the report of himself and two other members. There is no provision in Standing Orders for an expression of opinion by those who dissent from such a report and so we are taking this opportunity of bringing to notice the reasons why the report should not be printed. We recommend that no action be taken at present to provide a Saturday holiday for banks because it would not be in the best interests of industry, commerce and the public, which use bank facilities heavily on Saturdays other than in the main city branches of the trading banks.

This question could be reviewed in the future if and when the alternative facilities are sufficiently extensive to cater for the needs of the community. We refer here to night safes, armoured escort and change services, and the fact that shop branches of some banks are open for longer hours in some cases than the banks themselves, all of which factors appear to be growing to such an extent in the City of Perth that they could eventually meet the essential Saturday services now provided by the banks.

Outside of Perth, there are at present practically no alternative facilities while the use of bank facilities on Saturdays is greater continually. It is doubtful whether an armoured escort service in the country or in the smaller towns would be possible in the foreseeable future. The evidence gathered gives rise to the belief that there is a need for elasticity in the trading hours to suit local demands, for example, Friday night late shopping instead of Saturday morning and having the shops open all day Saturday and closed all day Monday.

Obviously, such moves could only be applied locally and, although beyond the scope of our inquiry, those points arose clearly in the evidence. To induce a wider spread of business activity, some consideration should be given by business concerns to altering their pay-day to an earlier day in the week. Although this would not eliminate the necessity for week-end shopping, evidence indicates that it might have beneficial effects. Therefore,

we desire to impress upon the House our belief that no further action should be taken in regard to this report.

As I have already said, we dissent wholly from the finding of the report. We feel that the weight of evidence is definitely against the finding submitted in the report by the chairman, although there was evidence taken from people, namely, members of the Bank Officers' Association, who claimed that this was a necessary industrial reform for them. To offset that, however, the bulk of evidence came from commerce and trade representatives and members of the public generally and even a housewife gave evidence to the effect that Saturday morning shopping was tied up with banking hours and that if the banks were closed on that morning, it would definitely affect trading.

I believe also that if the resources of this State are to be developed and if the progress of its various industries and trades are to be encouraged, full employment of the people should be maintained to achieve a sound stable economy. These objectives will only be attained by every section of the community being prepared either to produce more or to give better service instead of limiting their efforts and restricting their services. So as this matter applies to the closing of banks on Saturday morning, it was necessary that we should place some value on those factors when discussing the restriction of banking hours.

Normally, banking facilities should be available on Saturday morning to assist and to expedite the regular flow of commerce and trade. By attempting to close the banks on Saturday morning we could cause widespread inconvenience to the public and bring about a harmful effect on the economy of the State. If the banks were closed on Saturday mornings, traders would be faced with the problem of holding and safeguarding large sums of money over the week-end.

Frequently they have to draw additional change from the banks on that morning to meet the demands of their customers and they feel that those facilities cannot be catered for adequately by anyone other than the bank. A housewife would not change her bread order for two days because her husband was paid on Monday instead of Friday. Her pattern of shopping would remain constant. Therefore, the volume of shopping that is done on Saturday morning is such that the pattern would not be likely to change if the banks were closed, but the desire of the traders and their customers is that they should have these facilities.

When questioned on what alternative facilities they could use, many traders claimed that there was no satisfactory way for business to function on Saturday morning without banking facilities. Any

industry that is a service industry, which includes retail stores and banks, should first consider the public. When banks close at 11 a.m. on Saturday morning, the retailer has to make provision to get the maximum amount of money he has in his possession into the bank before that hour and he organises his business to achieve this objective. No matter to what extent the stores go to provide safes, they are still not able to provide the same facilities as they receive from the banks.

It is my belief that until the alternative facilities at present available are sufficiently extended to cater for the needs of the community, banks should remain open. My objection to the printing of this report is based on the fact that the chairman of the select committee has viewed this problem after consideration of evidence from one section only. He has disregarded the tremendous volume of evidence that was brought before the committee which indicated that many more people would be inconvenienced by the closing of banks on Saturday morning than the few who would benefit from it.

Mr. RODOREDA: It has been said that one learns something of interest every day and at least I have learned something today, namely, a new meaning for the word "relevant." After listening to the very impressive second reading speech, as it were, by the member for Harvey on a Bill that has not yet been introduced, I scarcely know how to proceed.

I would like to state, however, that I have never heard of a more futile and stupid motion put before this House. I cannot recollect such a motion ever having been moved before, at least whilst I have been a member of Parliament. It is beyond my comprehension what is expected to be gained by the hon. member who moved the motion and those who supported him.

Hon. A. F. Watts: The member for Leederville moved the motion.

Mr. RODOREDA: I wonder what other members really hoped to achieve by opposing it. All they are doing is to make it more inconvenient for members to study the report by not having it printed. However, it has been published and it is in front of us. We have in our possession the information contained in it and the objection that has been raised to the printing of it, will mean only that if any member wishes to debate the forthcoming Bill, it will make it more difficult for him to study the report.

Mr. I. W. Manning: We desired to tell members why we dissented from the report.

Mr. RODOREDA: Then, the hon. member did not tell us. The objection raised by the hon. member is against the printing of the report, but it is already printed

and on the Table in front of us, so what the hon. member is trying to achieve is beyond my comprehension. Obviously, a debate of this nature should take place on the presentation of the report, but those who framed the Standing Orders were cognisant of the fact that the report would be of no use to Parliament until it was printed, and therefore no discussion was allowed on such a motion. The motion to have a report printed is purely formal to permit the printing of it to be carried out, and it was obvious that no debate was anticipated on such a motion. Unless such a motion is moved, no one has any authority to incur the printing expense involved.

The reason why such a motion has to be moved is merely a formality so that the House can authorise the expenditure in having the report of the select committee printed. Therefore, by opposing such a motion no benefit can accrue to anybody. The whole of the report could be printed verbatim in "The West Australian" tomorrow.

Mr. Hall: It probably will be.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, no doubt, especially in view of the large coverage that newspaper gives to parliamentary proceedings! It is inevitable that it would be printed in that newspaper verbatim! Apart from that, we have wasted the whole afternoon by debating something that should be merely a formal motion. All the discussion we have heard this afternoon we will probably hear again when the second reading of the proposed Bill is before the House. The printing of the report is merely for the convenience of members so that they can study it more closely and compare it with the Bill when printed.

Mr. GAFFY: I support the motion for the printing of the report because I believe that it has been submitted according to Standing Orders and it is properly constituted. If the member for Leederville has erred at all he has erred on the side of impartiality. The member for Harvey has not made out a case against the printing of the report. He and his colleagues have merely submitted an opinion against its printing. Any review of the evidence that could be made on this ground will not be made by me at the moment because it is something that can be raised at some future date. I have no intention of indulging in idle verbosity as has been done by some members this afternoon. I support the motion.

Mr. HALL: The political jargon that has been spoken against the printing of this report is entirely unnecessary. If we were to get down to details regarding most of the files that are already tabled, we would find so much jargon contained in them that we would not be able to deal with them adequately. The printing of the report should be done so that the



matters contained in it can be ironed out much more expeditiously and efficiently than are other matters.

The member for Harvey has done something tonight which is entirely unwarranted and I am greatly disappointed at his accepting a position on this committee and then casting a reflection on it as he has done tonight.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

MR. HALL: Before the tea suspension I spoke on the necessity for committees to delve into the political jargon that is laid on the Table of the House. A select committee inquired into the banking industry, but one of the most astounding features was that the member for Narrogin, whom I hold in very high esteem, came into the House and disclosed his knowledge of the contents of the committee's report before other members had a chance to peruse what is contained therein. I am not going to delay the House much longer because consideration of the motion has already taken enough time. It is most disappointing for a member of a select committee to carry his personal bias—and I believe it is personal bias in this case—into the findings. In my opinion, he should not have accepted the position in the first place if he was not prepared to act in a neutral capacity and discuss the report after it is brought before the House.

MR. JOHNSON (in reply): I feel that this evening we have been treated to a display of what can best be described as poor sportsmanship or a dislike for the process of democracy.

MR. I. W. MANNING: That is not a fair observation.

MR. JOHNSON: The principle of democracy is the rule of the majority opinion. That was the process under which the report now laid on the Table of the House was made. As chairman of the select committee, I wish to inform the House that I took particular care at all times not only to comply with Standing Orders but to make every facility available to those from the opposite side of the House and from whom one would expect some form of disagreement with part of the report, to bring forward any evidence they desired to support their point of view.

We have heard a protracted debate on the matter and it is not my intention in discussing this motion, to speak at length except to indicate that some of the matters which were produced as comment on that report were not in accordance with the evidence. Some were, and some were not. The portion that was in accordance with the evidence was almost word for word with the report. I was particularly careful to note the comment of the member for Harvey in relation to earlier paydays and suchlike, which were very much in accordance with part of the report. Yet in the

report he has disagreed with that point. It does not appear to me that the situation has been mishandled. I fancy that the two members concerned have been misled by possibly mischievous and older advisers who saw an opportunity for creating a little bit of parliamentary fun and games.

The main point is that the Standing Orders require select committees to act in a certain way. They were complied with. Evidence has been heard and recorded in the proper form; every possible opportunity has been given to the minority section of the committee to adduce whatever evidence they wished; and any evidence which they wished to give was recorded. They took it upon themselves to disagree with the whole of the report except with the list of witnesses and the vote of thanks to the staff. They did have the opportunity, as laid down by Standing Orders, to deal with the report clause by clause. After having read the preliminary report, they indicated that they did not feel they could agree with it. That occurred after a previous preliminary report had been made when no agreement was reached, when we tried to go through the report word for word.

I cannot see that we have made any useful progress in the debate on this motion. A formal motion has been moved and notice lies in the intention to introduce a Bill to cover bank holidays, which is the relevant subject on which this debate should take place. I honestly cannot see any useful purpose being served by this debate except that it did give those in the minority an opportunity to do something which can be politely described as squealing.

Question put and passed.

#### **BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Introduced by Mr. Johnson and read a first time.

#### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.

Returned to the Council with an amendment.

- 2, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

#### **BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

Report of Committee adopted.

#### **MOTION—NATIVE WELFARE.**

*Inferences of Cruelty Investigation.*

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [7.41]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Minister for Native Welfare should lay on the Table of the House the file covering the investigation into inferences of cruelty in the 1955 Native Welfare Department report.

In moving this motion I shall endeavour to take the minimum of time because it amounts to a recital of the facts and they are fairly brief.

The matter to which I refer goes back to the 24th of November, 1955, when we were considering the Estimates in this House. I rose to speak in connection with the report of the Native Welfare Department.

It is appropriate that I should quote from Hansard at this stage. The quotation is not very lengthy but it does summarise the main problem I want to bring to the attention of the House. I have tried by questions to get the information I wanted, but I have not been successful. This is the only method I can conceive to get some satisfaction in the matter. Members who ask questions to obtain information will realise that it is not always easy to get the details they require. One realises the predicament of the Ministers when dealing with confidential information. I think on this occasion the Minister has not been as frank with the House as he could have been.

On the occasion referred to I said—

I am anxious that the Minister should be here as I wish to deal with a matter of vital concern to him, to this Chamber, and to the State.

I might interpolate that the then Minister for Native Welfare was the Minister for Education. I went on to say—

I have here the report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare for the year ended June, 1955, and there is one portion on which I would like the Minister to let us know his reaction. I refer to p. 92, the section of the report dealing with the district officer, Northern, Mr. J. S. Beharell, and his comments on his particular area. The heading, which I think merits explanation, is "Employment and Industry," under which the district officer says—

The main industries in this district are cattle, sheep and pearl fishing. There is no surplus of employable labour in the Kimberleys and, in fact, some employers are finding it more and more difficult to obtain sufficient numbers of employees for their requirements.

Conditions of employment, however, still leave much to be desired. The progress of improvement in this respect is extremely slow. A contributing factor is that all approaches towards an improved state of working conditions are in the main made to employees and not the owners, and although often sympathetic they are unable to alter present conditions without risk of severe repercussions.

The resources of this country have been developed at the cost of the labour it employed.

To my mind, this is the critical part, on which we are entitled to know the Government's reactions—

Men have added to their worldly possessions at the cost of other men.

Such development has only one true name, and that is exploitation. It should not be permissible for any industry to depend for its success in keeping labour poor. The basis of many social problems which confront welfare workers in relation to natives today is an economic one. Skin pigmentation is a minor matter, but security produced by allowing him a reasonable standard of living can overcome prejudice no matter how severe. As a Christian people we will never be able to evade the moral issues involved.

I think we are entitled to know from the Minister, or in his absence from a representative of Cabinet, what is the Government's reaction to that part of the report.

I invite the attention of members to the next few words, particularly, because it is from here on I want to relate the quotations from my speech of November, 1955, to the reports of an overseas committee which appeared in the Press of July of this year—

From time to time people who have adverse views regarding Australia, who are anxious to make trouble and do not care where they make it, seize on extracts of that nature and quote them as fact in the councils of the United Nations and other places.

