

is a most honest fellow. I would like the Minister for Agriculture to send out one of his field officers to inspect this farm and to establish why a man on one side of the fence can, over a period of five years, get a percentage in the high 90s, and in two instances over 100 per cent., while a farmer on the other side, with similar soil, pasture, and rainfall, can get only 60 to 70 per cent.

The Hon. S. T. J. Thompson: These were Merino sheep?

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: Yes. If an officer were sent to that property to investigate the position the information received could be of advantage not only to the department but to farmers generally.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Why worry about it if the farmer with 60 to 70 per cent. is quite happy?

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: It puzzles me why a man with similar husbandry, pasture, and type of country should get such wonderful results. I cannot understand why there should be this tremendous disparity.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: If they are happy why do you want to buy into it?

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: In Western Australia we have a tremendous infertility problem amongst sheep. If the sheep were running on different types of pasture this could possibly account for the position; but here they are running on the same variety of clover, the properties have the same rainfall with the same top dressing, and yet we have this tremendous discrepancy in percentages.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: I still think it gets back to the taxation angle.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: One can put it over the taxation officials for a little while but one cannot do this indefinitely. Does Mr. Willesee suggest they are selling lambs on the black market?

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Is it not better to make a little profit and be satisfied than to make a high profit and pay tax?

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: I will clarify the position for the honourable member. We have a man with similar pasture and a similar stocking rate getting low percentages as compared with the man to whom I have referred who happens to be in the same area and whose figures are outstanding. The matter is difficult to explain, but if departmental officers were sent down to investigate I am sure it would be a great help.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. F. J. S. Wise.

*House adjourned at 8.9 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 27th August, 1969

The SPEAKER (Mr. Guthrie) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### SUPPLY BILL

#### *Assent*

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

### QUESTIONS (28): ON NOTICE

#### 1. FREMANTLE PORT AUTHORITY

##### *Acting Manager*

Mr. TONKIN asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) Although the Acting Manager, Fremantle Port Authority, went to Melbourne in June ostensibly to have discussions with the Chief Engineer, Melbourne Harbour Trust, on roll on/roll off facilities, was it known to the commissioners at the time that the acting manager had made arrangements to be interviewed in Melbourne concerning a position which he was able to secure?
- (2) Following the questions concerning turmoil in the Fremantle Port Authority and his denial did the acting manager ask for and receive reports from certain employees which more or less confirmed that considerable unrest existed?
- (3) Will he call for these reports and reconsider the answer he gave to question 20(1) on Thursday, the 7th August last?
- (4) Will he make the reports available for perusal?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) No. Any arrangement made was subsequent to the general manager's request that the acting manager visit Melbourne on behalf of the authority.
- (2) The acting manager asked for information from certain employees to discover what dissatisfaction existed. The information given did not disclose turmoil in management but indicated that there was a certain amount of discontent chiefly regarding lack of communication within the organisation. The commissioners have already taken action to remedy this cause of complaint.
- (3) and (4) I have noted the information supplied by certain employees which I regard as confidential.

2.

## EDUCATION

*Medical, Dental, and Optical  
Graduates*

Mr. BRADY asked the Premier:

- (1) What number of students at the University of Western Australia qualified in the following professions over each of the past five years—
  - (a) medical;
  - (b) dental;
  - (c) optical?
- (2) Is the University providing tuition in optometry at present; if not, where must students qualify?

Sir DAVID BRAND replied:

- (1) (a) Degrees conferred by the University of Western Australia—
  - 1965—36.
  - 1966—38.
  - 1967—35.
  - 1968—36.
  - 1969—44.
- (b) Degrees conferred by the University of Western Australia—
  - 1965—9.
  - 1966—9.
  - 1967—13.
  - 1968—7.
  - 1969—22.
- (c) Number of students who qualified in optometry—
  - 1965—1.
  - 1966—0.
  - 1967—1.
  - 1968—2.
  - 1969—0.
- (2) The University does not provide a course in optometry. For a number of years students wishing to qualify undertook part of the Bachelor of Science course at the University and tuition in other subjects under arrangements made by the Optometrists Registration Board, using University facilities in some cases. These arrangements have been discontinued except for two students currently enrolled who are endeavouring to complete the course under this scheme.

A student now wishing to qualify in optometry may undertake first year as a science student at the University of Western Australia, but must complete the course at the Victorian College of Optometry which is affiliated with the University of Melbourne, or at the University of New South Wales or the Queensland Institute of Technology. It is understood that the

Optometrists Registration Board is at present reviewing the situation with the object of obtaining the full course in this State.

## 3. WOOL EXPORTERS ROYAL COMMISSION

*Government Action*

Mr. H. D. EVANS asked the Premier:

What action, if any, and when, does the Government propose to take relevant to Wool Exporters Ltd. and/or the Royal Commissioner's report relating to Wool Exporters Ltd.?

Sir DAVID BRAND replied:

Consideration is being given to the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner. Action will be taken during the present sitting to introduce legislation to deal with persons who allow companies to trade recklessly. Further research is being undertaken into the legislation proposed to deal with private selling of wool by the "back buying" method.

4.

## TRANSPORT

*Backloading Concessions*

Mr. H. D. EVANS asked the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Are any special concessions for backloading from the metropolitan area available to carriers of the Margaret River area?
- (2) If so, what is the nature and extent of these concessions?
- (3) In the event of concessions being available to the abovementioned area, can similar concessions be made available to the North Walpole-Tingledale area which has similar geographic and transport problems?
- (4) If not, why not?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Carriers who have conveyed livestock to the metropolitan area are granted permits on application to backload direct to producers' properties fencing and building materials, farm machinery, stock food and materials and equipment for water conservation and reticulation.
- (3) The concession was granted on the understanding that the circumstances applicable to Margaret River were not duplicated elsewhere and would not therefore lead to similar requests from other areas. As it now appears that pressure from other areas will eventuate and could ultimately adversely affect normal services

as well as tending to centralise business in the city to the detriment of local traders, it may be advisable to review the present concession rather than to extend it to other districts.

(4) Answered by (3).

## 5. EDUCATION

### *Federal Budget*

Mr. RUSHTON asked the Minister for Education:

What benefits to education in Western Australia will result from the Federal Budget?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

The only information so far available to the department is that which has appeared in *The West Australian* on the 13th August on the Federal budget generally and in *The West Australian* on the 22nd August regarding the State's allocation for Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education. Briefly the benefits accruing relate to—

- (a) Extension of facilities at the Western Australian Institute of Technology.
- (b) The planning for a new university and general extensions.
- (c) The granting of funds for the development of teacher education in association with colleges of advanced education.
- (d) The continuation of capital grants for teachers' college buildings.
- (e) The continuation of grants for the extension of science facilities and libraries both at Government and non-Government secondary schools.
- (f) The continuation of grants for technical education.
- (g) The introduction of *per capita* grants to students in non-Government schools to defray tuition costs.

## 6. HEALTH

### *Cigarette Smoking: Policy*

Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is he aware (see *The West Australian*, the 18th July, 1969) that experts predict a lung cancer epidemic from smoking which will be unmanageable within 20 years?
- (2) Is he aware that the Health Education Council believes that types of cigarettes should carry a duty proportionate to tar content of individual brands?

(3) What policy was agreed to, apart from the health hazard warning on packets, at the recent Health Ministers' conference—

- (a) to counter the frightening situation mentioned in (1);
- (b) to impose a high duty penalty associated with (2)?

(4) Can he inform the House whether or not the conference mentioned was motivated in the majority by a reluctance to ban advertising for reasons including—

- (a) loss of revenue to the various Governments;
- (b) a desire not to financially offend tobacco companies or advertising media?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) Yes; I am aware that this has been said.
- (2) Yes; I am aware that this has been suggested.
- (3) Discussions at the annual conferences of Health Ministers have usually been regarded as confidential until such time as the respective Governments have agreed to the decisions reached, or unless these decisions or other statements are released with the authority of the conference itself.  
As has already been announced, apart from the warning on cigarette packets, health education programmes to deter young people from smoking are to be intensified and the matter of advertising is being further investigated.
- (4) I would believe that the conference mentioned was motivated by a genuine desire to promote and protect health.

