

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 15th August, 1951.

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

QUESTIONS.

TRANSPORT.

As to Buses for Mt. Lawley Route.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it the intention of the Government to change the transport system on the Nos. 19 and 22 routes from trams to buses?

(2) If so, will trolley or diesel buses be used?

(3) When will the change take place?

(4) Will the change-over bring about an improvement in the 14-minute service between 9 a.m. and 3.30 p.m., and the 21-minute service between 7.48 and 10.36 p.m.?

The ACTING PREMIER replied:

(1) Discussions are at present taking place between the Minister for Transport, the Tramways Department and the

Transport Board regarding the future of these two routes, and it is expected that a decision will be reached at an early date.

(2) Answered by (1).

(3) Answered by (1).

(4) Answered by (1).

HOUSING.

(a) As to Interest Rate on Overdraft Building-Loans.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is he aware that one of the measures to be discussed by the Federal Cabinet in its "Halt Inflation" programme is that the Government may charge higher rates of interest on overdraft loans?

(2) Is he also aware that one of the most important individual ways of obtaining loans to finance the building of homes is through the overdraft system?

(3) Is he further aware that if a higher rate of interest is charged on overdraft building loans, more and more people may be driven to give up the struggle to help themselves and will have to rely on Government assistance through the Housing Commission?

(4) If he regards the matter in the foregoing questions as being substantially correct, will he take immediate steps to request the Premier to endeavour to obtain from the Prime Minister an assurance that if the overdraft interest rate is raised a discrimination will be made on non-speculative borrowing, such as loans for housebuilding?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) No.

(4) The Premier will be asked to have consideration given to the matter.

(b) As to Homes Constructed, South Belmont Area.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many houses have been built by the State Housing Commission in the South Belmont area—

(a) Commonwealth - State rental homes;

(b) war service homes;

(c) McNess homes?

(2) Are such homes fitted with standard Metropolitan Water Supply fittings for easy conversion to the department's sewerage mains when laid?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Homes built by the State Housing Commission in South Belmont—

(a) Commonwealth - State rental homes—448 completed, 42 under construction.

(b) War service homes—110 completed, 33 under construction.

(c) McNess homes—25 completed.

(2) Yes, as far as can be ascertained from records available.

SUPERANNUATION.

(a) *As to Increasing Benefits to Ex-employees.*

Mr. GUTHRIE asked the Minister for Education:

(1) When is legislation likely to be introduced to increase superannuation payments to ex-employees of the Government?

(2) What is the amount of increase likely to be?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) During this session.

(2) The matter is now under consideration.

(b) *As to Consideration by Government.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will he advise if the Government intends to give consideration to increasing superannuation payments?

(2) If so, when?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Mention was made in the Speech of the Administrator that legislation will be introduced to grant increases in pensions payable to retired Government employees.

(2) During this session.

INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT.

As to Alleged Pressure to Secure Amendments.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Has he seen in the Melbourne "Age" of the 10th August, a statement alleged to have been made by Mr. Vivian Smith, of Western Australia, who attended a meeting of the Dispossessed Property Owners' Association, that all political parties were infected with the Socialist bug and that the Property Owners' Association of Western Australia had compelled Parliament to grant a 20 per cent. increase in rents, the right of the owner to resume his property automatically after six months' notice, and eviction for subletting without permission?

(2) Does he know Mr. Vivian Smith, and did that gentleman make any representations to him in connection with amendments to the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act?

(3) Did the Property Owners' Association bring any pressure to bear on the Government, and thus provide grounds for the statement which Mr. Vivian Smith was alleged to have made?

(4) If there was no foundation for the alleged statement, will he advise the Melbourne "Age" accordingly?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) No, nor was I able to secure a copy in Perth this forenoon. It will be noted that the statement alleged to have been made by Mr. Vivian Smith charged neither the Government nor me personally, but Parliament, with having been compelled to make the legislative amendments referred to.

(2) To the best of my knowledge, I know the person referred to neither personally nor by repute.

(3) The Property Owners' Association saw me as a deputation, as also did the Tenants and Home Builders' Association, introduced by the member for Melville, but in neither case was any pressure exercised.

(4) No.

FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

As to Provision of First New Berth.

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

(1) Has he seen the report in "The West Australian" of Monday, the 13th August, headed, "Rottnest Queue Grows Again at Fremantle"?

(2) If so, will he inform the House if any change has been made in the proposal that the first new berth for ships at Fremantle will not be started until 1968?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Since the Tydeman report was prepared in 1948, the trade at the port has so increased that it is proposed to commence construction of an additional berth on the north side early next year.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Second Unit at South Fremantle.

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

(1) When is it anticipated that the second unit at the South Fremantle power house will commence generating current?

(2) Will the frequency changer at East Perth be able to deal with the 50,000 kilowatts?

(3) If not, will it mean that when the second unit starts Fremantle will get the 50 cycle frequency direct from South Fremantle power house over the main that has been erected for that purpose?

(4) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Shortly.

(2) No.

(3) The frequency changer has a capacity of 25,000 K.W. When the second unit is ready to generate, a commencement will be made with the changing

over of districts to 50 cycle frequency. As this change over proceeds, supply from the second unit will be made to these districts.

(4) Answered by (3).

FREE MILK SCHEME.

(a) *As to Eastern Goldfields Children.*

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will he request the State Milk Board to investigate the possibility of the proprietors of Firle Dairy, Kalgoorlie, supplying milk to Goldfields school children under the free milk scheme?

(2) Would milk transported from Perth to Kalgoorlie in stainless steel tanks of 265 gallons capacity and hygienically bottled by Firle Dairy, Kalgoorlie, be suitable for issue under the free milk scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) These matters, among other, will be the subject of inquiry by the advisory committee.

(b) *As to Provision for Country Centres.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What is the position regarding country schools, where milk is already being supplied to the school children by the parents and citizens' association?

(2) Will he arrange for a recoup to parents and citizens' organisations from the amount made available by the Commonwealth Government until such time as the Education Department is able to provide the milk under the Commonwealth scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) These matters, among other, will be the subject of inquiry by the advisory committee.

RAILWAYS.

As to Contract for "W" Class Engines.

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

(1) Were the negotiations preceding the signing of the contract for the construction of the "W" class engines directly between the W.A.G.R. or the State Government and Beyer Peacock & Co. of Manchester, England?

(2) If not, to what extent did the local agent enter into the negotiations?

The ACTING PREMIER replied:

(1) The original negotiations were conducted with Beyer Peacock & Co., but subsequent inquiries regarding certain details were channelled through the local agent.

(2) Answered by (1).

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Alterations to Knungajin Dam.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What alterations, if any, are contemplated to the Knungajin dam?

(2) If any alterations are proposed, will the effect of these be to decrease the holding capacity of the dam?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) None.

(2) Answered by (1).

BUTTERFAT PRICES.

As to Tabling Files of Negotiations and Conferences.

Mr. HOAR (without notice) asked the Acting Premier:

In view of the present butterfat crisis, and the need for Parliament to be fully informed as to this State's activities in connection with it, will he lay upon the Table of the House all papers and files showing the Government's negotiations and conferences with all other States and the Commonwealth Government?

The ACTING PREMIER replied:

I think I can say correctly that it would be impracticable to do so at present as a large number of the papers are with the Premier. As to whether it will be done upon his return, I can only say that the matter will receive consideration then.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Bovell, leave of absence for one week granted to the Attorney General (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) on the ground of urgent public business.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. NULSEN (Eyre) [4.40]: It is a long time since I made my first speech in this House and I am just as pleased now, as I was then, to say a few words about my electorate, or about matters that affect the whole State. I was pleased to see that the Premier looked so well when he arrived back from his extensive tour. His health seems to have improved greatly and I am sure that the trip has done him a lot of good. I trust that he will, in the future, be able to help the State as much as the trip has improved his health and that as the result of his experiences the people of the State will receive some benefits. The Premier travelled extensively through the United Kingdom and I am sure he came into contact with all classes of people. Through those contacts he should have gained considerable knowledge which should be helpful in the development of this State.

I notice, too, that the Premier discussed with the mineowners in London the position of the goldmining industry in this State. I trust that from those discussions the mineowners, and other people as well, will realise the serious position in which the industry is placed. If the mining industry were on an equitable basis with the primary industries in this State, then the former industry would be flourishing but, unfortunately, costs have skyrocketed. Salaries, fuel, material costs and even the cost of transport have risen, since 1947, beyond the prior conception of anyone in this State. Therefore, I feel that the Government since it has been in office has not done much to help the mining industry; actually, I should not say "in office" but "in power" because the Government has not the opposition of the other House which we had when Labour held office.

All prices have risen and these increased costs have seriously affected the mining industry. But, there is one commodity that has not gone up in price and that commodity is gold; it is still 35 dollars an ounce. Had the price of gold risen on a basis comparable with the returns from other commodities, then the mining industry would at present be in a favourable position. The goldmining industry in Australia has done more than any other single industry towards the development of this country and towards increasing its population. We all know that Australia was first used to receive convicts from the Old Country; but, generally speaking, those convicts were good types because in those days it was comparatively easy for people to get into trouble and receive sentences of transportation. Therefore, it was in many instances those who were fighting for better conditions that were transported to this country.

The discovery of gold was first made known in 1851 although it was discovered prior to that time. This was in New South Wales, and a few months later gold was discovered in Victoria. Because of the discovery of gold the population of those two States increased rapidly. People came in flocks from other countries, especially from nearby places such as New Zealand. Those people, too, were all fine rugged types. When gold was first discovered in Western Australia it made little difference to this State, but when gold was discovered in Coolgardie in 1892 and in Kalgoorlie in 1893, people came to this State in larger numbers. The records show that gold was first discovered in the Kimberleys in 1886, in Yilgarn in 1887, in Pilbara in 1888 and in the Murchison in 1891. Because of this discovery of gold a fine type of person migrated to the State.

The people were adventurous and rugged and a large number of them were cultured. They thronged the roads that they made themselves over the spinifex, through the bush and through the auriferous country of this huge State of ours—a State of

just on a million square miles. These people prospected the country thoroughly; they went through uncharted areas not knowing whether they would be able to find water or whether they would encounter opposition from hostile natives. They were intrepid people, drawn here by the magnet of gold. Those are the people who did much to develop the outback areas of this State and I am sorry to say that we do not seem to have the same gold-minded types in these days. Even the Governments of today are not gold-minded. The Commonwealth Government has not been gold-minded for a number of years; if it had been, the mining industry, which has done so much for the development of Australia, would be in a better position today.

On the other hand, Sir John Forrest was a gold-minded man and a water-minded man, too. He served his apprenticeship in the country areas under difficult circumstances. Sir John was one of our greatest explorers and one who knew the value of water to people in the outback parts of the State. Consequently he was anxious that the goldfields should get a water supply and through his efforts a water scheme was evolved. The scheme, at that time, was the greatest in the world. Although Sir John Forrest was the statesman who authorised the construction of the scheme, I want to give Mr. Nat Harper credit for what he did. I was speaking to some old prospectors on the fields, not long ago, and I said to them, "Do you know Nat Harper?" They said, "Yes, he was a very hard man." Mr. Speaker, I will not repeat the adjectives that they used because if I did you would probably call me to order. But they said he was the instigator of the great Goldfields Water Scheme.

It was Nat Harper who pointed out to Sir John that if water could be pumped 100 yards, 200 yards or a mile, it could be pumped any distance simply by installing sufficient pumps to carry it over the longer trail. Without detracting in any way from the worth of the service of C. Y. O'Connor, who was a great engineer and did a fine job, I assert that that officer was not at that time too optimistic about pumping the water all the way to the goldfields. Therefore Sir John, on the advice of a man who had practical experience—namely, Nat Harper—was able to provide this water supply to the goldfields. These old prospectors told me that was the real reason why that water scheme was put through so soon.

In addition, Sir John Forrest was a strong man, for had he had to depend wholly and solely on a majority in Parliament, that water scheme probably would never have been brought to fruition. I do not owe Nat Harper anything, but I always like to be fair and just and give credit where it is due. Although he has always been in opposition to Labour and has

always been a hard man to work for, on the other hand he had a lot of practical experience. Because of this, he was able to persuade Sir John Forrest that it was possible to have water pumped through to the fields. Hence we have the water scheme.

I feel that the Government is harassing the goldmining industry because as I have pointed out, the only commodity that has not gone up in price is gold. Transport charges have gone up, and railway freights have increased considerably. This has made it very difficult for the mining industry because it cannot pass on costs to the consumer, but has to bear them. In consequence present conditions are having a bad effect, not only penalising the goldmining industry itself, or I should say the mineowners, but also those workers who have their homes and are already established on the Goldfields. They have their assets; they have spent their capital in building their little homes.

If something is not done for the goldmining industry, the mines will have to take out the richer ore in order to carry on and, in consequence, the lower grade ore will be left in the ground. Besides this, the duration of the goldmining industry will probably be cut down by 50 per cent. This would be very sad for Western Australia, because today the State is producing over 70 per cent. of the gold recovered in Australia, which is very considerable in the aggregate. We talk about decentralisation, but I say it is a misnomer. There is no such thing as decentralisation. Western Australia was developed on the basis of centralisation and the only tangible effort respecting decentralisation apparent in the State is nothing more than lip service.

There is nothing practical being done in that respect and I say, very reluctantly, that if we do not take action in the matter we shall see a greater population in the metropolitan area than we have today. Out of a population of about 560,000 persons, over 300,000 live in the metropolitan area. Something must therefore be done. Not only does the Government penalise by present-day methods the various inland towns and people living in the country areas, but even ports that are the natural outlets for the trade from the outer districts are being penalised on account of the system that has operated on the basis of centralisation from the inception of the State.

To give the House an idea of what obtains, let us consider the position regarding second-class goods handled by the railways. The cost per ton per mile from Fremantle to Norseman, a distance of 477 miles, is 6.52d.; from Esperance to Norseman, a distance of 125 miles, the cost per ton per mile is 12.71d. Therefore we see that on a per mile basis, trade from Esperance, which is a natural port, is penalised to the extent of 100 per cent. If

we want a tapering-off system to operate on the railways, I daresay we could have it for Fremantle, because it is a natural port for the metropolitan area and a huge district outside that area. But the outer ports have to be developed, and they should not be penalised. They are penalised on the present basis because with the tapering-off system, the outer ports that have not such great distances to their hinterland must pay the difference.

I am sorry that you, Mr. Speaker, will not allow me to have some figures printed without my reading them to the House. In consequence, I shall have to quote the details because I should like them to appear in "Hansard" so that the people in the country may appreciate the position concerning the railways and the outer ports under the system now adopted. The figures are as follows:—

FREIGHT CHARGES.

	Per Ton.		Per Ton
	s. d.		Per Mile.
			d.
Fremantle to Kalgoorlie			
(392 Miles)—			
Wheat	39	3	1.2
Manure	44	3	1.35
Firewood	44	3	1.35
Miscellaneous	44	3	1.35
Special Grain			See Wheat.
Grain	44	3	1.35
"A" Class	67	2	2.06
"B" Class	92	0	2.84
"C" Class	129	8	3.97
Wool			See "C" Rate.
1st Class	183	9	5.62
2nd Class	237	11	7.28
Fremantle to Norseman			
(477 Miles)—			
Wheat	40	5	1.02
Manure	47	9	1.2
Firewood	47	9	1.2
Miscellaneous	47	9	1.2
Special Grain			See Wheat.
Grain	47	9	1.2
"A" Class	73	5	1.85
"B" Class	101	6	2.55
"C" Class	143	10	3.62
Wool			See "C" Rate.
1st Class	201	6	5.07
2nd Class	259	2	6.52
Esperance to Kalgoorlie			
(258 Miles)—			
Wheat	37	5	1.74
Manure	37	9	1.76
Firewood	37	9	1.76
Miscellaneous	37	9	1.76
Special Grain			See Wheat.
Grain	37	9	1.76
"A" Class	57	5	2.67
"B" Class	78	9	3.66
"C" Class	107	4	4.99
Wool			See "C" Rate.
1st Class	149	3	6.94
2nd Class	196	9	9.15
Esperance to Norseman			
(125 Miles)—			
Wheat	26	10	2.58
Manure	26	10	2.58
Firewood	26	10	2.58
Miscellaneous	26	10	2.58
Special Grain			See Wheat.
Grain	26	10	2.58
"A" Class	43	9	4.2
"B" Class	57	6	5.52
"C" Class	77	7	7.45
Wool			See "C" Rate.
1st Class	97	5	9.35
2nd Class	132	5	12.71

Those figures will indicate to anyone who studies them that our outports have been penalised for the sake of a tapering-off system working from Fremantle. If we want to taper our freights to a greater distance, it should be done from the capital only, because that is the port which serves the metropolitan area and the hinterland. To penalise the outports to the extent indicated in the figures I have read is quite unfair.

Such penalisation affects goldmining costs, because Esperance is a natural port; and if we had a proper basis for our transport so far as outports are concerned, it would make a difference of pounds in freights to the goldfields. As I have indicated, goldmining costs cannot be handed on; and I feel that the Government, instead of talking about these things and giving us lip service, should do something tangible and effective, something which will be helpful to country people.

There are still vast resources of gold-ore in our mines. There are millions of tons of proved gold-bearing stone. Geologists say that great payable ore bodies still exist, both as extensions of known ore bodies and in the way of deposits yet undiscovered. Huge ore bodies are being found in many areas. I suppose that today Norseman is the second best goldfield in Western Australia, and in recent months ore bodies have been struck that were never thought of a year or two ago. They have assayed as high as seven ounces to the ton. Consequently my little goldfields town of Norseman appears to be in a very promising position indeed as regards gold production.