We know that in spite of the work and money which has been spent by the Australian Government in New Guinea, for instance, we still find people speaking at United Nations conventions and trying to condemn the Australian Government for not doing enough for those people. I doubt whether any country could have done more in the time than the Australian Government has done in New Guinea. Nevertheless there are some who take text out of context or misquote something, or seize upon some Press statement, as the case may be, to try to stir up trouble. Here we find in our own State a document, which is an official one and tabled in this House for the information of members and therefore for the information of the public, which has this damaging statement in it, a statement which I consider is not true and is certainly not fair to the people concerned.

It implies that a degree of exploitation, which is criminal in effect if the report is taken literally, has occurred. I am not a resident of that part of the State and there are members here who have seen far more of it than I have done. But over the last 21 years I have seen a good deal of that area and I do not think it is a fair statement of the position that exists. Far from being exploited, many of these native people have had their conditions improved, but I would think that their lot is not as good or as happy as it was many years ago, on some Kimberley stations in particular. They were always noted for being happy people, but I think a degree of that happiness has gone, partly due to a transition period.

I think we are entitled to an explanation from the Minister or the Government as to its attitude to the report. If the Government subscribes to it and thinks it is correct, presumably it has taken some measure which will, in its estimation, correct the wrong. Personally, I feel that the report is not a fair statement and it is a reflection on people who have done a grand job by this State in developing it.

At that stage the vote was put and passed, and the Leader of the Opposition made an interjection regarding the disinterestedness of the Minister at the time.

The Minister for Native Welfare: What is the reference to the Native Affairs report?

Mr. COURT: I have referred to last year's Hansard. At that time I was reading from the document tabled here. In the Votes and Proceedings for 1955, Volume 3, the superimposed number is 1700.

My concern at the time was that this report, being tabled in Parliament, could be expected, by people in this State and abroad, to be the opinion of the Government, because one presumes that before the reports of departmental heads are tabled, they have been through the Minister's hands and he has had an opportunity to veto the information put forward. If he disagrees, I presume he confers with the officers concerned and if they are adamant in their opinion, he will have to decide whether the report shall go forward in the original form, or whether he, as Minister, will take some action to override the report of his paid officers.

The Minister for Native Welfare: You would not like an honest opinion stifled?

Mr. COURT: I am not suggesting that. The point I am trying to make is that, in view of the fact that this report had been through the Minister's hands and was tabled by him, the inference is that he agreed to the contents in the report; and if he agreed, of course the Government agreed. That was my reason for trying

to obtain an explanation from the Minister last November. I felt that if the report of the Department of Native Welfare for 1955 received any publicity, it could be misinterpreted abroad if it were taken at its face value on the assumption that it was a faithful report supported by the Government.

I heard nothing more although I understand that the debates on the Address-in-reply as well as those on the Supply Bills and the Estimates are vetted by the departments to see whether there are matters requiring answers or some attention, or whether there are some suggestions which merit action by the Government.

On the 13th July of this year we find in "The West Australian" a report headed, "Anti-slavery Body Asks about Natives". It reads—

The 119-year-old Anti-Slavery Society says that it has received reports of cruelty to Australian aborigines and that some action on their behalf is of urgent importance.

The society has also received statements of denials of aborigines' right to offer their labour freely where they wish.

Referring to these charges in its annual report, the society says it is hoped to bring together all societies and individuals interested in the advancement and welfare of aborigines in an application to the United Nations.

The proposal is made that the aborigines be made the subject of special study by the sub-committee on the prevention of discrimination and the protection of minorities acting for the United Nations commission on human rights.

In the Press the next day, two statements appeared in answer to this London statement by the anti-slavery society. The first was by the Minister for Territories Hon. Paul Hasluck. This reads—

The Minister for Territories (Mr Hasluck) today cracked at Australians who ease their consciences by telling foreigners how bad we are.

Mr. Hasluck was commenting on criticism of Australian handling of aborigines in the annual report of the Anti-Slavery Society.

"The welfare of natives is surely a matter of domestic jurisdiction," he said.

"Those Australians who seek an easy and showy way out of their responsibilities by asking someone else to carry pious resolutions could bring about quicker progress if first they would hammer the various Australian governments into greater activity.

"They could do more supporting generously the Christian mission working in the field."

in the same paper, on the State level, the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Mr. S. G. Middleton, under the heading of "Cruelty to W.A. Natives Denied," made this statement—

Native welfare administration in Western Australia had been so greatly improved that reports of cruelty to aborigines could not in all fairness apply to this State, the Commissioner of Native Affairs (Mr. S. G. Middleton) said yesterday.

Natives here were not denied the right to seek work where they wished—except under one section of the Native Welfare Act designed to prevent the spread of leprosy to the south.

Mr. Middleton was replying to a London report that the Anti-Slavery Society had made charges about the treatment of Australian aborigines and had proposed that the complaints be dealt with by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Middleton said that the society had written to him some weeks ago and he had replied last week setting out facts to disprove that this State was backward in its administration of native welfare.

He pointed out that West Australian natives were not directed to keep in State-controlled closed communities as in the Northern Territory and other States.

Children were placed in missions only at the wish of parents.

Mission children were subsidised by the State on equal terms with white children in private institutions, which meant that they also received free medical and dental treatment and free education.

Houses were being built for natives in city and country residential areas.

On the 16th July "The West Australian" had a leading article headed "Welfare of our Aborigines is our Business," wherein it dealt with the matter in a fairly objective way. Later, Parliament assembled and I asked a series of questions commencing on the 8th August. These questions were directed to the present Minister for Native Welfare—

(1) Did he see the report in "The West Australian," dated the 13th July, 1956, of the Anti-Slavery Society which inferred cruelty to Australian aborigines?

(2) Was any statement made by him in answer to this report?

(3) Did he see and approve the replies of Hon. Paul Hasluck (Federal Minister for Territories) and the State Commissioner (Mr. S. G. Middleton) reported in "The West Australian" of the 14th July, 1956?

(4) Does he know the persons responsible for reports and statements of cruelty and denial to natives of the

right to seek work where they wished, which reports are alleged to be of Australian origin?

(5) Was any action taken by the Government following my remarks made on the 24th November, 1955 (Hansard, pages 2151-2152) in which I invited the attention of the Minister and this Chamber to the unfair and internationally dangerous comments in the report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare for the year ended the 30th June, 1955, when exploitation was alleged?

(6) Does the Government concur in this report of exploitation?

The following are the Minister's replies:—

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) Yes.

(4) No.

(5) Yes.

(6) The matter is being investigated personally at present.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Is that "exploitation" or "cruelty" in question No. 6?

Mr. COURT: In the original question I asked, "Does the Government concur in this report of exploitation?" I asked a further question without notice—

With reference to part five of the question to which he answered "Yes," will he be prepared to indicate what action was taken following my comments on the 24th November, 1955?

The Minister replied—

It was decided that I, personally, as Minister for Native Affairs, should investigate this matter. That investigation has been taking place over the last month and a report will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

After a discreet interval, I proceeded to ask the Minister a further question this time on the 21st August—

When does he expect to be able to give the House the result of his investigations into the statements in the report of the Native Welfare Department following upon my comments, as recorded in Hansard, and his answer to questions in this House on the 8th August last?

To this question the Minister replied—

I expect to submit a report to Cabinet in about six weeks' time.

On the 29th August I asked the following question:—

With reference to my questions of the 8th and 21st August regarding the Native Welfare Department's report, will he inform the House why a further six weeks is still required to furnish a report when his predecessor had his attention invited to the

matter in question in November, 1955, and the issue involved is important, both locally and internationally?

The Minister replied as follows:—

In order to make a factual report on the matter raised by the hon. member, it is necessary to have a double check on certain aspects of the report referred to, and this is actually taking place at the moment. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Native Welfare is out of the State for several weeks on departmental business while his department is carrying out the major part of the work involved which will enable me to answer the hon. member's question.

I wanted some amplification of the reply so I asked the Minister this question without notice—

In view of his answer to my question, does this mean that no action was taken between November, 1955, and the time of my asking the first question on this subject during this session?

to which he replied—

No.

I then decided that it was fair and proper that I should allow the matter to remain in abeyance for some weeks, or allow a discreet period to elapse, in view of the Minister's reference to a period of six weeks when he replied to one of my previous questions. On the 17th October I asked this question—

(1) Further to my questions on the 8th, 21st and 29th August, is the report dealing with inferences of cruelty arising from my questions on the 1955 Native Welfare Department's report, completed?

(2) If so, when will it be presented to Parliament?

to which the Minister replied—

(1) Information enabling a factual report to be made to Cabinet was received on the 16th October. The details will be supplied to Cabinet this week for consideration.

(2) As much of the information is private or semi-confidential, this will depend on Cabinet's decision as to whether an early report should be presented to Parliament or otherwise.

Finally, on the 7th November, I asked the Minister this question—

When will he table the report arising from my questions on the 8th, 21st, and 29th August, and on the 17th October, 1956, dealing with inferences of cruelty in the 1955 Native Welfare Department report?

and the Minister replied—

When, and if, Cabinet determines it is advisable to do so.

The Minister for Native Welfare: The Minister never promised to table the report at any stage.

Mr. COURT: The Minister made it clear by inference, if not by direct statement, that we would be told something in connection with this matter. When he indicated that parts of it were confidential I could understand his views. But if it was too confidential to give me a full answer, he could at least have disclosed sufficient information to the House and to the public to put everyone's mind at rest regarding the report. I consider that his last answer was tantamount to telling me to mind my own business.

The Minister for Native Welfare: You would not expect to get the report before Cabinet saw it, would you?

Mr. COURT: There seems to have been an amazing amount of delay in the matter. That is what is causing me concern, and it certainly would be causing me more concern if I were in the Minister's position.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I do not think you are worrying about public anxiety.

The Minister for Education: You do not want to get that serious!

Mr. COURT: It is all right for the former Minister for Native Welfare to try to brush it off like that. But I think it is very serious. I will take some convincing that at least the part of it that has caused this public outburst by the Anti-Slavery Committee was not the result of somebody passing on the information from the local native welfare report for 1955. It is rather coincidental that these people should write to the commissioner for some clarification. It indicates to me, that somebody had suggested that all was not well in this State, and it should be clearly understood that this report is a public document.

My fear last November, soon after the report was tabled, was that somebody with malicious intent, or some busybody would take extracts from the report and probably text out of context and distort the whole position. We all know what it is like. Some people will take a small paragraph out of a Press report, or take a paragraph out of a man's speech and quote it as a statement of fact without giving all the padding. That is what happened on this occasion.

Mr. Norton: You are learning from the Press.

Mr. COURT: Not necessarily. It has been done in this House quite often. A man will quote something out of another man's speech and there will be an objection from the member concerned; he will say, as I have just said, that it is text out of context. So I do not brush this off as being of no consequence, as apparently both the present and the former Minister for Native Welfare do. I consider that

there could be repercussions out of all proportion to the seriousness of the matter reported on. But the way it is worded in the original document—

The Minister for Lands: You are exaggerating its importance a little, I think.

Mr. COURT: No. Is the Minister happy about the report of the Anti-Slavery Committee? That is a highly regarded committee of over 100 years' standing.

The Minister for Lands: That is not the point.

Mr. COURT: It is a committee that has direct contact with the United Nations and I do not think I am exaggerating the position at all. In any case, if it is only kept within the confines of this State, it is very unfair to the people of the district.

The Minister for Lands: I mean you are exaggerating the urgency of it.

Mr. COURT: Surely I am not trying to speed this up unduly! I asked the first question last November, and this is November, 1956.

The Minister for Education: That is only 12 months ago.

Mr. COURT: It is 12 months since the matter was raised here. Are we wasting our time bothering to read these reports? I should have thought that Ministers would have been pleased to think that people read their reports. After all, we have enough of them to read and it is not easy to get through even half of them. But when a member takes the trouble to study one of these reports, surely he is entitled to the satisfaction of knowing that the Minister will do something about any requests he makes! Surely the Minister for Lands would like to feel that the report of his department was being read.

The Minister for Lands: Fair enough.

On motion by the Minister for Native Welfare, debate adjourned.

### DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

On motion by the Deputy Premier, the motion to disallow the land-use zoning by-law made under the Municipal Corporations Act, was discharged from the notice paper.

### BILL—FIREARMS AND GUNS ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

MR. CROMMELIN (Claremont) [8.10] in moving the second reading said: This is only a small Bill introduced with the idea of helping established gun clubs both in the metropolitan area and the country districts. As members know, the members of those clubs are engaged in the sport of shooting clay pigeons; it is an international sport and for that reason is considered by those clubs to be of some importance. Unfortunately, these clubs are

restricted in their efforts to get new members because one man is not allowed to use another man's gun or, in other words, it is necessary to have a licence to use any firearm.

If we were invited out to a clay pigeon shooting range by a member of a gun club, we would be breaking the law if we asked him to lend one of us his gun and we attempted to hit the clay pigeons, for the simple reason that we do not hold licences. The clay pigeon shooters are anxious to keep strictly within the law and they wish to have the Act eased in this regard.