## 7.

## HOUSING

### *Sales of Rental Homes*

Mr. TONKIN asked the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Between January, 1966 and July, 1969, what was the average weekly increase in the values adopted by the State Housing Commission for—
  - (a) land, and
  - (b) dwellings,
 when sales of rental homes were under consideration in the following localities—
  - (i) Willagee,
  - (ii) Hilton Park,
  - (iii) Midvale,
  - (iv) Koongamia,
  - (v) North Midland,
  - (vi) Tuart Hill,
  - (vii) Nollamara,

- (viii) Yokine,
  - (ix) Balga,
  - (x) Belmont,
  - (xi) Morley,
  - (xii) Doubleview,
  - (xiii) Cloverdale?
- (2) Were the increases in valuations the same for each of the years, 1966, 1967, 1968, and 1969?
- (3) If "No", will he give the increases for each year separately?

Mr. O'NEIL replied:

- (1) to (3) The information requested is not available.
- Regular values of rental properties are not adopted or made. At the request of a tenant who wishes to purchase, an independent valuation of house and land is obtained. Provided the tenant completes the purchase within six months no further valuation is obtained.
- Any comparison of values would be unreliable as properties would vary in position and condition. Only occasionally would a property be valued more than once and valuations would be more than six months apart.

## 8. WORKERS' COMPENSATION

### *Claims*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Labour:

- (1) What number of workers' compensation claims are—
- (a) being withheld (as not admitted) as at the 30th July, 1969;
  - (b) overdue for payment in excess of two weeks pay period?
- (2) What number of claims were refused in the year ended the 30th June, 1969?
- (3) What is the reason for delays in payment of workers' compensation referred to in (1)(b)?

Mr. O'NEIL replied:

- (1) to (3) This information is not available.

## 9.

### ROADS

#### *Kwinana Freeway: Extension*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) In connection with the proposed extension of the Kwinana Freeway south of Canning Highway has any indication been given to local authorities that the Metropolitan Region Scheme will be amended next session?

- (2) Has a scale model of the proposed extension been prepared by the Main Roads Department?

- (3) If so, is the model available for inspection by interested persons?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) Much planning has to be carried out and discussions had with local authorities and other interested groups before the stage is reached for a formal amendment to the Metropolitan Region Scheme.
- (2) No.
- (3) Answered by (2).

## 10.

### RAILWAYS

#### *Standard Gauge Goods Yards*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

Is it the policy of the Western Australian Government Railways to provide and finance adequate access to new standard gauge goods yards and other facilities associated with the normal functioning of railway operations?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

The Railways Commission arranges with the authority responsible for roads in the vicinity for access to be provided to railway facilities.

Responsibility for this expenditure is dependent on the circumstances in each case.

## 11.

### RAILWAYS

#### *Midland Railway Company's Site*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Are negotiations continuing re leasing of the Midland Railway Company's old site opposite the Town Hall, Midland?
- (2) When is it expected negotiations will be completed?
- (3) Is an additional acreage of land to be made available to enable the negotiations to be successful?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Tenders have been invited for development of an area of approximately 5½ acres. The closing date was recently extended by one month to the 30th September, 1969.
- (2) Answered by (1).
- (3) No additional acreage is proposed.

## 12.

### HEALTH

#### *Analgesic Drugs*

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

- (1) By reason of the editorial recently appearing in the *Australian Journal of Pharmacy* which advocates tighter controls on the sales

of analgesic drugs including aspirin and phenacetin because of their adverse effect upon the kidney and the fact that it is said that they are being shown no more respect than chewing gum, will he ban the sale of such drugs in milk bars, super markets, and the like and/or take any other action?

- (2) If "Yes", when and what?
- (3) If "No", why?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) to (3) In accordance with recommendations from the National Health and Medical Research Council, and the State Poisons Advisory Committee, a regulation is being framed which will require a warning label on the preparations mentioned.

### 13. VETERINARIANS *Price of Services*

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) What body fixes the price of services rendered and medicines supplied to the public by veterinary surgeons?
- (2) What formulae or criteria are applied to determine the prices referred to and how often are the prices reviewed?
- (3) What are the present prices fixed for veterinary services?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) A scale of recommended fees is drawn up by the Western Australian division of the Australian Veterinary Association for use by its members. Prices for medicines are those recommended as the retail price by the pharmaceutical profession.
- (2) The professional fee is based on the type of case, the skill required, and the time taken to complete the case.  
Fees are subject to major review at irregular intervals of approximately 12 to 18 months.
- (3) There are no fixed prices for veterinary services, only suggested fees and these, in general, are confidential to members of the Australian Veterinary Association. The basic consultation fee varies from \$2 to \$4.50 depending on the species of animal involved and the nature of the examination.

### 14. HEALTH *Lead Foil Containers*

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health: In view of the huge quantity of tablets (some of which are in containers marked "Caution S2")

being distributed in lead foil which bears no distinguishing mark or name thereon, will he take action to ensure that the public can readily distinguish and identify tablets by markings on the lead foil when they are out of the container provided by the supplier?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

This matter is at present being examined by the appropriate sub-committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. Action will be taken in the light of recommendations from the council, as soon as they are received.

### 15. WATER SUPPLIES *Dam: Avon Valley*

Mr. BATEMAN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) Will he advise if a dam could be built along the Avon Valley to cater for water supplies north of the city?
- (2) Has any research been done with respect to siting a dam in the Avon Valley area?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) and (2) The salinity of the Avon is such that the water could not be used without treatment and it is considered that the use of such water could not be an economic proposition for a long time and possibly never.

### 16. ROADS *Wanneroo Road Level*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Works:

Has the Main Roads Department any responsibility for the road level in Wanneroo Road, Balga, which has resulted in many houses on the eastern side being considerable depths below road level, a state of affairs which could have been avoided by constructing the earth works on a split level to provide a dual carriage way?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

No. The design and upgrading of Wanneroo Road in the Balga area is being carried out by the Perth Shire Council.

### 17. POULTRY FARMING *Growers*

Mr. BATEMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) How many poultry growers have gone out of business in the metropolitan area in the years since 1966?

- (2) What has been the main cause of the growers ceasing or becoming bankrupt?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) Although it is known that over 70 producers have left the industry, figures from the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics show that the number of commercial producers in the metropolitan area has increased from 254 to 260 in the three year period from 1966 to 1969.
- (2) The precise reason for these producers leaving the industry is not known; however, it is known that in several instances the extension of urbanisation caused some growers to sell out.

- (5) Did he or his department confer with, or refer the matter to the Minister for Lands or the Department of Lands and Surveys?

- (6) If so, will he give details?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) to (6) Answered by (1). Considerable concern was expressed by the Jerramungup residents that a departmental officer who was not a ratepayer should be the one mainly responsible for the disension against the wishes of the majority of the ratepayers of the area.

20.

## TRANSPORT

### *Efficiency Experts*

Mr. McPHARLIN asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Has a group of efficiency experts been used in an effort to improve the financial position of the—
- Metropolitan Transport Trust;
  - Railways Commission;
  - Coastal Shipping Commission?
- (2) If so, have any recommendations been made?
- (3) Have these recommendations been carried out?
- (4) If not, is it intended that they will be carried out?
- (5) If recommendations have been made and adopted, have there been indications of improvements in the departments concerned?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) (a) M.T.T. have had a firm of management consultants advising them on the use of electronic data processing.
- (b) Railways have had a firm of management consultants advising in respect of evaluation of capital expenditure.
- (c) Coastal Shipping Commission engaged a firm of management consultants to further streamline the organisational structure and operating practices within the service.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) to (5) The recommendations are in the process of being implemented and it is considered they will bring about improvements in the departments concerned.

21.

## EDUCATION

### *Scripture Instruction*

Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is it proposed to make changes in the present system for scripture instruction at schools?

## 18. JERRAMUNGUP CHURCH

### *Lands Department Employees*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Lands:

- (1) Were any representations made to him or his department by the Gnowangerup Shire Council, anyone connected therewith or anyone else, regarding the activities of an employee of that department or the War Service Land Settlement Board, concerning the Jerramungup church proposal?
- (2) If so, from whom?
- (3) What were the terms of the representations?
- (4) What was the nature of the reply given?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) to (3) The Gnowangerup Shire Council expressed an opinion that the participation of a departmental employee in a local controversy was unseemly.
- (4) The council was advised that as the employee was acting in his capacity as a private citizen, no departmental action was proposed.

