

do. We are confronted by an insidious organisation and we have to put a stop to its advance.

If we have people in our midst who are traitors, they should be treated as such. We do not permit a thief to come into our homes day after day and steal our belongings. We take steps to prevent him, and we must do the same to combat this menace. The sooner the people of Australia appreciate the danger of the position, the better off we shall be. There will be opportunities during the session to discuss other matters, and I shall defer further comment until then. As a final word, I would say that the Governor's Speech impresses me as being so much repetition and resurrection.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday the 29th June, at 4.30 p.m.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 5.27 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 23rd June, 1954.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### WUNDOWIE IRON.

#### *As to Exports and Prices.*

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Are special grades of iron produced at Wundowie being exported to overseas countries?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is in the affirmative,—

(a) to what countries is the export being made;

(b) what is the quantity to each respective country;

(c) what price is being received for similar grades to each country?

(3) What price is received from Australian firms for a similar grade of iron?

(4) Does the supply of pig-iron produced at Wundowie meet all demands, or is there a current production surplus?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) and (b) During the past year exports were made as follows:—Japan, 370 tons; Hong Kong, 485 tons; U.S.A., 500 tons; Italy, 100 tons; Germany, 50 tons; N.Z., 100 tons; Indonesia, 200 tons; Eastern States, 350 tons.

(c) Prices are confidential as they are subject to current trading.

(3) Grades are not comparable.

(4) Yes. All local demands are met and an export market is being developed for the surplus.

### EDUCATION.

#### *(a) As to Swanbourne School Accommodation and Recreation Area.*

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

(1) Is there any room in the Swanbourne school area for the erection of further classrooms?

(2) Is it considered that the present accommodation is sufficient for the pupils now attending?

(3) Have plans been prepared to improve the recreation area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes; but only at the cost of reducing the already limited area available for recreational purposes.

(2) No; however, only one small class is not accommodated in a standard classroom. It is intended to relieve this position at the end of the year.

(3) Yes; and it is hoped to implement them in the coming financial year.

#### *(b) As to High School Subjects and University Examinations.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What subjects are taught at all—

(a) Junior high schools, 1st class;

(b) Junior high schools, 2nd class?

(2) What are the minimum requirements of—

(a) Leaving certificate examination;

(b) Matriculation or entrance to the University examination?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) English, mathematics, history, geography, scripture, health education, physical education, art, music, home science, manual training and technical drawing.

(b) English, mathematics, history, geography, scripture, health education, physical education, art and science.

Where facilities exist home science, manual training and technical drawing are also taken.

(2) (a) English and three other subjects.

(b) At present English and four other subjects.

From 1956 the following regulations will govern matriculation:—

I. The subjects for matriculation shall consist of the following at leaving standard:—

(i) English.

(ii) French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Spanish or any other language from time to time approved by the board.

(iii) Geography, history.

(iv) Mathematics A, mathematics B, music.

(v) Biology, chemistry, geology, physics.

II. Subject to section 3 hereof in order to matriculate, candidates must at one examination pass in English and in not less than four other subjects chosen from at least three of the groups (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v). For the purpose of this regulation the Leaving certificate examination and the following matriculation examination shall be counted as one examination provided that only candidates who have passed in not less than four prescribed subjects at the Leaving certificate examination shall be permitted to complete the matriculation requirements at the following matriculation examination.

III. Candidates may matriculate by passing at not more than two examinations in the appropriate number of subjects required by section 2

if they have left school before the commencement of the year in which the first of such examinations is taken and have since that time been gainfully employed. For the purpose of this regulation the Leaving certificate examination and the matriculation shall be regarded as separate examinations.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: A short, pithy reply!

(c) *As to High School for Shenton Park.*

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Education:

Is it possible, at this juncture, to give an indication of the approximate year when the high school, to be built at the north-east corner of Smythe and Aberdare-rds., Shenton Park, is scheduled for commencement?

The MINISTER replied:

No, it is not possible.

(d) *As to Site for New School, Swan View.*

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has a suitable site for a new school at Swan View been selected?

(2) What are the areas that will be served by this school?

(3) When will work on this school be put in hand?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A site is in course of selection at present.

(2) Swan View and the residential area to the north and east, and south up to the Bellevue-Swan View railway.

(3) When it is known what loan moneys are available for school buildings in the next financial year, the priority of Swan View for a building will be considered among all other places needing additional school accommodation.

## RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Suburban Diesel Service.*

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

(1) What improvement in running time is expected as a result of tests with the new suburban diesel train?

(2) Could an appreciable saving in the overall schedule be effected if speedy ingress and egress of vehicles was encouraged.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Perth-Fremantle, five minutes; Fremantle-Perth, five minutes; Perth-Bellevue, three minutes; Bellevue-Perth, four minutes; Perth-Armadale, seven minutes; Armadale-Perth, three minutes. These times were based on the trial run which included a halt of 15 seconds at a number of proposed new stopping places.

(2) Not necessarily as the timetable is framed for a stop of 15 seconds at stations, which is similar to the London underground railway practice.

(b) *As to Suggested Bus Service to Gnowangerup and Ongerup.*

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

Will he lay on the Table of the House all papers having reference to the suggested omnibus service to Gnowangerup and Ongerup?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes. I have the file and propose that it be laid on the Table for 14 days.

(c) *As to Alternative for Mundaring Branch Service.*

Mr. OWEN asked the Premier:

(1) Will he advise if the subject matter of a letter addressed to him by the Hills Railway Committee, dated the 18th January, 1954, having reference to the closure of the Mundaring branch railway, has been considered by the appropriate authorities?

(2) If the answer is in the affirmative, may a reply be expected in sufficient time to permit circulation to, and consideration by, the various local bodies concerned, before the expiration of the 12 months' trial period?

(3) Will he meet a deputation, if requested to do so, after consideration of such reply?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Reply was forwarded to the secretary of the committee on the 7th April, 1954.

(3) If a deputation is desired in this matter, those concerned should seek an approach to the Minister for Railways.

(d) *As to South-West Road and Rail Services.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is it intended to replace some of the railway road passenger services in the South-West with rail passenger services?

(2) If the answer to question No. (1) is in the affirmative, will he say what road services will be replaced by rail services?

(3) Has any request respecting the matter been received from the general public?

(4) Would any increase in rail passenger services between Perth and Bunbury add to the difficulties of maintaining schedules of trains carrying perishable commodities?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

- (2) Mondays to Saturdays inclusive—  
 8.25 a.m. freighter bus Perth-Bunbury.  
 8.45 a.m. passenger bus Perth-Bunbury.  
 2.35 p.m. freighter bus Bunbury-Perth.  
 2.40 p.m. passenger bus Bunbury-Perth.

Sundays—

- 7.45 p.m. passenger bus Perth-Bunbury.

Mondays—

- 6.35 a.m. passenger bus Bunbury-Perth.

(3) Yes.

(4) No.

(e) *As to Additional Rail Services.*

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

(1) With further reference to this matter, could the Minister inform the House whether the intention is to put on additional steam passenger trains, or is it proposed that passengers who are transported by road bus services will have to travel by the "Australind."

(2) Will the "Australind" have any more stopping places than those listed in the present schedule?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) There will be additional rail services put on. Whether they will be steam trains or diesel electric locomotives, I cannot say at present. There are other matters included in the question by the hon. member and I suggest that he puts the question on the notice paper so that I can give an answer in greater detail.

(f) *As to Diesels Ordered and Cost.*

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

(1) How many diesel locomotives have been ordered for the State railways?

(2) Of what different types are they?

(3) What is the estimated total cost?

(4) On what date or dates, were they ordered?

(5) How much has already been paid in respect of the purchase of these locomotives and when was such sum paid?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Sixty-nine.

(2) (a) Main line.

(b) Shunter and branch line.

(c) Jetty shunter.

(3) £4,496,708 including spares.

(4) (a) November, 1950.

(b) November, 1950.

(c) February, 1951.

(5) Progress payments have been made since June, 1952, and the total amount paid to date is £1,829,969.

(g) *As to Sale of Land, Bassendean.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

Has the Railway Department any intention in the near future of—

(a) selling land at Bassendean on the river side of railway line not required for the chord line;

(b) selling land on the super works side originally intended for marshalling yards?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) Consideration is now being given to the release of land in the Ashfield Parade area at Bassendean.

(b) No.

## ROADS.

*As to North-West Coastal Highway, Carnarvon-Northampton.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

What steps are being taken to permanently stabilise and maintain the North-West Coastal Highway between Carnarvon and Northampton, in view of the ever-increasing heavy traffic, particularly since the discovery of oil in the Carnarvon basin?

The MINISTER replied:

The North-West Coastal Highway between Northampton and Carnarvon is being progressively improved as funds permit and traffic warrants. Substantial amounts of money are provided annually for this work and for maintenance.

## BASIC WAGE.

*As to Increase under Price Index Statistics.*

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

What increase in the basic wage (whether granted or not) would actually have taken place under price index statistics—

(a) between the 31st March, and the 31st December, 1953;

(b) between the 31st December, 1953, and the present date?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) If the Arbitration Court had continued its practice of varying the basic wage in accordance with the "C" series index numbers the basic wage would have risen between the 31st March, 1953, and the 31st December, 1953, by an amount of seven shillings and threepence (7s. 3d.), i.e., from £12 1s. 10d. to £12 9s. 1d.

The quarterly index numbers and monetary variations for this period are:

March quarter, 1953: 2247. Basic wage—£12 1s. 10d.

June quarter, 1953: 2290 plus 4s. 8d. Basic wage—£12 6s. 6d.

September quarter, 1953: 2328 plus 4s 1d. Basic wage—£12 10s. 7d.

December quarter, 1953: 2314 minus 1s 6d. Basic wage—£12 9s. 1d.

(b) If the Arbitration Court had continued its practice of varying the basic wage in accordance with the "C" series index numbers, the basic wage would have risen between the 31st December, 1953, and the 31st March, 1954, by an amount of three shillings and eightpence (3s. 8d.), i.e., from £12 9s. 1d. to £12 12s. 9d.

The quarterly index numbers and monetary variations for this period are:

December quarter, 1953: 2314. Basic wage—£12 9s. 1d.

March quarter, 1954: 2348 plus 3s. 8d. Basic wage—£12 12s. 9d.

#### HOUSING.

##### (a) As to Cost of Commission-built Homes.

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

(1) What is the cost per square of houses recently built by the Housing Commission in metropolitan area and country areas respectively—

(a) in brick;

(b) in timber frame?

(2) What proportion of such cost is represented by the cost of—

(a) labour;

(b) materials?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Brick—Metropolitan area per square, £270;

(b) Timber—Metropolitan Area per square, £250; country per square, £206.

Brick houses are not being erected in the country at present.

In the metropolitan area, costs include deep sewerage connections, tiled roofs and close picket fences—items which do not apply in most country towns.

(2) (a) Labour—48 per cent.

(b) Materials—52 per cent.

##### (b) As to Homes for Evictees.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many homes built under the Commonwealth-State rental agreement and Workers' Homes Act, have been provided by the State Housing Commission as a result of eviction by court orders in

each of the months of 1953 and in January, February, March, April and May of this year?

(2) What special provision has been made since January, 1953, to house evicted people?

(3) How many evictee houses have been erected since January, 1953, and in which suburbs are they located?

The MINISTER replied:

(1)

	Commonwealth State and timber framed flats.	State Housing Act (Workers Homes).
1953—		
January ....	3	5
February ....	9	10
March ....	6	4
April ....	18	3
May ....	20	3
June ....	24	3
July ....	21	2
August ....	27	3
September ....	26	3
October ....	35	5
November ..	36	1
December ..	27	—
1954—		
January ....	14	—
February ....	30	—
March ....	29	—
April ....	16	—
May ....	14	—
	355	42

(2) Since January, 1953, evicted persons have in most cases been housed in converted army huts and timber framed flats. They have been transferred to houses when their turn on the priority list has been reached. In some instances, when flats have not been immediately available, it has been necessary to place evicted families direct into houses. In cases where an evicted person had reached his turn on the priority list for a home he has been placed in a Commonwealth-State rental home. The commission house building rate in the metropolitan area, where most eviction cases occur, has been considerably stepped up.

(3) Only 35 evictee houses have been completed since January, 1953. These represent balance of contracts arranged by the previous Government. Nineteen of these were at Willagee and 16 at Midland Junction. The erection of this type of accommodation for evictees was considered uneconomic and the present Government has concentrated its efforts on the erection of permanent housing.

## BRICKS.

*(a) As to Supply and Demand.*

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

(1) Is the supply of bricks equal to the demand, and if not, what lag is likely to exist between a person placing his order and obtaining delivery?

(2) If the supply is not equal to the demand, are any, and if so what, steps being taken to increase the supply of bricks, and if such steps are being taken, when is it likely that the supply will match the demand?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The supply of bricks at present is not equal to the demand, but well established builders have arrangements which enable them to obtain regular supplies. No orders for housing requirements are refused by the State Brick Works. Persons not regularly engaged in the building industry may have to wait up to 12 months for supplies.