Certain people are entitled to use a weapon without a licence and these people are members of the forces, members of the rifle clubs, members of the Police Force, men engaged on nightwatchmen's duties, the Governor, and consular representatives. My idea in trying to get relief for the gun clubs is so that they will be able to encourage new members to join. It is easy enough for anyone to learn to play golf, because a man can borrow another man's clubs, pay the green fees and by doing he is not breaking the law.

Also, some members of this House are learning to play cricket and they do not require a licence for that. But because dangerous weapons are involved, strict supervision is required and that is why we have an Act such as the Firearms and Guns Act. My amendment is designed to add a paragraph (f) to Section 9 of the principal Act, which paragraph reads as follows:—

Using a firearm the property of a member of a registered gun club, with his permission, on a properly constructed clay pigeon shooting range of a registered gun club.

If that is agreed to, the member of a gun club will be allowed the privilege, if he so desires, of letting another man use his gun, but only on a clay pigeon shooting range. This would be of great benefit to the gun clubs because they would be able to encourage prospective members to go out to the range in the hope that they would eventually become members of the gun club. It is not an amendment that would make a great deal of difference because this is not an inexpensive hobby.

These guns cost anything from 40 to 150 guineas each and I doubt if one could buy a cartridge for them today for under 1s. So it will be appreciated that there will not be thousands of people using the ranges every Saturday for clay pigeon shooting. I hope members will appreciate the interest which this Bill has to the members of the gun clubs and I would ask the House to support it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Police, debate adjourned.

# **BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

**MR. JOHNSON** (Leederville) [8.17] in moving the second reading said: In introducing this Bill to amend the Hire-Purchase Agreements Act, I think probably my purpose could be best illustrated by an analogy drawn from the home garden. About four years ago a friend of the family gave my wife half a dozen seedlings of a plant called the lace plant. We were told it was a particularly attractive plant. We looked after it with special care. We watered it, manured it and kept the weeds out of its bed. It grew and self-seeded and came up again next year.

A considerable quantity of seedlings came up the following year and we gave some away and planted others out in other beds. We looked after those seedlings quite well, though not quite as well as we did the previous year. They in turn were self-seeded in the following year all over the garden. As is generally the case with such things, I found it necessary to adopt a stringent policy as to where the plant should be allowed to grow. As I have said, it is quite an attractive plant. Opinions as to just how attractive differ between Mrs. Johnson and myself.

**Mr. Perkins:** Is it any good for stock-feed?

**Mr. JOHNSON:** It may be, but it may become a weed. I believe it is a member of the carrot family. This plant which has a very decorative purpose has had to be watched very carefully, and I have had to insist that it does not grow in the phlox bed or amongst the gladioli. I completely eradicated it from the bed containing the Brussels sprouts and the tomatoes. We keep it out of the vegetable garden.

That is the type of policy I wish to adopt in relation to hire-purchase. We have not completely eradicated this flower from our garden; we have no intention of completely eradicating it, but we do wish to be selective as to where it shall grow. If it tries to grow in a place which we consider unreasonable, then the self-sown seedling must be withdrawn. The growth of hire-purchase credit has been a source of concern to leaders in the field of commerce, to manufacturers, to economists, to politicians and to trade union leaders for several years, not only in Western Australia but in other States of the Commonwealth and also in Great Britain and the United States.

I do not believe that by this small Bill, I will achieve an instantaneous and perfect solution that wise men have been seeking and have failed to agree upon. But I invite members on either side of the House, no matter what their political views may be, to contribute to the debate and produce useful amendments, thus joining

with me in bringing about a set of changes in our law that will permit hire-purchase to function as a useful growth and to cure it of its propensity to become a weed, strangling by a prolific growth fairer and more useful plants.

No one knows better than the working man the value of hire-purchase. Without it there would be far fewer homes with radios, vacuum cleaners and motorcars, washing machines, etc. I remember when I first started work away from home—£2 10s. a week and I had to pay my own board—my first suit with long trousers was bought under a type of hire-purchase. Had I not been able to do something like that, I would have been—

**Mr. Roberts:** Without trousers.

**Mr. JOHNSON:** —without a job. The point is that hire-purchase has a great deal of use. More recently I acquired a motorcar by another form of hire-purchase, and I would not be the only person who has done that. However, in between those two transactions there were at most two others that could be described as hire-purchase on my own account. I believe that hire-purchase should be confined to a limited number of types of transaction. In the main, people should not buy things until they can afford them, except for items of urgent need which conduce to the earnings of income or the direct saving of current expenditure. My personal outlook on this is probably old-fashioned and a bit narrow-minded, and accordingly I have not tried to draw a pattern of legislation covering that degree of control—not by a long way.

Hire-purchase itself is a method of buying and selling goods designed to avoid the restriction of the law as to bills of sale and the laws regarding money lenders and yet to permit extension of the period of payment over a relatively long time so that payment can be made out of anticipated income. The security for the transaction is in that the property in the goods does not pass from the seller to the purchaser until after the final payment has been made. The payment is usually made by a first payment or deposit of a relatively larger amount and regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments extending over from a few months up to three or four years.

These latter regular payments are called rental, the legal fiction being that the agreement is only one to hire the goods although everyone knows that the intention of each transaction is that the purchaser shall eventually become the possessor of the goods as his own. Rental payments under hire-purchase are obviously not rentals in the normal sense; being always much larger than anyone would pay if the goods were intended to remain the property of the vendor.

Goods the subject of hire-purchase always remain the property of the vendor until after the final payment and so are recoverable by the vendor in the event of failure to maintain the regular payments of purchase price called the rent. Furthermore, the goods do not become a part of the estate of the purchaser so that the debt due thereon does not share in the general debts of the purchaser in cases of bankruptcy, composition, etc.

Thus a vendor who high-pressures someone into buying on hire-purchase goods which he cannot afford and the payments on which are a direct cause of the financial downfall of the purchaser concerned, is fully protected from the results of the over-buying he has caused at the expense of the other and, in such cases, more worthy creditors. The method of selling on hire-purchase has been described as making tomorrow's sales today. It permits the making of sales on credit to people who, under other circumstances, would not be considered financially strong enough to be credit-worthy.

People can have the use of the goods much earlier under this method than they would if they had to wait until they had saved up the whole of the purchase price; and people who find it impossible to save in the ordinary fashion by putting so much aside from each pay, find themselves forced to make regular payments to the hire-purchase man who has the pressure on, in that he otherwise can repossess the goods. All this leads to a higher volume of sales with the resultant higher production of goods and therefore a higher degree of employment, resulting in more wages available to be spent on other items sold under hire-purchase.

So far, so good. But what happens when there is a down-turn in employment for any reason? It is inevitable that goods are repossessed because of the cessation of rental payments. Second-hand, or repossessed goods compete for a smaller market with new goods. Reduction of demand and production, falling wages and less and less employment are obvious. When tomorrow's sales have been made and the next day's sales have been made and the next—as we have done now—it is pretty obvious what will happen when there are no sales for a few days.

Everything will stop and we will have an accelerated depression. The speed at which we will drop into the next depression, if it cannot be avoided, will make the beginning of the last depression look like slow motion because of the accelerated principles that exist in the hire-purchase market.

If we look at it another way, we will see that the sale of goods on hire-purchase is an extension of credit by the seller to the purchaser and, in becoming part of the total of credit, is a directly inflationary influence. The growth of this influence over the past few years is most interesting.

The Government Statistician has supplied me with figures relative to this matter. The table is headed "Hire-Purchase Finance Companies—Balance Outstanding on Retail Agreements." The table gives the figures for the various Australian States by quarters since March, 1953. I will give the quarters which refer to Western Australia since we are dealing with Western Australian conditions. It will show how in the last three years there has been a very great expansion in the volume of hire-purchase. I would point out that this refers only to finance companies and not to those retailers who carry their own hire-purchase agreements, and that that figure is not obtainable in accurate form from the statistician.

Therefore, these figures relate only to those agreements which are handled by the finance companies, and it would be reasonable to assume that at least another 50 per cent., or something fairly close to that, can be attributed to people who have hire-purchase agreements that do not run through the finance companies. But that 50 per cent. is purely a guess, which cannot be checked. The figures are as follows:—

Year	Quarter ended	Amount £
1953	31st March ....	6,577,000
	30th June ....	6,958,000
	30th September ..	7,548,000
	31st December ....	8,577,000
1954	31st March ....	9,107,000
	30th June ....	10,300,000
	30th September ..	11,545,000
	31st December ....	12,693,000
1955	31st March ....	13,370,000
	30th June ....	14,319,000
	30th September ..	15,280,000
	31st December ....	16,302,000
1956	31st March ....	16,057,000
	30th June ....	15,600,000

It is of interest to note, whilst dealing with this table, that the quarter ended the 31st December annually is the one with the biggest increase in any year. It looks as though Father Christmas put something in the hire-purchase companies' stocking and that "Christmas" and "debts" are synonymous. The hire-purchase companies' new retail agreements for the quarter ended the 30th June, 1956, numbered in Western Australia, 4,528 on motor-vehicles, tractors etc.; 380 on plant and machinery; and 13,118 on household and personal goods—giving a total of 18,026.

In the number of agreements motorcars represent a quarter and household and personal goods three-quarters. In relation to the value of goods motorcars covered £2,836,000; plant and machinery £408,000; and household and personal goods £841,000—a total of £4,085,000 in new agreements through the finance companies in the quarter to the 30th June. Motorcars represented about 70 per cent. of the value although only 25 per cent. of the number



of the agreements. Household and personal goods represented three-quarters of the number of agreements but only about 20 per cent. of actual value. Of the amount financed, £1,834,000 was in respect of motorcars; £246,000 for plant and machinery; and £700,000 for household and personal goods.

The overall value per new retail agreement, which is shown in return No. 247 in the finance bulletin of 1953-54, indicates a steady growth. We find that it was £233 for the quarter to the 31st March, 1953, rising to £257 in December, 1954; and the latest figure, which I got today from the statistician, was £283 in June of this year. The proportion of finance has risen over the same period from 55 per cent. in March, 1953, to 58 per cent. for motor-vehicles; and from 61 per cent. for plant and machinery to 65 per cent.

The relative figures for household and personal goods are 75 per cent. to 80 per cent. in 1954 and now 81 per cent., the all-Australia average, and 83 per cent. in Western Australia, showing that a further proportion of debt is entering into the life of the community and the proportion of the total debt being financed is increasing.

Another aspect of hire-purchase that should not be overlooked is its effect on interest rates. We are all well aware that when interest rates rise, the higher charges mean a direct reduction of the proportion of revenue available to Governments for the purposes on which revenue should be spent. We are also aware that interest rates have risen over the past few years. Partly this was the result of Federal Government policy, but partly it was the result of pressure in the money market which the Federal Government was unwilling or unable to control. And a lot of that pressure arose from hire-purchase. This has a further reflection in the current difficulty in obtaining loans for legitimate farming, home building and business extension purposes.

There is no need for me to bring to the notice of members the advertisements which have appeared regularly offering rates from 7 per cent. up to 12½ per cent. for money to finance hire-purchase transactions. No one would doubt that this money is expected to earn more than the interest offered, or the offer would not be made. Not only is this high interest rate offered, but a sound security is offered to back it.

Against the competition of such security and interest rate, people who require to borrow money for long-term projects like housing, and Governments that need loan money have two choices—higher interest rates or no money; Buckley's hope, or none. There can be little doubt that if allowed to continue uncontrolled, hire-purchase interest rates will continue to rise taking all other interest rates with them, bankrupting State Governments in the process—and a lot of other people.

While there are very few people who would claim that interest does not play a useful part in a commercial economy, there are few who would regard rates as high as 12½ per cent. as reasonable. They might have some justification in a highly speculative field like mining, oil prospecting or new types of production in which there is a real chance of losing the principal. There is no call for such high rates in non-productive activity where there is little risk.

It could not be suggested that in hire-purchase activity there is anything productive. Sales may be made a day, a week or a year earlier, but the total cost of the goods is heavily loaded with unwarranted charges, costs, interests, etc., until the actual cost to the purchaser is far higher than necessary and the total of goods sold is reduced by the smaller amount available to be spent on goods, so much having been absorbed by these other unproductive charges, interest, etc.

The effect of hire-purchase on the general economy has attracted the attention of many responsible bodies. To indicate that they are not all Labour supporters, I quote from the "Farmers' Weekly" of Thursday the 1st November, at page 11—

"This hire-purchase thing in iniquitous: it is taking away money that is used in general development work."

The president of the Farmers' Union Wheat Section Executive (Mr. D. W. Maisey) said this following a lengthy discussion at the Section Executive meeting last week on the subject of credit restrictions. Members referred to the refusal of banks to make finance available to farmers with the result that they were forced to do business with hire-purchase companies at much higher rates of interest.

Further down the article reads—

the general secretary (Mr. A. G. Traine) said that the matter had arisen from Australian Wheatgrower Federation motions which had pointed out that trading banks were refusing money to farmers and virtually making them go to the hire-purchase companies.