## 19. JERRAMUNGUP CHURCH

### *Lands Department Employees*

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

- (1) Were any representations made to him or his department from any source suggesting action should be taken to transfer a field supervisor of the War Service Land Settlement Board, or a land inspector of the Department of Lands and Surveys on account of his activities in connection with the Jerramungup church proposal?
- (2) If so, who made the approach?
- (3) What were its terms?
- (4) What reply was given, or action taken?

- (2) If so—  
 (a) when will it take effect;  
 (b) what are the new provisions?  
 (3) Why are they deemed desirable?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) Yes.  
 (2) (a) 1970 in selected schools and, if the experiment succeeds, in schools generally in 1971.  
 (b) (i) No changes at first year level; i.e., visiting clergymen to conduct lessons as formerly.  
 (ii) In second and third year scripture will receive two periods weekly instead of one as at present and will become an optional subject.  
 (iii) The new second and third year subject will have a common syllabus which is being drafted at present by a committee consisting of church and departmental representatives.  
 (iv) The new subject will be taught by departmental teachers as part of their normal teaching responsibilities.  
 (v) Churches not wishing to participate in the new scheme will remain entirely free to continue right of entry classes for visiting clergymen at second and third year levels.  
 (vi) It is proposed that for upper school pupils occasional sessions could be conducted in the form of half day seminars, or special services, say two per term. One of these may probably be in the last week of term.

- (3) The rapid expansion in secondary education in recent years has made it difficult, both for the schools and the churches, to organise religious education on the former basis. The new scheme has been advanced as an alternative.

## 22. TOTALISATOR AGENCY BOARD

### *Payments*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Police:

What amounts of money have been paid to the Western Australian Turf Club and Western Australian Trotting Association for each of the last five years ended the 30th June, 1969, from—

- (a) off-course betting;  
 (b) on-course betting?

Mr. CRAIG replied:

The T.A.B.'s financial year ends on the 31st July.

- (a) off-course betting.

	Western Australian Turf Club \$	Western Australian Trotting Association \$
1965.....	720,730	449,014
1966.....	745,828	473,333
1967.....	790,857	529,143
1968.....	993,257	662,172
1969(to be paid)	1,008,534	732,356

The figures stated include amounts due to the respective country racing and trotting clubs and the Fremantle Trotting Club and include other income as well as income derived from off-course betting.

- (b) On-course Betting.

The proportions of on-course book-makers betting taxes retained for the year ended the 31st July were as follows:—

	Western Australian Turf Club \$	Western Australian Trotting Association \$
1965.....	90,100	31,992
1966.....	96,130	36,773
1967.....	109,538	46,971
1968.....	127,335	48,521
1969.....	151,855	50,727

## 23.

### EDUCATION

#### *Teachers: Salary Increase*

Mr. RUSHTON asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has the salary increase for teachers been determined?  
 (2) If "Yes", what are the comparative figures between the old and new salary of each grade and range?  
 (3) What is the estimated cost of the salary increase to the State Treasury?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) Yes.  
 (2) A copy of the amended schedules with the old rates in brackets is tabled herewith.  
 (3) Approximately \$3,000,000.

*The schedules were tabled.*

## 24.

### RAILWAYS

#### *Purpose of Retaining Councillor Ritter*

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) In what capacity and for what purpose is Councillor Paul Ritter being retained by his department?  
 (2) In detail what are the terms of the retainer?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) and (2) Councillor Ritter is not being retained by the Railways Department.

## 25. EDUCATION

### *Sweeney Report*

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) Referring to my question of the 19th June, 1969, regarding the Sweeney Report, can he advise—
  - (a) whether an announcement has yet been made by the Commonwealth Government or when one is expected;
  - (b) what was the State Government's decision on payment of an interim increment?
- (2) If no decision has yet been made by the Commonwealth Government will his department take the matter up with the appropriate authority?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) (a) There has been no announcement and it is not known when one will be made.
- (b) I have asked the council to submit to me suggested new salary scales based on salaries paid in similar institutions in other States.
- (2) A meeting is being arranged of State and Commonwealth Ministers for the 15th September to discuss the recommendations of the Sweeney Report.

I can add to this information. Since the answer was prepared the council has submitted to me salary scales which I have approved.

## 26. EDUCATION

### *Plans for Future*

Mr. WILLIAMS asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) As a result of a meeting of State Ministers of Education earlier this year what inquiries are being undertaken or planned for education in Western Australia?
- (2) Who will undertake these inquiries and what will be their scope and terms of reference?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) An investigation is being carried out by a departmental committee into the needs of education up to the completion of secondary schooling, and for the education of teachers.
- (2) The committee comprises—  
Chairman: Director-General of Education,

Director of Special Services,  
Superintendent of Research and Planning,

Two representatives from each of the—

W.A. State School Teachers' Union,

W.A. Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations,

who will be called in on a consultative basis.

Terms of reference are as follows:—

### *A Nation-wide Study of Educational Needs: Terms of Reference*

The Australian Education Council has agreed to undertake a nation-wide survey of educational needs in accordance with the following programme.

Each State will set up a body (of its own construction) to survey, within its own boundaries, the needs of that State in order to provide effective administration of education, optimum preparation and education of teachers and a sufficiency of educational plant and equipment for the education to a desirable standard of all children up to the completion of secondary schooling. On the basis of planned needs to meet the foregoing objectives, a properly structured five or ten year plan for education should be envisaged which will involve a consideration of all facets involved in the educational process.

To provide a common framework for the several State surveys, and to make possible nation-wide planning to meet the needs revealed, the State survey bodies will adopt the following terms of reference in respect of the three major objectives stated above which affect all levels of education up to the completion of secondary schooling:—

- (i) to examine the needs of the State in respect of—
  - (a) the administrative structure, organization and establishment required to achieve informed, progressive and efficient administration, effective two-way communication and desirable human and public relations.
  - (b) the planned siting and acquisition of land for the establishment of educational facilities, the development of appropriate building designs, the erection of new school buildings and the upgrading of existing ones.



- (c) all equipment and supplies considered desirable and necessary for the provision of the best education for the child.
- (d) all teaching aids which, by their use, would enhance the effectiveness of the educational programme.
- (e) the recruitment and supply of teachers and professional supporting staff, having regard to salaries, conditions, promotional opportunities, allowances, housing, workloads, and general professional status and requirements.
- (f) the pre-services and in-service education of teachers.
- (g) the recruitment and supply of ancillary staff.
- (h) scholarships, allowances and bursaries to individuals and other educational organizations.
- (ii) to draw up broad priorities in which the fulfilment of these needs should be ranked to suit the purposes of the State concerned.
- (iii) to establish a tentative programme with appropriate time goals to meet the various priorities.
- (iv) to provide estimates of the costs involved.

The States further agreed that during the conduct of these surveys, they would arrange for inter-state consultation to ensure a reasonable degree of conformity, though not necessarily uniformity, in the standards of provision applied.

It is essential to recognise that there should be no immediate deadline, such as the 1970 Australian Education Council Meeting, for the completion of such a task as its chief value will lie in its comprehensiveness. Any such deadline could only result in a superficial approach to the task. While it may be readily accepted that the survey details as outlined in the terms of reference would comprise the major part of any report, no survey of needs could be validly undertaken unless the education of the child as an individual was the prime consideration. Once such a determination, concerning the educational programme which should be applied to ensure the best education for the child, has been made, the needs as

expressed in the terms of reference could then be comprehensively considered.

When the State surveys are completed, the Secretariat of the Australian Education Council will act in accordance with the following terms of reference:—

- (i) to collate the results of the surveys by the States, in terms of needs, costs, priorities and time goals;
- (ii) to assess the total requirement for educational expenditure in Australia;
- (iii) to relate this requirement to national resources;
- (iv) to present the above statements for the consideration of the Australian Education Council, with a view to action being taken to formulate a nation-wide plan for the fulfilment of needs in accordance with priorities determined by the States, and with a view to seeking Commonwealth co-operation and financial assistance in putting this plan into effect.

27.