(2) Close contact is being maintained with brick manufacturers with a view to increasing brick production. One of the larger companies is putting in additional plant and kilns, the first units of which are now in operation and others will come into production progressively. The possibility of expanding the production of smaller works is also being investigated. Increases have been made in the production of standard sized cement bricks and arrangements are in hand to further extend production. Maximum production is being maintained from the State Pressed Brick Works at Byford and Armadale by working overtime on the machines. Further brick-making machines are on order and every effort is being made by experimental work on methods of setting and burning to step up kiln burning capacity. It is expected production will increase from October onwards.

The Government has invited experts from the C.S.I.R.O. to visit this State early in July for the purpose of advising on ways and means for improving production from existing works.

Owing to the rapid development of the State, and the fact that the State Brick Works represent only about 30 per cent. of the State production, it is difficult to say when the supply will be capable of meeting the demand.

*(b) As to Use for State Insurance Office Building and Subiaco Flats.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many pressed bricks have been allocated for use in—

(a) the new State Insurance Office building;

(b) the Subiaco flat project?

(2) How many yellow bricks have been allocated for—

(a) the State Insurance Office building;

(b) the Subiaco flat project?

(3) Are all the pressed and yellow bricks being used exclusively for exterior walls?

(4) If "No" is the answer to No. (3), where are they to be used?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Bricks for the State Insurance Office building are being supplied as part of a weekly allocation of 50,000 bricks for the Public Works Department for buildings other than housing.

(b) 1,270,000 bricks are to be supplied over a period of 15 months.

(2) (a) Nil.

(b) 90,000—subject to possible variation.

(3) and (4) Pressed bricks are required exclusively for external walls and footings. It is hoped to get cream bricks for internal living room dados.

The building of the flats at Subiaco will result in the saving of approximately two and a half million bricks on the building of a similar number of individual housing units.

## TRAMWAY DEPARTMENT.

*As to Personnel and Cost of Outfitting and Training.*

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What is the cost of training and outfitting a man with uniform, etc., to work in the traffic section of the Tramway Department?

(2) What is the total number of personnel from the 1st May, 1953, to the end of May, 1954, apart from retirements and dismissals, who have left the tramways traffic section?

(3) Bearing in mind the answers to Questions Nos. 1 and 2 do the figures show an adverse effect on the financial position of the Tramway Department?

(4) Will he attempt to offset these figures by making inquiries to see what steps can be taken to stop the drift of personnel from this section of the Tramway Department?

The MINISTER replied:

	£	s.	d.
(1) Training .....	21	0	0
Uniform and overcoat .....			
after three months .....	22	10	0
service .....	43	10	0
(2) 48.			
(3) Yes.			

(4) This matter receives constant attention, in many cases with success. The reasons given for resignation, however, are mainly related to matters outside the scope of management to correct, and little can be done to offset an individual's right to seek employment more in keeping with his particular problem or desire.

#### GOVERNOR OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

(a) *As to Absence and Cost Saving.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Premier:

(1) Is there any truth in the newspaper report that the Governor will be absent from the State for five months?

(2) Will such absence adversely affect the administration of the State?

(3) What amount will the taxpayers be saved by the reduction in cost of the Governor's Establishment?

#### *Point of Order.*

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would like your ruling on this question, which, to my way of thinking, is a rather curious one, as to whether you consider it is a reflection on Her Majesty's representative. Her Majesty recently visited this State, and this question seems to be a reflection on her representative here. I know that the hon. member recently journeyed around the Eastern States—I submit, mainly for his own amusement—

Mr. Speaker: Order! The hon. member must not make a statement of that sort.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Perhaps I was speaking as I felt and not as I should have spoken. I want to know whether a member is entitled to ask a question which, to a good many of us, seems to be a reflection on Her Majesty's representative here, and whether the asking of such a question is in order. I would like the views of the Premier as to whether this question could not be passed over.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The question is in very bad taste.

Mr. Speaker: The question has been considered by the Clerk of the House and me, and I see no objection to it. I think it seeks information which should be available to any member who requires it.

#### *Question Resumed.*

The PREMIER replied:

I thought the questions asked were the opposite of a reflection on His Excellency the Governor. Apparently it depends upon the point of view. The replies to the hon. member's questions are—

(1) No. His Excellency will be absent for a period of approximately 2½ months.

(2) During His Excellency's absence, the Lieutenant-Governor will assume the office of Administrator.

(3) The Governor's Establishment will require to be fully maintained during His Excellency's absence.

Mr. Yates: The Governor's Establishment should be immune from such scurrilous questions.

Mr. JOHNSON: I would like to reply to what appears to me to be a personal attack upon me, based on personal animosity. I feel I have been attacked personally on this subject. The question appears to me to be sound—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss that subject at this stage. He can, if he wishes, deal with it when speaking to the Address-in-reply.

(b) *As to Insinuations in Member's Questions.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) In view of the insinuations in the questions asked by the member for Leederville concerning His Excellency the Governor, does he not agree that the Vice-Regal office is above party politics?

(2) Will he give an assurance that he will instruct the member for Leederville in acknowledged ethics on matters relating to the Vice-Regal office?

The Minister for Lands: What are you playing now, if it is not party politics?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) I see no insinuations against the Governor at all in the questions.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Very nasty insinuations!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Bovell: What about the third—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I am afraid I do not understand the workings of the minds that see nasty insinuations in the questions. As a matter of fact, one of the metropolitan newspapers—I think it was the "Daily News"—several days ago reported that His Excellency would leave Western Australia on a holiday in the middle of July and would return to this State in the middle of December. So the question, instead of being detrimental to His Excellency the Governor, would, I suggest, in view of the newspaper report given to the public—most inaccurate as it was—be helpful to him.

Mr. Hutchinson: The original question No. 3 is the one.

The PREMIER: As to giving instruction to any member of the House about ethics and associated qualities, I think all of us could be better employed in examining our own ethics.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You certainly set a jolly good example!

**POLICE.***As to Station Accommodation, Claremont.*

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

(1) Is the present police station at Claremont insufficient for the needs of the district?

(2) Will he give consideration to the erection of an adequate building on the Claremont site?

(3) When is a move likely?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Consideration has already been given to this question. A block has been secured near the Council Chambers, fronting Stirling Highway, and the plans have been prepared.

(3) In view of the urgent requirements for new police station buildings in other parts of the State which, at present, have no police station at all, the work at Claremont cannot be proceeded with during the forthcoming year.

**SWAN RIVER.***(a) As to Site for Additional Bridge.*

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Which of the three following sites does the Government favour for constructing a new bridge across the river—

(a) Coode-st., South Perth, to Riverside Drive;

(b) Mends-st., South Perth, to Barrack-st.;

(c) the Narrows?

(2) Will the bridge be of the iron girder and concrete type?

(3) When is it proposed to commence construction?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is not possible at this stage to say which of the three sites is the most favourable.

(2) Most probably.

(3) Construction cannot be commenced until investigations have been completed and plans prepared which would take some considerable time.

*(b) As to Consideration of Tunnel.*

Hon. DAME FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Has he considered the construction of a tunnel under the river rather than a bridge over it and, if so, what decision has been arrived at?

The MINISTER replied:

The question has been considered, but no final determination has yet been made.

**WATER SUPPLIES.***As to Deferment of Rates for War Widows.*

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that no deferment is granted in respect of water, sewerage and drainage rates payable by war widows, as it is in relation to rates payable by aged and invalid pensioners?

(2) Is it also a fact that deferment of municipal and road district rates is not granted to war widows?

(3) If the answer to either of, or both, the questions is in the affirmative, will he undertake to amend the necessary Act to make the same provisions of deferment for war widows as for age and invalid pensioners?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) There is no statutory provision authorising local authorities to grant the concession.

(3) The matter will receive consideration.

**ABATTOIRS.***As to Testing Method of Slaughter.*

Mr. HEAL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

In connection with the method of killing animals at the abattoirs, and now the State has the required number of cash bolt pistols for a test to be carried out—

(1) Has the test, which was to have been arranged for the end of May, been carried out?

(2) If so, would he make known the results of such test?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. Suitable facilities are available only in the newly constructed section of the abattoirs which is expected to come into operation in July.

(2) When the test is carried out results will be made known.

**PETROL.***As to Station Sites, Cottesloe.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the distance between the garage sited on railway property just south of the Victoria-st. railway crossing in Mosman Park, and the proposed garage site sought by Mr. H. Gascoigne north of this crossing?

(2) Was the distance between the Shell Co. garage opposite the Cottesloe school and the newly-leased Ampol garage site north of the Mosman Park station ascertained before Ampol was granted the site?

(3) What is the distance referred to in question No. (2)?



The MINISTER replied:

- (1) 12½ chains.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) 24 chains.

### TRAFFIC.

#### *As to Plan for Reducing Accident Rate.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has he given any consideration to calling together representatives from road transport organisations and the Local Government and Police Traffic Departments to formulate a plan to reduce the accident rate respecting pedestrians, particularly elderly people?

(2) If not, will early consideration be given to the matter?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) It is not felt that such a conference could achieve more for pedestrian safety than the protection given under the Traffic Act. Pedestrian crossings are being painted with "Zebra" stripes as this has been found to make them more easily discernable by motorists, particularly on dark and rainy nights.

### PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS.

#### *As to Length of Sittings.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of what has been termed "the unholy rush of business at the end of parliamentary sessions", will he give an assurance that the sittings of the House will be continued longer than they were yesterday when the House adjourned before tea?

The PREMIER replied:

If the hon. member would make inquiries from at least one member on the other side of the House, he would find that the shortened sitting was not due to any decision by the Government.

Mr. Bovell: I am pleased to hear that.

The PREMIER: It was due to a misunderstanding on the part of an hon. member on the other side of the House, but I do not complain about that. The length of future sittings will be decided on circumstances as they arise.

### FISHERIES.

#### *As to Tabling File.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On Thursday last the member for Mt. Lawley asked that the file dealing with the inquiries made in regard to the fishing industry in New South Wales and Queensland be laid on the Table of the House and I now ask for leave to do this.

Leave granted.

### HOSPITALS.

#### *As to Staff Position.*

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Minister for Health:

Is the Minister satisfied with the present staff position at the Royal Perth Hospital and the King Edward Memorial Hospital Subiaco?

The MINISTER replied:

I am not satisfied with the position, but it is unalterable owing to the shortage of staff and the difficulty of getting nurses.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

#### *The Government's Wheat Policy.*

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition asked on last Thursday whether I, on behalf of the Government, would be prepared to make a statement with regard to wheat policy. I told him then that I would have a discussion with the Minister for Agriculture and subsequently have the matter considered by Cabinet before making a statement. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and the indulgence of members, I shall now read a statement which has been prepared on behalf of the Government—

Wheat marketing has been a highly controversial subject for many years, even the growers of wheat being sometimes divided on marketing principles and methods.

In 1953, the Commonwealth Government submitted to the States a wheat stabilisation plan to cover a period of five years. That Government at the same time refused to continue the previous policy of paying a subsidy on home consumption wheat.

As a result, complete agreement among the States could not be reached on a home consumption price figure. Victoria refused to agree to a 15s. per bushel home consumption price because the Commonwealth Government was not prepared to continue the previous policy of subsidising that price.

The Government of Western Australia, through the Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Hoar), has consistently advocated a stabilisation plan to cover a period of at least five years with a Commonwealth guarantee of exports and a stabilisation fund created by the growers, subject to a ballot of growers being held and the result of the ballot being favourable.

The Government, through the Minister for Agriculture, has always been in close consultation with the representatives of the recognised growers' organisation and will continue that practice, believing that growers of wheat are entitled to a reasonable voice in connection with the disposal of their product.

It is recognised there cannot be much security for wheatgrowers under the existing three-year reserve plan which was designed only to cover emergency conditions.

It also seems clear that the International Wheat Agreement, especially with Great Britain outside the agreement, will not alone give growers the security they seek.

The Government of Western Australia is, naturally, very much concerned over the present uneasy wheat marketing and wheat production situation.

The subject is listed for discussion at the Premiers' Conference which is to be held at Canberra in a few days.

There is to be a meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council next month when it is expected the subject will also be fully discussed. The Minister for Agriculture from this State will, if necessary, request such a discussion, and will seek a consultation with the local wheatgrowers' representatives before proceeding to the conference.

The uncertain situation overseas regarding the marketing of wheat has made it necessary to construct additional storage accommodation in the main wheatgrowing States of Australia.

Although Western Australia has had greater storage facilities than other States, additional storage facilities will have to be constructed in this State.

The Government recently made available to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. for a period of twenty years a site on the railway property at Midland Junction and granted generous freight concessions to compensate growers for the fact that the wheat to be stored in the new storage depot to be established on the site will have to be side-tracked at Midland Junction as against being railed straight through to Fremantle.

The Government has also made an approach to the Commonwealth Government, requesting that a sum of £500,000 be set aside for the construction of storage accommodation in Western Australia, this amount to be made available from the sum of £3,500,000 which the Commonwealth Government is providing for the provision of emergency wheat storage facilities in the wheat growing States.

#### **BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.**

##### *Message.*

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

##### *First Reading.*

Bill introduced and read a first time.

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING** (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth) [5.6] in moving the second reading said: With two important exceptions, the Bill we are about to consider conforms in all respects to the measure that left the Legislative Assembly at the special session held about two months ago. The two differences are these: Firstly, the period of its operation is proposed to be until December, 1955—that is, to December of next year.