The gold potential of this State is very encouraging; but I am afraid that, with our costs rising all the time and no assistance forthcoming for the Goldfields, the life of the fields will be considerably reduced. Yet gold today is very valuable. It is really a counter against the dollar. If one had a sovereign in one's pocket, one could change it anywhere in the world. Gold is a magnet to people in the back country and, in the early days, venture-some people went to the fields not for fun but for the acquisition of wealth. They were prepared to take risks. My friend the member for Leederville was on the Goldfields in the early days, and he would not deny that he met there some of the best people he has ever come across. The same applies to the member for Murchison. I remember him when he was a fine-looking young fellow.

Mr. Marshall: What is wrong with me now?

Hon. E. NULSEN: He is not nearly so good looking as he used to be, but he is still quite handsome.

Mr. J. Hegney: You must not reflect on members!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I can remember when he and I had some very good times together. On the Goldfields one always made real friends. It was no trouble in those days to borrow a fiver or a tenner. People always knew that they would get it back. Today it is dangerous to lend sixpence, because one cannot always be sure of having it returned. Some fine people were attracted to this country by the great lure of gold. They did not come here for sport but, to acquire real wealth. Some of them obtained it; others did not. The member for Murchison and I were unlucky in that respect.

Many people settled in our agricultural areas in those early days and did yeoman work there, and pastoral activities were accelerated by those people who first went to the Goldfields. Before the end of last century, there were 35,000 people in Kalgoorlie. Not as many live there now. Between Boulder and Kalgoorlie I think there would be something between 25,000 and 27,000 people. The goldmining industry has produced a little under 54,000,000 ounces of gold, worth over £320,000,000. Gold has yielded more in pounds, shillings and pence than any other primary product in Western Australia—even more than wheat, wool and coal.

Mr. Yates: Is goldmining expanding or diminishing?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Under present conditions, it is diminishing. If goldmining were on the same basis as any other primary production in Western Australia, I venture to say it would be on the up-grade.

Mr. Yates: You mean by an increase in the price of gold?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, comparable to that enjoyed by other primary products, or even, with the increase in costs. I cannot understand why something has not been done in this State for the industry. Canada has liberalised the aid given to goldmining, and I think the subsidy there is £1 10s. an ounce. South Rhodesia has also given liberal aid to the industry, and South Africa provides a bonus of £1 18s. for 40 per cent. of the gold produced. If the goldmining industry here were given the same consideration, there would be a subsidy of £2 7s. 6d. for 40 per cent. of the gold produced, which would be exceedingly helpful to this State, seeing that Western Australia produces over 70 per cent. of the gold mined in Australia.

Before the International Monetary Fund came into being, about 1,000,000 oz. of gold were devoted to the purposes of fine art. It is reported that in 1950, there were 7,200,000 oz. so employed, but I refuse to believe such a large amount of gold was used in that way. In addition, 4,200,000 oz. were sold to the Middle East, Hong Kong, India and China. So it will be seen that more than half of the pro-

duction of the world, excluding Russia, has received a premium. But Australia has not received any of that premium. Why? The only answer is that Governments in Australia have not been gold-minded. Seemingly the South African Government and the Governments of Rhodesia and Canada are gold-minded, because they have done a good deal for the goldmining industry in those countries. We have not done anything at all up to date. The only thing we have done is to increase transport charges and the cost of mining requisites.

I know the Acting Premier has contacted Sir Arthur Padden, and all sorts of promises have been made. But nothing has been done. Our Premier met mine-owners in London and the promise was made that something would be done. I suppose he got in touch with the Acting Premier at that time; but all we have had so far has been words, and nothing tangible. I do not know what we are going to do about the mining industry, unless somebody who has the power to do something awakens to a sense of responsibility.

I attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the Chamber of Mines and listened to some good speeches. Our Minister for Mines made a very apt speech and we had an address from the president of the Chamber of Mines, who told us definitely that the mining industry was not prosperous. He said it was quite healthy, due to their own wise planning, but he did infer that the industry would have a longer life if it were put on a basis comparable with that of other primary industries in this State. While lack of manpower has been the cause of worry to the goldmining industry, the employees engaged in the mines have extended nothing but cordiality and co-operation to the managements. There is nothing to complain about in relation to the employees in the mining industry at the present time. They are working harmoniously and are doing their best, together with the managements, to take out the lowest possible grade of ore in order to give the industry continuity of life. Rising costs have had, of course, to be contended with.

I believe that the International Monetary Fund is the cause of the trouble. We, in Australia, seem to be the only people in the British Empire who have not taken some advantage of the position. As I have previously pointed out in this House, countries such as Canada, South Africa and Rhodesia have done a great deal to help their mining industries. Russia is better off than any other country in the matter of gold production because it is not hindered by the International Monetary Fund. It has a free market and can sell its gold wherever the highest price is available. I believe Russia is today receiving for its gold a price much higher than we are getting in Australia.

The State and Federal Governments should do something to remedy the position and, if the difficulties are overcome, I believe we shall find that more gold will be mined than has been produced in the past. The industry is entitled to some premium sales on gold, and should take advantage of the price available, just as have certain parts of the British Empire and Russia. Sir Massey Green, who has been connected with the industry for nearly the whole of my life, made a very fine speech and intimated that it would be better for the stabilisation of our monetary system if we were able to convert our paper money to gold. I have not given that proposition much consideration but I do not think it is practicable. However, if it were possible we would have a solid basis upon which to work.

Mr. Marshall: Our standards would be reduced materially if that were done.

Hon. E. NULSEN: That is so, because we have not sufficient gold to enable us to convert all our paper money into gold currency.

Mr. Marshall: Not to provide, at the same time, a decent standard.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Canada, South Africa and Rhodesia have secured premiums for portion of their gold and in this respect I believe Australia, and especially Western Australia, has a real grievance. I hope that something tangible will be done for our goldmining industry because gold is still playing a great part in the economics of the State and is assisting the Commonwealth in the matter of dollars.

I come now to the mining of pyrites, which constitutes another important industry in this State. Pyrites is a major component in the manufacture of superphosphate which, in turn, is the lifeblood of the Commonwealth and is particularly important to Western Australia. We use enormous quantities of superphosphate, and sulphur from overseas is now almost unobtainable because America has not sufficient stocks to allow for export if she is to keep her own industries going for the next 30 or 40 years. Pyrites is used instead of sulphur in the manufacture of sulphuric acid, without which superphosphate cannot be produced.

Pyrites is more economical in use than is sulphur but is not so clean and convenient to handle. In the past most of our sulphur came from the U.S.A. There is a limited amount of sulphur available in Sicily but its importation from that country would be even more costly than from America. There is sufficient pyrites available in different parts of this State to keep our industries going for the next century or so and, by using our local product we can help the British Empire further in its efforts to maintain a satisfactory dollar position. It is a case of American brimstone versus local pyrites and, in the event of war, if we are using the local

product we will obviate the danger of enemy action depriving us of supplies of sulphur.

We must also consider the availability of shipping and I urge the Government to spend a considerable sum of money on diamond drilling in various parts of the State in order to determine exactly what our pyrites potential is. Pyrites has been discovered at Southern Cross, Hill 50, Big Bell and Ravensthorpe, but I think we should look for still further resources and endeavour to find out what can be done in the recovery of sulphur from flue gases produced in the roasting of sulphide ores. The greatest deposit of pyrites so far discovered is that at Norseman. In the old Iron King mine there is a huge deposit which is believed to be large enough, at the present rate of usage, to meet our demands for at least the next century. Dr. B. H. Moore, late Director of the Kalgoorlie School of Mines, said that he thought the Norseman pyrites deposits were worth developing, and his words have proved to be correct.

Apart from the Iron King mine at Norseman there are, in that area, other nodes of similar character and I am convinced that in that district we have considerably more than enough pyrites to meet the requirements of this State for another 100 years. Sulphur produced from pyrites is just as effective as and cheaper than imported sulphur for the manufacture of the sulphuric acid that is essential in the production of artificial manures. Everything possible should be done by the Government to exploit our pyrites deposits.

The Willcock and Wise Governments, together with the McLarty Government, have done everything possible to assist in the development of this industry. The Willcock Government, in particular, was greatly troubled by the cost of freighting the pyrites to Bassendean for the production of superphosphate. The manager of the mine concerned appreciates the co-operation of the Government and the help it has given in the development of the Norseman pyrites resources. Norseman is conveniently situated, being only 125 miles, on a down-grade, from Esperance, and later I shall refer to that aspect when dealing with the necessity to manufacture all our superphosphate at one centre.

The South Australian company which owns the Norseman Goldmines, N.L., has expended between £500,000 and £750,000 on development and the machinery used for the purpose of concentrating the raw pyrites. Although it is only a small company it has been very helpful to the State in the development of this vitally necessary product. America's output of sulphur has risen from 2,500,000 tons to 7,000,000 tons per annum in the last 10 years. That is a terrific increase and it has been found that, at that rate of production, the U.S.A. would have only 20 or

30 years' further supplies available. In view of that we cannot blame the Americans for the attitude they have adopted, as it is simply for their own protection.

We are lucky in having our pyrites resources and, perhaps, other minerals as well that may help to ensure continued production of the sulphur that is so necessary for many of our vital industries. Many people did not understand the importance of sulphur, in much the same way as at one time quite a number of people did not understand the importance of salt, but we find that when England could not obtain the full quantity of sulphur that she required, a crisis developed and a great deal of her industry was considerably reduced. The amount of sulphuric acid produced is a barometer of a country's industrial capacity. Sulphur and sulphuric acid are necessary for the existence of almost every industry, from steel to the production of fire crackers, and thus its importance can be realised.

The Government, therefore, should do everything it can to exploit the sulphur potential of this State. It takes 1 lb. of sulphuric acid to produce 1 lb. of superphosphate, which means that we must develop pyrites, the major component of superphosphate, to its fullest extent. I have read that we have at least 2,000 years' supply of phosphatic rock in the Pacific and if that be true we have no need to worry about phosphatic rock supplies. However, sulphur is extremely important, and last year there was supposed to have been a shortage of 1,000,000 tons, which is very considerable and which affected industry throughout the world, especially in the British Empire.

"Bring me fire that I may purify the house with sulphur," wrote Homer in "The Odyssey." Homer lived about 800 B.C. Therefore sulphur has been very extensively used from time immemorial for medicinal purposes and in various methods of purification. Money should be no deterrent to the exploitation of pyrites. I am glad that the Government has made available £20,000 for a boring plant to prospect for further pyrites deposits and other minerals.

I am now going to have something to say to the Minister for Works. Although I hold him in high esteem, as does everyone else because he is an extremely nice person, the Norseman people are greatly disappointed with him because they wanted a road constructed for a distance of only two miles from where the pyrites is concentrated to the railhead, and the Dundas Road Board applied to me to interview the Minister with a view to ascertaining if he could spare a mere 240,000 or 250,000 gallons of water for the purpose of solidifying the road surface preparatory to bituminising it. The miners and all concerned were prepared to take the risk, so

I saw the Minister but, after conferring with the heads of his department, he turned the application down. I say to him that he should be stronger and not allow bureaucracy to control him. At the time, the Main Roads Board had its bitumen plant in the district doing other work and it would have taken only a few days to construct the road requested, but now the plant has been removed and the work remains to be done.

One contractor I know has a motor truck, for which he paid £5,000, to do the work. Although that road is in fair condition, it would be much better if it were bituminised. It is used by carting contractors who, when traversing it, create a sort of dust storm, and that street is enveloped in a cloud of dust. The womenfolk, therefore, are unable to do their washing while the trucks are passing unless they persuade the contractors to make a detour to the north of the road and while so doing the women are able to continue their laundry work and get it dry.

If the Minister were to visit Norseman and meet some of the ladies living in the street particularly affected, he would soon realise that he is not as good looking as he thinks he is! I therefore hope the Minister will be the Minister and not allow the head of the Water Supply Department to tell him what he has to do, and so take steps to have the plant sent there, even though it means the machinery having to return to an area where it had already been working.

Next I have something to say about superphosphate. I have given a lot of consideration to this question. I have discussed it with business people in the Eastern States, New Zealand and also in this State, including some of the prominent identities in the agricultural field. Every effort should be made to reduce the cost of superphosphate, and if that is to be done we must concentrate upon manufacturing one article in one place. It is definitely uneconomical to manufacture the same type of product in five or six different places. The firms handling superphosphate today have nothing to fear because they are sure of their profit and turnover. They are not producing sufficient superphosphate to cope with the requirements of this State, and I repeat that we should concentrate upon the manufacture of the product in one place and not in a number of places.

The position today is entirely different from what it was when we were importing sulphur because we now have to use pyrites, which is the main component of superphosphate and for its production we should direct our attention to a harbour or port where exist the necessary facilities, such as water and limestone. If at all possible, we must keep the price of superphosphate down. The only way to do that is to concentrate on its produc-

tion in one place so that there will be no duplication of staff such as chemists, engineers and other experts. It is a commodity we cannot do without. We must have it if we are to continue our primary production. It is actually the lifeblood of the State.

I spoke of the importance of gold a while ago, but I now feel, because of the development that has taken place as a result of the gold magnet, that superphosphate takes first place in the future expansion of this State. After exploring every avenue and visiting Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Fremantle and Geraldton, which are all extremely fine ports, I discovered that they have not that necessary component for the manufacture of superphosphate—pyrites—within an economic distance. This is not political, and I do not want members to think my remarks are in any way parochial. I am a Western Australian and I want to see my State developed on the cheapest possible lines.

There will come a time when we shall have to compete in the world's markets. So we must now look to our laurels and ask ourselves: How can we produce cheaper superphosphate? It is up to the Government to give every consideration to that question. It is of no use being too traditional or orthodox and saying, "The old system that we know will do." Times change, and we must change with them. If any member of this House can point to a more suitable port than Esperance for the establishment of superphosphate works, then I will say, "That is where they should be established." There is no doubt, however, that Esperance is the ideal site because of the proximity of pyrites which is so necessary for superphosphate manufacture.

It is fortunate that Norseman, on a down gradient, is only 125 miles from Esperance which is richly endowed with natural superphosphate requirements, fresh water and limestone. Also, as I have said many times in this House before, Esperance enjoys an excellent climate and affords shooting, fishing, swimming and other sports for employees in their leisure time. It also has a suitable jetty and a 37½ ft. draught of water. Although the production of superphosphate would entail great capital expenditure, it will probably be used for another 100 years and therefore money should be no deterrent if it is to be the means of developing this State on cheaper lines than has been possible in the past. Esperance, apart from being an excellent site in itself for superphosphate works, has a jetty only three-quarters of a mile from the one now in use, alongside which wharves could be constructed.

So I urge the Government to give consideration to erecting superphosphate works at Esperance. As I have already said, there are large pyrites deposits at

Norseman which are 40 ft. wide. They have not as yet ascertained the depth of the deposits. If we were to cart that pyrites from Norseman to Esperance it would cost only a fraction of the amount involved in carrying it, say, to Bassendean. It is only 125 miles from Norseman to Esperance on a down gradient, as against 458 miles from Norseman to Bassendean. Furthermore, it would not cost any more to take phosphatic rock to Esperance than it would to Fremantle, Bunbury or Geraldton from Nauru or Ocean Island in the Pacific, and pyrites could be delivered at Esperance for a fraction of the cost of delivering it at any other port in the State.

It may be that deposits of pyrites will be discovered at Southern Cross or elsewhere in the State. Southern Cross, however, is about 240 miles from Bassendean whereas the distance from Norseman to Esperance is only 125 miles. If works were established at Esperance the railways would be relieved of great pressure and congestion in the metropolitan area. Works at Esperance would also be helpful to the port of Fremantle because cargoes of phosphatic rock, instead of being landed at Fremantle, could be landed at a more suitable port, by which I mean a port nearer to one of the basic requirements for making superphosphate.

Sea freight is the cheapest freight; it is much cheaper than land freight, and therefore large super works established at Esperance should have its own fleet of boats. If it had boats of 10,000 tons or 15,000 tons, the freight on the manufactured superphosphate would be very low, and the super could be carried to the various ports to serve their hinterlands at very low cost. The greatest cost would be for loading and unloading, because I suggest that these boats should be able to steam 300 miles in 24 hours.

Mr. Bovell: If the boats were of 4,000 tons capacity, that would be large enough. A capacity of 15,000 tons is far too high.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I differ from the hon. member. As it would be necessary to ship probably 450,000, 500,000 or 600,000 tons of super a year, it would not be wise to use 4,000-ton boats. The larger the boat, the lower the operating costs, though the initial outlay for providing the boats would certainly be greater. However, it must be remembered that super. is very heavy and occupies relatively little space in comparison with its weight. Members may ask how the super. would be loaded and unloaded. At present we load and unload phosphatic rock, and if we can do that, surely we should be ingenious enough to devise methods for loading and unloading bulk super. We have to get down to tin tacks. Although the cost of large boats would be very high, the outlay would be justified because they would be catering not for one year, two years or ten years but more likely for ten times ten years.

I have mentioned previously that I have explored the whole of the ports of this State and found that there is none more suitable than Esperance as a site for one super. works for the State. I am aware that this statement will arouse opposition. I notice the member for Albany looking my way, and the member for Bunbury is doing the same although he is smiling. I do not think the member for Fremantle is worrying.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I am not.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I still maintain that if we had one works located in a suitable place, super. could be delivered at the various ports and thence to the hinterland at a flat rate and much more cheaply than it can be supplied under the multi-manufacturing conditions prevailing at present.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You think it would be better for the agricultural areas to supply them from Esperance?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You have another big "think" coming.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I have given this matter considerable thought whereas the member for Fremantle has merely considered it recently.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is obvious that you ought to give it more thought.