Later on this occurs—

Mr. Stott continued: "A perusal of this statement will show that the E.S. & A. Bank Ltd. subscribed £2,000,000 paid up capital to form the Esanda Hire-Purchase Company Ltd. The significant point about this is that from the paid-up capital of £2,000,000, all subscribed by the E.S. & A. Bank, they have loaned out on hire-purchase contracts £6,583,000.

It shows that they have £4,583,000 out receiving high and excessive rates of interest on money created by the bank itself from its own paid-up capital on £2,000,000.

A further point that the A.W.F. is seriously concerned about is that we have cases on our books which show that farmers are unable to secure the necessary overdraft credit from banks to be able to purchase their necessary machinery to carry on their farming pursuits, some of which show that the banks have informed the farmer concerned that owing to the policy of the banks (and in some instances they blame the Commonwealth Government, mentioning the economic policy of the Government) they are unable to advance any further money to enable the farmer to buy the necessary machinery.

They then advise the farmer that he could purchase the necessary machinery from a hire-purchase company and suggested the name of the company from whom the machinery could be purchased.

A perusal of the above will show that the Esanda Co. Ltd. would be able to advance money under hire-purchase contract for the farmer to buy a machine where he would be forced to pay up to 14 per cent. interest.

Further on in the same article we read—

Information from a Western Australian bank pointed out that often seasonal surplus money was invested in hire-purchase companies and not deposited in the banks.

This could mean that any bank's lending power was restricted.

From a different source—the "Record" of the 17th February, 1956—we find the following:—

According to the latest financial survey, the collective debt of the Australian people involved in hire-purchase contracts is £152,000,000. The figure is said to be increasing. Most of the contracts are for the purchase of motorcars and expensive household equipment such as refrigerators, washing machines and furniture.

Further on it states—

From the social point of view, however, the widespread use of credit arrangements is not quite so pleasing. The hire-purchase system might be acceptable if the advantages it involves were distributed fairly between the buyer and seller.

But this is not the case. Under the present system all the advantages are enjoyed by the seller of the goods, whilst the purchaser seems to enjoy something rather less than the normal rights of the customer.

Further on—

On hire-purchase contracts interest is charged at a flat rate; that is, the interest is calculated on the original amount owing, and is then charged for each year of the contract period.

Thus, the 10 per cent. flat rate advertised by the sellers of hire-purchase goods becomes in fact 20 per cent. per annum.

Further down we see—

Finance companies do not earn profit on goods sold, but only on money lent, and the flat rate of 10 per cent. is their only income, made on the transaction but more than adequate nevertheless.

Later on we read—

In view of the number of hire-purchase debts being contracted under such terms it is time the Government reviewed the system.

And then—

But finance companies do more than avoid risk. They make extremely high profits, declaring handsome dividends at the end of each financial year. The problem is not easily solved, but there appears no reason why all interest charged on hire-purchase contracts should not be calculated on a reducing balance principle.

There is no justification under any circumstances for charging interest on money which is not in fact owing.

The article concludes—

The wage-earner is being robbed by excessive hire-purchase charges. Half the charge is concealed by the flat rate racket.

Another issue of the same paper, of the 30th August, states in a leading article under the heading "Funny Cash"—

If, as Pope Pius XI said, money—in the form of creation of credit—is the life-blood of the community there must needs be a high degree of responsibility associated with it; indeed so high a degree that it cannot safely be left to the caprice of individuals. It is paramourly a function reserved to statecraft; it should be exclusively the sovereign power of the State. So it is that the root weakness of the democratic system that it has failed to establish effective control over the prime source of economic power. It is patently absurd and wrong, both in principle and practice, that private individuals or corporations should be able to wield this irresistible power, as often as not in an anti-social fashion.

And then—

And there is no doubt that the burden of normally-accepted interest is a major factor in the oppression of many lives, in the contraction of industry and not infrequently a barrier to national aims. If the creation of credit were exclusively the province of the State, as it should be, there would be no reason why interest could not be eliminated. A small charge to

cover administrative costs could be the only charge on money created by the stroke of a pen.

Further on we read—

Even the lesser financial giants who operate the hire-purchase have all the protection of the law in the right of repossession. Nor is the common ground of deprivation of gain valid in our day because the very alienation of money is the source of gain.

From those quotations from two different sources, it will be seen that much of the hire-purchase money comes from bank sources. Besides the quotation I made regarding the E.S. & A. Bank, I will now quote from the prospectus of Custom Credit Corporation Ltd., p. 5, where we read—

The National Bank of Australasia Ltd. owns 40 per cent., namely £1,200,000 of the £3,000,000 paid up capital of the corporation and acts as financial agent of the corporation at all branches of the bank throughout Australia. Similarly, the Bank of New South Wales and the Commercial Bank of Australia own considerable proportions of two other large hire-purchase organisations, the Australian Guarantee Corporation and General Credits.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Are not the insurance companies involved also?

Mr. JOHNSON: I do not know, but probably they are. On p. 9 of the prospectus of the Custom Credit Corporation Ltd. we read—

The company was incorporated on the 9th July, 1953. The rates of dividends paid were as follows:—

Period ended 30th June, 1954  
—at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum.

Twelve months ended 30th June, 1955—Interim at the rate of 5 per cent. Final at the rate of 10 per cent. (at total of 15 per cent. for the full year).

Twelve months ended 30th June, 1956—Interim at the rate of 7½ per cent. Proposed final at the rate of 7½ per cent.

Rydge's Journal for September, 1956, gave the return on average capital for the year 1955 as 30.3 per cent. and for 1956 as 21 per cent. However we look at it, the return to shareholders of 40 per cent. over three years is plainly excessive. This type of growth can only be described as like a weed and should be controlled to allow other aspects of financial requirements to have a reasonable chance.

In case anyone should think that the business is purely in the hands of the private banks, I will give a brief history

of a local firm in this field. The following information is quoted principally from the prospectus dated the 17th January, 1955, of Lawley Finance Ltd. The company was incorporated on the 25th July, 1950, and it was initially formed to provide hire-purchase facilities for a few selected dealers in the home appliance field.

Expansion has been rapid and has been achieved by utilising a combination of share capital and borrowed funds, the latter not having been secured in the cheapest market. It has been decided to convert the company to a public company and to further increase the earning capacity of the business by (a) extending the hire-purchase activities, including entry into the motor-vehicle trade and (b) repaying as soon as possible borrowed money carrying high rates of interest. It is interesting to note that this company which was borrowing money at a rate that it considered high and which expected to increase its earning capacity, paid dividends of 10 per cent. in 1952, 8 per cent. in 1953, 10 per cent. plus 4 per cent. bonus in 1954 and had paid an interim dividend and expected to pay a further 10 per cent. in 1955 when the prospectus was issued.

At that rate, investors can anticipate a return of the total capital in 7 to 8 years. This business is obviously more remunerative than bookmaking, of the iniquity of which we have heard so much recently. Principal shareholders of this Western Australian company—the registers are 6 to 1 in favour of Western Australia—include T. B. Coffey, of Floreat Park, M. E. Healey, of 160 Victoria Avenue, W. J. Lucas Ltd., Estate of J. Thomas Moore, Rural Finance Ltd. and a lot of well-known Perth identities holding smaller parcels.

This company has the first right of refusal of hire-purchase business on account of W. J. Lucas Ltd., Home Aids Pty. Ltd., John Warren Ltd., Thomsons Pty. Ltd. Bray & Company and W. J. Lucas (Kalgoorlie) and has a controlling interest in Thomsons Pty Ltd. The directors are well-known Perth businessmen William John Lucas of Inverness Crescent, Mt. Lawley, Bernard Francis Prindiville, of 108 Forrest-st. South Perth, Charles Walter Michael Court, of 46 Waratah Avenue, Nedlands, and John Martin Lavan, of 29 Cygnet Crescent, Dalkeith, who divided £1,175 between them as directors' fees as well as the not-inconsiderable dividends on shares in their own and relatives' names.

I think I have shown, if anyone really needed showing, that hire-purchase is a growth of great magnitude and rapidity, and because of its uncontrolled growth is a weed in the garden or a cancer on our society, having spread from being a useful service—which it still is in part—to becoming one of the principal causes of rising interest rates, less availability of

needed credit to farmers, home-builders and expanding manufacturers, and a cause of grave instability in case of a slight business recession.

Next I will deal with the details of the Bill. Actually I think that the control of this matter is one for the Commonwealth Government under placitums 12 and 13 of Section 51 of the Constitution, which deal with paper money and banking, but because they have failed to make any move, I am providing in the Bill, as printed, that every agreement shall be written and shall give the particulars listed. The important particulars are the cash price of the chattel, the deposit, the balance and the amount of interest payable. By this I hope that everyone who enters into a hire-purchase agreement will know just how much he is being charged for the goods and how much for interest.

To ensure that this is done and not avoided, I am trying to take all rights from the vendor if he does not see that this is done. Next, I am trying to assure that no one is charged interest on money that he has ceased to owe. When goods are re-possessed or handed back, it is only proper that the debt should not increase beyond that point. Provision is made to cover damages in excess of fair wear and tear. I hope by this to ensure that the sellers will be a little more selective in their victims and not try to make sales to those who cannot be regarded as reasonable risks.

The next provision covers interest rates. I have chosen 7 per cent. not because I think that that is necessarily the ideal rate but because the rate of 8 per cent. is already in the Act as a penalty rate for overdue money, and I can see no reason to amend that rate.

The Minister for Health: Will that be a flat rate?

Mr. JOHNSON: It is a rate per annum. If any member thinks that this provision does not provide for interest to be charged only on the balance owing on any day and can word a suitable amendment, I will accept it with alacrity as that is the current intention. The flat rate of interest charged by the companies now is near enough to half the effective rate yielded on the debt.

Hon. A. F. Watts: The rate requires periodical rests, does it not?

Mr. JOHNSON: It would be the same thing; weekly rests in the case of weekly payments, and so on. It would be the same as bank interest and it would be easy to provide a schedule by the use of an electronic accounting machine or slide rule. It could be printed in the form of a schedule. The 9 per cent. rate charged by Lawley Finance Ltd. previously referred to, is, in fact, a yield of about 17 per cent. and seems to be contrary to the Money Lenders Act which stipulates a maximum

of 15 per cent. for the most risky loans, in which category hire-purchase cannot be included.

I imagine that anyone having an agreement with this firm could have the transaction examined and adjusted favourably if he took action as laid down in the Act even prior to these amendments. I imagine that if anyone having an agreement with the firm liked to have it examined by a magistrate, it could be adjusted favourably, even under the present legislation. The next provision is for minimum deposits either in cash or by trade-in. In the New South Wales legislation these are set out for several classes of chattels. I prefer the greater flexibility of regulation for this as times can change and conditions with them, and while it might be reasonable to ask 30 per cent. on radios, it might be foolish to ask so little with t.v., and that could be far too much for farm or trade vehicles.

Finally, there is provision for the making of regulations which did not exist in the Act as it stood. If there is any angle of the subject with which I have failed to deal, I trust that members will indicate the points during their speeches to the second reading so that we can complete the debate quickly and pass the Bill through the Committee stage without unnecessary debate at that time. My desire in this is, as I indicated in my opening remarks, to control the growth of hire-purchase to those avenues wherein it proves really useful and restrict it where it shows signs of becoming a cancer or, as I suggested earlier, a weed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

## MOTION—HOSPITALS.

### *Metropolitan and Country Contributions.*

Date resumed from the 7th November on the following motion by Mr. Nalder:—

That this House is of the opinion that, in view of the replies given to questions this session regarding local contributions to the construction of or extensions to country hospitals, the policy being adopted by the Government in regard to same is unfair, and should be discontinued.

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH** (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre) [9.11]: This motion is rather hard for me to understand, coming as it does from the member for Katanning. I listened with a great deal of interest to his introduction of the motion and could not help but think that by his moving of it and the remarks made in support of it, he has done a great deal of harm to the cause he is seeking to espouse. I only hope that much of what he has said and has been heard by the members of this House,

will go no further and will not be heard or read about by the people in the country electorate that he represents.

The motion is certainly not constructive and, in fact, it is more destructive in character. I would not like to accuse the hon. member of having a sinister motive, but I feel that he has been rather irresponsible. I have always regarded the hon. member as being ultra-puritan and spiritual in character. I am rather concerned about his attitude but the hon. member must have had some motive that I cannot read into the motion. If the people in the country centres promise to contribute money so that certain work on their hospital can be done, I cannot see any harm in that. It shows that they have an interest in their district, in their hospital and in the welfare of the people of the district as a whole.

If the Public Health Department officers told the people in the country that there was not any loan or revenue money available and suggested to them that if they made an attempt to do something for themselves in the way of raising money to effect renovations or additions to their hospitals, I cannot see that there is anything wrong with that. If it were not for the lack of money, I would be only too pleased to oblige them and give them every assistance, but if the funds are not available, one cannot get blood out of a stone.