## LAND

### *Newburn Zoning*

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Has the Regional Director of Civil Aviation or any other authority been given an assurance by him that the land area between the airport and the railway establishment at Forrestfield, generally referred to as Newburn district, would not be changed from its present zoning of rural?
- (2) Would he lay on the Table of the House a copy of the correspondence on this matter between his department and that of the Department of Civil Aviation?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) and (2) It will be appreciated by the honourable member that I have no authority to give an assurance, either now or when I was Minister for Railways at the time when the railway marshalling yards location was under discussion, that the area in question would not be changed from its present zoning.

However, there was a clear understanding that the rural zoning would, for obvious reasons, be retained.

There were even reservations about limited industrial use which would certainly not be undertaken without very careful consultation between the Town Planning De-

partment, Department of Civil Aviation, and Department of Industrial Development.

To the best of my knowledge there is no direct correspondence between the Department of Industrial Development and the Department of Civil Aviation, although there was consultation between D.C.A. and myself in my capacity as Minister for Railways at the time, and as Minister for Industrial Development.

There has been correspondence between the Town Planning Department and D.C.A., and I understand copies of these letters have been made available to the Belmont Shire Council.

28.

### RAILWAYS

#### *Employees: Leave*

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Railways:

What is the total amount of—

(a) annual leave;

(b) long service leave,

due as at the 30th June, 1969, to railway employees who are covered by awards of the Railways Classification Board?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

(a) Annual Leave—3,160 weeks.

(b) Long service leave—817 terms.

### QUESTIONS (6): WITHOUT NOTICE

#### 1. INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION

##### ACT

##### *Amendment*

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Labour:

In view of the reported likelihood of changes being made to the Commonwealth Arbitration Act to ease the burden of the penal provisions on the trade unions, will he advise whether the Government will act similarly in regard to the State Industrial Arbitration Act?

Mr. O'NEIL replied:

I thank the honourable member for having given me some notice of his intention to ask this question, the answer to which is as follows:—

A reported "likelihood of changes" seems to me to be rather flimsy ground upon which to request similar action in respect of amendments to any legislation.

A report in *The West Australian* of today's date indicates that discussions in the matter of penalties in the

Commonwealth Arbitration Act are still a considerable way from producing a satisfactory solution.

The outcome of these discussions is awaited with interest.

2.

### FOOTBALLERS

#### *Personal Assault*

Mr. DUNN asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Did he see the report in this morning's *The West Australian* of the admission of a footballer giving details of several instances of direct personal assault while playing football?

(2) As it is illegal to assault another person, is it the intention of the police to prefer any charges in these cases?

(3) Does he agree that, if this kind of behaviour is allowed to continue unchallenged, the law is being reduced to a point of absurdity?

(4) Could he advise whether footballers, or any persons indulging in a sporting event, receive special dispensation in the matter of personal assaults?

Mr. CRAIG replied:

(1) Yes, I have read the article, and I have it in front of me now. Like the honourable member and others who have read it, I did so with some surprise, if not astonishment, that a well-known footballer, who is respected in many ways both on and off the field, would describe himself as a knuckleman. I do not think this is a very good example to the many young fine types of lads we have playing football today.

(2) No. The cases referred to are Statute barred.

(3) It is the policy of the Police Department to leave these matters to the Western Australian National Football League for any disciplinary action considered necessary.

(4) Unless the player involved lays a charge for any specific assault, no police action or special dispensation is considered.

3.

### EDUCATION

#### *Resignation of Teachers*

Mr. TOMS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Did he see the article on page two of the *Daily News* of the 21st August, 1969, headed, "Teachers May Quit for Trip to Asia"?

- (2) If "Yes," does he not agree that it would be preferable to grant the three weeks' leave rather than lose three teachers?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

I wish to thank the member for Ascot for giving me some notice of this question, the answer to which is as follows:—

(1) Yes.

(2) No. Departmental policy permits those teachers selected for State or national teams at the top level of their sports to be granted leave. Any extension of this policy to cover club or minor association tours would cause unwarranted disruption to the education of those pupils in the classes of the touring teachers.

#### 4. ROADS

##### *Kwinana Freeway: Extension*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works:

With reference to question 9 on today's notice paper, is he aware that the Melville Shire Council is in possession of a letter from the Main Roads Department indicating that the Metropolitan Region Scheme is to be amended next session?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:  
No.

#### 5. WEEBO TRIBAL GROUND

##### *Report of Investigating Committee*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:  
Is he in a position to indicate when the report concerning the Weebo area is likely to be tabled in Parliament?

Sir DAVID BRAND replied:

I regret to say I am not. I have not caught up with the Weebo problem yet. Perhaps the Minister for Native Welfare may be able to say something about this.

Mr. LEWIS: I am—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will have to ask the Minister a question.

#### 6. WEEBO TRIBAL GROUND

##### *Report of Investigating Committee*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

I thank the Premier for his suggestion. Is the Minister able to give any information as to when the report concerning the Weebo area will be laid on the Table of the House?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

The short answer to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is, "Not at present."

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

##### *Amendment to Motion: Personal Explanation*

SIR DAVID BRAND (Greenough—Premier) [4.56 p.m.]: Although I have not discussed this matter with you, Mr. Speaker, I would like leave to make a personal explanation in connection with something I said on Thursday.

The SPEAKER: I will put it to the House. The Premier has asked leave to make a personal explanation. Is there any dissentient voice? There being none, leave is granted.

Sir DAVID BRAND: When speaking on the amendment to the Address-in-Reply on Thursday, I stated that the subsidy in Victoria was 25c a bushel. This information came to us from the Victorian Treasury via our own officers. However, there was evidently some misunderstanding because following the decision of the Federal Government to grant \$1,000,000 to the Victorian Government, the subsidy was ultimately increased to 40c. I wanted to make that explanation to clarify what could be a misunderstanding, because some members quoted the subsidy as being 40c, and I stated it was 25c. It was ultimately 40c.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr. I. W. Manning, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Burt (Murchison-Eyre) on the ground of ill-health.

On motion by Mr. Davies, leave of absence for eight weeks granted to Mr. Hall (Albany) on the ground of ill-health.

#### EXMOUTH GULF SOLAR SALT INDUSTRY AGREEMENT BILL

##### *Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr. Court (Minister for Industrial Development), and read a first time.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: TENTH DAY

##### *Amendment to Motion*

Debate resumed, from the 21st August, on the following motion by Mr. McPharlin:—

That the following Address-in-Reply to his Excellency's Speech be agreed to:—

May it please Your Excellency: We the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our most Gracious Sovereign,

and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

*To which Mr. Davies had moved an amendment—*

That the following words be added to the Address-in-Reply:—

; but we regret to have to inform Your Excellency that the Government has been so oblivious to the serious situation which was developing in the farming areas because of diminished rainfall, that no preparations at all were made to deal with the position until after the Opposition had drawn attention in Parliament to the necessity for action and as a consequence valuable time has been lost in taking remedial measures.

We regret also to inform Your Excellency that the action of the Government in declining to inform Parliament of its proposals and in preferring to make its statements outside, is an affront to Parliament and calculated to reduce its prestige.

**MR. NALDER** (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [4.58 p.m.]: Last Thursday the Minister for Transport and I flew to various areas of the State which had been affected by the dry conditions existing for some time. This visit had been given publicity, and we had arranged to meet shire presidents and representatives of the various farming organisations to discuss the drought situation and the conditions which existed over the preceding weeks, and the likelihood of prevailing conditions following further weeks of continued dry weather. We also discussed the possible result if rain was received in the near future.

The Minister for Transport and I flew to a number of local authority areas where we met the people concerned and a full and frank discussion took place. A statement was made after our return which indicated that the position was deteriorating. As a matter of fact, we were agreeably surprised to find that the situation in a number of areas was not as bad as we had been led to believe. When I say that, I do not want to indicate that the position was not serious; because, as the statement indicated, the position was deteriorating.

I was surprised when I returned to Perth to find that an amendment to the Address-in-Reply had been moved by the Opposition censuring the Government for not taking any action. To my view this is completely irresponsible.

**Mr. Tonkin:** That is not what the amendment says.

**Mr. NALDER:** To my mind, it is completely irresponsible for an Opposition to bring a motion such as this to the House when it knows very well that the Government has made every effort to overcome the difficulty that is facing the various areas. Personally, I do not blame the member for Victoria Park, who moved the amendment, one bit; because, doubtless, he was forced into the situation—

**Mr. Graham:** What is this "forced"?

**Mr. NALDER:** —of moving the amendment.

**Mr. Graham:** We do not force our members to do anything.

**Mr. Bovell:** Not much!

**Mr. Graham:** They are not like the Government's yes-men.

**Mr. NALDER:** I will give the member for Victoria Park credit for possibly not knowing very much about the situation as far as drought conditions are concerned. This is very obvious as even the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will see if he refers to the debate of last week, which is recorded in *Hansard*.