Hon. E. NULSEN: It is obvious to anyone who has given the question due consideration from a commercial point of view that the super. should be produced at one place. I am convinced that Esperance is the most suitable port and that super. could be delivered from Esperance more cheaply than from any other port, and I should be greatly interested to hear any member deny that statement and back up his denial with figures.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Norseman is not the only place that has deposits of pyrites.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am aware of that. The hon. member has not been in his seat all the time I have been speaking.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Not all the time.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I referred to deposits at Southern Cross and possibly other places. I hope that the Government will explore every avenue for pyrites in order that primary producers may be supplied with their requirements of super. at the lowest possible rate. My remarks about the deposits of pyrites at Norseman might apply to other parts of the State, but I have stressed the closer proximity of the Norseman deposits to the port of Esperance that should be the site for the one factory for manufacturing super. for the State. The iron content of the Norseman pyrites is 62 per cent., which is higher than that at Wundowie and equal to that at Yampi. This iron content could be put to use if we had the one factory for manufacturing super. Then there is the gold content.

Some of the pyrites has assayed as high as 4 dwt. per ton, so that this value could be offset against the cost of manufacturing the super. Other by-products would not be considerable but could be used and credited against the cost of the super.

In 1939 the price of superphosphate was £3 12s. 6d. per ton. Today it is £14 5s. 0d. per ton. I consider that the Government should give serious attention to this tremendous increase. As I have already stated, when there is an assured turnover for the whole of the State, a cost-plus basis is unsatisfactory. We do not know what is being done in the matter of the production cost of super, and some investigation should be made.

The minimum freight charge on super. is 9s. 6d. per ton on an 8-ton minimum load, but the freight from Bassendean to Salmon Gums is 49s. 5d. and to Esperance 52s. 2d. per ton. Such heavy freight charges are unfair to outlying districts. Superphosphate should be supplied to all producers at a flat rate, and that is one reason for advocating a single factory to manufacture for the whole of the State.

There is no reason why agricultural districts that are well developed and favourably situated should get their superphosphate railed for 9s. 6d. per ton whereas settlers in outlying districts have to pay so much more. I think the district of the Leader of the Opposition would fall into the category of those enjoying low freights for super. His is a prosperous district, and probably he would not be averse to helping the settlers at Southern Cross and other distant parts by agreeing to a flat rate for the State. Let me now summarise my points as follows:—

(1) Phosphatic rock could be landed at Esperance as cheaply per ton as at any other port in the State.

(2) Pyrites could be hauled from Norseman to Esperance at the rate of 10 tons to 1 ton against manufacturing centres at a fraction of the cost.

(3) Administration costs could be reduced very considerably by concentrating on one factory as against five because of more efficient management.

(4) There would be a big saving in transport congestion.

(5) It would be a considerable help to our overburdened railways.

(6) Sea transport is the cheapest of freight, especially where large quantities are concerned, such as the handling of 450,000 or 500,000 tons of bulk super. per year.

(7) There is no doubt in my mind that super. could ultimately be landed at a flat rate per ton at all ports in the State more cheaply than it is being produced under the present multi-manufacturing system.

(8) Esperance is fortunate in having plenty of limestone and good water and in being an excellent port, and it has recherche climate, fishing, shooting and swimming as amenities for employees in their leisure time.

(9) Concentration of manufacture in one factory, would help to reduce the cost of manufacturing superphosphate by ultimately saving and treating the 62 per cent. of iron and the residue of the concentrate of pyrites, which should represent a credit against the cost of manufacturing the superphosphate.

(10) The gold content could be recovered from the concentrates. This is no mean consideration and should represent a further credit to benefit primary producers.

(11) Superphosphate will be indispensable for primary production in this State probably for centuries to come, especially in the production of the commodities we eat and wear.

(12) The huge growth in the use of superphosphate in the immediate past few years is responsible for the progress in primary production.

(13) If this State is to be developed at the lowest possible cost comparable with other parts of Australia and other primary producing countries, we must give our primary producers one of the most important aids to production, namely, cheap superphosphate.

Mr. Marshall: You said that the phosphatic rock could be delivered at Esperance more cheaply than at any other port.

Hon. E. Nulsen: No, I said as cheaply.

Mr. Marshall: I think you said more cheaply.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I intended to say as cheaply. I think that all the phosphatic rock now comes from Ocean Island in the Pacific, and it can be delivered to Esperance as cheaply as to Fremantle, Albany or Geraldton.

Mr. Marshall: That knocks the member for Fremantle clean over.

Hon. E. NULSEN: We have millions of acres of light land in this State, and superphosphate supplies will have to be considerably increased—probably within the next few years—to about 700,000 or 800,000 tons a year. I am hoping we will find two or three more great men such as John Forrest, Phil Collier and James Mitchell. I am satisfied there is an opportunity for some prominent person in the Government to make a name for himself in the development of our light lands which are just as good, in my opinion, as much of the heavy land that has already been opened up. In some instances, they are better, depending on the conditions, climate, rainfall, and available water.

If what I say is correct, the land will be used to great advantage. I am hoping, too, that our forests will be extended. We have millions of acres of country along the coast that could be developed for forestry, but not much has been done in that regard. As superphosphate should be a bit cheaper by using pyrites, which is just as effective as sulphur, instead of imported sulphur, then the development of which I speak should go on. I wish to conclude by saying that I hope the Government will give due consideration to the establishment of a superphosphate works—and I do not care at which port it is erected so long as it is the most suitable one, and our primary producers get a reduction in costs of superphosphate. We must give them this commodity as cheaply as we can.

This matter is not political or parochial, because it is too big; it affects the whole State. I hope members will not think that it is political or parochial. If they can prove to me that there is a more suitable port than Esperance for the establishment of these works, I shall be satisfied to be 100 per cent. behind them. I do not want to ingratiate myself with my electors in regard to this matter, but I have been accused of that through the Press. I would not otherwise be mentioning it tonight. I did not think along those lines when I spoke about the iron works in 1936, and I have never done so, as far as my electors are concerned, but if the construction of a new super. works will be good for other electors, it will be for mine; and if we can get cheaper superphosphate, whether it be at Albany, Esperance or Fremantle, let us have it.

I have spoken a lot about the Esperance Downs, and have been preaching about them in this House since 1932. The only thing I am sorry for is that instead of their being called Esperance Downs, they are not called Gabbykal Downs. That is a native name meaning "big water." Esperance has plenty of fresh water, and it was one of the natives' camping grounds. The Esperance district has been kicked from pillar to post, and in consequence the name "Esperance" sometimes does not entice people to go there. If, however, the downs had a new name they probably would go along to see what the place looked like, and if they did, they would see that the sandplain there—if we can call it sandplain—is the best we have in the State.

I was a member of the Light Lands Royal Commission, and I venture to say that that country is better than a lot of the land that the Government is developing today for soldier settlement. Mr. Helms was the manager of the pine plantation there from 1928 to 1931, and he proved conclusively that clovers, Tangier pea, lupins, veldt grass, rye grass and suchlike could be grown there prolifically. In 1932 I told the House what he said, but the

Government, or the people, did not understand the asset they had in the Esperance Downs. I think the reason why that area has not been developed is because it is so remote, and the departments have been reluctant to carry out experimental work there.

But, I am glad to say that we now have an experimental farm at Esperance. Some work has been done, and it has proved conclusively the truth of what I have said here down the years, namely, that the plains or downs are prolific. As members will recall, Sir Charles Latham was chairman of the Light Lands Royal Commission. When I approached him, he was reluctant to visit the Esperance area, but on his return—I had nothing to do with his report—he painted a glowing picture of the possibilities and potentialities of that area. Over the last year or two in this House I have heard a great deal about the Great Southern, the South-West and the North-West, but nothing of a tangible nature has been said or done with regard to the Esperance Downs, except that a little branch experimental farm has been established there.

It is no wonder that in the early days the people of the Goldfields wished to be separated from the rest of the State and asked, failing that, for Federation. But for the people of the Goldfields, we would not have had Federation, or at all events it would not have been obtained by a majority vote at that time. Esperance is the natural port of the Goldfields and could serve approximately 40,000 people, but we have been unable to obtain a regular shipping service for that port. I expected someone to interject and ask why Esperance had not been given a regular shipping service.

The reason for it is that the Ship Owners' Association wishes to concentrate all the freight at one port and consequently would sooner bring the goods straight to Fremantle than call at any of the outports. The result of this has been that we have been unable to have established a regular shipping service to Esperance. Were it possible to have ships call there on a regular schedule, I believe a considerable amount of freight would be available as the saving of railage to Norseman alone is 352 miles, when we compare the distance from that centre to Fremantle with the distance from Norseman to Esperance. The saving to be gained by shipping the freight through Esperance, as against through Fremantle, is 134 miles in the case of Laverton, for instance. As I have stated, Esperance is 352 miles nearer to Norseman than is Fremantle.

The Minister for Supply and Shipping: You always get a ship there when you have the cargo.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The trouble is that one cannot order goods unless there is a regular service. When I was in business

in that area, I could not order fruit, vegetables and so on to be consigned through Esperance as there was no regularity in the shipping service. One cannot run a business unless one is assured of regularity of supplies. If there were a boat arriving at that port regularly each month, business people could make their arrangements and order goods accordingly. Unfortunately, that has not been possible in the past.

The Minister for Supply and Shipping: It cannot be done unless there are sufficient people to be served, as there must be enough cargo available.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Both the shipowners and the Minister know that a service is of no value unless it is regular. There are about 40,000 people in the hinterland of Esperance and all the freight they require, both interstate and oversea, should be dealt with by that port. On several occasions I have made application to have the "Kybra" put back on the south-east coast, but in each instance the proposition has been turned down. The Minister for Supply and Shipping is sympathetic, but she does not do anything about it. She must know that it is only fair that the "Kybra" should be put back on that coast in the service for which it was built. I noticed in the Press the other day an intimation that we would not get the "Kybra" back for another three years. That is not fair to the ports on the part of the coast to which I have referred. I feel that we have been badly treated and have received no consideration.

Mr. Marshall: The "Kybra" was specifically designed and built for the south-east coast.

Hon. E. NULSEN: It certainly was. Although I should perhaps not say this, I believe the Government could express its true feeling by saying, "If the Japanese had that part of the State, we would not have to worry any more about it." The people of the area that I represent feel that in recent years their just claims have been disregarded.

Mr. May: You should take the Minister down there.

Hon. E. NULSEN: She has been there. Even Mr. McLeay has stated that oversea ships should visit the various outports and, if we are to receive the same consideration from our own Minister for Supply and Shipping, she should be able to tell me that the "Kybra" will be put back on the south-east coast for its next trip.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I was talking about shipping and I asked the Minister for Shipping whether it was possible for her to do something about giving us a regular service to Esperance. If we can get a regular service I am quite certain that at least three times as much tonnage

would go through the port of Esperance as is shipped at the moment. If ships call spasmodically it is most inconvenient and unsuitable for people who want to consign goods to or from Kalgoorlie, Leonora, Laverton and other towns in those districts. The people must have a regular service.

It is no use the shipowners saying that they are not getting sufficient business to warrant ships calling more regularly at Esperance. They want centralisation instead of decentralisation because they do not want to put into any of the outports if they can avoid doing so. The shipowners would much rather send their ships direct to Fremantle to unload and so I hope that the Minister will give the outports more consideration. If that consideration is not forthcoming, then I would advocate all our outports being zoned. This has been done in Queensland and has proved a great success. Only about one-third of the population of Queensland reside in Brisbane, the capital city, whereas in Western Australia over half of the population of the State live in or around the metropolitan area.

Therefore, I feel that some consideration should be given to the outports so that we can develop this huge State of ours. It is a wonderful State with great potentialities, but unfortunately we have not done justice to it; it is the human element that has fallen down. The possibilities are still there and those possibilities are just as great as in any other State of the Commonwealth. I have toured the North and South Islands of New Zealand and I would still choose Western Australia in preference to them. However, this State has been badly developed because of centralisation rather than decentralisation. The word "decentralisation" is a misnomer and should never be used.

I have argued on several occasions that we should have a magazine for explosives at Esperance, which is the natural port for the Goldfields. A site for this magazine has already been chosen but unfortunately the magazine has never been built. Consequently the large quantity of explosives required for the mining areas must go through Fremantle, be taken to Kalgoorlie by rail and then on to Leonora, Laverton and other places. I should say that the Eastern Goldfields area uses more explosives than any other section of Western Australia. Therefore I hope that the Minister will heed my request and that something will be done to assist the mining industry by reducing these unnecessary costs on the carriage of explosives.

I am not going to say very much about the mallee country because from Esperance up things are looking very bright. Most of the farmers in that area are doing really well because of the high prices being obtained for their products. But, on the other hand, these people are penalised because of the high freight on super. It

costs, for instance, 49s. 5d. a ton for super. at Salmon Gums as against a cost, in other parts of the State, of 9s. 6d. a ton minimum.

That is the penalty for residing in the country districts. The people who live in those areas do not have the amenities enjoyed by those who reside in the more closely settled parts or in the metropolitan area. Those in the country districts produce the commodities that are required by other members of the community but producers at Salmon Gums, for instance are penalised by having to pay rail freight of 49s. 5d. a ton for super. and for super. in new bags they have to pay £14 5s. a ton plus freight. At Esperance, because the Minister for Shipping will not give us the consideration to which we are entitled, we have to pay rail freight of 52s. 2d. per ton for super.

Mr. Hoar: It is a shame.

Hon. E. NULSEN: All these questions should be considered and without proper amenities it is only natural that the people will want to drift to the metropolitan area. Can we blame them? Of course we cannot. We are not fair and just if we tell people that they have to stay in the country to produce the real wealth unless we give to them the amenities to which they are entitled. The people in the metropolitan area do not have to pay 52s. 2d. per ton railage for super. to grow flowers or vegetables. It is the system that is wrong and I repeat that the word "decentralisation" is a misnomer. There is no such thing as decentralisation in Western Australia.

People will say that I have a flat rate on the brain, as I have been told that I had water on the brain. However, I do not mind because country folk are entitled to at least a little consideration. It would not matter what we gave them because they would still not enjoy all the amenities to which they are entitled and which the people in the metropolitan area have at the moment. The super. companies, backed by the Government, should give consideration to the question of a flat rate charge for superphosphate throughout the State.

There is also the question of a flat rate for petrol and oil. The people in my district pay as much as 4s. 6d. or 5s. a gallon for petrol as against 3s. 3d. in the metropolitan area. Is that fair and right? We do not consider the people in the country, and yet if we put a fence around the metropolitan area the residents in that area could not exist except by doing their own washing; and after all, they could not eat that! The people in the city could not exist if it were not for those living in the country districts. The primary producer is the most important person of them all.

Mr. Hoar: There should not be half the population in the metropolitan area that there is at the moment.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Of course there should not, but can we blame them for coming here? Of course we cannot. We have never given the people in the country much consideration at all and something should be done for them. Of course, they are handicapped politically and in other ways.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Has not your district a good member? The hon. member said they were handicapped politically.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, but he is one who is merely crying in the wilderness. The policy of the Country Party is decentralisation and I have also heard that the Liberal Party is in favour of such a policy, but I doubt it. There must be some influence being exercised somewhere because surely the Country Party should make every effort to implement its policy. I hope that some consideration will be given to the cost of transporting fuel and other commodities that will help those living in the outback to develop the country. For a number of years I have advocated a flat rate for water charges throughout the State and this House has agreed to that; but I will now ask the Minister for Water Supply if he has given any consideration to enforcing the principle.

Has the opinion of this House really been considered and has the Government made a true attempt to levy a flat rate for water? If the rate were made uniform, the extra charge would be extremely small in the metropolitan area but it would be of considerable benefit to country areas especially in some places where residents are paying 10s. per thousand gallons. Again reverting to the decentralisation policy, I notice that school children in the metropolitan area are now being supplied with pasteurised bottled milk. Although I do not object to that—in fact, I am glad to see that they are getting it—I do object to the differentiation that is made. I think that children in the country should also enjoy the benefits of the free milk scheme.

The Minister for Health: They will eventually get it.

Hon. E. NULSEN: If the milk cannot be supplied to all school children, both in the city and in the country, then it should not be supplied at all. In any event, I consider it is a waste of money to provide free milk to school children because I do not think it will cause any improvement in their health. Generally speaking, children obtain sufficient calories and nourishment in their own homes. Also, the scheme will have a detrimental effect ultimately on the supply of butter and cheese in this State.

Mr. Hoar: It will spoil the balance of the dairying industry.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, I agree with the member for Warren. I repeat that if milk is to be supplied to school children then the authorities should not make

flesh of one and fish of another because country children are just as important as those in the metropolitan area. I have no complaint about schools in the area from Norseman to Esperance and I thank the Minister for the consideration he has shown in the past. However, greater attention should be given to the Norseman school because the population in that district has increased so rapidly. That school comprises nine classes, with six classrooms to accommodate them. Two sub-leaving students have to study in the head master's office.

Infants are taught in the domestic science room on four days but have to go outside the school for the last day in the week. Therefore something should have been done before now to increase the accommodation in that school. At present there are 366 children attending, which constitutes an increase of approximately 30 per cent. over the past five years. The playground of the school is extremely congested because the whole of the school ground comprises only half an acre and the head teacher also resides in that area. In view of the large number of children already attending and the fact that Norseman's population is steadily increasing, it is evident that the classrooms available are insufficient.

Mr. Griffith: Did you say nine rooms for 366 children?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Nine classes in six classrooms with a total of 366 children. I do not think the member for Canning can complain about school accommodation in his electorate to that extent. I want to thank the Minister for giving serious consideration to the question of school accommodation in that area because he has promised to make available three prefabricated classrooms. I now ask him: How long will it be before they are erected?

Mr. Marshall: What is the use of thanking him before they are erected?