Mr. Nalder: The officers did not get much response from the people in the metropolitan area.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I will deal with that aspect directly. I would point out to the hon. member now, however, that there is just as much money raised in the metropolitan area as there is by the people in the country districts, in proportion to the population. We know that there has been a slump or an economic depression, and as much as I would like to give effect to the rigid priority list of work to be done in the country and also that to be done in the metropolitan area, the Government has not the wherewithal to carry out such work.

The member for Katanning has said he noticed that the people at Norseman and Esperance have not been contributing one-third of the cost of hospital additions or renovations. As far as Norseman is concerned, the people of that centre have made a greater contribution to their hospital than the people of any other country centre in Western Australia. Further, the Norseman people have raised more money or contributed more funds for the provision of amenities and so forth in that district than any other group of people in this State. For example, they have raised £30,000 to be spent on the establishment of a swimming pool.

Mr. Nalder: That has nothing to do with this motion.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It has. The Norseman people have also made a wonderful contribution to their hospital. It is one of the finest hospitals outside of the metropolitan area.

Mr. Nalder: That could be said of many other country hospitals.

Mr. O'Brien: I am glad the Minister said it is only one of the finest hospitals outside the metropolitan area.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Does the member for Katanning know of any other hospital in a country district where the people are being supplied with electricity practically for nothing? Does he know that all the repairs, renovations and other minor jobs are performed by the local people? The mining company at that centre will often send an engineer, a carpenter or other tradesman to the hospital to perform any work that is required. Those services are rendered for the welfare of the people of Norseman. Therefore, they are doing more than their share towards the maintenance of their hospital.

Mr. Roberts: How are they getting their electricity for practically nothing?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Because the mining company is charging the people only 3d. a unit. The people in the hon. member's electorate pay more than double that for their electricity.

Mr. Cornell: Will the S.E.C. do the same for other country hospitals?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am speaking about the community efforts at Norseman, because I have been indirectly accused of favouring that centre, together with Esperance, because I am the member representing those centres. I take exception to that because there has been no differentiation whatsoever, and everyone has been treated on a fair basis.

Mr. Ackland: We are only supporting the hon. member's motion by saying that the people in the country and those at Esperance are doing this.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: That might be so, but the member for Katanning is accusing me of not receiving similar contributions from the people at Norseman and Esperance towards the reconstruction or renovation of their hospitals because they are in my electorate. He said that he had noticed that the people at Norseman had not been contributing one-third of the cost of any hospital work in the same way as people in other country districts have done. That is on the basis of the local people contributing one-third of the cost, the Government one-third and the Lotteries Commission one-third.

Mr. Rodoreda: You must have misunderstood the member for Katanning.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I could have done so, but unfortunately his words are in print so therefore it is impossible for me to have made a mistake. In the early

days the people at Norseman raised their one-third share of the expenditure necessary to establish a hospital. Also, to provide fire protection for the building, the members of the local fire brigade laid piping from the local water supply to the hospital over a distance of one mile and did not charge one penny for the work done. Have the people in any other district done that as a contribution towards their hospitals?

So far as Esperance is concerned, its hospital was started in a humble way. I think the United Missions were responsible for the initial establishment in 1909. Later in its history the Public Works Department took it over, following which it came under the jurisdiction of the Public Health Department. However, that hospital has not had as much done to it in the same way as the hospital at Norseman. Therefore, I refute most strongly the statement made by the member for Katanning that the Norseman hospital has been favourably treated in comparison with hospitals in other parts of the State. The Minister for Native Welfare has just returned from Norseman and over the air I heard the report that he had said that he considered Norseman hospital as being one of the best outside of the metropolitan area.

Mr. O'Brien: I was pleased to hear the Minister say, "one of the best."

The Minister for Education: Meekatharra has a very fine hospital.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. However, as far as that hospital is concerned, a few years ago I paid a visit to it and I discovered that the building was propped up with sticks and if any sort of a wind had been blowing at the time, it would have fallen over.

Mr. Moir: Had the member for the district been neglecting that hospital?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hospital had been neglected and I must admit that the renovations cost more than I expected. I will now refer to the contributions made by people in the metropolitan area towards the maintenance of hospitals. There are many people who make such contributions. Organisations that have for their object the welfare and care of mental patients have contributed £2,000 a year to the Claremont Mental Hospital. The hon. member also said that the electorates represented by Country Party and L.C.L. members seemed to be overlooked in comparison with the work done on hospitals in the metropolitan area. However, the financing of all hospitals is on the one basis and no discrimination whatsoever is made in regard to the funds that are made available towards their maintenance.

Mr. Nalder: The facts do not prove that.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The facts do prove that. For example, only recently the Premier received a deputation from people representing the King Edward

Memorial Hospital and they offered to raise £125,000 if the Premier would agree to making some fund available towards the additions to that hospital.

Mr. Cornell: Did they not do that by way of bank overdraft?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, they did not. They intend to hold an appeal to raise £125,000.

Mr. Nalder: Yes, but they do not ask the ratepayers to contribute.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: They intend to obtain the money from the people in the district and also from others in the metropolitan area if possible. There is no reason why the ratepayers should not make some contributions towards their hospitals. The King Edward Memorial Hospital is a very important institution.

I repeat that no discrimination is made between metropolitan or country hospitals in regard to the financing of any additions or renovations. I represent a country electorate and I am more of a country man than a city man, but I would show no discrimination whatsoever. In any case, my leader would not agree to that sort of administration. No one will doubt his sincerity, honesty and impartiality as far as any organisation is concerned. Would any member of this House challenge that statement?

Mr. May: They could not challenge it.

Mr. Nalder: Collie has done all right!

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The member for Katanning represents a country district and so do I. On the Cabinet there are five members who represent country electorates and five representing electorates in the metropolitan area, but I can assure the hon. member that no section of the people has been asked to make contributions towards the renovations or maintenance of their hospitals.

Mr. Ackland: Who did ask them?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The officers of the department have probably advised them that there is not any loan or revenue money available and no doubt, if any hospital committee wanted certain work done, either by way of improvements, alterations or renewals, the departmental officers probably told the members of that committee that if they made a contribution towards the cost of the work, they would have a better chance of getting it done.

Mr. Ackland: Is that purely voluntary? Are there any conditions attached to it?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No.

Mr. Court: What if they did not raise the money? Would they be cut out altogether then?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, certainly not. There is a great deal of money spent on various hospitals in those

cases where the local people cannot make any contributions towards the work to be done on their hospitals.

Mr. Nalder: Yes, but they would be placed on the bottom of the priority list.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, they would not.

Mr. Nalder: Very nearly at the bottom.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The member for Stirling has just entered the Chamber and the member for Katanning can ask him whether he has received fair treatment from the department in regard to work performed on the hospital in his district. That hospital has had money spent on it. The hon. member was not asking for anything that he was not entitled to. However, the work that was necessary on that hospital was not placed on the bottom of the list because there were no contributions forthcoming from the local people.

Mr. Nalder: And on the other hand, the people in that area were not asked to meet a third of the cost.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Because they did not have the money. Further, if the Government has not sufficient money to perform the work that is required on any particular hospital after meeting the demands that are urgently necessary on others, the people of the district have to do something in an effort to raise funds towards the cost of the improvements or additions. For example, in the district represented by the member for Moore the hospital committee had to find £6,000.

Mr. Ackland: Wongan Hills was refused and the people at that centre have been told that they would not get a hospital for another six years.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I did not tell the hon. member that. The department has no right to tell the hon. member that, either, because it has not the authority to do so. The department might have suggested that it is not possible to do that because the Government has not sufficient funds. The needs put forward by the member for Moore have been treated fairly in accordance with the finance available. There is a letter on the file tabled today expressing gratitude for what I have done to help in the matter.

No one has been asked directly by the Government to assist. I commend the officials for what they have done. They told the people that there was no money available to be spent on the building of hospitals, either from loan or revenue. This question has not been discussed in Cabinet, and I can vouch for that. On the other hand if an effort is made voluntarily to obtain money, the Government will match it as will the Lotteries

Commission. If the Government has sufficient money, another course might have been adopted.

I have always done everything possible to help the people in the country. I have advocated a flat rate for water and fuel but I did not get very much support, not even from the Country Party. I am prepared to support the motion of the member for Moore. Reference has been made to decentralisation. Let us examine what the McLarty-Watts Government did in this respect. No great effort was made by this Government to establish the oil refinery at Albany or another suitable place.

Mr. Roberts: That Government made efforts in regard to some other centre.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It did not try to establish the refinery at Burtville. It certainly did not suggest going down to Esperance.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Neither of those statements is correct.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Government of the day kept very quiet about this matter and I did not see any publicity about a move to decentralise the oil refinery. At that time the McLarty-Watts Government had money to burn that was the time when prosperity was rampant. Today the position is just the opposite and the Government has not the money. No one can accuse the Government of discriminatory treatment between the metropolitan and country areas.

I have the greatest sympathy for country dwellers. Were it not for them the people in the city would not be able to carry on. The country people produce the real wealth of the State and they are entitled to all the amenities and facilities that are found in the metropolitan area. If I had my way, they would have a little bit more than the city dwellers. I am afraid that the member for Katanning has been led astray on this matter. This is a political move to belittle the Labour Government and the Ministry; it has not been just to the country people.

Mr. Nalder: You are absolutely wrong.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Even the member for Vasse said this was Government policy. That was an irresponsible statement. He wants to ingratiate himself with the leaders of his party because he has aspirations for some position that will arise in the near future. I am sorry he is not present this evening.

I would like to see between £12,000,000 and £13,000,000 spent on hospitals in the next three or four years. The mental hospitals are in a deplorable condition and the accommodation position is very acute. The Government has acquired a beautiful site in Guildford for the building of a mental hospital, but there is no money to carry out that work. The same applies to other

hospitals in the metropolitan area which are very short of accommodation, even more acute than in country hospitals.

That also applies to the King Edward Memorial Hospital. I might point out that the Royal Perth Hospital, the King Edward Memorial Hospital and the Home of Peace are just as much country hospitals as city hospitals. They each have honorary staffs and specialists for treating the patients. Patients from all over the State are sent to those institutions. In some instances more country patients are treated than city patients. There are private hospitals in the city and generally patients in the metropolitan area are sent to them.

Mr. Roberts: The country people would rather receive treatment at hospitals in their own centres.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: But they cannot be treated by specialists in all centres, except where there are regional hospitals. Serious cases are sent to the metropolitan area. A greater number of inmates of the Home of Peace come from country centres. This year the Government is making a contribution of £20,000 to that institution, the Lotteries Commission is making a similar contribution, and the committee of that institution is finding another £20,000.

Mr. Ackland: Do not some of the patients pay the fees?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Some do and some do not. This motion will put a damper on local effort and no one wants to do that. Would anyone suggest that if people volunteered to do certain things, I would say that the Government would not accept the proposition of putting up one-third of the money and the Lotteries Commission the other third?

Mr. Court: There is no suggestion of refusing the voluntary contributions. The query is whether contributions are strictly voluntary.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I have said so many times that, as far as the Government and I are concerned, they were strictly voluntary. The contributions might have been prompted by the officials, and I commend them for it. There is no loan money available. They might have said, "If you can make a contribution, there is a likelihood of the work being done sooner."

Mr. Ackland: That is a shifting of the ground from what you said previously. You said it was purely voluntary.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There is no shifting of ground. It is purely voluntary. The member for Stirling was not compelled to find one-third of the money to construct the hospital at Mt. Barker. The same remark applies to the hospitals at Meekatharra and Lake Grace. It was a Minister from the opposite side who started the Lake Grace hospital.

This motion will tend to put a damper on local effort and that is not fair. It may not have been intended. The people in the country are being told that they are being treated unfairly and on an unequal basis compared to city dwellers. That is not right. This will discourage country people in doing a job in which they are vitally interested.

Mr. Nalder: I did not say that. You are making that up to cover the case.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am saying that. That was the implication of the hon. member's remarks. The hon. member cannot deny saying that the country people were not getting a fair deal.

Mr. Nalder: You are accusing me of something else.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I say they are getting a fair deal, comparable with the treatment received by city people. It would be a sad day indeed if such an attitude were ever put into effect. The hospital system in this State is a vast and complex enterprise and not without its peculiar problems. Human relationship and the needs of the sick are a challenge to the best that is in us. This is one of the reasons why so many citizens are prepared to give up their time and energy in the interests of the hospitals.

There are no people more desirous of assisting hospitals in many ways than the people in the country. I have had that experience myself. I was chairman of a hospital board for 10 years and every week-end we had a working bee to do a certain amount of work. Those people did a marvellous job because the money was not available to pay for the labour. They responded.

Mr. Ackland: Is the same spirit shown by the people in the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It could not be shown in the same way. For instance, we cannot send a working bee to the King Edward Hospital or the Royal Perth Hospital because they are too big. The Lotteries Commission is contributing £33,000 to the Royal Perth Hospital each year. That will continue until the capital is reduced considerably. In any case, it will go a long way to pay for the interest. I firmly believe, whether or not the motion is passed, that this enthusiasm will not be prevented. Be that as it may, I deprecate the motion.