**Mr. Graham:** I was here and I listened for myself.

**Mr. NALDER:** The member for Victoria Park moved an amendment but he did not give any reason for moving it.

**Mr. Davies:** We ran out of time.

**Mr. NALDER:** Mr. Speaker, I consider that the time has come for members who intend to move amendments to the Address-in-Reply to give at least some reason for them. No reason whatsoever was given on this occasion.

**Mr. Rushton:** He did not know anything about it.

**Mr. NALDER:** Only three or four lines of the report in *Hansard* are devoted to this. Most of the time was spent in reading out the amendment. Any member of this place should be able to see that the action was nothing but irresponsible. I am surprised the Opposition should agree to a situation like this, when it knows full well that if any member intends to move an amendment at least he should give some reasons for doing so.

**Mr. Jamieson:** It was not nearly as irresponsible as your statement.

**Mr. Davies:** You will get some reasons.

**Mr. NALDER:** I consider this kind of thing should be looked into in future. At least Parliament should be given some information when a member moves an amendment.

**Mr. Davies:** If the Minister sits down, the Opposition will give some supporting reasons.

**Mr. Jamieson:** Wait and see.

**Mr. Davies:** There are very good reasons for moving it.

Mr. NALDER: I am quite sure that the general public will certainly not be fooled by the action of the Opposition.

Mr. Jamieson: Nor by the action of the Minister.

Mr. NALDER: Even farmers who support the Opposition will not be fooled for one minute by this amendment, because they know the facts.

Mr. Jamieson: We saw what your brother had to say.

Mr. NALDER: No effort has been spared by the Government to get the story over. All information has been made available as quickly as possible so that the members of the public may know where they stand.

Mr. Davies: You were not getting the story to this House.

Mr. NALDER: That is another subject.

Mr. Davies: That is part of the item.

Mr. NALDER: The Premier dealt with this.

Mr. Davies: After the amendment was moved.

Mr. NALDER: I want to indicate to the House that the Government has been right on the ball on this matter.

Mr. Tonkin: Tell us what you did.

Mr. NALDER: When the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Address-in-Reply he found fault with the Governor's Speech and said he was surprised that it did not make some mention of the drought conditions that exist.

Mr. Davies: And you said, "What drought?"

Mr. NALDER: That is correct. The Leader of the Opposition made that comment on the 6th August. The day before, the assistant director of the department, on my instructions, had rung 15 local authorities. He was able to contact 11 of them on the phone and, in those 11 cases, he spoke to either the secretary or the president of the local authority area. Not one of them, at that date, was prepared to recommend that the area be declared a drought area.

Mr. Davies: It was a different story a week later.

Mr. NALDER: I am saying this very specifically, and I can give the names of the shires if the members of the House wish to know them.

Mr. Davies: Please do.

Mr. NALDER: I am able to give the particulars of the local authorities which were contacted by telephone. In all, 15 local authorities were approached, but in four cases we were unable to contact the secretary, the president, or the shire clerk. Let me repeat: not one of the 11 local authorities that were contacted by the

officer from my department was prepared at that time to indicate that the area should be declared a drought area.

Mr. Jamieson: Did not the Minister have enough officers upon whom he could rely to get the information?

Mr. NALDER: Listen to that!

Mr. Jamieson: Of course, listen!

Mr. NALDER: The member for Belmont should go out into the country and learn something about it.

Mr. Graham: The Minister should have done that.

Mr. Davies: The Minister certainly did not know anything.

Mr. NALDER: The Minister was well informed.

Mr. Davies: The Minister knew nothing.

Mr. NALDER: I knew exactly what the position was and I will indicate, by giving some dates, that the Government has had the fullest information available to it.

Mr. Graham: At the time the Minister said, "What drought?"

Mr. NALDER: Had there been two or three inches of rain throughout the affected areas within two days, probably we would not have heard very much more about this matter. As a matter of fact some heavy falls have been recorded in the Albany area. I have not seen the full records of the rainfall but one farmer who was interviewed after that rain was reported to have said that the drought was over, or words to that effect. This indicates how quickly the whole situation can change. With a good rainfall, the situation can change completely overnight.

Mr. Moir: The stock will still be hungry next day.

Mr. Bertram: The grass has grown in the morning!

Mr. NALDER: I will give the member for Boulder-Dundas some information about feeding before I go very much further. The situation is one which must be analysed to some extent in order to indicate how far out the Opposition is when it comes along and moves an amendment such as this. It indicates that the members of the Opposition do not have any information about the matter at all and, more particularly, that they take little interest in the situation. The members of the Opposition have tried to lead the people of this State to believe that nothing has been done by the Government.

Mr. Davies: The Press would be in the same boat, I suppose?

Mr. NALDER: The Government has been kept fully informed of the situation. In June and July a very low rainfall was experienced in the areas where the situation has deteriorated. The Government knows that food has been in short supply and the situation has been affecting the stock. When I say "stock," in the main

I mean sheep and lambs, because very few cattle are carried by the farmers in those areas. Some do carry cattle, of course, and we have seen some of the farmers concerned, who have made provision for this. Even in the position in which we find ourselves today, many farmers have made provision to meet the situation.

I will refer to one farmer to illustrate my point. In one of the affected areas a farmer is now selling grain and buying sheep. I simply wish to indicate that many farmers have been in the position of being able to meet the situation. Of course, as conditions deteriorate through no rain falling, or very light rainfall being recorded, it must be known that the position will not improve but must go backwards.

We have only to look at our own backyards. If we do not water, the garden and the lawn dry up and, in time, they will die. This is the same situation. If rain is not received in the affected areas, the position deteriorates.

The Government has been kept fully informed of the position and, with regard to the present conditions in the various parts of the State, is in the position of being able to meet the situation to the extent that it is humanly possible for any person, organisation, or Government, to meet it.

As I have said, I have been kept fully informed as to what has been happening in the State and, because of the information available, the Government has been able to take the necessary action which it hopes will lessen the impact or the effect of this drought. As soon as conditions improve, the Government hopes that farmers generally will be able to operate under normal conditions again.

Mr. Brady: Has the Federal Government been asked for drought relief?

Mr. NALDER: The Federal Government has been informed of the position in Western Australia. As soon as all the facts are available, I expect the Premier will confer with the Prime Minister. I have already been in touch with the Minister for Primary Industry and the Minister for Trade, who have been informed of the position which exists in Western Australia.

Mr. Brady: I think the Minister for Agriculture in the Federal Parliament said yesterday that there had been no application for drought relief.

Mr. NALDER: I think the member for Swan is wrong. To my knowledge, the question was asked of the Leader of the Senate, who indicated that up to the present time no official communication had been received by the Commonwealth Government from the Western Australian Government. However, the Federal Government knows the situation. As soon as we are in a position to claim from the Commonwealth Government, we will certainly take this action.

Prior to the 1st August, the Government appointed a subcommittee of Cabinet, and it also agreed to appoint an advisory committee composed of representatives of various organisations and Government departments who would have some interest in this matter. After discussions with the Treasury, it was decided the Government would pay the cost of transporting coarse grains from the nearest bins to the areas affected.

This was brought about because very little coarse grain was available in the country areas where it was necessary to hand feed stock. There was quite a large quantity of grain at Fremantle and, consequently, the Government made this available to help the farmers carry on feeding their stock while further consideration was given to the situation in regard to wheat. I will make a brief reference to this subject in a moment. At the time the main point was to ensure that the farmers who did not have sufficient supplies of grain could at least take immediate action to obtain supplies which would be delivered freight free to the rail siding.

Shortage of grain is a very normal situation. The farmers anticipated that by this time of the year—namely, July and August—the season would have broken and it would not be necessary to do any hand feeding of stock. Some farmers had been buying grain privately from nearby neighbours who had more than they needed, but the situation developed where it was necessary for them to augment their supplies from another source. The Grain Pool had retained a quantity of oats and barley, which is done every year in case any area requires it, and consequently the Grain Pool was able to facilitate a movement of grain to the areas where it was needed.