Hon. E. NULSEN: He has promised them and now we need only the necessary workmen to erect them. I always endeavour to be fair and just to those who are trying to do their best. There is a suitable site for a school on an 18-acre block at Norseman but I want to know when the department intends to start building there. When will these children be taken from merely a portion of an acre in order that they may have adequate playing grounds? In view of the fact that nearly 400 children are affected, the position is ridiculous, and something should be done as soon as possible. The children are entitled to a large school because there is no doubt as to the permanency and stability of Norseman for many years to come. The gold prospects are good and, of course, the production of pyrites will prove a great boon to the town.

I should say that Norseman is one of the most permanent country towns in the outback of this State. I want to thank the Minister for the way in which he has carried on the good work of his predecessor along the trans-Australian railway. Today the schools are quite satisfactory, as is also housing accommodation. That is one of the main reasons why the Commonwealth Government has not had any serious trouble with its employees engaged on the trans-Australian railway. The houses along that line are equal to 75 per cent. of those in the metropolitan area. I would like the Minister for Railways to make a trip along the line and see what the Commonwealth Government has done in regard to housing its employees engaged on railway maintenance and construction.

The Eyre-highway, or East-West-road, has not been maintained as well as it could have been by the Commonwealth Government in conjunction with the State Government. I would point out that there is now a bitumen road right through from Brisbane to Port Augusta. This is very important but there is no bitumen and no sign of getting it for the Eyre-highway. We should have a bitumen surface right through because that road is becoming more important every day. At present something like 2,000 tons of freight are hauled over the road each month, with 30 or 40 vehicles running to and fro. From a defence point of view, in the case of war, the thoroughfare would not be usable in its present state during the wet weather. With the expenditure of a small amount to put it in proper order, we could connect the road up with those in the East. This would be most useful and indeed essential from the point of view of the defence of the country.

The work is also very necessary commercially, because of the trouble experienced in getting our goods across from the Eastern States. Some consideration should be given to the matter and the road should be bituminised from Port Augusta to couple up with the Kalgoorlie-road, or else it could go through Kalbarin, linking up with the road via Wagin and thence straight through. I do not care which way it goes, so long as we have ready access to the Eastern States.

A motor coach called the "Miss Nulbarbor" is now running between Perth and Adelaide, a distance of 3,500 miles for the return journey. The owner of the vehicle is Mr. F. J. Freeman. From the newspaper reports I was glad to learn that the passengers enjoyed their trip and the hospitality extended to them. I congratulate Mr. Freeman on his venture as I feel he is doing something that will help the people in the country, especially those in the back blocks, and his enterprise will also be an incentive to pastoralists to do their best, because they know they are getting nearer civilisation.

But if we had a bituminised road, Mr. Freeman would have competition and unless he put on more buses he would not be able to cope with the traffic offering on that run. In the wet weather I think the chairman, secretary, or engineer of the road board should have power to stop immediately any heavy traffic on the road in order to save it from being cut up. The road has been fearfully knocked about by heavy traffic and it costs a lot of money to keep it in repair. Therefore unless it is bituminised very soon I think power should be given to the people I have mentioned to stop heavy traffic until the road is suitable for those vehicles to run along it. At present the road board has some power, but it has to go through a certain procedure. By the time that procedure has been followed, it is too late and the road has been damaged by the heavy traffic. I would like to state that one trip during the wet weather by heavy traffic might cost the road board or Main Road Department thousands of pounds in repairs.

I have very little more to say, but I should like to add a few words regarding our good old prospectors in this State, about whom I had so much to say in the earlier part of my speech. I do not think they are receiving the consideration to which they are entitled. I know the Government has helped them in many ways, but costs have gone up and their sustenance allowance is only £2 10s. a week, which is very little and not sufficient for them to carry on the good work they have done in the past. In the early days the prospectors opened up Western Australia and were responsible for over £320,000,000 worth of gold being produced.

We are not thinking of their interests as we should. We say, "Oh, well, freights have gone up and we have not put up the cartage on ore, or battery charges." That, however, does not carry any weight with these people; they still have to exist and should get something more in the way of sustenance. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will give some consideration to the claims of these prospectors who have done so much for this State of ours. There is not much I have to say about old-age pensioners. Although they are a Commonwealth responsibility, I feel they are entitled to something more than they are receiving. I know a few on the Goldfields who have been knocked about a good deal, and I cannot conceive how they exist.

Mr. Bovell: Mr. Menzies announced a substantial increase tonight for old-age pensioners, etc.

Hon. E. NULSEN: In that case, all I will say is that I am delighted to hear it. Those people on superannuation are, I think, entitled to another 25 per cent. increase on the amount they receive, as it is impossible for them to carry on as they are doing. I notice that under the 1871 Act there are 460 persons on pensions, 321 of whom are under the £360 limit. I

think, therefore, that they, too, are entitled to some consideration, and the Government should give them another 25 per cent. increase. I was going to say a good deal about natives but I shall leave it until the Estimates are brought down. In passing, however, I would like to say that natives are getting better treatment and, although I do not know him very well, I know that Mr. McDonald has done more in three months for these people in the North-West than we have done in 50 years. The natives are doing a good job in the production of minerals and they are now permitted to enjoy some of the dignity which was not allowed them in the past.

There has also been increased interest in the near-whites and I feel quite joyful that the natives of this country and the near-whites are receiving more consideration now than they did for a long time past. I hope to see them placed on the same footing as the white people of this State before very long. I feel that if they are permitted to enjoy with dignity the privileges of citizenship and to exercise the mental powers they have, they will be equal to their responsibilities, and in time to come they will be worthy citizens of the State. As I have said, we have done more for them lately than ever before and I think the day will come when we will wonder how they existed and put up with what they did as a result of the exploitation of them by the white people of Western Australia and Australia generally.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [8.0]: During the past few weeks, we have mourned the loss of one who contributed more than any other Western Australian to the advancement and progress of agriculture in this State. I refer of course, to the late Sir James Mitchell. His work in establishing our wheatgrowing industry is well known, and his later achievement in inaugurating the dairying industry is equally appreciated.

Today the dairying industry is facing the greatest crisis that has ever confronted any primary or secondary industry in this State. During the last three years I have, from my place in this House, issued warnings about the parlous state into which the industry was drifting. When I was speaking some two years ago of the conditions that prevailed in the industry at that time, the then Leader of the Opposition (Hon. F. J. S. Wise) interjected, "Yes, and there will soon be no dairying industry." As regards butterfat production, that is almost the case now. With the passing of the years, the architects of the scheme, which has been built up at great cost and great personal effort on behalf of those engaged in the industry, must feel that the present conditions are a grave reflection upon the political interference with the industry throughout Australia.

Mr. Hoar: What do you mean by that?

Mr. BOVELL: The dairying industry costs tribunal has found that to produce a pound of butter costs so much and has recommended that this amount be paid to the producer, but through the action of certain Governments, this has not been done. I hold the Government of New South Wales primarily responsible for the unfortunate position that has arisen in the industry throughout Australia.

Mr. Hoar: What has this Government done?

Mr. BOVELL: I give credit to the Labour Government in Tasmania for the attitude it has adopted in this crisis.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: New South Wales is certainly looking after its people.

Mr. BOVELL: I wish to commend the praiseworthy actions of the McLarty Government in recent days. Negotiations between the States and the Commonwealth having fallen down, this Government has decided to take whatever action is within its power in the best interests of the producers. That is what the State Government is doing and is prepared to do.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: What action is within the power of the State Government? That is what we would like to know and so would the Premier, I think.

Mr. BOVELL: The position with regard to the equalisation scheme existing in the industry is somewhat involved. Here again I charge the New South Wales Government with endeavouring to upset the scheme.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: I fear that that Government would resign if it heard your speech.

Mr. BOVELL: That scheme has been achieved only as the result of very great efforts on the part of the dairy farmers throughout Australia. To prejudice the scheme would be to take a very serious step, and I trust that if wisdom in the interests of the producers of butterfat does not prevail in the discussions being conducted in Canberra at the moment, the State Government will find some way to enable it to assist these producers without disturbing the equalisation scheme.

For some years the youth living in the dairying districts have been drifting away from the industry. The long hours, the arduous work and the lack of suitable remuneration have been responsible for driving them into other avenues of employment, and the industry in the lower South-West is being carried on mainly by producers who have been so engaged for 20 or 30 years. The Governments of Australia are under an obligation to returned servicemen who have engaged in the industry. They have been rehabilitated under the Servicemen's Land Settlement Scheme, and I believe that these men are suffering a severe reverse. They find it difficult to

see any promise in the future unless a solution of the problem of ensuring them a just financial return for their labours can be arranged without further delay.

I cannot emphasise too strongly the very desperate position of the butterfat industry at the moment. For a considerable time I have been personally engaged in trying to get those responsible to appreciate the problems confronting these primary producers. Some four or five months ago I visited the Eastern States and interviewed, amongst other Prices Ministers, the Premier of South Australia, Mr. Playford. South Australia and Western Australia are similarly placed as regards the dairying industry. Development has not been carried to the extent enjoyed by the industry in Victoria and New South Wales, and we suffer considerable difficulty in the production of butterfat inasmuch as individual holdings are not developed sufficiently to provide a cow unit capable of ensuring adequate remuneration to cover the cost of production. I have endeavoured to co-operate closely with Western Australian representatives in the Commonwealth Parliament. I shall read portion of a letter addressed to Senator Piesse under date the 3rd May, 1951, in which I suggested that the Minister for Agriculture in the Commonwealth Parliament should request the State Prices Ministers to confer with a view to—

(1) Ascertaining that production costs are based upon working hours to conform with present-day industrial standards.

(2) A review of production costs being held quarterly and not yearly as at present.

(3) As butter is classed in the "C" Series, which price is taken into consideration for basic wage adjustments, the Commonwealth Government to continue to subsidise on a consumer basis. Should production costs be above what is considered an economic subsidy, the State Prices Ministers to pass this amount on to the consumer by increase in the price of butter.

(4) That a special survey be made of the dairying industry in Western Australia where development has not reached the standard enjoyed in the Eastern States. (I understand South Australia is similarly placed to Western Australia.)

The Commonwealth Government to take immediate action to stabilise the dairying industry on at least a 10-year basis.

As we know, the Commonwealth Government announced that it had a plan for stabilising the dairying industry throughout Australia on a six-year basis, but through the action of certain Governments—and I repeat that I believe New South Wales is the main offender—the whole of the dairying industry and the butterfat production of Australia are being thrown

into a chaotic condition. I understand that the Premier of South Australia is meeting the other Premiers with a view to submitting a further proposal to the Commonwealth Government in an endeavour to gain a solution of the problem.

I trust that before the Premiers return to their respective States, a solution will be found that will be acceptable to butter-fat producers, so that the dairying industry, which has been built up in this State at great personal effort by the producers, will continue to progress. If conditions are not altered forthwith, the dairying industry must decline. Up till 1948—and I quoted these figures in the House some three years ago—the production of butter-fat from 1918 showed a gradual increase except for fluctuations during the war years. The peak production was in 1948. Since then, the industry has been in a state of flux, and each year the producers have not known what they would receive. It must be remembered that the Menzies-Fadden Government did, after delay by its predecessor, grant the producers the margin which had been recommended by the costs finding tribunal in 1949.

Mr. Hoar: There never was a refusal by the Labour Government to meet that cost.

Mr. BOVELL: There might not have been a refusal, but it was delayed from the 30th June, 1949, until after the Federal election which was held on the 28th September of that year, if my memory serves me rightly, so that it was left to the Menzies-Fadden Government to pay the producers the amount which had been guaranteed under the five-year guarantee by the Chifley Government. I trust again—

Mr. Hoar: You are too trusting.

Mr. BOVELL: —that the members of the various Governments throughout the Commonwealth will adopt a realistic attitude to this vital problem. We in Western Australia suffer from our own peculiar difficulties, and I hope it will be possible for the producers to be treated fairly and given a proper remuneration and reward for their labours.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [8.15]: My Leader has already made appropriate reference to the death of the late Sir James Mitchell, but I would like to add a word or two in that connection. Sir James will be greatly missed in this State because of his lovable nature, the fact that he was so well known and was really part of the State, and his contribution to the State's development. We regret his passing. We realise, of course, that Nature must have its way and sooner or later we will all pass on from this planet. But when the time comes for a man who has been such a popular figure as Sir James was to pass on, a void is left which takes some time to fill. No doubt he was a great man, well liked and respected by all, from the youngest to the oldest.

I would mention, also, that we have lost two members from this House, one a colleague of mine, the late Mr. Tom Fox. He also was a lovable man, and one who decidedly had the common touch. He was a real friend to working people. He will be greatly missed in the district where he toiled for so long in the interests of his fellow-men. We have lost also the late member for Maylands, Mr. Shearn. In his own particular way, he had an interesting style of speech which never failed to impress one because of its neatness. The presence of the late hon. member will be missed from this House. It was obvious during the Maylands by-election campaign that he had served his electorate well because people of different political faiths readily expressed the belief that he had served them all particularly well, irrespective of their party colour. But such is life—men come and go. We miss them when they depart from the stage, but their places are taken by others who quickly endear themselves to various sections of the community, according to their lights.

I desire to refer to one or two comparatively minor matters before I proceed with what I regard as a vastly more important one. First of all, I want to remind the Government that the position in connection with the Increase of Rents (War Restrictions) Act is not forgotten. The Acting Premier said that in good time steps would be taken by the Government to amend the Act. He gave no indication of what he meant by "good time," but I would assume it to mean in sufficient time to enable both Houses to give proper consideration to such amendments so that if they are to be agreed to, their effect will be felt before the 30th September when the mass evictions will take place, unless something is done.

Mr. Graham: Notice of such a Bill was given this afternoon.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If that is so, I missed it. I am glad to hear that a Bill is to be introduced, and I hope it will be sufficiently comprehensive to enable us to make a proper amendment of the Act, and thus prevent the abuses which are so evident. Last Saturday morning I heard, from one of the wireless stations, an appeal for accommodation for a man, his wife and five children who were being evicted under this Act. The youngest child was five months and the eldest 14 years of age. I wondered how it came about that, in view of the statement of the Minister that these evicted persons would be provided for by the Housing Commission, it was necessary for a costly advertisement of that kind to be put over the air.

I have not been able to ascertain the particulars but, to hazard a guess, it would seem to me that the accommodation offered to this family was probably the three-roomed type which has been erected at Melville and which, of course, could

not by any stretch of the imagination accommodate successfully seven persons—a man, his wife and five children. I hope the Government will not just say to such people, "If you are not prepared to take one of these three-roomed places, you cannot have anything." Where the family concerned is larger than the average, some attempt should be made to provide additional accommodation because, after all, we must encourage people to live according to decent standards, and there is such a thing as morality to be fostered.

If we force people with large families into accommodation containing a limited number of rooms, so that boys and girls must all turn in together—their ages ranging from under one year to 14 years—we are going to strike trouble. I hope some consideration will be given to the larger families when evictions are taking place. I stated earlier this session that when the Premier and the Minister for Housing were quoting figures relating to evictions they were misleading the people. I repeat that statement now and am prepared to back it up with some argument.

Figures were quoted here to show that there were 77 eviction cases in which orders had been made by the court. Subsequent figures were quoted to show that it had been necessary for the State Housing Commission to provide for only 17 of those cases. There is nothing wrong with the figures, which are absolutely correct, but, presented in that way, they convey an entirely wrong impression. To begin with, it must be said that although 77 eviction orders have been made by the court there is a further step to be taken before actual evictions take place. I refer to the issuing by the Clerk of Court of a warrant which causes the bailiff to take action.

At the request of the magistrate in a number of these cases—I was present in the court and heard the request made—a number of the owners who succeeded in getting these automatic eviction orders agreed not to take immediate steps to have warrants issued, in order to give the Housing Commission time in which to provide accommodation. Instead of the Housing Commission taking advantage of the time that was allowed, it did the very opposite. Its attitude is: "Although an eviction order has been made against you and we will make a note of it, we are not prepared to provide any accommodation until a warrant is actually taken out and the bailiff threatens to take action."

It signifies nothing for the Minister to say that he has the keys of 32 places in his pocket and that only 17 of them have been required. If all the owners who are entitled to take out warrants had not been importuned by the magistrate not to do so and had taken out the warrants, those 32 keys would not have been nearly sufficient to go round. It is only because the magistrate asked the owners to allow the

tenants a breathing space that the Housing Commission was not called upon to provide them all with accommodation.

At the first threat of any legislation that might be of a retrospective character, one can expect the owners who have been successful in obtaining eviction orders to apply forthwith for warrants and there will then be an avalanche of requests for the Housing Commission to provide accommodation for evicted families. In fact, although 77 eviction orders were issued, only 21 warrants were taken out and of the 21 people affected only four were able to find accommodation for themselves, whereas the figures quoted by the Minister and the Premier would give the impression abroad that more than half the people affected were able to find alternative accommodation.

The fact, as I have said, is that only four out of 21 were able to find places for themselves and the other 17 had to be provided for by the Housing Commission. If that percentage is maintained with the remainder of those likely to be affected, the 32 keys, which the Minister has dangling in his pocket, will not be anything like sufficient. There have been some 400 notices issued under the Act and most of them will come before the court on the 30th September. As eviction orders are more or less automatic, we can expect some hundreds of warrants for eviction to be put into operation unless the proposed legislation prevents such evictions from taking place, and that remains to be seen.

I cannot see what good purpose is served by quoting figures that do not convey a true picture. Let the Government be honest with the people and state clearly what the situation is. To speak of being called upon to provide for only 17 out of 77 is nonsense. The Government was actually called upon to provide for 17 out of 21, as the Housing Commission refuses to make any provision until the warrant for eviction is actually issued. The Minister knows that to be a fact.