It would have been better if the member for Katanning had gone to the department where he would have obtained what information he desired without the unnecessary damaging publicity. When this gets out it will be damaging and will tend to discourage country people, pitting them against the city dwellers. In reality there is not sufficient money to go round. The member for Katanning spent some time in referring to replies given to questions. His motive might have been ulterior.



Hon. A. F. Watts: Why were there no volunteers between the 23rd February, 1953, and the 23rd February, 1955?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: At the time when the hon. member was in the Government, there was plenty of money available.

Hon. A. F. Watts: The dates I quoted were after that. Why were there no volunteers in your first two years of office?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There were volunteers in my area all the time. They volunteered to do the necessary work in the hospital.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Why did this volunteering only start last year?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Simply because we did not have any money. The member for Stirling knows that perfectly well. If there were money available, the Government would be only too willing to help. I know that the member for Stirling is as anxious as I am to help the country districts.

Mr. O'Brien: An amount of £160 was raised last Saturday night at the Silver Chain ball at Yalgoo.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member asked for a file to be tabled and I complied. He did not find some information which he sought in the reply that was given. The file tabled contained all the official documents, both inwards and outwards. I have been assured by the Under Secretary that no document has been withheld. The file is complete. I asked him whether any document had been extracted from the file and he said it was absolutely complete.

The indication is that the city is better treated than the country, but let us look at the figures. We got the replies tonight. When we consider the money paid out on the Royal Perth Hospital—a State hospital—and we take into consideration the King Edward Hospital and the Home of Peace, we find that considerably more money has been spent in the country than in the city. In the city quite a lot of contributions have been made that probably the hon. member does not know about.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Not in respect of Government hospitals.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Take the Royal Perth Hospital. By 1956—the worst year because we have no money—most of the country area hospitals had been established and money spent there in years past. As a consequence, they are not so badly off. When the Government which the member for Moore supported was in office, not much work was done on hospitals in his area. More work has been done on them since the Labour Party has been in power. Does the hon. member deny that?

Mr. Ackland: I do not deny that at all.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: In 1956 loan money to the extent of £338,481 was spent on the Royal Perth Hospital, and in the country £267,220. If members take that figure from £446,958, it leaves all hospitals, other than the Royal Perth Hospital, with a figure of £179,738. The hon. member can go into all these figures and he will find that the money spent in the country has always been comparable with that spent in the city, yet today there is a greater need for beds in the city than there is in the country.

In order to correct some answers, I shall read a letter written by the chief clerk to the Under Secretary for Health. I do this to show that if there has been a mistake it has not been intentional. He said—

In connection with the points raised by Mr. Nalder concerning answers to questions, given by this department, it seems that the principal point in this regard is in respect of the variations between the questions answered on 27/9/56 and 23/10/56.

The amounts promised by districts, listed in reply to Mr. Watts' question of 27/9/56, have again been listed in the replies to Mr. Nalder's question of 23/10/56, with the exception of Wyal-katchem and Dalwallinu where the work had been practically completed.

The information given on 27/9/56 covered promised contributions for the financial year ended 30th June, 1956, whereas the later information supplied excluded completed jobs but included the projected undertakings at Northampton, Kojonup and Katanning, upon which negotiations had ensued from 1/7/56, the commencement of this financial year.

Pemberton hospital's contribution quoted at £1,250 was inadvertently omitted from the towns listed on 23/10/56 but, apart from this, the answers given were in every respect correct. I am attaching a separate sheet showing the nature and style of the work planned for the Pemberton hospital, which gives a clear illustration of departmental and other assistance towards carrying out essential work.

Criticism has been levelled at the non-contribution of people in the metropolitan area towards hospital construction, but it appears that attention should be directed to the fact that Government hospitals in the metropolitan area provide only a small percentage of the hospital accommodation required by city people.

That is because we have private hospitals, and in many instances the Royal Perth Hospital is filled by country people who go there for specialist treatment.

Mr. Cornell: Can you give more figures to substantiate that assertion?

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** Yes, I can get them if the hon. member so desires. The letter continues—

Royal Perth Hospital, with its honorary specialists, clinics, etc., caters for the whole of the State and patients requiring specialist attention are admitted from all over the State. A majority of the people in the metropolitan area, when needing hospital accommodation, are required to obtain this from private hospitals.

Departmental policy has always been that new hospitals should be provided for from loan funds but, in a limited number of cases, funds have been made available from revenue to subsidise any urgent work of additions and alterations required by boards in advance of the established priority.

I thought it only fair that I should read the letter to give the member for Kataning a thorough understanding of the position. There is nothing wrong, as far as the officers of the department are concerned, because Section 27 of the Hospitals Act gives power for local authorities to spend revenue and borrow money for public hospitals. It does behove the country people to make some contribution, if they possibly can—it also behoves the city people to do the same wherever possible. In many instances in the city, this has been done. We can refer to the response in regard to the establishment of the medical school. That was a marvellous response. It was made by the country as well as the city. Do not members think the Government was entitled to accept that money—over £500,000—for the establishment of a medical school?

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** That was purely voluntary, and no one is complaining about it.

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** There are others who might misconstrue the position and say that it is not voluntary; but no Government has compelled or asked the people to make a contribution. The officials, acting in their capacity, have probably suggested it. I am not trying to avoid the point. I commend them for it. They have said to the people, "We have no money. There is no loan money and there is very little other money, so there is only one way out and that is that if you can make a contribution, we might be able to match it with the lotteries, and the Government might be able to find one-third." When there is no money, we cannot get blood out of a stone. I could well spend between £12,000,000 and £13,000,000 in the next three or four years, and every penny of it is required.

On how many occasions have approaches been made to the Government by some charitable, social or welfare organisation, and the Government has said that it would give assistance by matching public subscriptions. That is all we are doing now

as far as the country is concerned. We are doing exactly the same here as far as the King Edward Memorial Hospital goes. It has been suggested that £125,000 can be provided if the Government can match it. The Treasurer has gladly accepted that proposal.

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** Who is providing that £125,000?

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** The people. An appeal is going to be made to the people of the metropolitan area.

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** That is the first time.

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** No, it is not.

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** Yes, it is.

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** I do not deny that I would encourage country and metropolitan effort. I hope it continues, and where possible the Government and the Lotteries Commission will be able to assist financially. I have no apologies to make for what the Government has done or for what I have done. The Government did not know what we were doing so far as these contributions were concerned because the matter was never discussed at Cabinet. I commend the officers of the department for their foresight; I feel that they have tried to help the people in the country where the people are trying to help themselves.

**Mr. Nalder:** Didn't you, as Minister, know what the officers were doing?

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** Of course, I did; and I have never denied it. But I have never directed the officers to do it. The hon. member can go to the department if he likes; there is no need to take my word for it. He can ask the officers there if any direction was given.

**Mr. Nalder:** It is a rather peculiar set of circumstances.

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** There is nothing peculiar about it.

**Mr. Nalder:** Of course, there is.

**The MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** In Western Australia we have a total of 110 hospitals of which 88 are in the country and 22 are in the metropolitan area—these are hospitals under Government or committee control, which is more or less the same as Government control. When I took over the portfolio as Minister for Health the department suggested that the following hospitals be closed:—

Kukerin.  
Northampton.  
Boddington.  
Coolgardie.  
Williams.  
Wickepin.  
Wiluna.  
Laverton.  
Dumbleyung.  
Brookton.

The Brookton hospital is now leased to the matron. Because I was a country member and I was sympathetic towards their problems, I said that none of the hospitals was to be closed.

Mr. Evans: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I told the department that all those hospitals were to be kept open, and they will be kept open while I am Minister for Health because I feel that the people in the country are entitled to all these facilities.

Mr. Nalder: There has not been much money spent on these hospitals.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, but nevertheless the hospitals have not been closed, and the Dumbleyung hospital is quite a nice place. I was there not long ago and, after all, it is only 25 miles from Wagin. Kukurin is only an outpost but they still have a matron there. It was suggested that the Boddington hospital be closed and also the Coolgardie hospital, which is in my own electorate. I venture to suggest that had I not been the Minister for Health at the time, or had a country member not been the Minister and had the country interests at heart, probably all those hospitals would have been closed down. I have always been sympathetically disposed towards country hospitals because I have had a lot to do with them.

There is also a great shortage of hospital beds in the metropolitan area, more so than in the country districts. The population of the State, as at the 31st December, 1955, was 670,750 and of that number 365,000 were residing in the metropolitan area. So members can see that there are 59,250 more people in the metropolitan area than there are in country districts. That is one of the reasons why I am so keen on decentralisation and I think we should do all we can in this regard.

The gross expenditure on hospitals in Western Australia for 1955-56 was £4,506,434 while the gross revenue was £1,531,002, leaving a net loss to the State of £2,975,432. We will never get the money necessary to do the essential work unless the people make some effort, particularly under present-day conditions. Yet we have the member for Katanning telling the country people that they are being treated unfairly.

Mr. Nalder: I am telling the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I tell the hon. member that the people in the city are paying out money too.

Mr. Nalder: I am telling the Minister that the country people are not being treated fairly.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I think I have proved to the hon. member that they are not being treated unfairly. It is not Government policy to ask officers of the department to go around telling the

people this. But there is no loan money or revenue money available, and there is a possibility of getting something done if the people will make a contribution. Their contribution is matched by the Lotteries Commission and the Government on an equal basis—one-third each. It is no pleasure to the Government to be short of money. We want to give the facilities necessary in the country and in the metropolitan area; but to do that we would want at the very least £12,000,000 or £13,000,000 within the next four years. That would enable us to get on with the building of our hospitals and help us get out of the mental mess we have at the moment.

Hospital beds in Western Australia, on an average, cost 98s. 5.7d. per patient per day. The highest cost is at Wittenoom Gorge, which is 161s. 4d. and the lowest at Kellerberrin, 55s. 11d. That is in the district of the member for Mount Marshall.

Mr. Cornell: He is not a bad little secretary.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It is probably the hon. member. I know that the Minister for Education is also looking for money to build schools and extra classrooms; but it is almost impossible to get the necessary finance. The charges in Government hospitals are as follows:—

	per day
Single bed wards ....	72s.
Two-bed wards ....	60s.
Three to five-bed wards ....	48s.
Others (larger wards and verandah beds)	36s.

So with an average cost of 98s. 5.7d. per patient per day, members can see why there is a deficit. I think I have given a fair exposition of the position generally, and I feel that the member for Katanning, although his efforts are sincere, ought to go back and tell the country people that they are not being unfairly treated. Looking at the matter quite fairly, I think the country people have had a fair go.

So far as Norseman is concerned, I deny that the people of that district have not made a contribution. They have one of the best hospitals in the country and the community of that town has made that hospital. They have some wonderful facilities there and they have spent between £30,000 and £40,000. The hospital gets its electricity at 3d. per unit and if any repairs, renovations or painting are required, a man comes down from the mine and does the work. There is no charge to the hospital.

Mr. Ackland: Does the mine generate that electricity?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes; nevertheless it is a contribution. If they had to pay the full amount, it would be considerably more. I hope the member for Katanning will say to himself, "I was not

quite right in what I thought." But, of course, he will stick to his guns because he has been prompted.

Mr. Nalder: I was not prompted.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am sure that the hon. member would not have moved that motion had he not been prompted because he is a fair man and to be fair one has to look at things from a broad point of view and to give fair consideration to both sides.

People in the metropolitan area have done a very good job and although they might not have made the total contribution, they have made some direct and big contribution towards the hospitals in this State. Also we must remember that the metropolitan hospitals are on a different basis to those in the country. I can remember the time when the Wiluna hospital was run entirely by the progress committee and the local people had to find the money for it. The only contribution made was a subsidy of £25 a month for the maintenance of a doctor.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did the Minister say that in future, country districts will have to find one-third of the money for new hospitals construction?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, I did not. I said that if the country people volunteered to find one-third of the money, the Lotteries Commission would also find one-third and the Government the other third.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Then those districts would get preference.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: After they find the money and it is all there, they must get preference.

Mr. Nalder: Because there is no priority.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If the people in a district do not make any effort, they should not be treated on the same basis as the people in a district where some effort is made. That is only right from the departmental point of view because there is not the money available for us to spend. The member for Stirling is very lucky. He got over his problem at a time when we had the money and the hospital was an urgent necessity. If we had as much money as the McLarty-Watts Government had when that very nice hospital at Pinjarra was built—and a very necessary one, too—we could have done quite a lot. But we are short of loan money and revenue money, and so it is not possible to do all that we would like. I hope the member for Katanning will go back and tell the people that as far as he could see, the people in the country were being treated on a basis comparable to those in the metropolitan area.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [9.57]: I want to support this motion and at the outset I want to say that I am disappointed with

the Minister's contribution. He started off by saying that this was a reflection on him and later he said that it was a reflection on the officers of his department.

The Minister for Health: No, I did not say that. I said there was no reflection on them. I commended them.