From time to time we experience seasons in Western Australia which are not average or are below average. Last year Bridgetown and Boyup Brook seemed to miss out on the rainfall with the result that conditions deteriorated in those areas. At that time the Government made coarse grains available through the Grain Pool for the use of farmers. The Government also arranged, through the Minister for Transport, to allow farmers to engage anyone they wished to transport the grain without the necessity to make an approach to the Transport Board.

These facilities were made available in order to improve the situation in that particular area. I went down and visited the area and talked to the officers of the shires, and they felt they did not want to declare their districts as drought areas. However, a little later the season broke and the rains came, and I understand that the season in those areas is quite a good one this year.

I remember only too well that in Coorow three or four years ago there was not a drought; it was the other way around: there was too much rain and the farmers were not able to get their crops in. As a result they were short of grain. So members can see that the position varies from season to season and from year to year, and it is up to those in the industry to ensure to the best of their ability that they store sufficient feed for their stock so that they will be able to meet a difficult situation. In the main farmers know very well that their dry stock are able to fend for themselves much better than the ewes with their lambs.

Some two months ago a conference was held between interested parties—that is, agents, the various farmers' organisations, exporters, and the abattoirs—to discuss the position which occurred last year when glut conditions prevailed in several markets. The conference was held in an endeavour to ascertain what could be done to improve the position.

The Midland Junction Abattoir Board sent one of its officers to New Zealand in an effort to obtain slaughtermen to help cope with the glut conditions. It did this because everyone knows that glut conditions are of no help to any of the parties. One cannot expect the machinery, which is set up, to cover every aspect of a situation such as this. When normal supplies arrive week in and week out, then the machinery is able to cope. So the Midland Junction Abattoir Board recruited 51 slaughtermen and 15 labourers in New Zealand and brought them to Western Australia. It also engaged 40 slaughtermen from Victoria.

One of the problems in the slaughtering business is that of finding sufficient labour to cope with the demand. The same thing was experienced at Robb Jetty, and great difficulty was found in recruiting sufficient men to carry on the slaughtering. As a result of this recruiting, the Midland Junction Abattoir was increased from two chains to three chains. I think members know what a chain is. It is the operation in which an animal which is slaughtered is passed to the men who are responsible for doing certain parts of the skinning and dressing of the carcase. The same thing applied at Robb Jetty. Two chains were engaged and these are in operation. I mention this because the same situation is developing now.

No doubt members will know that as a result of the market this week a record yarding is anticipated. I have not been able to obtain the final figures, but up to yesterday 70,000-odd sheep had been auctioned in two days and, if the normal yarding was brought into Midland today, the figure would possibly be nearer 100,000. No part of our organisation in Western Australia can handle these conditions.

As a result of the meeting I mentioned earlier, the Farmers' Union agreed to notify its members—and this was done on the front page of its paper some four or five weeks ago—that they should watch the market to ensure that the situation which occurred last year was not repeated this year. However, it has been repeated, and, of course, it has been brought about by the deteriorating conditions in country areas, which have caused farmers to endeavour to get rid of their stock.

I wish to make a point here because, no doubt, a number of people will be of the opinion that if this stock is offered for sale, then facilities for slaughtering stock should also be available. However, quite a number of the stock that is being offered for sale today are not fit for slaughter.

Mr. Norton: What is the value of the stock on the market?

Mr. NALDER: The value of the stock is what it brings on the market. It is offered for auction and the figure at which it is knocked down is its value. In some cases the figure is very small. As a matter of fact, there is a lot of stock in the country today which is not worth anything at all, and, in some cases, when it is sent to Midland the farmer is left with a debit and has to send a cheque to pay for the difference.

Mr. Davies: How does that work out?

Mr. NALDER: I will give the member for Victoria Park one simple illustration. It costs the farmer 70c to transport stock by road, and that stock may only bring 10c to 20c when offered at auction on the market. This is how it happens. Some lots of sheep have been offered for sale and have been purchased by exporters, and up to 10 to 15 per cent. of those animals have not been passed by the health inspector. In other words they go down the chute; and this, of course, is a loss to the exporter. Once the sheep is bled, the operation continues and the cost of the slaughtering has to be met by the exporter.

As I said, of certain lots of stock that were auctioned at the Midland Junction Abattoir in the last few months, up to 10 to 15 per cent. have not been passed. So this indicates that a number of the sheep that are coming into the Midland Junction Abattoir are no good for slaughtering.

The condemnations at Robb Jetty in 1968-69 amounted to 1.4 per cent. This is somewhere near the normal percentage, because even a killable animal sometimes has something wrong with it and is rejected by the health inspector. However, in the last two months,—July and August—of the 80,000 killed in seven weeks, 4 per cent. have not been passed as fit for human consumption.

Mr. Tonkin: What would that be due to?

Mr. NALDER: In the main, they are emaciated. They are not fat enough.

Mr. Tonkin: During the last two months?

Mr. NALDER: This is over the last two months. I would think that if the Opposition was keen to give assistance to the farmers, as has been mentioned, it might take some action to ensure that the slaughtermen's union plays its part, because there has been nothing but trouble for the past few months.

Mr. Jamieson: We have less chance of exerting authority over the slaughtermen than you have.

Mr. NALDER: The Opposition represents the various unions.

Mr. Jamieson: We do not represent the various unions.

Mr. NALDER: Well, the Opposition certainly has some say in the matter.

Mr. Jamieson: You ask the unions. Everytime a member indulges in that sort of thing, look at what happens in the Commonwealth sphere.

Mr. NALDER: I repeat what I said previously: if the members of the Opposition used their influence to assist in this matter, it would be a more practical approach to the position. As a result of the stoppages which have occurred, many thousands of stock that could have been slaughtered have not been slaughtered.

I appeal in this House to the people involved in this exercise—slaughtermen and those who assist them—to at least make an effort to help the situation, because of the conditions which now apply. I think that in the past when there have been catastrophes of other descriptions everybody has lent a hand to ensure that the impact was lessened as much as possible. This is a situation in which I believe everybody associated with the industry should make an effort to ensure that the position is catered for as well as possible.

To assist the situation, the Minister for Transport and Railways approached the Commonwealth Government, and an agreement has been reached whereby Commonwealth stock trucks are being brought to Merredin to load sheep to be taken to the Eastern States. Two years ago we brought over 350,000 sheep to Western Australia from the Eastern States in order to build up our numbers. The position is now reversed. New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia had droughts two years ago, but now they are having better seasons and they are in the market for stock. Quite a number of our stock have already been sold to the Eastern States, and this is helping to relieve the position. This fact has not received much publicity. Statements have been handed to the Press, but they have not been used.

However, these arrangements are now in operation; the stock is being loaded at Merredin and taken to Port Augusta without being transhipped. The stock is then sent to the various farmers who have purchased it.

Mr. Bertram: Will the farmers be given any assistance when the time comes to replenish their stocks?

Mr. NALDER: Yes, this is covered. In the first place, those farmers who have found agistment for their stock—and quite a lot have made arrangements to have their sheep transported by rail to a place of agistment—will not have to pay for the return of the stock; the Government will pay the cost of the return journey from the place of agistment.

Further, if the farmers are not in a position to be able to find finance—that is, if the banks or the stock firms are not able to make money available—then the Government will make finance available to help the farmers rehabilitate themselves. The basis of this will be that once an agreement has been made, finance will be available for the purchase of stock, or for any other purpose to help rehabilitate farmers, at 5 per cent. interest, with a holiday for two years and repayment over five years.

This has been accepted by the farming community as a very generous offer, and its purpose is to help to keep farmers on their properties following the hardships brought about by the drought.

On the 21st July I requested the department to obtain reports from all departmental branches in the State. The officers in the various branches made a survey of their areas, and the information received took some seven to 10 days to collate. On the 29th July, representatives of the department met to assess the situation, and they started a programme to gain all the information they could to enable them to advise the farmers on how best to cope with the drought conditions. We hope to have a booklet available to farmers early next week.

As I mentioned earlier, the advisory committee included representatives of the farmers, the Railways Department, the Public Works Department, the Department of Agriculture, and the Rural and Industries Bank. The committee met on the 12th August, and full publicity has been given to the recommendations it made at that meeting. The committee is to meet again on the 2nd September.