The second and important difference is that the Bill proposes that action be taken arising from the changed circumstances following the 30th April. It provides that steps which have been taken since that date will be invalidated in all cases except, of course, where tenants have actually left the premises they previously occupied. That will have the effect of nullifying notices to quit which have already been given, proceedings for the recovery of premises, judgments or orders for the recovery of premises, writs or warrants for the enforcement of judgments, or orders for recovery of premises.

There is a third difference in the legislation, and it, too, has the effect of endeavouring to preserve the status quo as operating up to the 30th April. That appertains to rents. Under the provisions of the Bill, where there have been increases of rent since the 1st April, — that date has been inserted because of the difference of opinion amongst legal authorities as to whether any action under the law as operating at the present moment could have been initiated prior to the 1st May, and that action subsequent to that date only meant action by the court—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Can you tell us anything relating to agreements that have been arrived at between landlords and tenants on increases? Are they to be set aside too?

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** Perhaps I can illustrate this point by referring to my notes so that there will be a complete understanding on the point. This Bill is similar to the previous measure in that it provides that a landlord and tenant may agree on the rent to be paid. If the parties cannot agree, either one of them may approach the court for an assessment of a fair rental, or either may apply to the court instead of attempting to reach agreement. This is also similar to the provisions which came into operation on the 1st May, except that the court will be composed of three members instead of a magistrate only.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about agreements already come to?

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I shall deal with that point. There is a provision in the Bill specifically referring to that point which is roughly in these terms: The Bill provides that where lessees have since the 1st April agreed to pay more than the lawful rental applying immediately prior to the 1st April, the lessee need not pay such increased rental and may take court action to recover any increases he has paid, unless within three months of the Bill coming into operation he confirms in writing his agreement to the increase, or unless the increase is confirmed by the court or the rent inspector.

From those remarks it will be appreciated that what is sought by the Government is that, with the exception of cases where tenants have physically vacated their premises, we shall return to the state of affairs existing prior to the Act, as we know it at present, coming into operation. Then the proposals of the Government, as debated some two months or so ago, will have effect. Members, of course, are aware, because it should be very fresh in their minds, of exactly how the machinery embraced in the Government's Bill would apply.

With regard to rents, there would firstly be a special tribunal operating in the metropolitan area, or shall I say, the greater metropolitan area, to be known as the fair rents court, to be comprised of a magistrate and two assessors, one representing the Real Estate Institute, and one representing the tenants to be appointed by the Minister controlling the Act, who at the present moment is the Chief Secretary. The purpose of appointing the special court is that it might, if necessary, devote its full time to the task and responsibility of determining what is a fair rental, whether approached by the landlord or the tenant, so as to minimise to the greatest possible extent any factors of delay which could be irksome to either side.

Because there has been criticism in the past of decisions made by magistrates, it is felt that the court could operate more effectively, more efficiently and with a greater knowledge of the matters being determined, if there were representatives from either side—that is, of the owners and the tenants—who could confer with the magistrate; and the set-up would, of course, be parallel and comparable with the Arbitration Court as it exists at present, where there is a legal man as chairman with representatives of the two interests on either hand.

It is not proposed to lay down any formula whatsoever to be followed by the court. There was considerable discussion regarding that point when the proposal was last before Parliament. I should point out that in the case of the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act there was a formula of certain considerations to be taken into account by the court when determining a

rental; and it was at the request of representatives from the Legislative Council drawn from the present Opposition parties at a conference of managers that particular points to be taken into consideration were deleted. So there has been, since that time, discretion vested in the court in determining what is a fair rental; and I do not think it is necessary to lay down terms and conditions, because any person who has any reasonable knowledge of property can, upon report being made to him, or by inspection, determine what is a fair and reasonable figure.

The Government realises that with such a court, where all rentals of houses let prior to the 1st January, 1951, would go into the melting pot, there could conceivably be—and no doubt would be—sharp increases in very many cases. But the Government feels that, as a Parliament, we are not in a fit and proper position to determine that rentals should be increased by 10 per cent., or 12 per cent., or any other figure; and because conditions vary to such an extent in respect of points I need not outline, it does not make commonsense to lay down a formula that rentals may be increased within certain limits to 2 per cent., 8 per cent. or any other figure. It is a matter, in respect of particular premises, of determining in the light of all the circumstances that the court is free to investigate what is a fair and proper rental. Surely there can be no objection to that point. I want to emphasise—because in most of our discussions the point has been overlooked or glossed over—that what I am stating has equal application to business premises and to dwellings.

In respect of evictions, under the Bill, if it becomes law, any person—provided he has resided in Australia for a period of two years and has owned the property for three months—can obtain possession of his property for himself or other members of his family by giving three months' notice; and there is no discretion left to the court. The decision of the court is automatic. Therefore it cannot be honestly suggested that there is any great infringement of the rights of a person who desires to obtain possession of his own premises. The period provided is shorter than that which any Government in the past, irrespective of its political colour, has submitted to Parliament. I might state here that there are a number of members on this side of the Chamber who are anything but pleased with that provision.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman:** We are certainly not pleased with it.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** However, the Government felt that there has to be an appreciation of the overall position, and the person who owns premises and seeks them for his own accommodation has very high claims indeed.

Covering other classes of tenants, where it can be proved to the satisfaction of the court that the tenant is an unsatisfactory

one in the matter of the payment of rent; the manner in which he is neglecting the premises he occupies; or in respect of his conduct generally, which might be offensive to other people in the locality; or if he undertakes activities of any sort that are contrary to the law, 28 days' notice is required to be given, and then the matter is determined by the court on the merits of the evidence. So there is ample provision for a landlord to get rid of a bad tenant.

All that this law will do will be to protect those who are good tenants in the matter of the payment of their rent, the looking after the property, and their conduct generally. Surely there is no disadvantage to the owner. If he is getting the present rent, or a fair rent as determined, is he suffering any disadvantage if Smith is the occupier of the premises instead of Jones? This matter of accommodation, of shelter for people and their families, is so important that I think it is asking very little indeed of the owner of premises to request him to allow tenants who are playing the game to remain where they are until such time as the lag in the provision of accommodation generally has been reasonably overtaken.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You think that up till 1955 will be sufficient for that purpose?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I can only speak for myself. My feeling and my hope are that by the end of next year the position will have been eased sufficiently to allow legislation in respect of evictions either to be discarded or at least very much watered down. In respect of a fair rents court, however, there will probably always be the necessity for a tribunal of some sort—whether it be a special court or our ordinary courts, to make some check on exorbitant charges and also—what is perhaps equally important—for the purpose of having a deterrent effect upon those who tend to go to excesses.

Just recently I was interested to read in the evening newspaper a short news item which had nothing whatever to do with housing, but which, to my mind, indicated a very important principle. It appeared in the "Daily News" of the 9th June and was as follows:—

Two Brazilian courts have ruled that human need outranks property rights.

Ordinarily, everyone will agree that the owner of premises should—subject perhaps to matters that can occur to anyone—have the right to do with his possessions or property what he wishes. But at a time like this, when the emergency is still with us—though it is perhaps being tapered off and is receding—the right of families in the matter of accommodation is more important than the right of an individual to evict tenant "A" for the purpose of putting in tenant "B," if the first tenant has, according to all principles,

been satisfactory in every respect. This Government has no desire to continue restrictions or controls in any direction whatsoever unless, in its opinion, after an investigation of the matter, it feels that it is in the public interest so to do.

Because the provisions of the Bill were so recently discussed at some length during the general debate and in Committee, there is no need for me to spend any further time in debating the various aspects or clauses of this measure. It is a Bill in respect of which there can be considerable debate on the various clauses when we reach the Committee stage.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is there any provision for the sale of properties or the winding up of the estates of deceased persons?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There are already in the existing legislation provisions appertaining to those matters. Statements have been made that the Government has gone in for a lot of scare-mongering in connection with this matter, endeavouring to create an atmosphere. As a matter of fact, there was an oblique reference to that sort of thing contained in a question addressed to me by the member for Dale last Thursday. Perhaps, in order to clear up the point, I should read what I stated two months ago, and what appears in "Hansard" of the 6th April. I said—

It is impossible for anyone to assess the possible repercussions after the 30th April in the event of Parliament not taking some action to correct the position. There may be hundreds involved, or there may be thousands. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that there will be an increase of people seeking accommodation over and above those who regularly approach the State Housing Commission every week because of court action that has resulted in their being threatened with eviction from the premises they occupy.

Later on I emphasised the point that I did not know, and neither did any other person know, just how many people would be involved or confronted with the possibility of eviction or steep and impossible rental charges far beyond a fair thing and, in many instances, far beyond the capacity of the person to pay.

Mr. Wild: Could you not have averted that if you had agreed to our amendment, proposed at the special session, to separate the date of the eviction and the increase of rent?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Very definitely not!

Mr. Wild: You could have done so, but you were playing politics, my friend! That is all you are playing—Legislative Council and Federal Government politics!

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I sincerely hope that with regard to a measure like this, which is so important to so many people—

**Mr. Wild:** You did not think it was so important two months ago.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** —in that it strikes at the very home, at women and children, in the matter of accommodation, we can debate the subject fairly. Most decidedly let us have our differences of opinion, as violently as we wish; but I do not know that we get anywhere by ascribing all sorts of political motives in connection with the matter. With respect to that, all I say is that every other State in the Commonwealth, irrespective of the political complexion of its Government, has felt, in both Houses of Parliament, that there is a necessity for some form of control.

**Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:** Show your sincerity by agreeing to a select committee.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I do not want to make reference to that matter, and I trust the Leader of the Opposition will allow me to continue. I repeat, every other State, in the two Chambers of Parliament, except Queensland, where there is only one, has agreed that there is a need for some form of control to be continued. We can, of course, differ with respect to the terms of control. The McLarty-Watts Government, each year during its term of office, introduced legislation to continue controls—

**Mr. Wild:** But they were gradually eased.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** —far more rigid than those embodied in this Bill.

**Hon. D. Brand:** If you built all the houses you say you have—

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** They are being built, make no error about that. There will be some reference to that question in a moment.

**Mr. Wild:** The foundations are being laid, yes.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** The member for Dale will have to laugh on the other side of his face presently when I remind him of something he said a few weeks ago.

**Mr. Wild:** I hope you can—

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** If the hon. member will be patient and not interrupt so frequently, perhaps I will come to the point so much earlier. Only this afternoon I received an interesting letter from a person whom I do not know but who lives in Nedlands. I will read the opening paragraph of the letter because I think it is revealing. I have not his authority to show the letter, but I have

no objection to any member seeing what he has written to me. The letter is dated the 21st June and it states—

In view of the introduction of amended landlord and tenant legislation, permit me to express my views on this matter. Being a retired man for the past several years and living on a fixed income from property let to tenants, I, like many others, have not been too happy about government control of my rent fixing, whilst having to meet the rising costs of recent years.

Since 1st May this year, however, it is unfortunately true that some landlords have greedily over-raised rents, and I for one, whilst once opposed to government control, now agree that some control is necessary.

He goes on in some detail to outline what has occurred.

**Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver:** Let us have his name and address.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** To indicate the general position, no responsible newspaper in Western Australia has suggested that rent and eviction control should be done away with entirely. I am interested in a Gallup Poll, for what it is worth, which was conducted a few months ago throughout the Commonwealth. It revealed that the vote for ending rent control did not exceed 34 per cent. in any State. Of Labour voters, 70 per cent. want rent control. The Liberal and Country Party voters divided this way—continue control, 51 per cent; end it, 35 per cent. Those of no opinion amounted to 14 per cent. This is important—of the people interviewed, 66 per cent. are home owners, 27 per cent. rent and seven per cent. board.

The Gallup Poll that was taken could conceivably be wrong to some extent, but I think it will be readily accepted that generally speaking, the results of such polls are approximately right. This indicates that there is an overwhelming body of opinion from people of all political persuasions that there is a necessity for the continuation of control, as indeed there is, in every State of the Commonwealth. What is the position which confronts us today? I can only indicate the information that is available to the State Housing Commission. That information comes to the commission by tenants who bring their notices of eviction or other troubles.

**Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver:** They have been forced to do it. You force them to ask.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** The hon. member knows nothing whatever about it. Many people do not approach the Housing Commission when they receive eviction notices, and because they go to no public authority, the State is unaware of the total number of eviction notices that are issued. However, there were, under the old legislation, 393 notices

recorded with the State Housing Commission up to the 30th April. There were 321 persons who called stating that they had been advised by their landlords—

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: And their members, under your direction.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: —that they would be evicted. Mr. Speaker, I wish you would do something to restrain the unruly member for Subiaco who does not know the first thing about this question—

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: I do know.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: —but who is making a nuisance of herself to one who is endeavouring to present official facts and not his personal opinion in respect of a most important matter, namely, the protection of families and business people from eviction from their premises, except in certain circumstances. To continue, 562 notices have been registered under the existing law with the State Housing Commission in the seven weeks.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: He makes me sick! I am going out.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That makes a total of 1,276. I am certain this Chamber is ever so much healthier for the going of the member for Subiaco.

Mr. Hutchinson: The member for Subiaco was right when she said that the policy down there has been designed to add to the numbers of evictees.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is a complete inversion of the truth.