Mr. ACKLAND: I meant that the Minister intimated that the motion was a reflection on them. I believe I speak for each of the eight members of the Country Party when I say that we hold the Minister in the highest personal regard, and we do not believe that he would misrepresent the position. But I want to tell him that he was quite wrong when he interjected during the speech of the member for Katanning and said that the sums of money which were contributed by the country hospital committees were purely on a voluntary basis.

The Minister for Health: So they are.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Minister said that nothing had been asked for by any member of the medical board. I wrote letters to all of the four hospital committees in my electorate because I knew that that was not a fact. During the last two or three years I have had complaints from each of those hospital committees—Dalwallinu, Goomalling, Moora and Wongan Hills—and such words as "blackmail" appeared in their letters. I shall read some of them later. They said they were told that unless they made contributions to the extent of one-third of the costs the work could not be undertaken.

I have received letters from these four hospital committees recently and I find that although they spoke of blackmail until latterly, each one of them now is a little afraid of intimidation, because they have been most guarded in their recent letters to me. However, I had a most outspoken letter from one secretary—indeed it was so outspoken that I got in touch with him and said it was my intention to read the letter to the House. After giving the matter some consideration he said that he would rather I did not do so until I had obtained the permission of the hospital board chairman. That permission I now have. But knowing there was some reluctance on the part of these hospital committees, I asked for the files and found all I wanted on those files. Neither the member for Katanning nor any other member of the Country Party wishes to stop selfhelp in the country.

The Minister for Health: I am glad to hear that.

Mr. ACKLAND: It is there and it always will be there; indeed they would not be in the country were they not willing to practice selfhelp. Two of my four hospitals were built entirely by voluntary subscription. I was interested myself in a hospital in Wongan Hills which we built

in 1928, the year before the depression, and, without any assistance from the Government whatever, that hospital was carried on until 1935 when the Government was prepared to take it over because it proved so necessary to the district. I remained the chairman of that hospital committee until all the guarantors were released from the guarantee they had with a bank. So although the Government took it over and was, in its own opinion, most magnanimous, we were left with a debt of £500 which was raised in quick time. Self-help exists, and it will continue to do so.

The Minister for Health: You will never stop it.

Mr. ACKLAND: So it is wrong to say that the member for Katanning was harming the cause he espoused; he was doing nothing of the kind. The Minister has not answered the question. By interjection the Leader of the Country Party asked why, over a period of three years, there had been none of these voluntary offers of help, and the Minister's reply was not very satisfactory. I can tell the Minister that the hospitals in my electorate today—and that applies also to hospitals in most other country places—do not get very much unless they are prepared to contribute. They do not mind contributing if the contributions are made State-wide. We are proud of our hospitals and every other amenity; and Norseman is not the only place where that spirit exists—though I am glad to hear it does exist in Norseman.

The Minister for Health: I would not have mentioned Norseman but the hon. member accused me of something.

Mr. Nalder: I only asked a question.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Minister's mention of Norseman really gave a great deal of support to the motion moved by the member for Katanning. I have here a letter dated the 26th July, 1955, written by the secretary of the hospital committee to the Under Secretary for Health. It reads as follows:—

The Dalwallinu Road Board has been asked to obtain £5,000 from its ratepayers. This money to be used as part of the expense of building new quarters and kitchen at the hospital.

If this were done it would mean that each ratepayer in the district would be rated a certain amount and it would take two years to obtain the £5,000. Half of this amount would be available this financial year and the balance next year.

If the £5,000 were made available to you over the next two years with the road board's guarantee, would you guarantee to call tenders and have the building erected this financial year?

The Minister for Health: Who wrote that letter?

Mr. ACKLAND: It was signed by Harold Smith, secretary of the Dalwallinu Hospital Committee. I now propose to read from a letter dated the 3rd August. It states—

In reply to your letter dated 26th July, 1955, I desire to advise you that the hon. Minister has approved of a subsidy on a £ for £ basis with moneys raised locally up to £5,000 towards the cost of additions at your hospital . . . .

I would appreciate your advice as early as possible after the road board meeting on 8th August, as a specific instruction cannot be given to the Principal Architect until I have your assurance that the road board has agreed to provide £5,000.

On the 27th September the Under Secretary wrote the following letter to the secretary of the Dalwallinu Hospital Board with reference to the installing of a duplicate indicator board in the maternity section of the hospital:—

I am now advised that this work is estimated to cost £131. This, it is considered, should be a charge against your board's maintenance account and before asking the Public Works Department to put the work in hand, I would appreciate your approval to the expenditure.

That one file itself proves that the hospital committee at Dalwallinu was asked to contribute by the officials of the department. I have a file here dealing with Wongan Hills which I will leave until last. There is a letter from the secretary of the Goomalling and District Hospital. The secretary was reluctant to give me any information, though he was as appreciative of the fact as I am that the Government had made money available to build additions and renovations to the Goomalling hospital. The Minister opened the building I am speaking of, and he will remember the occasion. This is what the secretary had to say—

However, some years ago we applied for assistance to build a nurses' quarters, but received no help whatsoever and erected a suitable cottage ourselves on private land.

During the current renovations many new furnishings, floor coverings and equipment have been necessary, and in nearly every case we were asked to provide one-third of the cost. On one item, namely, a washing machine, we provided the total cost.

So over and over again we find that the Minister is not at all fault with the action taken by his department. When the member for Katanning said it was not voluntary, the Minister said that neither he nor any member of the Government had asked for contributions. Yet here we have departmental officers making these

requests. I have a letter from the chairman of the Moora Hospital Board dated the 11th of this month and this is what he had to say—

Proposed additions to the Moora hospital and new kitchen block: We have raised the sum of £6,000 towards the cost without having been asked. Owing to the present-day financial restrictions, having raised portion of the cost, we feel the Minister must give us some priority regarding the improvements which are urgently required at Moora.

There we have a case of a hospital board that was very reluctant to give me this letter stating that, in its opinion, being prepared to find £6,000 towards the expenditure of this hospital, it felt it would be on a priority list.

The Minister for Health: What is wrong with that?

Mr. ACKLAND: It is exactly in support of what the member for Katanning had to say, that unless the hospital committees are prepared to make contributions, they had little, if any, hope of getting assistance from the department. I now come to the file regarding Wongan Hills. This letter is duplicated on the file and I would like to read what the secretary had to say. He was reluctant to give me the letter to read but the chairman has done so. In any case, I could have read the relevant parts on the file. It is dated the 6th November, 1956, and is as follows:—

I was very pleased indeed to receive your letter of November 1st, in the matter of differential treatment in various hospitals, and as this matter had been a very sore point with me and my board, I do congratulate you and your colleagues for taking the matter up, as there is no doubt whatever that the methods used to obtain moneys from boards—that is, the local people—is pure blackmail.

The word "blackmail" was used to me with reference to the department and with many members in conversation. The Government had done some work for them for which they were not charged. They had put in a sewerage and a hot water system and a new mortuary. The letter continues—

However, for the proposed new alterations at present being negotiated by the department we have been asked to pay one-third of the cost, which proposal was flatly rejected by this board and our reply to the department's suggestion was as follows:—

The letter I will now read is dated the 20th March, 1956, and reads as follows:—

My board are definite that they will not agree to find one-third of the costs of this capital expenditure, as

we are already subsidising the hospital to the tune of about £1,000 per year, and which we believe is more than our fair share—and we have been induced to spend this money here each year by virtue of the numerous instances where in the past you have instructed us that you accept full responsibility for all capital costs, and in addition to which, we now have Mr. Stitfold's promise to provide the money required in this particular instance, and you obviously cannot have it both ways. Further, via taxation, we pay more than our share of building Royal Perth, Hollywood Repatriation, Chest Hospital and so on, and we have not noticed you calling upon the people of Perth to subsidise such buildings by one-third, or any other amount, and in all these circumstances my board consider your suggestion a somewhat reckless imposition on the sentiment of the local residents.

However, in fairness to the department, I must state that following a recent deputation to the Minister for Health from this board requesting that a new hospital be built here, the Assistant Under Secretary of the Department—Mr. H. Smith—came up here and discussed our problems, and has since submitted a plan of certain proposed alterations, for which he has not requested that we pay the one-third.

With regard to obtaining equipment (essential) for the hospital we are very frequently requested to pay one-third of the cost and unless we accede to their demand, such equipment cannot be obtained. I attach hereto a list of the main items that we have requested from the department of recent years, and which have been supplied eventually after we had agreed to pay our agreed share. This list tallies to £1,619, but there are also a whole lot of other items that we have had to pay for, amounting to many hundreds of pounds, but I have not the time at my disposal today to go through all the accounts and records to find them.

The list of furnishings and equipment acquired during the last five years on which the department made the board contribute one-third or more of the cost is contained in an attachment to that letter. The amounts shown are the actual amounts paid by the board and they are as follows:—

	£
X-ray machine (one-third) ....	204
Dunlopillo mattresses (one-third) ....	54
Refrigerator (one-third) ....	29
Essex Stove (five-sixths) ....	498

Stainless equipment (one-third) .....	24
Electrical rewiring (one-third) .....	169
Filing Cabinet (one-half) .....	22
Electric heater (one-third) .....	11
*Kitchen sink .....	125
*Shower recess .....	54
*Fencing .....	304
*New x-ray room .....	125

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£1,619

\*Whole cost borne by board.

That is signed "N. C. Stonestreet."

Mr. Lawrence: You nominated the plural. Who did the blackmailing?

Mr. ACKLAND: That has not been put in the letter.

Mr. Lawrence: You nominated that yourself.

Mr. ACKLAND: I never.

Mr. Lawrence: Yes. You said that they tried to blackmail them.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am glad to read this letter to the Minister because at all times he is courteous, as he was on this occasion. This letter is signed by the secretary of the Wongan Hills-Ballidu Road Board and it reads as follows:—

I have been directed by my board to request you to convey to the Hon. the Minister for Health the appreciation of the board for the very courteous manner in which he received the recent deputation concerning the proposal of a new hospital at Wongan Hills, and the sympathetic hearing evidenced while the deputation was in progress, and to request that the matter of a new hospital for Wongan Hills be given a priority on the schedule for future works.

What I want to tell members is that Wongan Hills has refused to contribute one-third. The Minister did not tell me, but the departmental heads told me that it is most unlikely that Wongan Hills will get a new hospital in the next 10 years. It was not said that that was because Wongan Hills did not contribute one-third. I do not want anyone to run away with that idea.

It is realised that Wongan Hills needs a hospital badly. The original hospital was erected by a local committee who were laymen and who had no assistance from the department. We built it against the advice of the department. Since then a hospital has been built around that structure; but, as a hospital, it is not a success, as the Minister himself will admit, together with his departmental heads. The present hospital will be taken over for a school hostel in connection with the junior high school when it is established; but as

the district will not contribute one-third towards a hospital, it is not likely to go one during the next 10 years.

The Minister for Health: Perhaps the farmers would lend us sufficient money to build one.

Mr. ACKLAND: I do not now what they would do, but they have been very generous in the past. The motion moved by the member for Katanning was no party political in any shape or form, and it is not my idea to be party political. The Minister is interested in country people, and so am I. All we ask is that the people living beyond the boundaries of the metropolitan area shall be treated on exactly the same footing as those living within it.

If it is not necessary for the people of Perth to contribute one-third of the cost, it should not be necessary for people in the country to do so. There was a blasting of trumpets and a shouting from the housetops when it was said that a hospital was being built at South Perth by the local residents. I thought that South Perth had done something unique—

The Minister for Health: They made an effort.

Mr. ACKLAND: —in the history of the metropolitan area. From the speech of the member for Katanning, I was very disappointed to find that out of £118,000, which was the cost of the building of that hospital, the people of the metropolitan area of South Perth in particular, found only £22,000.

The Minister for Health: And the Lotteries Commission £45,000.

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes, the Lotteries Commission is finding money for the country too.

The Minister for Health: What is wrong with that?

Mr. ACKLAND: It is helping to build the Royal Perth Hospital, too.

Mr. Lawrence: Don't the country people use that institution?

Mr. ACKLAND: They do, up to a point.

Mr. Lawrence: Up to a point, nothing Be reasonable!

Mr. ACKLAND: They prefer to use their own hospitals.

Mr. Lawrence: You be reasonable!

Mr. ACKLAND: The hon. member would prefer to have a hospital in South Fremantle.

Mr. Lawrence: I don't want a hospital in South Fremantle.

Mr. ACKLAND: You are funny if you don't! I want a hospital for Wongan Hill and the member for Katanning and other members want hospitals for their districts.

Mr. Hall: Albany wants one badly.

Mr. ACKLAND: There are four hospitals in my district, and each one of them has been asked to make a contribution of one-third of the cost. I will admit that in Goomalling the Government built a very nice addition to the hospital which did not cost the local people anything, but they have contributed by providing nurses' quarters and other conveniences.