A further small matter deals with answers which the Chief Secretary gave to questions this afternoon. Unfortunately I was called out of the Chamber just when he was about to give the answers, or otherwise I would have followed them up with some questions without notice. My attention was drawn to a statement in the Melbourne "Age" where it was reported that a certain Mr. Vivian Smith had attended a meeting of property owners and had made the statement which was contained in my question. If the Minister was anxious to see a copy of "The Age," I would have thought that the first place in which he would look for it would be the Public Library. If his officers had thought of looking there, I believe they would have been able to peruse a copy of that paper.

The Chief Secretary: From where did your information come?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It was in a cutting from that newspaper, sent to me from Melbourne.

The Chief Secretary: Are you quite sure that by this morning the Melbourne "Age" was available in this city?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would think so. I saw this cutting yesterday.

The Chief Secretary: It came by air mail, of course?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am not sure about that as it did not come direct to me. I received it, indirectly, from the Eastern States. I actually read it in print.

The Chief Secretary: But you have not assured yourself that there is a copy available in the city.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, but I assume that there would be a copy available at the Public Library. However, I am not going to be at cross purposes with the Minister over that. What I am annoyed about is the Minister's weak attempt to show that the member for Melville, and a deputation of the tenants, took the same course of trying to influence him as did the property owners.

The Chief Secretary: No. You could not draw that assumption.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We will see what any reasonable man would think about it.

The Chief Secretary: You read it again.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This was my question—

Did the Property Owners' Association bring any pressure to bear on the Government, and thus provide grounds for the statement which Mr. Vivian Smith was alleged to have made?

Mr. Vivian Smith did not say anything about tenants. His statement was that the Property Owners' Association of Western Australia had compelled Parliament to grant a 20 per cent. increase in rents, the right of the owner to resume his property automatically after six months notice and eviction for sub-letting without permission. The three things which he said had been done, were done. Those three things are provided for in the amending legislation.

The Chief Secretary: Quite correct. I do not deny that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But Mr. Vivian Smith is alleged to have said that this came about because the property owners had compelled Parliament—of course, if they compelled the Government they could compel Parliament because the Government controls Parliament.

The Chief Secretary: It was not said that they compelled the Government. It was said that they compelled Parliament, and that means this House.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is true. He never mentioned the tenants.

The Chief Secretary: No, I mentioned them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Firstly, I wanted to know whether the property owners had brought any pressure to bear on the Government and thus provide grounds for the statement which Mr. Vivian Smith had made. That was a genuine attempt on my part to ascertain whether Mr. Vivian Smith was just talking a lot of hot air or whether he had some grounds for his statement. But the Minister replied—

The Property Owners' Association saw me as a deputation, as also did the Tenants and Home Builders' Association, introduced by the member for Melville, but in neither case was any pressure exercised.

I submit that the Chief Secretary's reference to the member for Melville, and the tenants' association, was done deliberately in order to camouflage the real question and to make it appear that our visit to the Minister was for the same purpose as that of the property owners.

The Chief Secretary: You are drawing a conclusion that no one else in this House would draw. It is because you are suspicious.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I ask the Minister, why was it necessary to mention the tenants at all? I want to know the answer to that and I have placed a question on tomorrow's notice paper. I have asked the Chief Secretary "Will he say when the Property Owners' Association waited on him?" I think the answer will be "Before the amending Bill was introduced."

The Chief Secretary: Of course!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Ah!

The Chief Secretary: Of course!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But when did the member for Melville wait on the Minister?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Afterwards.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Five months afterwards.

The Chief Secretary: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is the analogy?

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Minister was slack in his job.

The Chief Secretary: Since you have asked for an answer, I will tell you that when your deputation waited on me this next Bill was then pending.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, it was not.

The Chief Secretary: Of course it was.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, it was not, because the Chief Secretary told the deputation that it was his idea that this legislation should be given 12 months' trial.

The Chief Secretary: That might easily be so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yet the Chief Secretary now says that legislation was then pending. It does not add up.

The Chief Secretary: There was never any intention on the part of the Government to keep the Bill pending until 12 months later.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I take strong exception to the Minister trying to indicate that the member for Melville and the tenants' association endeavoured to influence him in any way in the provisions of the amending Bill introduced last year. But the Property Owners' Association did; and that is the difference.

The Chief Secretary: If the hon. member wants to see the minutes setting out the result of the deputation from the Property Owners' Association, I will be only too glad to let him peruse them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Why give the impression that the visits of both bodies were similar when this was not so?

The Chief Secretary: I said that in neither case was any pressure exercised.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But when the tenants' association waited on the Minister, the legislation had been passed. So I say that it was a weak attempt to indicate that the tenants and the property owners were in the same boat.

The Chief Secretary: All right. If you wish to have your own way, have it.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: He will have that.

The Chief Secretary: There is no doubt on that point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The next matter with which I propose to deal is one that will lead up to a charge which I intend to make and which is of a serious nature. This Government is comprised of two sections—the Liberal Party and the Country and Democratic League. The more important section, because of the numbers in the Cabinet and the fact that its leader is the Premier, is the Liberal Party. I have in front of me a useful little booklet, setting out the policy of the Liberal Party. This booklet states that it "includes many benefits for you." This was the propaganda issued some years ago when the Government was successful in capturing the Treasury bench. In this booklet, which is intended to cover everybody, are set out objectives of the Liberal Party of Australia and these include this one—

Protecting the people against exploitation.

I want members to keep that objective in mind as I tell the House just what is going on—protecting the people against exploitation! With regard to housing, this was the policy of the Liberal Party—

(1) To ensure at once that sufficient manpower is made available to produce building materials and erect homes.

(2) Accelerate the housing programme and to that end permit no public works, other than those of an urgent nature or those which are themselves related to housing, to be undertaken.

(3) The recognition of the fact that if adequate housing is to be achieved Government action should be primarily directed to providing adequate incentives and due encouragement for the home-building activities of private citizens.

I take it, in pursuance of that objective, that the Government introduced the self-help building scheme. An admirable idea. It was to encourage people who could get the assistance of some expert labour—the assistance of some people who knew a little about building—to enable those home-builders to provide themselves with houses. But if that scheme was to succeed it would mean that such self-help builders would need a fair crack of the whip insofar as available materials were concerned. It is not much good giving a self-help builder a permit to start building if all sorts of things are allowed to go on which will make it next door to impossible for him to get the necessary materials with which to build his house.

Very shortly, after this policy got under way, the Government, without making any public announcement to this effect, allowed any person to obtain releases to build any number of houses for sale. It was of no matter whether he owned 10, a dozen or two dozen houses. The Government said, "If he wants to build some more houses up to 15 squares, he can have the necessary permits to do so." The Government also said to the builders, "You can build as many houses as you like for sale; you need not bother about the persons to whom you sell them. You can sell them where you like and we will not control the price."

The ordinary logical development of that policy would be the immediate growth of the number of privileged persons who could get regular supplies of bricks, cement and timber at the expense of most people who wanted to build only one home. And the more that programme accelerated, the more lucrative the returns would become, the greater would be the activity of the spec builders and the less material would there be to go round, because, as has been said by a gentleman by the name of Mr. W. J. Leighton, who is none other than the president of the W.A. Chapter of the Institute of Architects, the supply position had probably never been worse. On the 27th July, 1951, he is quoted as having said—

"The supply of materials for building," in the opinion of the president of the Western Australian Institute of Architects, "had never been worse."

Yet under the circumstances, the Government has permitted and encouraged spec builders to get as much available material as possible in order to make profits—not to house people, but to make profits.

When my attention was first drawn to this and I noticed that one builder in my district had permission to build 81 houses which he was permitted to sell at any price he liked, I discovered that he has his own brickworks, his own timber mill, but that he does not provide all the materials he needs for the erection of his houses. But to help him along in this profit-making scheme the Government calls him a privileged person and in addition to the output from his own brickworks, he gets a regular allocation of bricks from the State Brick Works to assist him in making profits. Are members aware that on the figures supplied to me by the Minister, 57 per cent. of the State Brick Works output goes to privileged persons?

These privileged persons are group builders, spec builders, the P.W.D., and men with brickworks of their own. They take 57 per cent. of the State Brick Works output, leaving 43 per cent. for the self-help and small builders who are struggling to keep going. The result of this policy is that because the small builders cannot get a regular supply of bricks they cannot keep their bricklayers in continuous work. The bricklayers are not prepared to stay idle, so they are leaving the small builders to go to the big builders with regular quotas and before very long the housebuilding programme in Western Australia will be in the hands of the few big men who are concentrating on spec building and not on building for the people.

Mr. Yates: Do you know the names of some of them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. Plunketts is one.

Mr. Totterdell: We know that; tell us another.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the hon. member will peruse the Votes and Proceedings of yesterday he will see the information supplied to me by the Minister.

Mr. Marshall: Where was the hon. member yesterday?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I know of certain small builders who, after having the permits in their keeping for some months, have had to return them to their clients, saying that they could not get supplies and therefore could not build. They are obliged to cease work because they cannot get the bricks to keep their bricklayers in continuous work and the bricklayers go to the men who have been spoon-fed by the Government in order to keep their teams working. The explanation given to me by the officers of the State Housing Commission was that they had to ensure a regular allocation of bricks to these big builders so that they can keep their men at work, but there is no such concern about keeping men at work for the small men.

Such is the racket of spec building that I know of men who are not connected with the building trade whatsoever making capital available to builders in order that they may go in for spec building, and they are not interested in orders from clients who want houses built to their particular specification. They will not even look at the plans for war service homes. If one sends a man to the war service homes section of the Housing Commission, the officers will inform him that they will go into the matter and they will say, "Yes, we are prepared to build, but you find the builder." I know of dozens of instances—and that is no exaggeration—of men who have been to the Housing Commission and who have been told that the War Service Homes Board is prepared to build a home for them if they can find a builder.

I do not know, however, of one man in the last six months who has been able to find one because the men engaged on spec building are not interested in this type of house and the smaller builder will not undertake its construction because he knows he cannot obtain supplies. That is the chaotic state into which we have drifted as the result of this policy, and I propose to read one letter in support of my remarks. This gentleman writes—

For some time I have been following the rents, etc., and have tried since early 1947 to get a rental home from the State Housing Commission, but have given that hope away as a lost cause, and have gained experience in that regard.

My wife, two children (boys) aged four and a half years and three years, together with myself are living in a room 11 feet by 11 feet, in the home of my wife's parents. All this is well known to the State Housing Commission, and we have been on priority No. 1 since our application was put in and are still on priority No. 1 and not likely to get off it, or any further with it. So about last July,—

And he means twelve months ago—

I bought a block of ground in Kennedy-street, Melville. Had my permit to build a twelve and half square home granted by the Housing Commission, found a registered builder who drew the plans and specifications for me—

Here he gives the name of the builder—

I also have a building loan approved by the Commonwealth Bank. The builders hoped to make a start on the house in February, but have been held up for building materials, first timber to finish the houses that they had started, and then bricks to commence other houses, mine included. They were promised three loads of bricks a week, but when they were due to be delivered they, the builders, were put back to one load a week.

I noticed what you had to say re the spec builders, and I know that I cannot tell you anything new about it that you do not already know, only out this way one builder has built 20 spec houses, and another is building a block of flats (corner of Beaufort-street and Central-avenue, Inglewood). The flats have gone up apace, never a delay for bricks or timber, whilst other places within a short distance of the flats, being built by other builders, are so far and no further stage dwellings.

My reason for mentioning this is the "Mysterious They." A few weeks ago I made, or had made inquiries for me, as to why the builders could not get the materials for my home that the Housing Commission had granted permits for, and was informed that "They" could only grant the permits; it was for the builders to get the materials.

Then a week ago a builder was asked by an architect to build some flats, and when he said he had his hands full of work, and could not get the materials, the answer was, "Build the flats, and 'They' will see you get the materials."

I made it my business to inquire into the price of these 81 houses which are being built at Melville because I had been told that a returned serviceman had been to the Housing Commission to see if he could get a war service home, and had asked if it would be possible for him to purchase one of these houses being erected on the Canning-highway. The Housing Commission told him that those houses were being erected by Plunketts as spec houses and he had better see Mr. Plunkett. He went to see Mr. Plunkett who promptly told him he had better go and see Winslade & Lawrence who were handling the business for him.

So he went to Winslade & Lawrence and asked if he could buy one of these houses. He was told he could. He then said, "Can I buy it through the war service homes section," and Winslade & Lawrence said that he could not. The returned serviceman wanted to know why and was told that the maximum loan he could get through the war service homes section was £2,000 and that these homes would cost £4,000. So that was the end of that. I thought it would be interesting to see what price was put in to the local authority by the builder when permission was being sought to erect these houses. Accordingly I got a copy of the schedule and on looking through it found No. 3793 T. S. Plunkett Pty. Ltd., Canning-highway and Bicton, brick residence, £2,500; the next one I saw was £2,500 and so was the next and the one after that was £2,200. There was another one at £2,600, but I cannot pick it up at the moment, but it is, however, here in these schedules. I then

found a couple of houses priced at £2,700 so I thought that that would give me an idea of what these houses ought to cost and that perhaps there was no truth in the story of the ex-serviceman that the cost was £4,000.

I waited and these houses went up like mushrooms. There was no delay at all, no difficulty in getting flooring or bricks or tiles or anything else. The tiles were there ready to be put on as soon as they were required. The first family moved in and I knew it would not be long before two or three other families occupied these houses. After a fortnight when the second family moved in, I made inquiries and was told that the price of the first house was £3,500; the price of the second £3,750—up £250 in a week or a fortnight! The woman who told me she had undertaken to pay £3,750 said she had heard that when the third one was ready it would cost over £4,000.

Mr. Totterdell: The same plan?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Practically the same plan. They appeared to me to be all on the same plan. Plunketts are not only using their own materials, but they have an allocation of controlled materials from the Housing Commission and an allocation of bricks from the State Brick Works in addition to their own. Their purpose is to make as much money as possible from this house building. One cannot blame them for doing that if the Government encourages them to do it. But how many builders are going to build for private persons and make the ordinary rate of profit when if they turn to spec building they can make £1,000 a house? How long are they going to continue that way?

First one and then another will wake up and will get to the stage when they will not build at all to private order but will all engage in spec building. No wonder there is a black market in bricks and building materials as well. The point is that spec building, whilst it provides houses, does not provide houses for the lower strata of the people who are in such dire need of them. There are plenty of houses advertised for sale almost every day, but they are within the reach of those people who could spend £4,000 for a house. How many working people, however, can enter into a contract to buy a house for £4,000? Therefore, these spec-houses will not contribute to that problem at all; they are using materials which ought to be availed of to build houses for the people who need them.

To the extent that this spec building develops, so will the position of housing the people who are being evicted from dwellings deteriorate. This is creating a very real problem and is putting a premium upon dishonesty. When so much money can be made from spec building it is no wonder that builders are prepared to pay large sums of money to get bricks in order to erect their houses. I would like to quote

from a cutting in "The Daily News" of the 8th August. The heading is as follows:—

Allegations of Black Marketing.

Allegations of black marketing in building bricks were made today by a number of brickyard managers and proprietors.

These allegations were not made by private individuals or members of Parliament but by brickyard managers and proprietors. The quotation continues —

It was said that some builders were prepared to pay up to £20 a thousand for black bricks. (The factory price is about £7 10s. a thousand). The need for an inquiry into the brick trade was stressed by two brickworks managers. One brickyard manager said that cartage contractors bought supplies from small burnt brick manufacturers and sold them to builders who were anxious to complete homes. Another brickworks secretary said that a desperate home builder offered him £50 "brick money" to put his name early on the list of names for future supplies.

Let us see what Mr. Leighton, president of the Architects Association had to say about this question of black market in bricks.

While a 50 per cent. increase in brick production was expected in the near future the supply at present was acute, although bricks could be bought on the "black" for £12 10s. to £20 a short 1,000 or for early delivery.

That is the statement of the president of the Royal Institute of Architects, a man in touch with builders, saying quite openly that bricks could be bought on the black market for £12 10s. to £20 per short thousand. He added—

Black market bricks were obtained through a system of fiddling with the releases by short delivery and possibly also from surpluses.

He knows what is going on. Does the Minister for Housing know? If he does not, there is something wrong with his liaison system, and if he does, there is something wrong with him for not taking action. I have a cutting from "The Listening Post," which is the returned soldiers' paper, of July, 1951.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: His liaison system ought to be all right. He has a returned soldier on it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: "The Listening Post" stated—

The housing committee, it was reported, had given a deal of consideration to speculative building which is now taking place, and in view of a report received that an ex-service man was unable to purchase one of these houses owing to the fact that the price asked for it was approximately twice

as much as that allowed under the loan by the War Service Homes Commission, a communication has been addressed to the Secretary of the State Housing Commission, drawing his attention to the conditions prevailing and requesting that investigations be made and the position altered in this connection in the best interests of ex-service men.

I have seen nothing to indicate that anything is being done in this connection. There are some things that cannot be made to add up at all. The Minister told me that in June of last year there was a lag of six to eight months in the brick supply at the State Brick Works. I think that is correct, because I have a copy of a letter which was written by a constituent of mine to the Minister in which the same period was mentioned. I shall read the letter, which is dated the 19th December, 1950, as follows:—

I received a permit to build a self-help brick dwelling in July, of this year and lodged my priority for bricks with the State Brick Works' Perth office. At the time of lodgment, the 9th August, I was informed that I could expect delivery in six to eight months.

That coincides with the information the Minister himself gave me. When this man lodged his order, he could anticipate a wait of six to eight months. Brick production increased in the meantime. The output from the State Brick Works gradually increased and was greater than when the lag was only six to eight months. Then how could the lag so far as this person was concerned get to 12 months?