To assist the Government to assess the situation, a drought finance committee has been appointed. This is comprised of the Chairman of Commissioners of the R. & I. Bank, the Under-Treasurer, and the Director of Agriculture. The committee has met on a number of occasions and has



made recommendations on the type of expenditure that should be made—whether it should be by way of subsidy, or loan.

Mr. Jones: When was that appointed?

Mr. NALDER: About 10 days ago. I would like to make special reference to the question of water, because it appears to be the biggest problem associated with the deteriorating conditions. Although the areas served by the comprehensive scheme are covered reasonably well, there are areas outside the comprehensive scheme which are not so fortunate, and, as a result, the farm water advisory committee which was appointed by the Government some two or three years ago was asked to make a survey of the situation, and I am glad to report that the boring equipment has already gone into what are considered to be the areas worst affected—particularly the Westonia area—and operations started early this week.

As it becomes available, other equipment will be sent into areas where it is thought an urgency exists and, in this manner, we hope to be able to cover a considerable area and to assess the value of supplies not only in the case of individual farmers, but as it relates to adjoining farms to which it might be necessary to cart water.

The position I have outlined will be dealt with under the same conditions as exist in relation to the farm water advisory committee, which was organised for this purpose. Money will be made available to equip the bores and it will be repaid over a period of 15 years. This is the position which exists at the moment, where farmers outside the comprehensive scheme are prepared to put down key dams.

The supply of feed is, of course, most important and, as members know, we have approached the Australian Wheat Board to see whether a redelivery plan can be brought into existence. Briefly, this means that farmers who have delivered wheat to bins and who have been paid the first payment of \$1.10 can repay that money and draw the equivalent in wheat from the bin to help them feed their stock.

This proposition has gone to the Wheat Board which, I understand, is to meet tomorrow. We hope to receive a favourable reply to the request. This will mean there will be no break in the supply of grain to farmers.

There is still coarse grain available and when the situation I have outlined eventuates we will be in a position, through the bulkhandling authorities, to make wheat available if it is required.

Arrangements have also been made for local authorities to make regular reports to a central office which has been established in the Treasury Building in Perth. The Assistant Director of Agriculture will be the person responsible for controlling this

office, and all information will be collated, and any action which might be needed will be promptly taken.

The officers of the department are at the moment working on a map indicating the drought areas and when this is completed from the information received from the various shires seeking a declaration of drought areas, a public announcement will be made.

I would now like to make some reference to the publicity which has been given to this question of drought. Those of us who have seen some of the pictures which have appeared in the Press and on television know very well that the position has been grossly exaggerated. We have seen photographs showing heaps of bones, dead sheep, and so on, but everybody in the industry knows very well that this is really not a true picture of the position.

I have seen photographs of somebody holding up a ram's head while heaps of skulls are lying on the ground, but most of us know that these animals have been dead for three or four years. Some of the sheep which have been pictured probably died as a result of being freshly shorn, and this happens in normal conditions.

In the best of seasons if one were to ask a farmer his normal death rate among his sheep one would be told that it was from 3 to 5 per cent. So there is little doubt that the public has been fed exaggerated information. I recall having seen a picture in which sheep were lying dead and in which wool was lying all around the place. There was no doubt that those sheep had died from six to 12 months previously.

A few days ago there was a photograph in the *Daily News* showing a sheep lying in the stubble with a lamb beside it. A number of people who have seen this photograph tell me that the sheep pictured is a wether and not a ewe.

Mr. Graham: How do you know?

Mr. NALDER: This is the view of people who know about these things. It is possible that the lamb was picked up and placed alongside the sheep in the picture. It was probably a few days old and had probably had a good feed at that time. Situations such as these can be exaggerated, and I hope that people will not take advantage of the position.

The Government knows the problem does exist, but it has planned, in every way possible, to deal with it. I think we all hope and pray that the rain will soon come and that we will not have a situation where farmers will be forced to go through a season wondering what to do next, both in relation to their stock and their seasonal activity. I would like to assure members that the Government has not been sitting down doing nothing, as is suggested by the amendment.

It was pleasing to notice during the discussions which the Minister for Transport and I had with the people whom we met that they appreciated very much indeed what the Government was doing to assist them. The Government is hoping to arrange for district officers to visit local authorities at least once a week to discuss the situation, receive reports of what is happening, and see whether the situation is deteriorating any further.

I feel sure the House will not accept the amendment, because we all know the situation has been exaggerated out of all proportion. It would not be a good thing for us to embarrass the people who are at their wits' end, not knowing what to do for the best. The Government is making every effort in every instance to assist farmers in this most difficult position.

**MR. TONKIN** (Melville—Leader of the Opposition) (5.39 p.m.): For the most part, the speech of the Minister for Agriculture was devoted to explaining what the Government is doing now, what it proposes to do, and what it has done subsequent to the 6th August. Had I elected to do so, it would have been well within my province to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that, for the most part, the Minister was out of order, because the amendment charges the Government with being oblivious to a serious situation which was developing, and with making no preparations at all until after the Opposition had drawn attention to the position.

**Mr. Nalder**: That is rubbish, and you know it.

**Mr. TONKIN**: Accordingly, in effect, the amendment says the Government did nothing prior to the 6th August, and as soon as the Minister got to his feet he showed he had not read the amendment, because he said the Opposition charged the Government with not taking any action. The Opposition did nothing of the kind; it charged the Government with not taking any action prior to the 6th August.

**Mr. Nalder**: It has been proved that this was the case.

**Mr. TONKIN**: To the extent that the Minister was explaining to the House the subsequent actions of the Government, he was completely out of order.

**Mr. Nalder**: Action was taken on the 21st July.

**Mr. TONKIN**: When the Premier was speaking he said the Minister for Agriculture took the first action first; and the first action taken by the Minister for Agriculture was a decision to carry coarse grains free of freight. That decision was made on the 8th August.

**Mr. Nalder**: It was made on the 1st August.

**Mr. TONKIN**: Oh no, it was not.

**Mr. Nalder**: Yes, it was.

**Mr. TONKIN**: If that decision was made on the 1st August, why was it not announced publicly until the 9th August?

**Mr. Nalder**: It was; it appeared in the Press on Friday, the 1st August.

**Mr. TONKIN**: I will tell the Minister for Agriculture that it appeared in *The West Australian* on the 9th August.

**Mr. Nalder**: On the 1st August, when the decision was made.

**Mr. TONKIN**: No, it did not; the Minister should have a look at the paper.

**Mr. Nalder**: The 1st August was the date on which the decision was taken.

**Mr. TONKIN**: There are two charges levied against the Government. The first charge is that it was oblivious to the situation developing up till the 6th August, and the second was that it bypassed the Parliament when it made its decision as to what it was going to do.

Following two Cabinet meetings—and despite the fact that a question was asked in this House after those Cabinet meetings—the Government went outside and made its announcement through the Press as to what it proposed to do. This action on the part of the Government was calculated to reduce the prestige of Parliament and to adversely affect the image of Parliament in the eyes of the people.

**Sir David Brand**: You know that is not correct. You cannot give a statement if it is not ready.

**Mr. TONKIN**: I will prove this to the Premier as I go along.

**Sir David Brand**: You will prove nothing of the kind.

**Mr. TONKIN**: The Premier will be surprised.

**Sir David Brand**: I will not be surprised. You cannot make a statement available if it is not ready.

**Mr. TONKIN**: If that is so, there is an obvious answer to the first charge of the Opposition, which states that the Government was oblivious to the situation prior to the 6th August. If the Government had done anything, the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture could have said, "This amendment goes overboard because this is what we did, on these dates, prior to the 6th August." All the Minister did prior to the 6th August was to appoint committees.

**Mr. Nalder**: Will you admit the Government made a decision on the 1st August?

**Mr. TONKIN**: All the Government did was to appoint committees.

**Mr. Bovell**: No, indeed, it was not.

**Mr. TONKIN**: The Minister himself said that emaciated sheep had been coming into the abattoir for two months.

**Mr. Nalder**: That has nothing to do with drought conditions.

Mr. TONKIN: Oh, has it not?

Mr. Nalder: Do not show your ignorance.