I do not want the Minister to run away with the idea that this motion is political or that there is any reflection on him. We have a very great regard for him. This is not an attack on Mr. Devereaux or Mr. Smith. We hold them in the same high regard. But someone gave instructions for people in the country to be asked for a contribution of one-third. The Minister was misinformed when he was told that they were not asked for that contribution. I will concede that they were not asked by him, but the letters on the file show that these people were asked and they were afraid to give me the whole story in their letter to me because they thought that their chances of getting some reasonable treatment in the future might be jeopardised. I support the motion.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [10.23]: I propose to say a few words on the motion because I think its terms are justified and that the member for Katanning's action is directed mainly at preventing the spread of the activity which has been so clearly demonstrated in the last few minutes by the member for Moore.

I would not suggest that the member for Katanning wants to pillory the Minister for anything he has done. But it is obvious from the figures presented in the various speeches on the motion that this business of obtaining so-called voluntary contributions from country local authorities can snowball into a revival of the system which existed for something like 22 or 23 years and which was abolished in 1948.

Under that system no country hospital could be erected or extended through that period of years unless the local authority or some local body was prepared to find a proportion of the capital cost. That proportion varied between one-half and one-third. The reason for the variation was that it was one-half before the Lotteries Commission existed and became possessed of sufficient funds to warrant assistance being given.

So we had the peculiar position where some local bodies had been required to find 50 per cent. because there was no Lotteries Commission to assist; but later, others had only been required to find 33½ per cent. because there was a Lotteries Commission to assist and that commission had itself found one-third, leaving the Government to find one-third and the local body one-third.

I was a resident of and subsequently member for Katanning, and I recollect very well the circumstances in which the Government hospital which is on the site of the present hospital at Katanning was erected. The local authority, of which I was then a member, was required to contribute 50 per cent. of the capital cost. To do that it raised a loan, because it was a fairly substantial sum that was required as there was a substantial township of over 2,000 people, not to mention the surrounding districts, to be served. The local authority raised a loan which was repayable over a long period of years at normal rates of interest. The Government of the day, which I think was the first one headed by the late Hon. Phil Collier, made that arrangement.

As a result, that district paid very considerably more than half the cost of the hospital, in addition to the contribution of its residents as taxpayers to the ordinary liabilities of the State. I single that hospital out only for the reason that I was in direct contact with the circumstances at that time. But, of course, similar things applied in other areas.

I know, for example, that the neighbouring town of Wagin was in a similar position. Subsequently, in 1933, the Lotteries Commission came into existence; and after a time, in pursuance of its charitable activities, began to assist in the financing of hospital building; and therefore in cases that occurred subsequent to the commencement of those activities of the commission the contribution was reduced to one-third and a great many local authorities and local bodies in practically all parts of country districts were required to contribute that fraction of the capital cost.

The greater number have raised loans for the purpose which, in some cases, are still a charge upon their ratepayers; and in addition, I would reiterate, those ratepayers are taxpayers who assist in the payment of the obligations of the State like every other citizen does as a taxpayer. An instance of that is to be found in regard to the cost of the original hospital at Mt. Barker. The local authority is still under a liability in respect of that hospital, although it was opened 20 years ago.

The Minister for Health: They did not make any contribution to the new hospital.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Admittedly—and for a reason that I will give a little later. But they did make a contribution to the original hospital opened in 1936 by the late Hon. Alex. Panton, who was then Minister for Health and there is still some of that liability in process of amortisation by the Plantagenet Road Board today. I think the outstanding amount is about £500 after nearly 20 years.

The Minister for Health: There are a few more.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Of course. Then a remarkable thing happened in regard to some of these areas which had contributed



half the cost while others, consequent upon the arrival of the Lotteries Commission, contributed only one-third under the system that was brought into operation by the Government of the late Hon. P. Collier and continued until 1948. The situation was that those who were paying one-half discovered that others were paying only one-third and approached the Government and the Lotteries Commission to see if an adjustment could be made to put them all on the one-third basis.

With the aid of the Lotteries Commission that was contrived in a number of cases and the liability of certain local bodies was correspondingly reduced, but not to nil; only to one-third. During all that time there was no such programme required of local bodies in the metropolitan districts.

Any hospital construction in the metropolitan districts in regard to Government controlled hospitals, which are the only ones I am concerned with, was paid for first entirely by the Government and, secondly, entirely by the Government and the Lotteries Commission and the only compulsory contribution made by residents of the metropolitan districts was that which they contributed as ordinary taxpayers to the liabilities of the State. They had not the additional obligation of paying the extra contribution.

Lest it might be thought that by virtue of some voluntary effort to provide amenities or the like for metropolitan hospitals, aside from construction or extension costs, the relative position of the two sections in those days would right itself, let me indicate that what the Minister says is taking place in regard to Norseman has taken place in the great majority of country centres where there have been hospitals over the last two or three decades.

I was a member of what was known in my earlier days as the Katanning hospital comforts committee which was designed to raise funds in addition to those which were compulsory under the rates by virtue of this requirement by the Government which I have referred to, and which were raised purely to provide additional benefits of one kind or another too numerous to mention now but which still exist. I can remember myself as a member of that committee over a period when in one year we raised approximately £2,000 which was utilised for all sorts of purposes, including putting radio ear phones throughout the hospital for the 15 or 20 patients then accommodated. So we had the position of the metropolitan area contributing nothing except as taxpayers and perhaps an occasional voluntary effort such as I have last mentioned, whereas the country was paying as ratepayers, taxpayers and as volunteers; a most unsatisfactory and, in my opinion, improper state of affairs.

Do not let it be imagined that I have the slightest objection to the provision of the highest standard of hospitalisation in the

metropolitan district. Far from it, but I would suggest that the same requirement should be imposed upon the one as on the other, and that there should be no difference in the requirements. Either there should have been in the days prior to 1948 a stipulation that both the city and country should make a contribution on the lines I have referred to or, alternatively, that neither should make it.

No such stipulation existed and there was, therefore, a distinct differentiation during all those years between the two sections of the community. It was apparent to me and those associated with me then in this Assembly that it was time to put a period to that method. Either we must put an obligation on the metropolitan people to do as the country folk had been obliged to do or, alternatively, we must abolish the burden on both. The latter was far the most preferable course, and it was the one we plumped for at the 1947 election and it was carried into effect in 1948.

In consequence, from that time forward neither the metropolitan people nor the rural people, in regard to their Government hospitalisation, were asked to pay any contribution towards the capital cost of building or extending hospitals. So far as I was aware, that continued until last month and I was surprised to hear, in answer to the question I asked—I think at the end of September—that some contributions had been obtained from local authorities.

I was surprised because when I got that information it appeared to me that there was a distinct possibility of a return to the situation which I have covered in the last few minutes, where there would be a revival of that improper differentiation between the two sections of the community and I thought there was some question which ought to be asked to ascertain whether the information given to me was founded on fact.

The Minister for Health: It was never the Government's policy.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That may be so, but, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, when the information given to us in answer to questions indicates the possibility of this quasi-voluntary system snowballing into a return to the methods adopted between 1926 and 1948, that would be a most undesirable thing. If this motion does nothing else, I hope it will put a brake on any intention to have a continuance or extension of the system which appears now to be growing up.

The Minister for Health: What would you say if I told you that a lady the other day said that if they could find £10,000, she would like to know whether we could build a maternity hospital?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I think the Minister should have explained that there was absolutely no obligation to do it and put the offer and the whole discussion on the

file. The lack of that sort of information is conspicuous by its absence from the files. There are only suggestions that discussions have taken place but nothing to indicate what the discussions have been. That is the sort of thing that can give rise to suspicions such as I now find are supported to some extent by the comments of one of the hospital secretaries, as read out by the member for Moore, which indicated that there has been something more than plain volunteering.

If there is to be real volunteering of that nature, I would have it made plain and put on record so that this argument could not arise in that case in the future and then there could be no doubt whatever about it. I regard the extension or additions to Government hospitals in all parts of the State where there is a distinct necessity for such action, as being more important, for instance, than the provision of funds for such things as infant health centres. I subscribe entirely to the Minister's policy of assisting those activities but if it is impossible to find money for essential hospitalisation in the distant areas of the State, as the Minister indicates, I think it desirable to postpone assistance for some of these propositions rather than do anything which would imply in any way a return to the system which operated between 1926 and 1948 and which, as I have tried to show, constituted a most improper differentiation and one that was not justified in any circumstances.

Whatever system was introduced and put in operation should have been applied to both sections. I do not mind today, if the Government feels that it is essential for it to have contributions from residents surrounding the hospitals, but it should go to them both in the city and country areas and I will drop my objection, but go to them in one area alone and not the other and I will not drop my objection, whichever area is left out, because I think it must be the same for all or not at all.

The Minister for Health: At present the King Edward Memorial Hospital is offering £125,000. What should I do with that?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That is news to me and I would like to have the file and see how the offer was made before giving a verdict. I will not give a verdict unless I am sure I have the facts.

The Minister for Health: The offer was made at a deputation to the Minister.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: If the Minister lets me have the papers, I will do my best to tender my advice. The first we have heard of it is tonight and the Minister cannot expect me to give an answer on those terms. I do not wish to be critical, because I appreciate that there are difficulties surrounding the question, but I do not like to hear the Minister's continual reiteration of the fact that there is no

money. I think the amount which so far has been volunteered—to use the Minister's own words—is approximately £63,000.

The Minister for Health: It is £43,000.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: No, I think it is £63,000, counting the Katanning and Kojonup contributions. There are two lots of £10,000 there which I think were mentioned in one of the last answers to questions. The other day I asked the Premier a question relating to Wundowie. Here, again, I had experience of the Wundowie charcoal iron industry as I was the Minister under whose administration the board of management came for approximately six years. I know the production of Wundowie at the present time and my knowledge has been supported by answers to questions given in the past few days and it is sufficient to meet the demands of Western Australia for pig iron. So the only reason it is necessary, in this year of grace, to expand the production of the Wundowie iron industry is to produce charcoal iron to export.

On the facts to date, admittedly, there has been a market for more than the surplus Wundowie has been able to produce at present. There is a substantial surplus over and above the local demand. All the extensions that are to be made are to increase that surplus for export and £261,000 has been approved for that purpose. I inquired of the Premier: Did he not think that for this year it would have been better to postpone that development because of the shortage of funds for necessary classrooms and hospitals? The Premier replied that he did not agree with me. He is entitled to his opinion, but I think it is the wrong one.

I do not think there is any justification for expending £261,000 or half that amount or any other amount this year on extensions to Wundowie for the purpose I have mentioned when, in face of the circumstances, there are distinct limitations imposed on the construction of necessary facilities for education and hospitalisation in Western Australia. The questions I have asked of the Minister for Education and the replies he has given have indicated that, in the light of the best programme that has been devised so far, there will be a shortage of not less than 150 classrooms on the 1st February of next year. Obviously, there are shortages in various country hospitals as well as in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Health: Which would be more important—classrooms or hospitals

Hon. A. F. WATTS: They are about 50-50. They should be split in that way, in my humble view at least, if there is an equal demand in cost for them and I think there would be but I do not regard one as being much more important than the other.

The situation, is, I think, that we certainly ought to conserve, for those purposes, whatever money we have. It is not so very long ago that the Premier laid upon the Table of the House a file dealing with correspondence that had passed between himself and the then Acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth in regard to certain funds that were desired by this State. Unfortunately, that file has been returned—rightly so, of course—to the department. But a perusal of that file would have shown that there were funds available that had been advanced to various industrial enterprises and which had to be repaid, and to some extent—if not entirely—it would have been better if they had been conserved for the very essential things to which I have just referred.

Therefore, I do not think it is reasonable for the Minister to suggest that there have been no means of obtaining this £63,000, which amount has been the main subject of the remarks made by the member for Katanning. If it had been a question of giving closer consideration to the best means of spending this money on the most worthy and necessary undertakings that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education might have found, then they would have been spending it in a much better way than they are at present.

I do not say that this would be a panacea to all their ills. That is too much to expect. They might have found themselves in a better position, however, even if the things I have referred to had been postponed. I would suggest to the Minister that he take up these matters a little more thoroughly with the Treasury officers and endeavour, in the future, to make arrangements that are more in concert with what I think are his own views on the subject.

The Minister for Health: How did you find the Treasury officers?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I found that they were quite willing to put first things first if the Minister told them forcibly enough. I appreciate the Minister's difficulty in regard to this matter, but I think they could be induced to put first things first, and the Minister is the only one who can tell them to do so. I commend the member for Katanning for moving this motion. I have indicated that I think it is justified. I believe it is likely, if the matter had not been taken in hand, to have snowballed and a position would have been reached whereby we would have done the same as we did in 1946 and 1948.

I reiterate that I do not want any favours granted to any section of the community. I want the same treatment for all the State's taxpayers and that is what they would be getting if the Government adhered to the policy introduced in 1948 and paid for all the structural additions

and improvements or, alternatively, went back to the system that prevailed before 1948 and made all the people of the State contribute some proportion of the cost. But so long as the Government differentiates, I must disagree with it because of all the facts and the evidence before us. I suggest to the Minister that he should make it clear to his departmental officers that he does not want any dubious voluntary arrangements in the future. If it is to be a purely voluntary effort, let all the world know about it and then even I might be satisfied.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.54 p.m.*

## Legislative Council

Thursday, 15th November, 1956.

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