Mr. Hutchinson: Your statement is a complete inversion.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I have received letters from people stating that when they have visited the State Housing Commission, they have been told that if they were evicted consideration would be given to finding premises for them. There is no doubt about that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Of course there is not. Members on the other side of the House seem to be so far removed from this question that they have not even an elementary knowledge of the procedure or of what goes on. They have a smattering of hearsay and from that they resort to conjecture in respect of the complaints. This is what happens: A tenant receives notice to quit from the owner of the premises. He becomes agitated and perhaps makes inquiries round about, but as often as not, particularly where children are concerned, he finds his way to the State Housing Commission which says to him, in effect, "You are still housed where you are. There is still a journey to be taken. You have to be taken to the court. When the court has made a decision adverse to you then—no promises—we will

examine the circumstances of your case and will endeavour to provide you with some form of emergency accommodation."

Surely there is nothing wrong with that! If, merely because a person received a notice to quit, we put him in a brand-new house, there would be everything wrong with what we did. After they have been to the court and an eviction order has been made, unless there are most exceptional circumstances, to which I need not refer in detail, they are not even then placed in houses, but are sent to Hilton Park East or other places of community living, which is not acceptable to the great majority of people under the circumstances that operate, but they are compelled to accept it as there is no alternative.

What I have stated indicates that there are 1,276 such outstanding notices of which the Housing Commission is aware, although I make the qualification that there will be some overlapping or duplication, and the eviction officer of the Housing Commission informs me that about 1,000—and probably a few more—would be the number of cases affected in respect of accommodation. It has been suggested that this Government has gone in for some scare-mongering, but the fact is that while 700 people approached the State Housing Commission on account of evictions during the 12 months ended the 30th April, there have been 562 such approaches made in the seven weeks since the 1st May.

Mr. Court: But that represents the absolute peak.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, but it indicates the great number of people affected, and no one can suggest that any Government could pick anything like 562 houses off the shelf in order to provide accommodation for these people.

Mr. Wild: Did the Minister notice in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" a report of the proceedings in the court yesterday where seven eviction orders were made and the rest of the cases were withdrawn, as the applicants had found other accommodation?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I can pursue that question—

The Minister for Works: Applicants? The people who are to be evicted do not apply to the court.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That question could be followed further but I prefer to proceed with my speech and if the hon. member thinks there is something in the point he raised, I can deal with it when replying to the debate. Naturally we do not know what happens to all of those people, but I do know what happens to some of them. In the metropolitan area, where the problem is the greatest, the number of evictee cases that came before the court for the past twelve months

was 567, or an average of 11 per week, but there are 43 cases listed for the repossession of premises this week, 40 for next week and 40 for the following week. If anything approaching that number of orders for eviction is made by the court, it will become impossible for the State Housing Commission or any other authority to find accommodation for all the people concerned.

The Housing Commission has housed 478 evicted families in the past 12 months, and 1,305 since the 1st July, 1951, when the legislation, as amended a few months earlier, came into operation. The legislation, as in operation at the present moment, has had the effect of causing applications for homes to pour in to the State Housing Commission. Over 2,000 applications for homes have been lodged since the beginning of the year. People everywhere are becoming scared as to what might happen and are lodging applications in order to stake a claim in the event of the postman blowing his whistle one morning and delivering to them a notice to quit.

There were 557 new applications for homes lodged with the Housing Commission during the month of May alone. Never at any time, irrespective of the side of the House upon which I have sat, have I endeavoured to create the impression that landlords as a group were a greedy band of men and women. It is only the exceptional landlord that does not play the game and I should say that, spread over the whole community, it is only the exceptional tenant that does not reciprocate.

Generally speaking, the law is directed towards a very small minority in the community in order to protect people from the depredations of those who tend to go to excess and that is the case with this Bill. In the great majority of instances it will have no application, but it does lay down a procedure in the matter of rents and in respect of evictions, in order to protect people against those who might tend to take advantage of the existing circumstances under which, unfortunately, there is still not available sufficient accommodation to meet the demand.

In the last month the rent inspector—members are aware that he does not come under my jurisdiction—made investigations in the matter of rents, covering 258 complete flats. The average increase in rental shown since the 30th April is 66½ per cent. Whether that is sufficient, not enough or too much, I do not pretend to know, but that is a matter which a competent authority could decide. A check was also made of 56 houses—I think it covered all suburbs—and the average increase in rental since the 30th April was 113 per cent. There was a classic example in Cambridge-st., Wembley, of a brick house—said to be in poor repair—the rental of which was £1 15s. per week but has since

been stepped up to £8 per week. As though that were not sufficient, 28 days' notice to quit has now been given.

It is landlords in that category that this legislation is designed to check, and they may constitute only 5 per cent. or perhaps 1 per cent. of all the landlords. They are the particularly avaricious type.

Mr. Hutchinson: Do you agree that in some of these apparently outrageous instances it would be interesting if the member mentioning them could give the other side of the story?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That may be so, but I think everyone will agree that an increase from £1 15s. to £8 per week since the 30th April is excessive, to say the least.

Mr. Hutchinson: It is, on the face of it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In any event, if the owner of the premises felt he was being grievously underpaid, there has for several years past been in the legislation provision for an owner to make an approach to the court at intervals not more frequent than every six months.

Mr. Hutchinson: He may have adopted this course to get rid of the tenant without eviction.

Mr. Lawrence: But the tenant has also been given 28 days' notice to quit.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is a public servant, known to many members of Parliament, who lives in a constituency not far from here, and who was paying £3 10s. per week for a one-roomed flat. On the 29th April he received a letter informing him that his rent would go up to £4 10s. per week, and at the bottom there was a note asking him to advise if he was not continuing the tenancy. He received a further letter, dated the 17th June, informing him that the rent had gone up to £5 per week, and again there was a note asking him to advise if he was not continuing the tenancy.

It is possible that that landlady, as it happens to be in this case, adopts the procedure of bumping the rent up a certain amount every few weeks until the absolute limit has been reached. I have discussed it with this particular public servant and he says, "I feel that I am being grievously overcharged, particularly with the second instalment: but what can I do? I am afraid to complain or protest because there would inevitably be the 28 days' notice." That, I think, establishes the point that there can be no form of rent control or discipline while the landlord has the unfettered right to give his tenant notice to quit because the least demur on the part of the tenant could involve him in being bereft of the premises that he was, for the time being, occupying.

Hon. D. Brand: It would not have been so if you had accepted the amendment suggested last year.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** Yes, it would. However, we can discuss the particular provisions at a more appropriate time. I am endeavouring to be as patient as possible in this matter—

**Hon. D. Brand:** So are we.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** —and am not being provocative on this all-important subject. I hope that it will be dealt with on the plane that it deserves.

**Mr. Court:** What housing position would you or your Government consider should exist before moving to this state of free evictions which you mentioned earlier? You said that perhaps at the end of December, 1955, it might be possible. What housing position should exist?

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** When the tremendous backlog of accommodation has been substantially reduced. At present the Housing Commission is proceeding to do that rapidly. It may not be quite so evident at the moment, but before very long it will be. All sorts of things are being done, but first of all let me add that no one can answer the question with absolute certainty. I think it will be agreed that if oil is found in commercial quantities there could quite easily be an influx of many thousands, or tens of thousands of people. There could be an industrial disturbance or a breakdown of important brickmaking plant. Some of the larger sawmills could go up in flames and a whole lot of other things could happen.

**Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:** There might be an earthquake.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** There might be anything at all. That is why nobody can say, with any certainty, that the date shall be such and such and that at that time we can dispense with the controls—at least, not 18 months ahead. My own hope and feeling is that if we have not arrived at that state in 18 months, we will be fairly close to it.

**Mr. Court:** Let us forget all about an exact date. Would you say that the eviction provisions could be removed when the Housing Commission can give an applicant a State rental home, or the equivalent, within three months?

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I do not think it necessary to be as close to the position as that. In the last couple of days I had an interesting check made and I discovered something that will probably surprise most people. In 1938, in respect to workers' homes, there was a waiting period of about two years.

**Mr. Court:** That is so.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** There was certainly no shortage of manpower or building materials in those days, but that was the accepted order of affairs. I have not checked officially, but I am informed that, generally speaking, apart from those

who received a regular allocation, prewar there was also a waiting period for bricks. But the community generally accepted that position. There were exceptions when it was possible to get bricks almost immediately. I do not think that the stage will ever be reached where a person will be able to go to the Housing Commission and deal with its officers in much the same way as a person can deal with the employees of a mercery store—on the one hand saying, "I will have that shirt because I like its style and colour" and on the other hand saying at the Housing Commission, "Can I have such and such a house?" and be granted it on the spot.

As a matter of fact, it would be foolish in the extreme for the Housing Commission to have its programme so close up to the order of things, because with the least recession there would be a possibility of hundreds, or thousands, of houses being left unoccupied, for a lengthy period of time. In such cases the burden would be placed on those who occupied other Housing Commission dwellings. However, I think that I should indicate briefly some of the things that are being done. First of all, the building rate is approximately double what it was two years ago in the metropolitan area. When we last discussed this measure, the member for Dale had this to say—

I also want to make mention of the claim made by the Minister in his speech the other evening. I hope he is right. However, like the member for Blackwood, I am rather inclined to think that he will have to eat his words, if he possibly can, because he said—

It is anticipated that by the 30th June this year a further 3,500 houses will be completed.

I hope that that proves to be correct, but I would point out to the Minister that that is a pretty extravagant statement. I do not know much about the position, but I learned a little—

Incidentally, the word "little" is not underlined.

—while I was at the State Housing Commission during my three years of office, and I found that it takes quite a while to build houses.

Let me inform the member for Dale that as I speak—and there are still two building weeks in this financial year—over 3,300 houses have already been completed this financial year.

**Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:** We gave you a good start. There is no doubt about that.

**Mr. Wild:** Plenty of bricks and timber.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to make that remark. But only this evening the member for Dale pointed the



finger of scorn and said that while there may be many houses under construction, getting them completed was a different matter. I repeat that over 3,300 houses have already been completed this financial year and accordingly my estimate of 3,500 completed houses by the State Housing Commission this financial year, will be pretty near the mark. We will get that information in a fortnight's time.

Mr. Wild: But are you not building to the exclusion of the private builder? Is the total number of houses being built in the State today more than it was 12 months ago?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not think it is.

Mr. Wild: There you are! That is the picture. If you are using all the bricks and timber, how can a private man build?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is definitely not in accordance with facts.

Mr. Wild: It must be.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not want this to be taken in a political sense but the horror budget, as it was referred to—

Hon. D. Brand: Absolutely not political!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: —had the effect of reducing the avenues of credit and, 18 months or two years ago houses were not commenced to the extent that they should have been. I am hoping that private builders will set about erecting homes in greater numbers. To those who are all for private enterprise, and to those who sit on the other side of this Chamber, I suggest that they bestir themselves with as much vigour as this Government is bestirring the Housing Commission in the matter of building an increased number of houses. I can assure them that as Minister for Forests and as the Minister controlling the State Saw Mills and the State Brick Works, I will do everything possible to help with supplies. In order to help the home builder—whether it be the State Housing Commission, the private contractor or the self-help builder—it became necessary for me to impose certain restrictions regarding the directions in which State bricks would be distributed. It was done for the express purpose of assisting the housebuilding programme, irrespective of the builder.

Hon. D. Brand: In the main, the State Housing Commission.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, unfortunately that is true.

Hon. D. Brand: Under your direction.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is, unfortunately or rather fortunately, untrue.

Hon. D. Brand: You just said so.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The interjector was apparently endeavouring to make me feel that my action in respect of directing supplies of State bricks affects detrimentally those who seek to build houses. Surely when shops, factories, theatres, churches and halls—

Hon. D. Brand: And the State Insurance Office.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes. But surely when shops, factories, theatres, churches and halls were being built all over the place, to the detriment of home building, it indicated that something had to be done. For that reason, not one additional brick has been given to the Public Works Department for the erection of the State Insurance Office building. Supplies in that regard are coming from the ordinary regular allocation that is made to the Public Works Department for non-housing projects. As to timber, the volume of production is ever so much greater than it was, and action has been taken to restrict the export of jarrah, both overseas and interstate. Somebody might query the constitutional power to do that, but I am pleased to say, however, that the wishes of the Government in that respect have been fully met by the major sawmillers, who have co-operated with us in an endeavour to deal with the situation. But, as the volume of timber produced is being increased continuously, there will eventually be no further need for these restrictions to be imposed.

To give some indication of the position regarding bricks: For the first four months of last year, I would point out that there were 26,250,000 clay bricks manufactured in Western Australia as against 31,000,000 for the same period this year. During the first four months of 1953, 2,500,000 cement bricks were manufactured, but for the same period this year the number was 3,500,000. Those figures show that the production of bricks increased this year by 5,750,000 and, compared with a year ago, the total increase in production is at the rate of 17,000,000 bricks per annum. That is equivalent to approximately 700 extra complete brick houses.

Hon. D. Brand: In the main, where was the increase derived from?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: From a number of sources, and here I want to pay tribute to the private brick manufacturers who have strained every nerve and sinew to increase production and have also co-operated to ensure that bricks are diverted to where they are most required. Already, this afternoon, in answer to a question, information has been given in regard to the Cardup brick works, and, of course, the State Brick Works has stepped up its production. At the offices of the State Housing Commission we have what is known as an advisory bureau which is patronised by hundreds of people who go

there for information and advice as to how to proceed with the erection of their own homes. In the ultimate, I trust that this is having the effect of making it possible for some people to provide houses for themselves.