It might get to 12 months for persons who lodged their applications subsequently to this man, but if the lag was only six to eight months when he lodged his order and production increased meanwhile, then at most he should not have had to wait eight months, and it would be natural to assume with increased production, he might have got his bricks in a shorter time. To his astonishment, when he went for his bricks, he was told that the lag was two years. That is what upset him and caused him to write this letter to the Minister. The letter proceeds—

In the meantime I carried on with my foundations which I have now completed. Today while in Perth, I made further inquiries as to delivery of my bricks and was informed that I would have to wait two years. Needless to say, I was astonished at this information, particularly in view of the fact that at the time of lodgment of my order, they insisted that I take my wire-cuts as well as my pressed bricks from them, as they said their wire-cut kiln would be well in operation by Christmas and there was no sense in my going elsewhere, to which I agreed.

Also I can remember at about that time the publicity given through the Press as to the easing of building materials and the promise of your Government to have things well in hand for home builders. Now, to say the least, I am extremely disappointed, and I am appealing to you to help me in my problem.

Now see what the Minister said in his reply, dated the 11th January, 1951—

Further to my letter of the 20th December—

The Minister's letter of the 20th December was merely an acknowledgment of receipt of the man's letter—

—in connection with the supply of bricks for your self-help brick dwelling, I regret not having replied previously, but the State Brick Works were on holidays from the 23rd December until the 10th January and, as a result, I was unable to obtain the necessary information.

It appears there must have been some misunderstanding when you called at the State Brick Works office quite recently as it seems quite likely that your wire-cut bricks would be available at the same time as your order for pressed. At the present moment, pressed bricks are approximately 12 months in arrears, and as your order was placed on the 24th July last, you should be receiving yours for that month together with the wire-cut bricks.

Might I suggest that if you desire to build immediately you obtain bricks from yards other than the State Brick Works or Law and Co., both of whom are about the same period in arrears. The Midland Brick Yard, together with the Metropolitan Brick Yard at Orange Grove, can usually supply within two months of application.

I would say, "Oh, yeah!" I wonder where the Minister got that bright idea, that in January of this year those companies could supply within two months of the application being made. In the return which the Minister gave me within the last couple of days, showing the estimated lag, which is only a matter of some six months following this letter, he said, with regard to the Midland company—

Orders not accepted for more than six months' production and then cash is required with order.

If in January they could supply in two months and now have a lag of one and a half years, something terrible must have happened in the meantime. I am wondering what process of reasoning the Minister used when he put this proposition up. This unfortunate man, if he withdrew his permit from the State Brick Works and placed it with some other company, unless he was prepared to buy on

the black market, would have had to take his place at the end of the queue. However, after he had had his permit with the State Brick Works from August until January, the Minister suggested that if he wanted bricks quickly, he should place his permit with one of the private companies and then wait his turn there.

I want members to take particular notice of that, because in something I propose to say presently they will wonder how the man in charge of the State Brick Works at Byford could be so anxious for business in view of the fact that the Minister was trying to turn it away. I would like the Minister, or some other member of the Government, at some stage, to answer the problem in arithmetic: If there is only six to eight months' lag when a man lodges his order, and production increases in the meantime, how can it take 12 months for the man to get his bricks? Has the Minister a grasp of that? The only possible answer is that some persons start to get bricks out of their turn; and that is precisely what is happening.

A certain person, whose name I propose to give, having great difficulty in getting his bricks, and seeing houses being erected all round him, decided he would do something for himself, so he thought he would have a word with the manager of the brickworks—the Cardup Bricks Pty. Ltd.—where his order had been lodged. The man was Capt. Bruce, who is the nautical and ship surveyor of the Commonwealth Department of Shipping and Transport. He is a returned man with a distinguished service record, and he holds a responsible position. He thought it was time to try to expedite delivery of the bricks and get his house going.

The first step he had to take was to find who the manager of the Cardup Bricks Pty. Ltd. was, but his inquiries in that direction met with a refusal. Those in charge of the brickworks would not tell him. So, being frustrated there, but being a man of some resource, he turned to the newspaper where he was able to find a reference to bricks and brickworks. In "The West Australian" of the 12th June this year there appeared, under the heading "Big Rise in Brick Output Expected Next Year" the following statement for which the Minister was responsible, or alleged to be responsible:—

The present State brick production varies from 1,100,000 to 1,377,000 bricks a week. Mr. Wild expressed himself pleased with the progress of the construction of the work under Mr. G. Rapley, of the Works Department. He subsequently visited the Cardup works and conferred with Mr. R. Harrison, the new manager.

So, Capt. Bruce said, "Ah! That is the man; Mr. Harrison, Cardup works," not knowing that Mr. Harrison was attached to the Government works. So, Capt. Bruce then sent off this letter—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is Bruce and the bricks, not Bruce and the spider!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He sent this letter—

Mr. R. Harrison,
Manager, Cardup Bricks Pty. Ltd.,
101 St. George's Terrace, Perth.

There is no mistake about the address. The only thing wrong with it is the name of the manager—

Brick Permit Lot 764 Applecross
for James & Lorene Mavis Bruce.

Dear Sir,

I sincerely request your help re the matter of 23,500 pressed bricks which were ordered with permit, of your firm on 25th August, 1950.

That is explicit enough. He goes on—

After a lapse of 10 months I have been informed by my builders, Hampson and Benton, of Applecross, they are unable to carry on with my home due to the non-delivery of bricks.

It was understood in August, 1950, that there was a six months' lag on bricks and it is indeed very upsetting to see other homes being erected, permits of which have been issued in 1951. I have, from the beginning, been willing to pay cash in advance for the bricks irrespective of the builder's finances, and any consideration by you, Sir, whether it be by personal interview or letter, would be greatly appreciated to further the erection of my home.

That is a perfectly straightforward letter. It contains no improper suggestions, but just an indication on the part of the writer that he wanted to do something to help himself out of this difficulty, because he had been waiting 10 months for bricks and there was no sign of them. The letter was sent off to the Cardup company—a private company. But as it was marked personal it was not opened by the company, but was sent on to Mr. Harrison. As soon as Mr. Harrison opened the letter he would know it was not meant for him, although it had his name on it, because it referred to the brick permits for Lot 764 Applecross, and to an order, which had been lodged on the 25th August, for 23,500 pressed bricks.

So, Mr. Harrison would be able to ascertain, in a matter of seconds, that no such order had been placed with the State works, but he did not, as the Minister suggested in the letter I read, tell this man to go to the place where he had placed his order. The Minister suggested to a man, who had lodged his order with the State works, that he take it somewhere else if he wanted the bricks quickly. The man in charge of the State Brick Works did not send the letter back, nor did he send it on to the proper place, but instead he wrote a personal letter in reply. This

is the letter that I have in my hand and members can see the paper it is written on. It is not State Bricks Works stationery. I have here also the envelope in which the letter came. It is the stationery of Ye Olde Narrogin Inn and is marked "Personal." This is what it says—

State Brick Works,
Byford.
Perth, 19/6/51.

Dear Sir,

In answer to your letter received on the 17th of June, 1951, there seems to be some mistake, as it is the State Brick Works, Byford, of which I am the manager.

The Minister tells me he is not the manager, and so there is some difference of opinion there. To continue—

If I can be of any assistance to you I will see you on Saturday morning, the 23rd of June, at 10.30 a.m., if this is convenient to you, at the above address.

In all my long experience of dealing with Government departments I have never yet found a public servant who put himself out to such an extent as this to take on a job when he was already snowed up with work. Most Government servants will give one reasonable attention but will not go out of their way to meet one on a Saturday morning in order to take on a job which is not their own.

The Minister for Health: Was he not a new man?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He knew there was some mistake, because he said so, and yet he asked Capt. Bruce to come out and see him at the works. Capt. Bruce and his wife went out to the works.

Mr. Graham: Would they not be closed on a Saturday morning?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Apparently they were not, because Mr. Harrison was there and met Capt. Bruce and his wife.

The Minister for Lands: You said it was at the works.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: At the office; they went out to the works.

The Minister for Health: Was it not to Ye Olde Narrogin Inn?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He wrote the letter on paper from Ye Olde Narrogin Inn but where he wrote it, I do not know. Of course, there is no person who, if he received a letter under similar circumstances, would not normally straightaway call in a typist and dictate a letter saying that a mistake had been made and that the letter he had received was being forwarded to the proper quarter.

The Minister for Housing: Do you know whether there are any typists at the Byford brickworks?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know. The Minister for Housing: I can inform you that there are not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does Mr. Harrison correspond with head office on Ye Olde Narrogin Inn stationery?

The Minister for Housing: When the right opportunity occurs I will reply to your scurrilous attack on an innocent man.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have made no scurrilous attack on anyone yet, but have simply stated what occurred and I ask whether these occurrences are reasonable in the circumstances. That is all I am doing. I have made no attack on anyone yet, but that is not to say that I will not do so before I have finished.

The Acting Premier: The implications are considerable.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course they are, to any right-thinking man.

The Acting Premier: I therefore think the Minister's interjection was justified.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not. I will see what the Minister has to say for himself a little later on, because I can assure the House that he does not come too well out of this.

Mr. Marshall: Was he at Ye Olde Narrogin Inn also?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Capt. Bruce and his wife went along to see if they could get these bricks and they were told by Mr. Harrison—so Capt. Bruce tells me—that he had looked for their order and had ascertained that it had not been lodged with his office, but that need not matter because the bricks could be obtained for him. It did not matter! It was unfortunate that the permit was not lodged with the State Brick Works but had been lodged with a private works, yet that did not really matter as the bricks could be obtained, and some offside to Mr. Harrison was present and said, "It is not a case of what you know, but of who you know."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is true.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Capt Bruce and his wife were assured that the bricks could be obtained and this statement was made: "Big builders, who have large teams of bricklayers operating, cannot have their men idle and so it suits them to pay £5 per load extra for the bricks." Capt. Bruce said that he would think the matter over and get in touch with Mr. Harrison later. I ask members what could there be to think over? When Capt. Bruce went away from the brickworks he was in a state of turmoil. He wanted his bricks but did not like this sort of thing. He wanted to know why, if bricks could be obtained, he could not get his, because he had been told by Mr. Harrison—so he says—that Mr. Harrison knew

Mr. Robinson of the Cardup brickworks. Capt. Bruce went to see Mr. Brownlie and told him what he has told me.

According to Capt. Bruce, Mr. Brownlie said, "An anomaly has been created. We will have to get Capt. Bruce his bricks," but when the full story was told Mr. Brownlie felt it was a bit too deep for him and suggested that Capt. Bruce see Mr. Gomme of the State Brick Works. Capt. Bruce went to see Mr. Gomme and was very dissatisfied with the way in which Mr. Gomme received the information. I want members to bear this in mind; Capt. Bruce had everything to lose and nothing to gain by sticking his neck out in this way. Generally, when charges of this nature are brought to light, it is done by means of an anonymous letter and there are some departments in this State which act on information contained in anonymous letters.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Too right they do!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Capt. Bruce did not write any anonymous letter but went in person to make his complaint about what had happened and, when he could get no satisfaction, he came to me and asked what I thought of it and made the request that I should ask the Minister for Housing to allow him and his wife to go to the Minister's office and have Mr. Harrison present while Capt. Bruce detailed what had occurred. I took that request to the Minister and he refused it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What was he frightened of?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said, "He can make his statement to Mr. Gomme," but I said, "He has already been there and is not satisfied that sufficient notice is being taken of this matter." The Minister was adamant and would not allow Capt. Bruce to come down and make his statement and, as we had to take what steps were open to us, we agreed. Then, not more than four feet away from the Minister, I used his telephone and rang Capt. Bruce to tell him that it had been arranged that we should go to the head office of the State Brick Works so that he could tell his story, and there would be an inquiry into the matter. Capt. Bruce asked me over the phone if I would be there. In the Minister's hearing I used these words—

Yes, I will be there.

In the afternoon, Capt. Bruce and his wife met me outside the building and we went in. Mr. Hall was there to take charge of proceedings and the first thing he said was, "Mr. Tonkin. I have decided to hold a departmental inquiry but you cannot be present." Knowing that Capt. Bruce was taking considerable risk in the course he was following, and leaving himself open to a libel action, we declined

to proceed unless Capt. Bruce had somebody there to protect him. So I said to Mr. Hall, "This has taken a turn. The Minister knew I was going to be present and you tell the Minister this—" He said, "I will not tell the Minister anything. You had better tell him."

Mr. Graham: Who is this Mr. Hall?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think he is the Assistant Manager of the State Saw Mills. Mr. Hall gave me the use of his telephone and I spoke to the Minister. I reminded the Minister of the arrangements which had been made for this inquiry and I further reminded him of the fact that he knew I was going to be present and had raised no objection. I said, "All we want to do is to make a statement in the presence of the man who is involved." Could anything be fairer? Capt. Bruce asked that Mr. Harrison be present when he stated what had transpired.

I further said to the Minister, "This is the position. If this inquiry does not proceed I propose to tell the Press this: 'There has been an occurrence at the State Brick Works which has all the appearance of being something that is decidedly wrong. The parties concerned have asked the Minister to let them make a statement in the presence of the man concerned and the Minister has refused. The Minister then arranged that an inquiry should take place and knew that I would be present. Now, the man who is taking the inquiry is disinclined or refuses to proceed if I am present.'" I then said to the Minister, "I will leave it at that." The Minister's reply was, "The ball is at your feet." That was not what I was looking for at all. When Mr. Hall heard me say that, he said, "If you only want to make a statement with Mr. Harrison present, we will take the statement and hold an inquiry afterwards." I said, "That is all we want to do. When you hear the facts then there is an obligation upon you to see what the position is, because it is a terrible thing if what appears to be going on is taking place at a State instrumentality."

I warned Capt. Bruce that he should say only sufficient to indicate that the matter was worth inquiring into and I told him that he should be careful not to provide evidence which would land him in the court without proper protection. Because of that, Capt. Bruce was not as outspoken as he would have been in a court of law. He made a statement in the presence of Mr. Harrison and in my opinion said sufficient to indicate that a proper inquiry was warranted. In due course a report was made to the Minister and he permitted me to see it. As a result of what I saw, I wrote a letter to the Minister, but before I read this letter I intend to read another letter, because it was received before the one I wrote to the Minister. The letter I now

propose to read was despatched to Capt. Bruce from the manager of the State Brick Works. It reads as follows:—

Dear Sir,

Personal and Urgent.

I am greatly concerned with the unsatisfactory position of the official inquiry commenced by Mr. Hall on the 5th inst. regarding your grave accusation—

Apparently he regarded what had already been said as a grave accusation—

against Mr. R. Harrison who is, as you know, although recently appointed, a trusted officer holding a very responsible position in the State Brick Works. When he commenced the inquiry Mr. Hall was under the impression from the import of a conversation you had with Mr. Brownlie, and from your direct statement to me, that you accuse Mr. Harrison of being prepared to accept a bribe of £5. The statement made by you at this office on the 5th inst., contains no reference to any such accusation. I feel sure you will readily understand that I must deal with the matter in a judicial manner and take no action whatever against Mr. Harrison without giving him full opportunity of hearing from your own mouth and answering whatever accusations you wish to make against him. I therefore have no alternative but to ask you whether or not you are prepared to make a definite accusation against him in his presence. You will realise that if you are not prepared to repeat your statement it will be futile for the inquiry to proceed any further. I would therefore be glad to have your reply by the 18th inst. as this matter is serious and must be finalised one way or the other as soon as possible.

As soon as Capt. Bruce received that letter he brought it to me.

Mr. Graham: Who wrote it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Mr. Gomme, the general manager. Capt. Bruce brought the letter around to me and I asked him for a copy. I went to see Mr. Gomme and I said, "You sent this letter to Capt. Bruce asking him to come here to make an accusation." I then said, "If you received a similar letter would you come, because I would not." Mr. Gomme admitted that he would not do so. I said, "It seems to me that you are only trying to get evidence for a libel action."

Then he made this astonishing admission: That he wrote that letter because Mr. Harrison's lawyer had asked him to get a statement from Capt. Bruce. When the Minister showed me the file, sure enough there was a letter from the solicitors for Mr. Harrison showing that they had been asking Mr. Gomme to take this action. So the department, instead of having an inquiry into what happened, set itself out to get evidence which could be

supplied to Mr. Harrison's solicitors, before any attempt was made properly to sift this position. Can that conduct be defended? So I wrote this letter to the Minister—

Dear Sir,

I thank you for letting me see the file regarding a visit made by Capt. Bruce and his wife to the State Brick Works, and subsequent developments consequent upon a statement made by those two persons describing what occurred at an interview between them and Mr. Harrison.

As there is no final comment from yourself, I do not know if you intend to let matters remain as the file indicates, or whether you contemplate some further action. For my part, I must say that I am not at all satisfied.

As far as it is possible to judge from the papers, the inquiry carried out was of a very perfunctory kind. The aim of the departmental officers conducting it seemed to be to get Capt. Bruce to make some statement which could have been passed on to Mr. Harrison's lawyers to enable them to succeed in a libel action for damages. I consider they should have been applying a series of checks in order to make sure that all was right at the brickworks.

To say the least, Mr. Harrison's explanation of the letter which he wrote to Capt. Bruce on stationery supplied by "Ye Olde Narrogin Inn" is most unconvincing. I should like to know if the department has any letters from Mr. Harrison on similar stationery. I presume he has the services of a typist and is given a supply of stamps for his correspondence.

Inquiries might have been made into the quantity of bricks produced and sold, and the destination of such bricks, and if any persons obtained them out of their turn, but there is nothing on the file to say whether this course was followed or not.

I should be glad to hear from you concerning the whole matter, and whether or not you propose to take any further action.

In reply to that letter the Minister in due course said that he was perfectly satisfied with the action that had been taken, which was nil. The set of circumstances which I have detailed is serious enough, but we have other facts to support them. There is supposed to be a lag of two years at the State Brick Works. In my inquiries I found a place which is in course of erection in my electorate and the release for 25,000 bricks was made in May of this year. The permit to build was granted in June of this year and that house, which is being built of State bricks, is practically completed.