Hon. D. Brand: Are all the officers of that bureau from the State Housing Commission?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There are only two officers employed there and they both belong to the State Housing Commission. I have indicated just a few of the directions in which the Government has moved in an effort to grapple with the problem of accommodation, but it still maintains that additional time is required in order to break down this vast accumulation of outstanding orders for houses as represented by the applications that have been lodged with the State Housing Commission. There is, of course, a wrong general impression with regard to the seriousness of the situation at present. Certain figures, as I indicated, tell only part of the story, this being information that is known only to Government departments.

I do not know whether members have felt the same reaction as myself, because there has been, in respect of the metropolitan Press at any rate, almost a complete silence with regard to this burning question. On this subject, which is affecting at least 1,000 families who are worried to death about the situation, there have been no featured articles, reports of interviews or statements from responsible people, or letters to the editor. However, if one cared to write a letter to the editor about birds' eggs or some similar subject, there would be no difficulty about having it published.

In other words, the Press is creating the impression, which I hope is not in the minds of members opposite or in the minds of members of the Legislative Council, that everybody is quite happy about the situation, that everything is going on quite smoothly, and that there is no occasion for excitement or for any action to be taken.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Surely, you will admit that there has been plenty of Press propaganda!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This is a question which affects vitally and intimately many thousands of people, as reflected in the figures, and by the crowd standing outside the offices of the Housing Commission, which looks like a queue waiting for the doors to open for a winter sale at a departmental store. From the morning Press, one can check how many letters to the editor have been published in connection with what is going on.

Mr. Court: Are you suggesting that the editor is suppressing letters that he receives?

The Premier: It would not be the first time that letters to the editor have been suppressed.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is quite true. Only recently, I remember that there was some criticism regarding myself and I was informed by somebody who works in the place that there was a high pile of letters which were on the side of the Minister for Housing, not one of which appeared in that newspaper, and there were a comparatively few letters which gave the opposite view and one of them was published.

Mr. Oldfield: Surely you are not suggesting that "The West Australian" is biased against you!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think I have already said sufficient, on many occasions, with respect to that matter. Finally, I would point out that the Government has records and information available to it, supplied by departmental advisers. Accordingly the Government knows the position which is similar to that which existed last year and the year before—perhaps not to the same extent, but a similar position does confront us. It is the Government's responsibility to measure up to the situation and the Bill represents the viewpoint of the Government, which is that it is necessary to continue protection and overcome that situation which has been created since the 30th April.

It should be emphasised that the Government is left to clean up any mess that might be created by members, not by an attitude of frivolity but because of certain complexes or because they have not a full appreciation of the situation. They will not have to face up to it; it will be the Government that will have to do this. If there are families, with children involved, being thrown on to the streets, it will be the Government that will be charged with the serious responsibility of providing some sort of accommodation for these people.

Hon. D. Brand: You definitely made up your mind at the last election, when you said you would solve the housing problem in three years.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is an interesting remark, and if that is so I would appeal to the members of the Opposition to allow the Government to proceed with that object in view, instead of permitting it to be harassed by 1,000 tenants screaming at the doors of the commission.

Hon. D. Brand: You have had very real co-operation.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: From the very first time we sought to introduce legislation, the present Opposition sought to remove any effectiveness that legislation might have. The interesting point is that,

quite unconsciously, the Leader of the Opposition paid a tribute to the Government. He has said, and his party has said, that there is no need for these controls; there is no situation likely to cause concern, because if a tenant is evicted there is another tenant to take his place. In other words, the Leader of the Opposition has said that there is no housing crisis at the present moment. To put it another way, within 12 months the Government has solved a problem which it stated would take a period of three years. I think that is a reasonable assessment of the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. D. Brand: Put that way, yes.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: He said it on three different occasions.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He means, at Pinjarra.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Recently we had two or three houses at Pinjarra and we could not find people to put into them.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I will tell you something about that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: But that matter has been taken up. This is an important measure and I have been informed by the eviction officer of the State Housing Commission—and he is not interested in politics; I do not know his politics—that many people come in like dazed cattle; they are bewildered and do not know which way to turn, particularly when there are children involved. If they seek accommodation elsewhere, they find the rents so high as to be impossible of payment. Members know that the name of the eviction officer is Mr. Prince. He has spoken to and handled many hundreds of these people, and that is the position as he sees it. It is a serious social problem, and I trust that both this Chamber and the Legislative Council will agree to these principles in order to give the Government, which assumes the responsibility, an opportunity of defending the people suffering from housing problems until such time as the programme can be taken up. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Wild, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £16,500,000.**

##### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Moir in the Chair; the Treasurer in charge of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

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

##### *In Committee of Ways and Means.*

The House resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Moir in the Chair.

The TREASURER: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th of June, 1955, a sum not exceeding £11,000,000 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £4,000,000 from the General Loan Fund, and £1,500,000 from the Public Account.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

##### *Bill Introduced.*

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced and read a first time.

##### *Second Reading.*

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [7.33]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [7.34]: Taking this, as in previous times, as a suitable place for the ventilation of one's grievances, I wish to say that I have two matters I want to refer to on the Supply Bill, one being, I would suggest, of a public nature and of interest to everybody, and the other being somewhat more parochial in character. Firstly, I shall refer to what I consider is the extremely raw deal which is being handed out by the Government to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. in reference to its request for space at Fremantle for the storage of extra quantities of wheat necessitated by the present somewhat peculiar situation in the wheat market and the quantity of wheat that is likely to be left on its hands from last season's crop when the new harvest comes in.

I asked some questions this afternoon with the intention of ascertaining if statements made in the Press from time to time, and in various newspapers I might add, were substantially or entirely in accordance with facts. Unfortunately, the Minister found it necessary to postpone those questions, and as I have at present no source of information other than from newspapers, I have real reason to believe, as it has not been in any way denied, that those statements are correct and I propose to accept them. It appears that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., not in its own interests but in the interests of the wheat farmers of Western Australia, and I would say of the people of Western Australia, generally, applied for an area in Fremantle upon which it might build a bin or shed for the storage of additional quantities of wheat—I understand up to 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 bushels.

Now let it be generally known and understood that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. is not a shareholders' profit-making company. It has very few shareholders, and they are but nominal shareholders because its subscribed capital is an extremely nominal fund. Its funds are derived, of course, from the tolls it makes from the wheatgrowers of this State in the handling of their products, and in recent times from other cereal growers as well. Those moneys have been utilised for the erection and maintenance of the necessary facilities in the various parts of Western Australia, and they have given tremendous satisfaction.

Not only do I say that they have given tremendous satisfaction to the cereal growers themselves, but they ought to have—as far as I am concerned they have—given great satisfaction to the Government of the State, for in a number of instances the company has been able to provide funds for the erection of the necessary facilities which otherwise might have had to be expended by the Government. It is true that the Government of which I was a member regarded Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. with benevolent eyes in view of its undoubted service to the community, and the fact, as I have said, that it was not a profit-making institution as such things are usually known, gave it rights of a substantial character at Fremantle in regard to properties suitable for the handling of wheat which previously were vested in the Government.

That action on the part of the previous Government led to the then Minister for Agriculture, Hon. G. B. Wood, coming in for some very strong criticism from the present Minister for Works. On more than one occasion, strong dissent was expressed by him in this House to the attitude of the then Government to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., so much so that it appeared to me that the hon. gentleman had some very hard things—to put it mildly—against the company and would, so far as he was concerned, have conferred upon it no right whatever that would have assisted it to carry out its policy of benefit to the wheatgrowers. Consequently, I do not know whether the present position has arisen as a result of the attitude of the Minister for Works or the Minister for Agriculture.

So far as I understand the Press reports, what statements have been made have come from the Minister for Agriculture, but as I understand the situation, the land at Fremantle is under the control of the Minister for Works. Thus, while the voice may be the voice of Jacob, perhaps the hand has been the hand of Esau. I do not know. I understand that the company was told it could not have the land it wanted as the area was reserved for an oil company. In all the circumstances of the case, I venture to say that

not one of the oil companies is entitled to a priority greater than that of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.

The company was offered an alternative site at Fremantle which, I am informed, would have necessitated a considerable amount of reclamation from the foreshore and ocean. In the question I asked to-day, I inquired who was to pay for the reclamation, but as the question was postponed, I cannot criticise from that point of view, but I can say that it would have entailed considerable time and expense—and I suggest unnecessary expense—and would probably have placed the company in a position of accepting a site that would have been inconvenient, probably expensive, and would have necessitated waiting a considerable time while the reclamation was being done before a start could be made on the erection of the building, and so the work would have been too late for the purpose.

The Minister for Lands: There was the question of the congestion at the port of Fremantle.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That question might have had something to do with the decision, but may I suggest that if reclamation was required to make space available for the oil company or for Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., in all the circumstances the Government would have been justified in giving the area to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and requiring the oil company to do the necessary reclamation or have it done. Taking all aspects into consideration, it seems to me that that would have been the right course to adopt, knowing C.B.H.'s requirements and knowing that its staff are complete experts in the handling of these problems, which it has tackled satisfactorily over a long period of years.

According to the Press reports, deputations from the Farmers' Union waited on the Minister for Agriculture, the Farmers' Union being more vitally interested in the matter than was any other organisation. Finally, out of all this, emerges the right for C.B.H. to erect the premises required at Midland Junction, approximately 25 miles from the place where the wheat would have to be exported, in an area which is most unsuitable and which the company, because it has to make some provision before the forthcoming harvest starts to be delivered at the end of November, accepted with the utmost reluctance.

That is the position in short, and I say without hesitation that it reflects no credit whatever upon the Government; in fact, so far from reflecting credit, it calls for the strongest criticism. Unfortunately, it is too late now for anything to be done about the matter. C.B.H. will have to make the best of a bad job and undoubtedly will do its best with that site. I strongly suspect, however, that the net result of

having to use the site at Midland Junction will be to impose extra cost upon our cereal growers.

Now to deal with the other matter. During the short session in April, I asked some questions relative to the reasons that prompted the Railway Commissioners to refuse to inaugurate a road bus service through Gnowangerup to Ongerup, and was informed by the Minister on the 14th April that the reasons were the limited patronage offering, that road services in the outlying districts were not operating at a profit and it was not considered desirable to introduce additional services while this position exists. I direct attention to the two points made by the Minister—the limited patronage offering and road services in the outlying districts not operating at a profit and its being considered undesirable to introduce additional services while this position exists.

I wrote to the Minister making reference to the matter and in the last paragraph stated—

I am writing you to ask that reconsideration be given to the (Gnowangerup) Board's request and that I be advised of your decision as quickly as possible.

That was after the commissioners had replied to the Gnowangerup Road Board declining to agree to the inauguration of this service. I may point out, as I did to the Minister in my communication, that the population of the district east of Gnowangerup is not fed by any railway further east than Ongerup and has now extended 28 or 30 miles from that centre and is increasing rapidly, the reason being both public and private land settlement development. It was mainly for that reason that I asked him to reconsider the matter and submit his decision. I received a letter from the Minister referring me to the communication which had been sent by the commissioners to the Gnowangerup Road Board, and observing that he declined to alter that position.

Accordingly, when the House met this session, I asked the Minister if he would table the papers, which he did today. I find that the consideration which he gave to my request is contained in a minute to his commissioners, or commissioner, shortly after he got it. He wrote—

Railways Commission. Forwarded for your early consideration and draft reply, please.

H. H. Styants,  
Minister for Railways.

Two or three days later there is a minute to him from the commissioner saying—

Draft reply to the Hon. A. F. Watts attached as requested.

The Minister then sent me the draft reply just as the commissioner gave it to him. If this is the reconsideration that he might be expected to afford a request of this

nature, it is an extraordinary type of reconsideration, because he has merely said, "Draft me a reply," and has despatched the reply.

That is not the kind of consideration that I believe a member of this House is entitled to expect from the Minister in such circumstances, because I had been informed by the Gnowangerup Road Board that it had heard there was not unanimity of opinion among the departmental officers concerned with this matter and that therefore it was to be hoped that the Minister would sit in judgment, finally, between the different opinions of the senior departmental officers.

I find from the files that that is just what the position was, because on pages 221 and 222, under date the 3rd December, 1953, a recommendation came from the Chief Traffic Manager to the effect that this service should be established. The last paragraph of his letter states—

Recommendation is made accordingly and your early advice hereon will be appreciated to permit, if possible, the service to be introduced as from Monday, the 23rd December.

On page 223 there follows an estimate made, apparently, by the Comptroller of Accounts and Audit, because it is attached to his letter in which he sets out that the total estimated expenditure on the proposed route works out at an average, over a four-weekly period, of £1,071, and the estimated revenue from the route on the four-weekly period at £1,165, a net profit per four weeks of £94.

This is estimated only on the number of persons who, on Thursdays, use the diesel electric train which runs between Ongerup and Katanning and which links up with nothing, whereas this bus was going to link up with the bus to Perth. So, in all probability, far from there being only 11 or 12 people who, it is stated somewhere in this file, would use the service, there would be considerably more who would take advantage of it, especially as there are many people out there working for the Main Roads Department and the land settlement authorities who have no vehicles of any kind and who would be only too glad, probably, to use this transport when it linked up with transport to Perth. But without all that, the service would show a profit of £94 every four weeks.