I asked the Minister for certain information about persons who were getting bricks in June. The Minister said the information was confidential and that he would not make it available in the House, but I could see it in his office. To my way of thinking it was no more confidential than the information he had already given me. He had told me of the names of privileged persons who could get supplies of bricks. All I asked for were additional names of persons who obtained bricks in June and he said that those names were confidential. I admit it would have been very awkward for the Minister if he had disclosed those names because a number of persons who are watching the position and cannot get bricks would have approached the Minister and complained about so and so. Therefore he kept the information in his office where I saw it this afternoon.

With regard to this particular builder who has commenced building within the last couple of months, I ascertained from the books that his first delivery of bricks in June of this year was 1,750 on the 18th, then he got 1,500 bricks on the 20th, 1,500 on the 25th and 1,500 on the 29th; approximately 6,000 bricks. That will not build a house. But the brickwork of this house is completed and the bricks have been obtained from the State Brick Works—where there is a lag of two years—in two months. Does not that warrant some inquiry in view of what has been stated by Capt. Bruce?

The position as I see it is this: I realised that the statements which I would be making would be serious for Mr. Harrison because in any case he would be placed under suspicion. I wondered whether I should wait until the conclusion of the Address-in-reply debate when I personally could move for a Royal Commission and so keep the matter quiet in the meantime. I then intended to move quickly for the appointment of a Royal Commission. After giving the matter a lot of thought I decided against that course for this reason: If there was going on at the State Brick Works that which the statement of Capt. Bruce and his wife would lead one to believe, then it was wrong to let it continue for weeks. It would be better to bring the matter to light now. I put this to the Government: In fairness to Mr. Harrison and to Capt. Bruce, the Government should immediately appoint a Royal Commissioner to go into this matter.

The distribution of bricks in the metropolitan area and the existence of this black market which is said to exist by the architects and brickyard proprietors require the Government to make some inquiries into the matter and find out who are responsible for what is going on and to see if Mr. Harrison and anybody else in the State Brick Works are involved. The public interest demands that this inquiry be held and, in fairness to Mr. Harrison, I ask that

it be held. It is my duty as a public man to bring this matter under public notice. Much as I would refuse to take an action which could be detrimental to an innocent man, to my mind a *prima facie* case was made out and the subsequent actions taken by the Minister and those associated with him did nothing to allay my suspicions. On the contrary, they increased them.

Now I ask the Government to immediately appoint a Royal Commissioner either to clear Mr. Harrison's character or to prove the existence of this blackmarketing. It is imperative that action should be taken immediately. It would be wrong for this shadow to be hanging over any man longer than is absolutely necessary. I defy anybody to say that the inquiry so far carried out can be regarded in any way as being adequate. All along it seemed to me that the officers of the State Brick Works were more concerned about protecting Mr. Harrison and enabling him to keep Capt. Bruce quiet than in finding out if there was anything in what he said.

I would conclude on this note: Is it likely that a man such as Capt. Bruce, occupying a responsible position, would deliberately run the risk of a court action, with consequent heavy damages, in order to put up some cock and bull story? Is that likely? Of course it is not! But he wished to bring it under the notice of the proper authorities immediately and he lost no time in going first to the chairman of the State Housing Commission and then expressing his desire to go to the Minister. Did that indicate somebody who was going to put up a tale? Capt. Bruce asked that he and his wife be taken before the Minister and that Mr. Harrison be present when they made their statements as to what had occurred. Could anything be fairer or more indicative of the belief of Capt. Bruce and his wife that something was going on which was bad and should be stopped?

The perfunctory inquiry that was carried out would afford no satisfaction to anybody; I am sure it cannot have been satisfactory to Mr. Harrison, unless he feared a proper inquiry. If the man was innocent, I should think he would be the first to say, "Let us have a proper inquiry into this matter. Bring Capt. Bruce and his wife before any Royal Commission so that I can answer the charges." That would have been my attitude if I were in his position, because he knows very well what Capt. Bruce has said; so does Mr. Gomme, who referred in his letter to "a grave accusation" and then finished up by saying he could not proceed any further unless Capt. Bruce would make a statement, which he intended forthwith to supply to Mr. Harrison's lawyer.

This is the unsatisfactory state of affairs surrounding this business. Not only are the State works involved but the distribution of bricks in the metropolitan area as well. I know of one company which held

a man's release for five months; kept promising to supply bricks every week, and at the end of five months sent his release back and told him that if he still needed bricks to go and see a certain carrier. He went to see this carrier, and the carrier told him he would supply him with bricks at £13 4s. a thousand; these bricks were to come from the same company that had returned his permit.

Mr. Marshall: America has got nothing on us now!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I regret very much that it has been necessary to take this course of action. Had the Minister done the right thing, there would have been no need for me to make these facts public in this way. But, in my opinion, the Minister did not do the right thing, nor did the departmental officers, and, accordingly, I had no option but to take this method of trying to force a proper inquiry. I say now that it is imperative in the interests of all concerned that this matter be probed, and properly probed, so that Capt. Bruce and his wife can have an opportunity of stating what occurred, and those involved can be there to answer the statements—and, to my way of thinking, there is plenty to answer.

MR. HILL (Albany) [9.53]: I should also like, Mr. Speaker, to refer to the passing of Sir James Mitchell. I remember on one occasion when it was my privilege to move a vote of thanks to Sir James, I remarked that it was fortunate that Lady Mitchell was not of a jealous disposition because Sir James had two other loves—Western Australia and little children. In that he set a very fine example to us all. After a lifetime of service to the State, Sir James had to do what we all have to do sooner or later—make way for a younger man. He received the recognition from all sides to which he was due, and then he quietly passed to his final rest without any of the suffering of which we see far too much.

I also wish to refer to the passing of two of my personal friends. The late Mr. Harry Shearn was elected at the same election as myself. He and I had many things in common and were very firm friends. Like others opposite, the late Mr. Tom Fox was my political opponent, but he, too, was a friend of mine. One of the characteristics of the British race is that we can be opponents in politics, or, say, on football or cricket fields, but at the same time retain mutual respect in friendship. The only thing we insist on is that each shall play the game, and I think members will agree that Harry Shearn and Tom Fox always played the game. I cannot do better than express the wish that their successors will earn the respect that this House gave to their predecessors.

The greatest problem confronting us today is the threat of war. Perhaps I should say we are at war today. I once heard

two military officers talking, and they agreed that it was better to prevent an enemy from landing than to wait until he landed and then fight him. What is known as Nelson's strategy went further than that, namely, keep the enemy in his own port, or sink him when he comes out. It was this strategy that saved us from Napoleon, the Kaiser and from Hitler. We all know what happened when we were unable to carry out that policy in the Pacific.

Today we must adopt Truman's or the United Nation's strategy, which is to build up such a fighting force that the other fellow will not be game to start another war, and if he should start another war, we want to be in a position to finish it victoriously as soon as possible. We need to maintain our Army, and our defence must be based on the principle that the best defence is a vigorous offensive. An attack upon Australia is a very remote possibility but we must be prepared to do as we have done in the past—to defend Australia in other parts of the world.

Naval warfare will not be the same if there is a third World War. If someone even had told me 20 or 15 years ago that I would see American submarines attacking Japanese shipping from Albany harbour, I would not have believed them. We have to be prepared for a very vigorous anti-submarine campaign. Naval bases such as were needed in the last war are not necessary today, but we must have a port where our biggest ships can be safe from submarine attack. Fremantle harbour is looked upon by naval authorities as a death trap. The costly attempts to build a naval base at Cockburn Sound were a failure.

When the danger was greatest, it was Albany and not Fremantle that was used by our Allies. Two British battleships called at Fremantle in 1945 to take on fuel. There was a little blow on, so the battleships and their tankers steamed down to King George Sound and Frenchman's Bay, where they were fuelled. A hurricane can be blowing without any harm being done to ships in Frenchman's Bay. The Princess Royal Harbour is the only harbour in the State where safe shelter can be had for our larger ships. Because of this fact, I suggest that the State and Commonwealth should collaborate to develop the port of Albany for both naval and commercial purposes.

The general feeling is that I should be a very happy man because a number of the things for which I fought since I have been a member of this House are now becoming realities. I must admit, however, that my main objective is not yet achieved. I hope that before I leave this Parliament we will see in this State a sound transport administration. If we had that, we at the southern end of the State would not have had to fight as we have done for the development of our port, for the development of Albany would have come

automatically. The chaotic condition of transport is due to the fact that we have not and never have had a sound transport administration. Today we have too many Ministers, too many departments, too many ports, too many railways and we are running too many trains.

We can divide our transport problem into two parts—the State problem and the metropolitan problem. Both have the same thing in common, namely, no decent administration. I have a copy of "Road Patrol," the official organ of the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia. This issue deals with the traffic and parking problems in Perth. I shall not read it all, but some portions are enlightening.

Multiple Authorities—No Co-ordination: When we examine the machinery by which remedial measures might be implemented we are due for a shock. There are no less than six authorities involved. Some of them have a hand in the traffic pie—others merely a finger, but there have been occasions when one or another of these authorities have managed to insert a foot. None of them have absolute power and their interests and objectives are often in direct conflict.

A brief outline of their functions and limited powers will illustrate the apparently hopeless prospect of obtaining the necessary co-ordination and broad vision which is a first essential to the long-range plan that this problem requires. The six authorities are:—

- The Transport Board.
- The Perth City Council.
- The Police Department—Traffic Branch.
- The Tramways Department.
- The Town Planning Commission.
- The Traffic Advisory Committee.

Further on appears the following:—

This then is the picture as we see it of our traffic controlling authorities. Even on a ministerial level the control is divided since the Minister for Works, Minister for Police, Minister for Transport and Minister for Local Government, are all involved in one way or another.

Without undue exaggeration, the set-up can be likened to a motor vehicle with half a dozen independently operated steering wheels in the hands of drivers with conflicting destinations and entirely lacking in co-ordination—

That is what the present Government inherited from its predecessors—

One Overall Authority:

This melancholy picture may suggest that the first essential in any approach to the problem is the ap-

pointment of an overall controlling body clothed with executive power, working on a full-time basis and comprising men with experience in all phases of traffic and which will live with the problem.

We do not administer our water supply or electric power facilities through part-time committees composed mainly of amateurs. Our traffic problems are extremely complicated and we require traffic engineers to solve them—

Suggestions have been made to alter this rotten system—

If the situation is likened to a motor vehicle, an R.A.C. Technical Report might read on the following lines:—

The battery (public interest) is not adequately charged, and the spark delivered by the high tension coil (Cabinet) is therefore weak. There is no distributor or timing apparatus (central control) and therefore the cylinders (Transport authorities) are not firing in proper sequence. The fuel (plans) contains excess air and insufficient volatile spirit, and in any case the clutch (Traffic Dept.) is slipping badly, rendering the transmission inoperative.

Recommendation: Major overhaul required immediately.

Years ago when Stanley Melbourne Bruce was Prime Minister, he realised that a major overall control was necessary. I have a copy of the report of the Commonwealth Transport Committee, which was printed in 1930. Copies of the report were presented to the Premiers' Conference in May, 1929, and amongst the Premiers present was the late Philip Collier, representing this State. Although the Labour Party was in office for so many years, it made no attempt to carry out the committee's recommendations—very sound recommendations they were, too.

Hon. J. B. Slesman: What has this Government done?

Mr. HILL: I am disappointed that the present Government has not carried them out.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are on the right track now.

Mr. HILL: The committee recommended—

Co-ordination cannot be effected solely by the passing of Acts and regulations containing various restrictions.

A suitable organisation to meet the requirements of the respective States is necessary, together with adequate executive authority to carry out its duties effectively.

The organisation will vary with conditions in each State, but action along the following lines is suggested:—

- (a) All transport activities to be grouped under one Ministerial head, who will be responsible for the whole transportation policy.

The Minister for Works: Do you think that the one Minister should control railways as well?

Mr. HILL: I wonder whether there is any other country in the world that has had a Minister for Transport as well as a Minister for Railways. I wonder what the Minister for Works would say if it were suggested that we should have a Minister for the army and a Minister for infantry. Transport automatically includes railways. I was rather amused at the member for Murchison on one occasion when he stated that railways and transport were distinct portfolios. That was a big mistake on his part. I repeat that Labour was in office for a good many years after the committee's report was published and made no attempt to give effect to it. The report was made in 1929.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Was it sent on to the Labour Government?

Mr. HILL: Mr. Collier was one of the Premiers at the conference when the report was submitted. If members doubt my word on that, they will find confirmation in "The West Australian" of the 24th May, 1929.

Mr. Marshall: I would not have anything to do with the report if it was by Sir George Buchanan.

Mr. HILL: Although the hon. member is an ex-Minister for Transport, he could have learnt a tremendous lot from Sir George Buchanan. I am the only member of this House who has taken the trouble to compare the report of the Commonwealth Transport Committee with the report of Sir George Buchanan and I can say that the committee's report may be regarded as a precis of Sir George Buchanan's report.

Mr. Marshall: If you obtain the files of the Transport Co-ordination Board, you would find a draft Bill designed to give effect to the recommendations.

Mr. HILL: Then why were not the recommendations carried out?

Hon. A. H. Panton: They were brought down in 1948, but your friends kicked the Bill out.

Mr. HILL: I shall continue reading the committee's suggestions—

- (b) The establishment of a co-ordinating authority which would be responsible for carrying out the transport policy approved by the Government.

(c) The co-ordinating authority may take the form of one of the following:—

Commissioner for Transport with Advisory Committee.
Transport Board.

Advisory Council representative of interests concerned.

Functions of the Co-ordinating Authority.

The detailed functions of such an authority will also vary in each State, but generally all proposals affecting the provision of new transport facilities involving public expenditure or legislation should be reviewed by the authority, such as—

- (a) Construction or extension of any railway line.
- (b) Closing of any existing railway line.
- (c) New developmental road construction programme.
- (d) Development of new harbours and consideration of all major harbour works which may affect other transport services and ports.

This authority would also be responsible for the action necessary to effect the co-ordination of transport services and the control of road motor services for transport of passengers and goods.

The transport authority I would suggest for this State would consist of the Minister for Transport, who would be the ministerial head of the Department of Transport. The permanent head would be the commissioner or director of transport. Those two would be assisted by a council comprising the Minister, as chairman; the commissioner, as deputy chairman; a Treasury official, the Chief Commissioner of Railways, the Commissioner of Main Roads, the chairman of the Transport Board, the manager of the State Shipping Service, the chairman or manager of the State Harbours Board, a representative of the Overseas Shipowners' Association, a representative of the motor hauliers, a trade union representative, and representatives of the Farmers' Union and of commercial interests. That may seem a large council.

The Minister for Works: We have not a room big enough to hold such a council.

Mr. HILL: That is a remarkable statement, because there is not a great deal of difference between the personnel of that proposed council and the committee appointed by the Government to try to clean up the mess at Fremantle. This is not the first time I have made this suggestion. I made a similar one about 1939. Six months later, I received the report of the general manager of the South African railways and harbours in which he recommended the

appointment of a directorate of railways and harbours very similar to the council which I am recommending now.

It is absolutely essential to have a Treasury official on the council. Some of the main factors affecting our costs are capital expenditure and interest charges. It is necessary that all proposed major expenditure should be carefully considered by the council, which would report whether it was necessary. In South Australia there is a Public Works Standing Committee which reports upon all proposed works involving expenditure of over £30,000 before the projects can be dealt with by Parliament. It will be agreed, too, that the Commissioner of Railways should be a member of such a council and also the Commissioner of Main Roads, the chairman of the Transport Board, the manager of the State Shipping Service, the chairman or manager of the State Harbours Board and a representative of the shipping companies.

Mr. W. Hegney: What about an airways representative?

Mr. HILL: I consider that the director of transport would probably be able to look after that. I think we can do without an airways representative.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They would be very annoyed.

Mr. HILL: Then there should be a representative of the motor hauliers. Can any member give me an idea of how many millions of pounds are invested in transport by motor hauliers?

Hon. A. H. Panton: Too big for one mouthful.

Mr. HILL: There should be a representative of the trade unions on the council. Transport activities are employers of labour in a very large way. Our transport activities cannot be a success unless they have the loyal co-operation of the workers, and that co-operation cannot be obtained by wielding the big stick but only by fair dealing and consideration on both sides.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hear, hear!

Mr. HILL: There should also be a representative of the Farmers' Union and one of the commercial interests. That council may be a large one; but let it not be forgotten that there are hundreds of millions of pounds invested in the different activities those gentlemen would represent.

Mr. Rodoreda: Did you say that you would not have a representative of the airways?

Mr. HILL: There might be one; and it might be necessary to co-opt representatives of the Defence Department. This council would consider and report upon all matters affecting more than one form of transport; all major harbour works; the development, extension or acquisition of any port; the construction, extension or closing of any railway line; and developmental roads.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did you say the closing of ports?

Mr. HILL: I suggest the hon. member sit tight for a minute. One of the first jobs of such a council would be to devise a sound port policy. It is interesting to note what the Commonwealth committee said about ports. That was in 1929.

Mr. Marshall: It is still right.

Mr. HILL: The report says—

Ports at capital cities show an annual profit of £500,000 most of which enhances State revenues. Minor ports on the mainland States make an annual loss of about £490,000 which is met from State revenues, so that the trade of the main ports is fixed to meet the losses of the minor ports.

About 80 per cent. of the overseas trade is carried out at the main ports, and thus overseas trade is at present being taxed to some extent to meet the losses incurred at minor ports.

Many minor ports have for a lengthy period shown annual losses, failing to earn even their working costs. Other outports are losing trade on account of motor transport concentrating trade at larger ports.