Mr. Hutchinson: You must admit it would have been a departure from railway policy to make a profit.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will not argue that point. There are, in the communication to which I last referred, certain references to the bad state of the road, etc. When this interesting document came along to the commissioner he sent it again to the Chief Traffic Manager for further remarks. The Chief Traffic Manager sticks to his guns and says that the road is not

in a bad state; in fact, it is in a reasonably good condition, with which I agree. The Chief Traffic Manager says—

The statements in paragraph 3 of the Comptroller of Accounts and Audit's letter discloses a lack of appreciation of the subject under review, and to qualify this, comment is made on the points raised as follows:

So we come to the time when all this business finally reached the commissioners and I have their minute here. This is an extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Government Railways Commission of the 4th February, and it appears on page 233 of this file. It states—

In opening the discussion the Commissioner said that the Comptroller of Accounts and Audit's views had not helped to solve the proposition and were, in effect, only switching the problem from one line to another. During an inspection of the area last November there had been a strong demand for a road service, and it had been claimed that the district was developing fast.

The Assistant Commissioner (Engineering) said he was opposed to a road service as rail cars helped to pay overheads and track maintenance. Figures obtained by him at Narrogin recently indicated that the average patronage per week was 12 people in the summer and 10 in the winter.

That is where they get the figures from. The minute concludes—

The Commissioner expressed the opinion that on the Commissioner's (Engineering) statement of 10-12 passengers, the additional service could not be considered at present.

So this decision, I suggest, was arrived at in the face of, shall I say, over-cautious estimates, and yet it was indicated by the Comptroller of Accounts and Audit that the service would show a profit of £94 every four weeks. In spite of this, I am told that the patronage offering does not warrant the establishment of this service.

What I complain about most of all is that when the matter is referred to the Minister for his reconsideration, he, well-knowing, I suggest, that it was a matter of considerable interest to these people, and that there were considerable changes taking place in the area under review at the moment, simply passes it on to the commissioners and asks them to draft a reply, which they do, and he signs it and sends it to me. In order to get to the bottom of all this business to discover just what are the circumstances—and I regret I have not the time to look at the file properly; I have only referred to the top portion of it—I have to go to all this trouble to find out for myself what the position is in order to determine whether there are any facts which would warrant further representations being made.

I can only express the hope that in future when a member of Parliament writes, in a courteous and proper manner, to a Minister, asking for his reconsideration of a matter of this nature, which is important to the district concerned, relatively important to other districts adjacent and not without importance, in all the circumstances, to a great part of the State, he will take the opportunity of having a real look at it, and of forming his own opinion on the question. Good Heavens! What is he there for? I venture to suggest that never, in the time that I held ministerial office, did I receive a letter of that kind without giving attention to it and making an attempt to form an opinion from the information contained on the file, but here apparently the Minister never saw the file, until today. He asked the commissioner to make a reply, and the commissioner made it and he sent it to me. I do not think it is a fair bet, and so I make my protest.

**MR. COURT (Nedlands) [8.11]:** I wish to deal briefly with two matters, both of which are related to the forthcoming visit of the Premier to the Eastern States. I desire firstly to refer to the outcry we have heard from this and the other States regarding the shortage of funds for State works and, secondly, to the Premier's statement with respect to the proposal of the Commonwealth Government in relation to a national development commission.

As to the first matter, we have heard many complaints from most of the States, but we never seem to hear an account of exactly what would be done with the extra money if the Commonwealth Government saw fit to release immediately a large sum of money—perhaps some millions of pounds—to this State for development purposes. We find that at the moment there exists a condition of full employment as complete as we could ever hope to get it. In Western Australia today the figures of persons enrolled for unemployment relief are so low that very few of us thought such a position possible in a country like this; and at the same time we find that the materials available for important works are fully committed, with some odd exceptions.

We are therefore entitled to ask from whence would come the men, materials and services to utilise profitably and properly any additional moneys that might be made available by the Commonwealth Government. It would be a national calamity if the clamour by the several States for extra money were to throw Australia back into a condition of unbalance in regard to men and materials such as existed in the immediate postwar years. I think it can fairly be said that in the last year or so we have reached the best state of affairs that has been experienced since before the war as regards the supply of materials matched with available manpower.

It is important, also, that there be preserved a discreet balance between the demands of the Governments of the States and the Commonwealth and the demands of private industry, because if the demands of the Governments for the available manpower, materials and services become excessive, it follows that private industry is denied and is less able to compete for them than are Governments. We have had in Australia, and particularly in New South Wales, a ludicrous state of affairs, with Government projects within one State competing with one another with varying degrees of success from one year to the next according to the success of the submissions of the Ministers concerned.

I would therefore like to hear from the Premier, at this or some other appropriate time, some amplification as to how his Government would go about using additional funds without causing violent inflation on the one hand or disorganising the economy of the State as regards the relationship between the demands of the Government and of private industry on the other hand. Doubtless, some progress could be made by the importation of contractors, men and materials independent of what is available locally, but that, of course, would involve great disadvantages as far as long-term benefits to Australia are concerned. The build up of the nation through migration, which involves additional funds, men and materials, is a very desirable object, and it may be that the Government could embark on some long-term plan deliberately to try to increase the flow of migrants to this country, together with a corresponding increase in the output of materials.

The second point is the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for an advisory body to serve as a national development commission. I feel that there has been some misunderstanding about the original proposal put forward by the Prime Minister. As I read his proposition, it was to ask the States to co-operate in the creation of a small advisory body of highly expert persons to serve as a national development commission and report to both Commonwealth and State Governments upon the economics and relative importance of particular proposals. At no stage have I found it said by the Commonwealth Government or by the Prime Minister that this national development commission—or whatever it might be called—was to do other than to report to both the Commonwealth and State Governments upon the economics and relative importance of particular proposals.

One gathers from the Premier's Press statement that the proposal of the Prime Minister was for a body intended to dictate or decide how the State Governments should spend their money. I notice that the Premier says that the State would on principle oppose any authority outside

Western Australia having the right to decide the State's works programme or the order of priority in which proposed works should be put into operation. I hope that when the Premier visits the Eastern States and meets the other Premiers and the Prime Minister, he will give due consideration to any proposition put forward by the Commonwealth Government in respect of this particular matter.

I feel that there is a degree of divergence in the Labour movement in this regard because, while the Premier in this State has opposed the suggestion on principle, and it has also been challenged by Mr. Gair, the Premier of Queensland, and by the Premier of New South Wales, the Leader of the Opposition in the Commonwealth Parliament, Dr. Evatt, has said, as late as the 13th June, that the time has come for a true partnership between the Commonwealth and State Governments for developing Australia, and he amplified that statement, which I take to mean that he feels that the time is opportune for a better understanding between the States and the Commonwealth Government regarding the raising and spending of the amount of money available.

Mr. Hutchinson: You do not think that a commission such as that would lead to the State Government becoming more subservient?

Mr. COURT: I do not think so. I feel that the time has arrived when we need some body of experts that can report on the relative merits of propositions. I would not suggest for one minute that the States should surrender any rights in deciding, in the final analysis, how the money should be used. Surely an expert body could report to the Premiers and say, "This is what we feel about these various works." They could be divided into three groups as follows:—

- (1) Works of importance to Australia as a whole.
- (2) Works of particular significance to a given State or the development of that State.
- (3) Routine works in which the States naturally reserve the right to say what should and should not be done.

If those recommendations came forward from a responsible body, having regard for a predetermined formula, I feel it would eliminate from the Commonwealth-State financial relationships a lot of the bitterness that is engendered at present.

I trust that when the Premier attends the Premiers' Conference he will endeavour to influence the other Premiers to examine carefully the merits of a scheme under which the States would not surrender the rights they have to decide what works shall be done, but under which a commission would be set up to report in an expert manner on the desirability of various projects.

**MR. BOVELL** (Vasse) [8.12]: I wish to say a few words regarding the question of water conservation and water supplies, especially in the country areas. The Premier will recollect that recently a deputation was introduced to him by the member for Harvey regarding the Wellington Dam. I would further impress on the Premier's mind the need for action in regard to this project. The extension of the irrigation areas further southward is most desirable and at the moment the Minister for Works is having a survey made of the Preston River-Capel area in regard to this extension. The survey is being made with a view to the drainage of this area and the ultimate irrigation of it.

The State is handicapped because of the inadequate water supplies in country towns; and even in the South-West, where the rainfall is heavy, there are country towns that have been crying out for many years for water supplies. So far the Government has not been able to make sufficient funds available for the installation of these country town water schemes and I ask the Premier to give the matter further consideration, especially for towns which have available a ready supply of water. The Government Geologist, Mr. Ellis, accompanied a deputation which I introduced to the Minister for Works. This deputation was from the Busselton Road Board and its members discussed with the Minister the artesian basin which, it is thought, extends from Mandurah to Cape Leeuwin. I believe that this source should be tapped. The Busselton water supply scheme has operated for the past 50 years and the water comes from an artesian supply.

It is considered by authorities who should know something about the matter that this artesian basin extends from Mandurah to Cape Leeuwin and it would provide ample water for people in those areas, particularly farmers in the dairying districts in the lower South-West. Individual settlers and farmers have not the financial resources to tap this potential supply, but if some financial assistance could be given by the Government, I believe there would be ample water available. Mr. Ellis is of the opinion that it is worth investigation and the water would be invaluable to settlers in those areas; this, in turn, would be of immense benefit to the State. I hope that with the passing of the Bill, and with the funds that the Government will have available to it, consideration will be given to the provision of extra water supplies in our country towns and an extension of the irrigation areas further south. Finally, I would like to stress the importance of tapping this artesian basin which is acknowledged by authorities to exist in the South-West.

**MR. PERKINS** (Roe) [8.17]: Last session I asked some questions of the Minister for Agriculture relating to the increase of soil salinity in many of our

country areas. The Minister will find the replies he gave me in the "Hansard" of last session at page 68. His replies indicated that the department did not have any fixed ideas as to the origin of the undoubted rise in the water table in the low-lying areas of the eastern wheatbelt particularly, but that certain theories were held. Since then I have noticed that the Government has arranged for the Commissioner of Soil Conservation to make a visit overseas. Presumably, he will make some investigation into this subject while he is abroad.

I am hoping that the Minister for Agriculture will make a fuller statement than he has done up to date in regard to this matter and that he will make it as soon as possible. That is my real object in rising at this stage. I am hoping that he will make available to members, either in this House or by a Press statement, whatever information he has. I do not mind how it is done so long as the information can be passed on to those people in the agricultural areas who are extremely concerned about the position. I have spoken on this subject on many occasions in this Chamber.

In speaking to the Bill, I do not intend to reiterate the arguments that I have used from time to time stressing the seriousness of the position and urging that some action be taken. However, I must say I am extremely disappointed that in a problem of this magnitude no real survey has been made in the areas vitally affected. As members know, in the wheatgrowing areas of the State there is a chain of salt lakes regarding which those in a position to give a worth-while opinion say that in a remote period of the past the rainfall of the inland areas of the State was much higher than it is now, and that these lakes formed part of the drainage system.

Naturally, in the course of time, great changes have taken place in the topography of the countryside and with the lower rainfall experienced over many thousands of years and with the growth of forests on land much of which may have been bare in the past, there has not been the need for this lakes system to carry the quantity of water that undoubtedly it did in the remote past. However, the opinion is held by people who have lived in those districts practically ever since settlement took place, that with some attention to freeing the obstructions that have been created by wind action undoubtedly the drainage through the old lakes system could be considerably improved without much expense.

I understand that the department has conducted some experiments in the Midlands area. I would be very interested if the Minister would make some statement as to any conclusion which the departmental officers have been able to draw from the experiments they have conducted



already in the Midlands district. Certainly no publicity has been given to whatever conclusion those officers have reached.

**The Minister for Lands:** Quite a bit of publicity was given to that matter three or four weeks ago arising out of a deputation to me from the Farmers' Union.

**Mr. PERKINS:** I am sorry I missed that; I will be interested to see it. It is certain that the problem is of considerable magnitude. Members will recall that several years ago the Government of the day brought an expert from the Eastern States, Mr. Pennefather, who made some investigation—not particularly lengthy—into the problem. His report was published in the Press after a great deal of agitation on the part of people interested. For some reason there was great resistance against its publication on the part of the department. It was said that it was not in a suitable form to be published. However, after publication it was difficult to understand why the objections had been raised. What appears in that report is sufficient to indicate that that expert from the Eastern States took a very serious view of the soil salinity problem in Western Australia.

**The Minister for Lands:** Of course, you know that we do not always get full co-operation from farmers either.

**Mr. PERKINS:** All I can say in reply to that interjection is that the department took jolly fine care that it did not get co-operation because the officer concerned who accompanied Mr. Pennefather took no action whatsoever to contact people in the eastern areas who were anxious to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem as they saw it.

**The Minister for Lands:** I was talking about the reporting of salt patches. The value of a farmer's property depreciates because of them and naturally he is most reluctant to make that information known.

**Mr. PERKINS:** The problem is so widespread that it is impossible to camouflage it and one has only to drive along a country road to see evidence of salt on a property so affected. However, be that as it may, I am not particularly concerned about those points. What I am stressing is the need for some greater action on the part of the department. If the investigating officers do go out to those areas, I hope they will have sufficient power to make whatever surveys are necessary in order fully to inform themselves on the problem. However, I can assure the Minister that so far as the local authorities and the farming community are concerned, he will get 100 per cent. co-operation—

**The Minister for Lands:** That is what we want.

**Mr. PERKINS:** —in any action required in order to mitigate the seriousness of the problem. I have noted that in certain areas the local authorities and the people concerned are taking action at their own

expense to put in drainage channels in certain areas. However, this type of local action is not going to solve the problem. If one farmer is successful in draining the water off his property, it will only force it somewhere else and make the problem more serious for some other landholder.

**The Minister for Lands:** We have officers permanently employed on that, you know.

**Mr. PERKINS:** We do not see very much of them. I doubt whether they are getting out on the job very much.

**The Minister for Lands:** Oh yes, they are!

**Mr. PERKINS:** The area I know best is the main eastern wheatbelt. The problem is great there. There is a large lakes system to the east of Brookton which is actually lower than the Avon River. In the early stages of the winter the Avon River overflows near Brookton and runs into that lakes system, filling the lakes before the water carries on down the ordinary course of the river to empty itself into the Swan River and finally into the sea. In a wet winter, such as we had last year, after the lakes fill up and the water begins to come down from the far inland areas—even those parts towards Kalgoorlie—it drains through the lakes system into the Swan River.

In a wet winter there is a big flow into those lakes from the eastern area and the water rises to such a level that the flow is reversed and comes into the Avon River to cause severe flooding, in some years, at York, Northam and Toodyay. So it is a complex problem indeed. I realise that whatever action is taken it will be a number of years before the programme is carried out. That is absolutely inevitable but time is slipping by. It was 12 years ago, after I entered this Chamber, that I first discussed the problem in the House and I know that at the time there was a great deal of agitation in the farming areas for some action to be taken. Twelve years have passed and we are only where we started.

**The Minister for Lands:** It is probably a bit worse.

**Mr. PERKINS:** The problem has become worse in the meantime. I have the feeling, even after the publication of Mr. Pennefather's report, that the Commissioner of Soil Conservation is not sufficiently seized with the importance of the problem.

**The Minister for Lands:** He spends almost the whole of his time on that particular problem.

**Mr. PERKINS:** I may be wrong in making that statement—

**The Minister for Lands:** You are wrong

**Mr. PERKINS:** —but I can only say that I have that feeling. I know that at various times the commissioner has said, "I am afraid it is inevitable that you are going to

lose some of that country; it will go salt and you cannot do anything about it." Originally, before any clearing was done in those areas, there was no salt problem there at all. An infinitesimal part of that country was salt lake, as it is now; a very limited area indeed. In the course of 30 odd years of settlement we have this very large acreage—I would hesitate to guess how much it is—but it is very large.

I know of farms which were classed as 100 per cent. first class when originally surveyed and selected 30 odd years ago; at the present time there are only a few acres that are not salt. Those are the worst cases. But the problem is of very great magnitude and the point I stress is that this is some of the most fertile of the agricultural land we have in this State. It is that flat wheatbelt soil that in normal circumstances grows excellent crops and very good feed. So the problem is a very severe one indeed. If that amount of damage has been done in 30-odd years of settlement, then I hesitate to think what damage may be done in the next 30 years unless we do something to prevent it.

Members know there is a good deal of light land adjacent to the heavy ground that has been alienated in recent years. As soon as the natural shrubs are taken off, there is a tendency for that country to shed water, particularly in the early stages, before it is possible to get better pastures on to it. There is plenty of evidence in country I know very well indeed, because I live there, that the run-off in much of it is far greater than what we have been accustomed to see in the past. The difficulties experienced last winter in many of our wheatbelt areas because of local flooding makes many of us fear what the position may be in a run of wet seasons. I do not, however, want to paint an unduly alarming picture of the situation. I do think it is a serious one, but I feel it is not insoluble.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is it affecting the water supply as well?

Mr. PERKINS: No, it does not get into any of our water supply catchments. The Avon River actually catches all that from the eastern areas.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What about the wells?

Mr. PERKINS: Any wells close to the salt lakes have been written off many years ago. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, there is no doubt at all about the rise in the salt-water table, because wells sunk in the early days of settlement when water was 30ft. down now have salt water 10ft. from the surface. So there is no doubt that the salt-water table has risen, and that is the prime cause of the salting of soils in our main agricultural areas.

There is another problem of seepage salt in soils, which is very noticeable in portions of the Avon Valley, where water

seeps into the soils at a higher level, picks up the salts on the way down, reaches an impervious layer and coming out the surface, deposits salt on the top, and we get the characteristic salt patches on the hills. But obviously from Mr. Pennefather's report, there was more alarm about the rise in the salt-water table than there was about surface salting.

Probably the problem of surface salting can be better dealt with by the development of certain pastures which can absorb a greater proportion of water before it seeps down. There are species of plants which are more salt tolerant and can grow on patches where the salt comes out on the surface of the soil. My real reason for rising at this juncture was to ask the Minister for Agriculture to take the first suitable opportunity, whether in this House or by a Press statement, to publish whatever information he has. I hope he will also say something about the investigations which I trust the Commissioner of Soil Conservation is making while on his present trip.

The Minister for Lands: You can rest assured on that.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [8.36]: I would like to stress the importance of Commonwealth financial assistance for the goldmining industry in this State. As we all know, the problem has been brought about by heavy increased costs. A gold subsidy was proposed and an announcement was made by the Prime Minister in a policy speech early in May that his Government proposed to authorise the payment of a subsidy on gold to a maximum of 30s. an ounce. It was good news for a section of the mining industry that suffered severely in the postwar years from rising costs and fixed prices for gold. The subsidy would not help many goldmines at the moment. It would keep some marginal producers going and would lighten the burden of others whose costs are nearing the ceiling price of gold.

But the gesture is appreciated, for it is an acknowledgment that gold does make some positive contribution to the national economy. The Prime Minister made that announcement and it was very good news to the representatives of the goldmining towns and electorates. I would point out, however, that at least £2,000,000 is required to assist adequately the goldmining industry in this State. Had the Federal Leader of the Opposition been returned, his promise of 100 per cent. would have been fulfilled, and this would have meant many more shillings per ounce subsidy.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He will get back next time.

Hon. D. Brand: You seem to be looking ahead.

Mr. O'BRIEN: For my part, I have no complaint as far as the present Government is concerned; it has done a good job

with respect to the goldmining industry. The task is to make finance available to enable the goldmines to carry on—I am now speaking of marginal mines in particular—and to assist the prospectors and smaller syndicate mines as well.

I am proud indeed of the opportunity to inform members of the progress that has been made in some of the towns in the Murchison electorate. Firstly, there is the goldmine known as Hill 50 which is producing gold from a few dwts. to many ounces. There is a group of mines operating at present in the Mt. Magnet area such as Hill 50 Extended, Hill 50 Central and Mt. Magnet Development, but further north we are not so prosperous. With finance made available to the Minister for Mines to enable his plans to be put into operation towns such as Cue, Meekatharra, Sandstone and Agnew will also prove satisfactory gold producers for many years ahead. The Beria mine at Laverton known as Lancefield is producing satisfactorily, and the Boomerang mine at Bourkeville is under option to a company at a price of £20,000. So I sincerely wish—and I have confidence that this wish will be carried out by the Premier—that when he attends the Premiers' Conference at Canberra he will stress to the Commonwealth Government the importance of assistance to the goldmining industry.

Another problem that confronts the Murchison is housing. In towns such as Mt. Magnet, where there has been a big increase of population, houses are very necessary in order to attract the right type of citizens, such as married men, to the town. As in the majority of other towns, the tenant here is suffering from increased rentals. Houses that used to be available at 10s., 15s. or £1 a week, are being rented at 35s., £2, and £2 15s. per week.

Hon. D. Brand: Where is that?

Mr. O'BRIEN: At Mt. Magnet. With regard to the sale of houses some of which were bought very cheaply 40 years ago, but cannot be condemned now for the simple reason that people are obliged to live in them, are up for sale at enormous prices. Houses which in those days cost £50 or £75, are being offered for sale by their owners at £250, £450 and £750.

Hon. D. Brand: Does that apply to Meekatharra?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Not at Meekatharra. There houses are scarce, but fortunately we have a sympathetic Government and a sympathetic Minister for Housing. He has approved of a number of houses being erected at Meekatharra and some at Mt. Magnet, to be let to approved tenants.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have just come in in time to hear the praise.

Mr. O'BRIEN: Many tenants at Mt. Magnet have been evicted. I know this because I only returned from that town last week. More houses are urgently required in that district.

Hon. D. Brand: If the Minister for Housing has doubled the erection of houses in the city, why has he not done that in the country?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Married miners are suffering greatly in this town, but I would emphasise that the Minister for Housing is doing all in his power to overcome that very embarrassing position. The Minister has been very considerate and has promised to build homes for distressed families there. Last week I was invited to a home of a married miner, the father of six small children, the eldest being 12 or 13. I discovered that when the rental was increased recently to £2 5s. a week, he wanted to purchase the house which cost between £50 and £55, even including outstanding rates at that time. But the owner wanted £250 for the house. So we are confronted with such difficult problems, but I feel confident that they will be solved. Regarding the railways, no doubt we have been taxed by the imposition of increased freights.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No doubt at all.

Mr. O'BRIEN: We got the increased freights all in one lump because over the period of years the previous Government did not impose higher rail charges.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You like it in big lumps?

Mr. O'BRIEN: The Government did not increase the freights because it felt it might have been very embarrassing at the time. The Meekatharra-Wiluna line which, I understand, was threatened by the previous Government, still remains intact under the present Administration. I can see that freight reduction is in sight because of likely assistance being given to the goldmining industry.

Mr. Hutchinson: What about the Sandstone line?

Hon. D. Brand: You are embarrassing the Premier!

Mr. O'BRIEN: I sincerely trust, for the sake of the people of the Murchison, that starting price betting legislation will be introduced this session.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What do you want to do? Are you going to legalise it?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Yes, certainly. Personally, I believe that starting price betting should be legalised.

Hon. D. Brand: Is it true that you are introducing a Bill to this effect during the session?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Last session I introduced a Bill which was passed by this Chamber, so I daresay that if I introduce a Bill on starting price betting, it might be just as successful.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Has it done away with the fracture headaches you introduced?

Mr. O'BRIEN: I might say that we do get the two bottles now, and they relieve our fractureur headaches!

With regard to roads, I feel sure that in the near future the road from Wubin to Payne's Find and then to Mt. Magnet will be bituminised. Magnet at present has an assured outlook for a period of 25 or 30 years and will become the Golden Mile of the Murchison. I believe that the present Government will assist, as did the previous Government, and ensure that a sealed road is provided to Wubin as soon as money becomes available. If only 10 miles were built, it would be a step in the right direction. A bitumen road from Mullewa to Yalgoo to cater for many people travelling to the main port of the Murchison, namely, Geraldton, I feel sure, will be commenced as money becomes available.

**HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley)** [8.51]: I do not wish to labour the debate. The Premier: Do not "liberal" it, either.

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** The Government should give further consideration to the question of having a development advisory committee. This matter has been mentioned by the member for Nedlands. The Premier will admit, I think, that it is extremely difficult to secure continuity in relation to a major public work. One major work required in this State is a deep-water port at Derby to give an outlet for the Kimberleys, which must expand. I understand that the estimate for the work is something like £1,000,000.

Then we shall need another large reservoir for the metropolitan area in the not distant future. The construction of such works would have to be continued from year to year and a large sum of money set apart for the purpose. They are not works of an ordinary routine nature, such as the building of schools and other public works that have to be carried on year after year. They are of a developmental nature, and as such cause embarrassment to the Government if it cannot maintain continuity.

The only way in which this can be done is to have an understanding with the other States for some priority to be given, and I cannot see how the States will accept any priority arrangement unless there is independent expert advice that is acceptable to them all. Where would Western Australia be without the Grants Commission? That is an expert body, and no State, so far as I am aware, has challenged its recommendations, nor have the representatives of any State in the Federal Parliament opposed the recommendations. A body of that nature is what we require so that a Government such as ours, with many developmental works of a major nature in view, may be assured of a continuity of funds for those works. There may be some works the construction of

which the Commonwealth has agreed to assist on a pound-for-pound basis, and the State might not be able to achieve the full acceptance because of a shortage of money.

The Minister for Health: Would you agree to the Commonwealth's superseding the States in priority?

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** Not at all. It would be a matter for acceptance by the various States rather than by the Commonwealth. I consider that a start must be made in that direction. It is well known that our Government has been embarrassed by commitments that had to be made, for instance, in connection with the railways. When those commitments were made, there did not seem to be any likelihood of a situation arising whereby it would be extremely difficult to meet them. Yet we were obliged to ask contractors to postpone their debts. It is not a good thing for Western Australia, or for Australia as a whole, to have to ask a British firm to postpone its debts.

**Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:** We were not the only State to do so.

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** That is so. I believe that the Premier of Victoria stated that a most important work had to be closed down temporarily, and probably that was one of a developmental nature. The Commonwealth is not in the same position because it has the final say, in many respects, in the matter of raising money. Consequently, it is not placed in an embarrassing position.

The Minister for Health: The Commonwealth has the big stick.