18. Recommendations.

It is recommended that—

- (a) The finances of the main ports should be separated from those of the States, and port charges adjusted to ensure that the annual revenue of the main ports shall be sufficient only to meet working costs, interest and amortisation.
- (b) Losses at minor ports should be met from State revenue, and annual losses now incurred be reduced by closing certain ports, and by rail and road transport concentrating the sea-borne trade at other more suitable ports.
- (c) Exporters and importers should organise and arrange as far as possible with ship-owners for the provision of the minimum tonnage of overseas vessels necessary to enable trade to be maintained.

That was the recommendation of the committee in 1929.

Mr. Marshall: A very wise one and a very good one, too.

Mr. HILL: It is also interesting to know what the Commonwealth Grants Commission had to say about Western Australian ports. We are told that we have to be good little boys and listen to what the Commission tells us. That was one of the

things said when we were asked to approve of an increase in railway freights. The following appears in the eighth report of the Commission (1941) at page 76, para. 178:—

The expenditure out of loan funds on outer harbours in Western Australia is large and it does not appear to us that a sufficient attempt is made to get an adequate return from the users in the districts served. If the traffic will not stand the cost, there is no reason for expenditure on harbours unless it is essential for the industry of the district, in which case the industry should be charged through a special rate. This policy has been tried in other parts of Australia, and insistence upon it has on occasions led the people of a district to decide that the expenditure on a harbour was not really necessary for their interests. A multiplication of harbours is uneconomic. It is true that in Western Australia the port of Fremantle returns a large profit, but this does not make up for the losses on the other ports. In any case the profit of Fremantle is no excuse for an unscientific and unco-ordinated policy of harbour development. A large expenditure has been made on the Bunbury harbour, which is only about 100 miles from Perth, and it is doubtful whether it has succeeded in overcoming the disadvantages of the port.

I do not wish to deal with any particular port in this speech except my own port, which was at the Kalgan River. I had my own port, and more cargo used to go over my little wharf than over some of the wharves in South Australia. But it was one of the ports which was closed down, and the traffic has been concentrated on another port as a result of motor transport. My wharf was washed away in the flood of 1939. It is when I get to Albany that my transport troubles start.

I think it can be safely said that of all major problems, that concerned with ports is the least understood. Sir George Buchanan in his report says that a port is the medium or clearing house between sea and land transport and that on the ports and their proper location the whole system of transport largely depends. Sir David Owen, general manager of the Port of London Authority, in his presidential address to the Institute of Transport in England in 1930, said that a port in itself is not a means of conveyance or transport; it is only a facility for the actual instruments of transport, and a port in order to be effective must adapt itself to the changing means of transport.

Parliament should realise that in the last 50 years there has been a revolution in transport. We have all seen the change in land transport. The improvements have

increased the area which a port can serve. The increase in the size of ships and in labour costs, have brought about a demand by the shipping people for a few big properly equipped ports. All over the world the little port is being gobbled up by its big neighbour. We have in the House a relative of the chairman of the Melbourne Harbour Trust. A year or so ago this gentleman was in Victoria, and he was taken for a trip by Mr. McKenzie who then said, "The little port is finished, and the sooner that fact is realised, the better."

Hon. A. H. Panton: So is the little contractor, according to the member for Melville.

Mr. HILL: That may be. We have to face facts, and we must adopt a port policy today to suit modern means of transport. In England there are fewer ports than there were 100 years ago, and all over the world they are gradually being thinned out.

Mr. Marshall: You are putting up a good argument for the retention of Esperance and Bunbury.

Mr. HILL: The hon. member should not open his mouth on something he does not understand. Queensland has been held up as an example of the success of a multiplicity of ports. The position in that State has been described as seven starving ports and one ravenous railway. Buchanan, in his report, recommended the closing down of five of the Queensland ports and concentrating the trade on the other two, but that has not been done. The result is, comparing the last census with the previous one, that the percentage of the States' population is greater in Brisbane than in any other Australian city.

I have spent only one day in Brisbane, but when I came away from there I travelled with a Queensland representative in the Commonwealth Parliament. This gentleman said, "Our trouble in Queensland is that we have too many ports. Rockhampton, which is a silted-up port, should be closed down in favour of Gladstone, which will gradually swallow up Rockhampton. It would be better for the Government to realise that now." A year or so later the Commonwealth Director of Road Transport, Major House, was in this Chamber. I said to him, "How is the Gladstone-Rockhampton controversy going?" He said, "The trouble with Gladstone is that it is too close to Brisbane. It is only 300 miles away."

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is the trouble with Perth and Fremantle. Fremantle is too close to Perth.

Mr. HILL: Incidentally, Perth is a port.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It would be if Fremantle were not there.

Mr. HILL: A most peculiar attitude is adopted towards ports and railways in this State. A port, like a railway, is only a link in the transport chain. Last year a Bill was introduced into this Parliament to construct a chord railway from Bassendean to Welshpool. The Minister, when he introduced the Bill, gave a full description of the railway and spoke at considerable length. Plans of the proposed railway were laid on the Table of the House, and aerial photographs were on display in the library. In addition, two senior railway men came here and told members all they wanted to know about it.

Compare that with the position of Albany and Bunbury. Some five years ago the Labour Party started its electoral campaign by going to Albany—at least the then Minister did, and he held up a plan showing a conglomeration of wharves, and he called the plan a port, and said that the Government was going to spend £2,000,000 on the scheme. The election propaganda of the Labour Party in Albany was to the effect that the member for the district was opposed to this plan. The Minister then went to Bunbury, without parliamentary permission, and said, "Here is an £800,000 scheme already started." It was just an election gag. That sort of thing would not be allowed in South Australia.

Last year the Minister for Works said that if Tydeman's report was good enough for Bunbury, it was good enough for Albany. I agree with his statement. In South Australia both of those reports would have been submitted to the Public Works Standing Committee and before any expenditure was allowed on either of those ports, the report of the committee would have been submitted to Parliament. I would like to see the same policy adopted in this State. Members can talk about Albany as much as they like, as long as they speak the truth.

We need a State harbours authority. I have the Tydeman report on the port of Fremantle, and I wish to quote from page 124, Vol. 2. I shall not read the whole of the page. I would like to ask: Is it a laughing matter to see the Rottnest queue? Or to know that if one of the guns at Leighton were placed in King's Park it would have half the population of Western Australia within range? Is the terrific cost that we have to pay today a laughing matter? I do not think it is. On page 124, Col. Tydeman states—

Control of the port at present is shared by a complicated multiplicity of interests, of which the Harbour Trust constitutes but part. Public bodies and private concerns involved are as follows:—

Treasury Department.

W.A.G. Railways.

Harbour and Light Department.

Public Works Department.

Shipping representatives and stevedoring firms.
Co-operative Bulk Handling.
Oil companies.
Stevedoring Industry Commission.
Waterside Workers' Union.
Commonwealth Government.
State Departments.
Fremantle Municipality.
Fremantle Harbour Trust.

He also states the interest that each of these various authorities has in the port. How can a port operate successfully with such a multiplicity of control? Take the Albany Harbour Board today. The board itself is under the control of the Minister for Transport. If the board wants anything done it has to go cap in hand to the Minister for Works. When bulk handling is introduced it will come under the control of the Minister for Agriculture. The pilot and the lights are under the Chief Secretary, as Minister for Harbours and Rivers.

Mr. Marshall: You had better pull up there.

Mr. HILL: It is a laughing matter, all right! We have a lot to learn from South Australia where the ports are controlled by a State Harbours Board consisting of three permanently-appointed commissioners.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: So they should be here.

Mr. HILL: I agree. I also think there is room for the local harbour boards. The port of Albany was in a chaotic condition under the control of the railways. The present harbour board has fully justified its appointment. At the present time there is a ship at Albany which has unloaded 4,000 tons of general cargo. She is taking on 400 tons of coal, a couple of hundred tons of fish, and I do not know how many tons of staves for beer barrels. The difference between port administration in South Australia and that in Western Australia is that in South Australia they are looked upon as commercial undertakings, whereas in this State they are nothing more nor less than political playthings.

I have here a return for a consignment of pears which I sent to England. I have not had opportunity to analyse all the costs but I know that I had a great fight to get those pears aboard. First of all the shipping agent asked how many pears I could supply and I told him there would be about 500 cases, but that I could handle only 250 cases. I started picking the pears and then the agent rang me to say that the allotment of space had been cut down by the company and he could take only half my pears. At all events they were picked and they had to go into cool storage and just after I finished picking them I went into hospital.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It must have been a heavy job to knock you out like that.

Mr. HILL: No, it was for something else. When the pears came out of cool storage they were declared slack and had to be re-packed, and then the inspector came along and said that they were too ripe. My wife had a stand-up argument with the inspector and said that the pears were going over on consignment, and that I knew something about shipping pears.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Were you out of hospital again by then?

Mr. HILL: No. They said it was my funeral and that I could ship the pears. They cost me 10s. 6d. per case in freight to ship and I maintain that if we want cheaper freight we must lower our harbour costs. A modern ship to handle fruit costs £1,300,000 and her daily port charges are £1,000. At all events the pears were finally got away and I cleared a record price on them, the only unfortunate part of it being that three or four hundred cases simply dropped to the ground and the sheep ate them.

It is widely recognised that we have too many railways in proportion to our population and that the best railway system in the world cannot work effectively if ports are made the plaything of politicians. Major House, who came here to advise the State Government said, in conversation with the present Acting Premier, Senator Seward and myself, "To work the railways effectively you must have efficient ports so that the railways can take the stuff to the ports, unload and be back on the job carting cargo to the ports." We are running too many trains and I was surprised to hear one of the Railway Commissioners say the average load of one train was only 90 tons.

The report of the Royal Commission on Outports referred to the fact that certain railways in this State should be re-graded. Out of £700,000 spent on re-grading our railways, not one penny has been spent on the Great Southern south of Narrogin. The job of providing a one in 100 grade from Narrogin to Albany would be comparable with providing a one in 80 grade from Collie to Brunswick or with the deviation round the Swan View tunnel, as far as cost is concerned. An engine which will haul 380 tons on a one in 60 grade will haul 505 tons on a one in 80 grade and 605 tons on a one in 100 grade. If we concentrate our trade on fewer railways and ports, with fewer trains, we will make for all-round economy.

Motor transport must not be allowed to pick the eyes out of the freight that is offering. It is a world-wide policy to carry low-priced goods by rail at low freights and make up the profits on the goods of high value. That policy is essential to assist primary production, but it cannot be maintained if motor transport is allowed to handle all the best of the freight. In relation to transport it is essential to consider the problem as a whole and

realise that transport starts at the farm and finishes at the oversea markets. Our aim must be to keep the total cost down.

Each form of transport is capable of doing useful work for the benefit of the community, but the tendency is for the various branches each to look upon its job as an end, instead of only a means towards a greater end. Some railway people would cut out motor transport altogether, and some road transport owners would like unrestricted competition with the railways. I visualise the time when all the various means of transport will be regulated to do the work in which they can best serve the community. When that state of affairs is brought about the ports will be seen in their true perspective and not as political playthings. They will act as efficient links between the various kinds of land transport on the one hand and sea transport on the other.

The member for Eyre suggested that there should be only one super. works, and that it should be at Esperance, but, although I am anxious to see every port serve the State, I cannot agree to that proposal. It takes one ton of pyrites to make sufficient sulphuric acid for the production of four tons of super. and it would not be an economical proposition to incur transport costs on four tons in order to save transport charges on one ton. I cannot agree with the hon. member that we should have one super. works only.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You have not given the matter consideration.

Mr. HILL: I have studied the question for 20 years.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Pyrites has not been used until recently.

Mr. HILL: No, but super. has. The right place for a super. works is where it can provide back-loading for the railways. One of our troubles today is that one super. works was put in the wrong place to supply backloading for the railways. It has often been said that I concentrate too much on the port aspect and neglect land development.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Every man should have a hobby.

Mr. HILL: It is more than a hobby with me. I have always found that when I pick a case of fruit and pack it my troubles are just starting, and that is why I have made such a study of port and transport problems; but I have not been idle on the question of land development in the Albany district. I understand that the first immigrant to land in Western Australia was a man called Digory Geake. He went to Albany and in February, 1840, was given a Crown grant of Plantagenet location No. 5, on which my home is now located. He and a lot of other old stagers picked the best land round Albany and did not use it and that is one reason why agriculture in the Albany district was held back.

I went on to that location in 1909 as a fruitgrower and somewhere about that time there was an Irish Blight scare with regard to potatoes in Western Australia. The Government sent a man to Albany to encourage the growing of potatoes in that district. In conversation with me that gentleman said that on any farm one should endeavour to market as much as possible on four legs, but unfortunately he had to advocate the growing of potatoes.

In 1917, we had the wettest year on record, and 5,000 tons of potatoes were destroyed in Western Australia. Afterwards, one potato-grower said to me, "I thought I had a big loss when I lost my potato crop. But I saved a few tons and I have had a job to sell them. So, if the crop had not been destroyed the market would have been hopelessly glutted and we would not have received anything for our potatoes."

About 1919, the Albany Chamber of Commerce convened a conference to see what could be done for farmers in the district. As a result of that conference, the Albany Butter Factory came into being. I did not take an active part at the start, but afterwards I became one of the directors of that factory. I have lost a good deal of time and money because of my work as a director, but I do not begrudge those losses as that factory has helped to develop the land around Albany. In 1922, a committee, of which I was a member was formed to try to encourage more land development in the immediate vicinity of the port. Sir James Mitchell made a grant of money available for carrying out experiments, but unfortunately, when the change of Government took place in 1924, no more funds were available and the committee had to go out of action. But that committee did a lot of good work and made the Albany farmers pasture-minded.

I have given a large part of my property to my son and today I have about 60 acres cleared and under grass. I am carrying 200 sheep, three cows and calves and five horses. That gives members some idea of the carrying capacity of land in the Albany district. I am confident that the land in the southern end of the State will carry a big population. As regards the Many Peaks settlement, it is interesting to know that the grand-daughter of Digory Geake married a man by the name of Jefferson. He was the original man to take up land in the Many Peaks area. I am not going to say that we have a Garden of Eden in that district but we have what might be called second-class land. However, we have a wonderful climate and we can grow good crops and pastures. One can buy superphosphate, copper sulphate and manganese but one cannot buy rainfall. The other evening I was amazed at the outburst of the member for Fremantle against the poor old cow-duck who produces our butter. I tell the hon. member that butter comes from cream, and cream comes from cows.

Hon. A. H. Panton: No!

Mr. Marshall: Where does the cow come from?

Mr. HILL: But do not let members run away with the idea that the cow gives the milk to the cocky; she does not.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Which comes first, the hen or the egg?

Mr. HILL: I do not know; I will leave that to the hon. member. The cocky has to swop, with the cow, food for milk. Those cows do not work 40 hours a week; they work 24 hours a day for 365 days of the year.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And the cocky?

Mr. HILL: He works overtime. That is the trouble with the cow-cocky; he has to sit down night and morning, seven days a week, 56 hours a week, to extract milk from the cow.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You do not agree, that they should tip milk down the drain?

Mr. HILL: The cow-cocky does not get a fair deal and if this state of affairs continues, the people will not receive any butter. If it is such a wonderful job, why does not the member for Fremantle get the men from the wharves to go down and work on dairy farms for a while?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The Stevedoring Commission has told us to get more men on the wharves.

Mr. HILL: If there were a change-over, and the men from the dairying industry were put to work on the wharves, there would not be any congestion in Fremantle harbour, and ships would be unloaded in record time.

The Acting Premier: But would the cows be milked?

Mr. HILL: No. Last week, when I went home, I saw a young fellow who was a pilot in the Air Force. He held out his hands to me, and said, "Look! I have been laying a new cement floor in the cow-shed. If you people do not give us better prices for our butter, this will be a shearing-shed." My own son, and my neighbour, have cut out producing butter and are now going in for beef production. I want to stress the fact that something must be done for the butter producer. It must be done quickly because it is a most unattractive proposition in Australia today.

Mr. Hoar: Yes, but they are waking up.

Mr. HILL: Yes, and they will have to wake up quickly.

Mr. Hoar: They are very late in the day.

Mr. HILL: We must do everything possible to try to improve conditions for men and women on our dairy farms. The man is not the only one who works 56 hours a week. In the majority of cases—and I am sure the member for Warren will agree

with me—the wife does a lot of work and even the kiddies, when they come home from school, have to do their share. In one part of my district the dairy farmers' children have to go over 30 miles on a rough road to school and I am anxious to see that those people receive a better deal than they do at the moment.

Some years ago, an American lecturer made a large sum of money from delivering a lecture which was entitled "Acres of Diamonds." This lecturer dealt with a man in Palestine, or somewhere thereabouts, who had a farm on some blue clay country. After some time, he became dissatisfied and thought he would go looking for gold. He sold his property, but finally went broke looking for his goldmine. When he came back to look at his farm he found that the man to whom he had sold it had discovered diamonds. There is another man, an American farmer, who had a block which would not produce very much. This farm was situated on black soil country and he decided to sell it and go searching for gold.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And they found oil!

Mr. HILL: This man, after spending some considerable time looking for gold and eventually going broke, went home to the old town. When he got there, he looked around and could not believe his eyes. There were houses everywhere and when he got right on to the farm itself, he saw there were big oil derricks all over the place. Oil had been found on his old farm and he had not realised that it was there.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That was all in the "Digest of Digests."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I wish we had an oil well here.

Mr. HILL: Yes, it would be a grand thing. We have a big State with large potentialities, but instead of chasing mythical goldmines we should concentrate on developing our assets. The State has a great future, and our job today is to lay a sound foundation for the future. We have to base our present policy not on what poor old granddad did, but on what our grandchildren are likely to need.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.48 p.m.