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** That is so. If the States could come to some agreement along the lines I have suggested, it would be to their advantage, though not to the advantage of the Commonwealth. If such an arrangement were made, the States would have a big lever in lean years when calling upon the Commonwealth for assistance. On the other hand, with all the States calling on the Commonwealth for assistance, the Commonwealth could not grant a million pounds to Western Australia for a deep-water port because the other States would also want a million, and in that event the Commonwealth is in a position to do exactly nothing.

If we had an independent body, such as the Grants Commission, I believe that the Commonwealth would not hesitate to assist the claimant States to the full extent of the recommendations, and I see no reason why some such body should not be conceived for the protection not only of Western Australia but also of all the States. Then some pressure could be brought to bear upon the Commonwealth to grant more assistance for developmental works than is being made available at present and thus enable the States to be assured of continuity of funds for major works of a developmental nature.

**MR. NIMMO** (Wembley Beaches) [8.59]: I think I may as well offer a few words on the bill that the Premier will have to present when he goes to Canberra. My remarks have to do with education. I feel much concerned about the position in one of my areas, Scarborough, on account of the growth of the district and the education needs of the children. The position is so serious that I have decided to make a door-to-door canvass to ascertain the number of children in the district.

In my estimation, it will not be many years before the Scarborough and North Beach population reaches anything from 60,000 to 80,000. I can see great growth in the district. On the north side of the main Scarborough-rd. there were, not many years ago, very few houses. I have been endeavouring to find out the number of children in the district and I am classing them in three sections. I have not completed that section although one of the others I have. I estimate that on the north side of the main road there is one child per house that is under construction.

The Minister for Health: That is of school age.

**Mr. NIMMO**: No, one to 14. I estimate that up to date there are at least 1,700 children between the ages of one and 14 living on that side of the road. That, as I have said, is allowing for one per house under construction. In the first part of that section, where most of the building is going on, the average is two children per house. Nearer to the heart of Scarborough, the average drops to 1½ children per house, and in the more established sections the average is a little over 1½. I think that when I have completed the figures for the whole of Scarborough they will be very interesting.

I want to impress on the Premier that when we go to the Education Department we are told, "There is no money available." I would like the Premier to treat this matter as urgent because I think other districts are in the same position. At the Doubleview school we have about 700 children, and I would say that the school is overcrowded. The lower school is also overcrowded. A class is held in the pavilion on the sports ground. Many of the children on the north side of the main road have almost a mile to walk to school, which seems to me to be rather a long way.

We have been promised that an eight-roomed school, which will cost £40,000 to £45,000, and perhaps more, will be built at North Scarborough. We will have to watch the position in regard to the education of the children in that district because the majority of those of four years of age will, within two years or less, be going to school. I hope later to be able to give the House the exact figures of the number of houses that are in the district, which I roughly estimate at about 2,600 in the Scarborough area.

Another point in regard to educational facilities there that we have to keep in mind is the provision of a high school. We hear of other districts wanting high schools, but in the near future we will want one very badly in the Scarborough-North Beach area. Some of the Scarborough children go to the Kent Street High School and we have now, with the assistance of the Minister for Transport, a school bus running from Scarborough to Claremont on the back beach road. I repeat that I hope the Premier stresses the need for £ s. d. for schools because schooling is very important. Later, when I get my official figures, I hope to be able to pass them on to the Minister for Education, and I trust they will be of great assistance to him.

There are two matters the Minister for Housing needs to watch very closely in relation to the growth at Scarborough, and they are the provision of water and light. During the summer months it is nothing to get half a dozen rings during the night from the high parts of Wembley, Floreat Park, City Beach, Doubleview and Scarborough, saying, "We have no water." I would like the Minister for Housing to watch the position closely because many extensions have been made to the water supply in North Scarborough. I will feel much happier when a pipeline is put through from Mt. Yokine to somewhere between Scarborough and North Beach.

The lighting position is very similar, although the State Electricity Commission during the last six or 12 months has done a fairly good job because we did have quite a number of weak spots throughout my district. I would also like to know whether the Premier would consider putting up some scheme to take over the beaches from the different road boards and other authorities that now control them. We in Scarborough think that paying for the amenities on the beach imposes a great strain on the people of that locality.

When we sum up the position in a new district like Scarborough, we find it wants footpaths and roads, but the road board has not the money with which to provide them, and there is no other way of borrowing money—although I think the State Housing Commission would, up to a point, help with the provision of roads in the new areas. On a hot night or week-end thousands of people are to be seen on the beach using the amenities that are provided, but only a small percentage of the residents of Scarborough do so. I think the time has come when we should secure funds from the Government so that everybody will share in the maintenance of the beaches. I hope the Premier will consider the question of providing money for these amenities—schooling, extension of water supplies and maintenance of beaches.

**THE TREASURER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [9.9]: I would like to say a few words in reply to some of the points raised. The member for Stirling dealt with the question of land recently required by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to enable that company to establish additional storage facilities for grain, especially, of course, for wheat. He claimed that in this matter the company had received a raw deal from the Government. I am sure it is true to say that all Governments in this State have, at all times, given that company a reasonably good deal. I do not know of any other company which has received a deal anywhere near as good. The company in question already occupies a very substantial area in the Fremantle district. When it applied, as it did recently, for a large additional area of land, the Government had to look at the position reasonably from the point of view of all the interests concerned.

As regards the area which the company wanted on this occasion, we found that an undertaking had been given, a considerable time before, to an oil company, to the effect that the land concerned would be reserved for the needs of that organisation. It might be easy to think that when a company such as Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. came along, the Government could wipe aside all other interests no matter what undertakings might have been given to them, and say, "We are sorry about the undertakings which have been given but Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. has come along and wants this land and we must grant the request," but that could not be done.

When the Government found itself in the position of not being able to make this land available to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., it looked around to see whether any other suitable land could be made available and Cabinet decided to offer the company an area of railway land at Midland Junction. In offering the company that land we had to sacrifice, as it were, the forward interests of the Railway Department. It might very well prove that in a few years' time this land which we have made available to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. will be urgently required by the Railway Department, but nevertheless we have taken the risk involved in that regard and have offered the land to the company in order that its problem might be solved as reasonably as possible in the circumstances.

Midland Junction may be inconvenient or costly to the company in some respects and the establishment of grain storage facilities there might cost the growers of the grain a small amount of additional money. I do not know whether the company looked for private land anywhere closer to Fremantle than is Midland Junction but there was nothing to prevent it from doing so. Had it followed that course

it might have found suitable private land ever so much closer to Fremantle, but whether it even bothered to search for land of that character I do not know. I have already said that I think all Governments in this State have given Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. an exceptionally fair and reasonable deal and I would go so far as to say that all Governments in this State have always given the wheat-growers a better deal than has been given to any other section of primary producers.

Therefore I think that, in the special circumstances as described by the Leader of the Country Party, the company concerned has not been unfairly treated nor have the growers of grain who are concerned in the matter. I wish also to say that the Minister for Works was not the villain in this piece. He was as anxious as we all were to do the best possible for Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and, in that way, the best possible for the wheat-growers.

The hon. member also castigated the Minister for Railways for having allegedly received a letter from him—which part of the story was quite true—and with having sent it on to the Railway Department for a suggested reply and, having received the suggested reply from the Railways Commission, with having, without further ado, sent it to the member for Stirling. I feel that the hon. member has a rather short memory in this matter and that if he will call upon the very good memory which he possesses, he will know that when such a situation develops within a department, as between the officers and the Minister, the officers do not send only the suggested or draft reply, but send the draft reply on the file, and therefore the Minister, when he receives the draft reply, receives the file and is able to study the appropriate papers to satisfy himself that the reply is one with which he could agree.

I hazard a guess that there were times when the member for Stirling, as a Minister of the Crown, adopted draft replies sent to him by officers. I hazard a guess also that there were other occasions when he made substantial alterations to the suggested replies and still other instances when he would not have anything to do with the suggested draft reply and made a decision entirely different. I maintain that he came to all those decisions because when the draft reply was sent to him, he received not only it but also the appropriate file which he studied to the extent he considered necessary in the circumstances and made up his own mind accordingly. I would go so far as to say that if, after the House rises, the member for Stirling and the Minister for Railways should meet in one of the members' rooms and have a face to face and heart to heart discussion about the details of this matter, the Minister for Railways would not come off second best. The result might be a draw but I am sure that the Minister for Railways would know as

much about what is in the file and about the detailed circumstances of the problem as would the member for Stirling.

The member for Nedlands and the member for Mt. Lawley discussed the question of the Commonwealth proposal to set up some sort of a committee to do something in relation to a works priority programme that would be applicable to all the States. It is true that I said my view in regard to this proposal was that, on a point of principle, I would oppose any authority outside Western Australia having the right to decide what works we would put in hand or the order of priority that they should be given, and I say that again. I hope that every member of this House would say the same thing.

I think the Press report from which the member for Nedlands quoted said more than he read to the House. I went further, in the interview with the Press reporter concerned, than the hon. member quoted, and I pointed out that at this stage I knew no more about the proposal of the Commonwealth than had appeared in the Press and consequently preferred to make no other comment than I had already offered on the basis of principle and principle alone. I would be anxious as anyone to learn something official from the Commonwealth about these proposals, and presumably the Premiers, at the Premiers' Conference, will receive an official explanation from the Prime Minister as to what the proposals of his Government actually are and what they will mean if they are adopted.

However, I would utter this word of warning: This question of setting up an expert committee on an Australia-wide basis to direct or even advise the States in regard to works priorities is not as easy as it sounds and could, in practice, work out to be thoroughly unacceptable, especially to a State like Western Australia. In this debate today we have had some members stressing the importance and urgency of developmental works; we have had other members stressing the urgency and necessity for school buildings.

So in these matters one has to make up one's own mind in a way which is not always upon the basis of desirability from the point of view of development or from the point of view of bringing about the greatest quantity of increased production. Quite often one has to make up one's mind on the basis of urgency. In other words, if there is a great shortage of schools, hospitals and other public buildings, then no matter how much one might feel that one ought to carry out public works to increase development, one cannot carry out those works at the expense of keeping the children of the State without sufficient school accommodation, or the sick people of the State without sufficient hospital accommodation, and so on.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course, I envisage that you would probably get something extra.

The TREASURER: I am inclined to think that if we are offered anything extra by the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth will want to have a deciding voice as to the undertakings upon which that money will be spent in the respective States.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: In setting up this national advisory committee, do not you think it is the desire of the Commonwealth to help the States?

The TREASURER: I should hope so.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I am sure it is.

The TREASURER: But at this stage I think we ought to suspend judgment about a proposal in connection with which we know nothing official. I have expressed an opinion about a principle which will allow some authority outside Western Australia to have the right to decide what works we, as a State, will put into operation and the priority of those works.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: After all, it is an advisory committee, you know.

The TREASURER: I do not even know that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Prime Minister said something about it in his policy speech.

The TREASURER: I have had nothing official about it.

Mr. Hutchinson: Regarding development, about which you spoke, do you think we can legitimately ask for a reduction in the scale of migration?

The TREASURER: That is a separate problem. If the flow of migrants coming into a country is reduced, it reduces the physical ability of the country to do the things which are necessary to achieve more progress and more development.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Commonwealth is not likely to agree to that.

The TREASURER: In connection with the matters raised by other members, in some instances the Ministers concerned have listened, and regarding other items, which come under the departments controlled by the Minister for Works—who is unavoidably absent this evening—they will be referred to him for his consideration.

I am sure that every member knows that the best way to get things done is not only to make speeches in Parliament in connection with them. Making speeches in Parliament regarding something a member desires in his electorate, or in the State, is thoroughly in order; I do not offer one grain of criticism about it. But if a member really wants to take the proposal to a more practical stage and have a better prospect of getting what he desires done, he should approach the appropriate Minister personally. All members, as a result of their experience, know that. It is necessary, to some extent, to carry on a softening-up process of the main departmental officers concerned and there will even come a time, in some negotiations

which members carry on, when they will have to do that when they approach the Treasurer himself.

Mr. Nalder: That is interesting advice. Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

*House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 24th June, 1954.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Increase of Staff and Expenditure.*

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

(1) Has the number of Railway Department employees increased since the 1st July last?

(2) If so, by what number of employees, and in what sub-departments?

(3) What additional expenditure will the extra numbers involve per annum in respect of salaries and wages?

(4) To what extent were the increases caused by increased traffic offering, and if, to any extent, what is the increase in traffic?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Increases or decreases in staff have occurred in all sections of the department, the overall effect being a net increase of 91. The greatest increase was in the traffic operating staff, the numbers of which are now and have been for some considerable time, under-strength.

(3) At the average rate per employee as at the 30th June, 1953, approximately £64,000.

(4) From the latest information available the ton-milage of paying traffic for the current year was 119,695,215 higher than the corresponding period 1952-53 and 43,403,197 more than 1951-52 which was a record year.

(b) *As to Overhead Bridge, Maylands.*

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Railways:

In reply to a question asked by me on the 8th April last, regarding the Seventh Avenue overhead bridge, he stated that reconstruction of this bridge would commence in May. As no start has yet been made, can he give the House an assurance as to when work will definitely commence, and if not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

The reply given to the hon. member's question on the 8th April was to the effect that it was hoped to commence this work during the month of May. Work will now definitely commence next week.

### SEWERAGE.

*As to Completion in Claremont Area.*

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

Will he use his best endeavour to have the sewerage work in Devon-rd. and Davies-rd., Claremont, completed this year?