Mr. TONKIN: The fact that large numbers of emaciated sheep are coming into the abattoir indicates a serious situation in the country districts; it shows that the farmers are quitting their stock because they have no feed. But what did the Minister do? He asked the local authorities if there was a drought.

Mr. Nalder: That is just what has been done in the other States. Victoria would not declare a drought area unless the local authorities agreed; and that is the situation in Western Australia.

Mr. TONKIN: If anyone in authority had been examining rainfall figures he would have known months ago that we were in for a bad time.

Mr. Rushton: How many months ago?

Mr. TONKIN: Two months ago; and we are in for a bad time. There is not a district in Western Australia where rural pursuits are being carried out to any extent where the rainfall is not down, and down, greatly, indeed.

Mr. Nalder: You are wrong again, because the Katanning district received its normal average rainfall.

Mr. TONKIN: I have taken the trouble to get in touch with the Bureau of Meteorology and I asked it to select for me representative towns in every district in the State—towns representative of every section. I have the figures here and they prove the point I have just stated. Take Dalwallinu in 1968 for the months of May, June, July, and August. The rainfall figures were 100, 727, 187, and 175 points.

Mr. Young: How much down on the average would that be?

Mr. TONKIN: In 1969, Dalwallinu received 183 points for May, but only 215 points as against 727 for June; and only 116 points as against 187 for July.

Sir David Brand: Some of the best wheat crops are grown in the lesser rainfall areas.

Mr. TONKIN: In August, this year, Dalwallinu received 43 points as against 175 in 1968.

Mr. O'Connor: I think for your information—

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister can think what he likes; I will guarantee the authenticity of these figures from the Bureau of Meteorology.

Mr. Bovell: That proves nothing.

Mr. TONKIN: If the Minister wants to disparage the Bureau of Meteorology, which has supplied me with these rainfall figures of the various districts, that is his business. I am prepared to accept these figures, which have been given to me as being an authentic record of the rainfall in the various towns.

Mr. O'Connor: Would you be prepared—

Mr. TONKIN: The towns concerned are Dalwallinu, Moora, Bencubbin, Merredin, Northam, Katanning, Ongerup, Lake King, Hyden, Walgoolan, and Grass Patch; and in every instance the rainfall is substantially down.

Mr. O'Connor: Would you be prepared to correct an incorrect statement—

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister can make his own speech.

Mr. Brady: You tell us what arrangements you made before the 6th August.

Mr. TONKIN: On this evidence one would have expected more to have been done than just appoint committees and ask local authorities if they were experiencing a drought. The Minister for Agriculture should have asked his brother whether he thought he was experiencing a drought!

Mr. Nalder: I have already asked him about it, and he was carting water.

Mr. TONKIN: On the 31st July, Mr. O'Neil, Manager of the Grain Pool, said that the demand for oats and barley for stock feed was becoming more pronounced from all parts of the State's agricultural areas, with oats being distributed at the rate of 1,000 tons per week and barley at the rate of 750 tons per week, and farmers were paying world parity prices. Some farmers had asked for wheat out of storage against next season's deliveries.

Yet the Minister for Agriculture gets in touch by telephone with local authorities to ask them if there is a drought. All the indications were obvious to those on this side of the House; and I feel pretty certain they were obvious to some Country Party members who must have been making representations to the Government, if I am any judge, for some action to be taken; and they most assuredly would have been pointing out the position and asking for something to be done. That is my assumption.

It was left to us to draw attention to the fact that in the Governor's Speech there was no mention of the serious condition in the country; no mention of the Government having appointed any committees; and no mention of what perhaps the position would be if the situation worsened—not a single syllable.

Mr. O'Connor: By what date was this?

Mr. TONKIN: In the Governor's Speech. So we drew attention to that fact.

Mr. Rushton: When was the Governor's Speech prepared—about May?

Mr. TONKIN: I will say this: If the present situation continues—as unfortunately it appears it will—we will, in this State, face the worst situation we have for 50 years. The prosperity from the iron ore has not yet rubbed off on the other

areas of this country, and we are still largely dependent upon our rural industries for our economy—very largely dependent. That is why this sector should be receiving the closest possible attention from the Government.

Mr. Bovell: It is. I was along the south coast on the 25th and 26th July.

Mr. TONKIN: However, when we drew attention to the position the Government's reply was that we were trying to panic the situation.

Mr. Nalder: That is what you are trying to do now.

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister for Agriculture asked, "What areas of the State are suffering from drought conditions?" So on the 6th August he did not know. He went on and said, "Name them, please." On the 6th August! Then he explained that the day before he had been in touch with 15 local authorities asking them if there was a drought.

Mr. W. A. Manning: They should know, shouldn't they?

Mr. Graham: The Minister should know, too.

Mr. TONKIN: He then said he was going on a report. He was not able to travel around the State and he was concerned with what his advisers said. So apparently his advisers said there was nothing to worry about.

Mr. Nalder: I told you on the 21st July I called for a report from all critical areas.

Mr. TONKIN: On the 6th August the Minister said that he was going on that report, which must have told him there was nothing to worry about, because on the 6th August the Minister asked, "Where are the drought conditions? What places? Name them, please." Apparently the report did not tell him.

When I asked the Minister straight out whether certain areas of distress in the State were not due to drought, his answer was, "No." I put the question straight to him, "Is not the trouble in certain areas due to drought conditions?" And the Minister's answer was, "No," on the 6th August, when we had a situation which had all the indications of being most serious indeed!

Within 24 hours of our raising this question in Parliament we saw television pictures which the Minister now says were phoney and were a frame-up and did not show the true position at all. I suppose all the letters that subsequently followed were phoney, too! I take it, there was no necessity for the meeting of farmers at Bencubbin who threatened to take the law into their own hands by taking wheat out of the bins! It is strange, in these circumstances, that the Minister had to telephone 15 local authorities to find out if there was a drought.

In the *Sunday Times* of the 10th August, under the heading, "Farmers say big areas do face drought," appeared the following:—

Many W.A. farmers—including Mr. Jack Nalder, brother of the Minister for Agriculture—yesterday disagreed with the minister's no-drought statement on Wednesday.

Mr. Jack Nalder went on to say that the rainfall at this property since the 1st January had been 493 points. This was only slightly more than what would be the normal average for the month of July. There were many other letters indicating the same thing.

On the 8th July, Mr. O'Neil felt it was desirable to make a further statement to the Press. For those who do not know, I repeat that Mr. O'Neil is the Manager of the Grain Pool.

Mr. Nalder: On the 8th July?

Mr. TONKIN: I beg your pardon; on the 8th August. He said that requests by farmers to buy back oats and barley had increased steadily in recent weeks. He was then selling about 2,000 tons of coarse grain to farmers each week. They had bought back 13,000 tons to that date. The highest amount bought back before this season, in any season, was 3,000 tons.

Would you, Mr. Speaker, not have thought if that had been brought under your notice and you had known that for weeks emaciated sheep had been coming into the abattoir, and you had known that 13,000 tons of coarse grain at world parity prices had been purchased by farmers when previously the largest total of coarse grains ever purchased back was only 3,000 tons, that this was a most serious situation indeed?

In *The West Australian* of the 9th August, Mr. Thorpe of Bencubbin, who was President of the North-East Zone Council of the Farmers' Union, said people were saying that the Government had been trying for five weeks to ascertain if there were a drought or feed shortage. This made farmers in his area want to take things into their own hands. He said, "The feed situation in the north-east wheatbelt is worse than bad—it is critical. By the time the Government gets moving with committees and other things to release grain for food, there will not be any sheep left to feed."

Mr. Forrester, the General President of the Farmers' Union, said the Government would need to do far more than give freight concessions. The decision to give freight concessions was the first sign by the Government of its intention to do anything, and that announcement was made on the 9th August.

Mr. Nalder: You are wrong again; it was the 1st August.

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister should look at the paper.

Mr. Nalder: You be prepared to be corrected if that statement is wrong?

Mr. TONKIN: I am telling the Minister that what I have said was reported in *The West Australian* on the 9th August.

Mr. Nalder: It was reported on the 1st August.

Mr. TONKIN: It was reported that the Government had agreed to pay the transport costs on coarse grains needed by farmers for emergency stock feed. The article went on to say that this was the first relief measure by the Government to help farmers whose stock was threatened by worsening dry conditions in many country areas. That announcement appeared in *The West Australian* on the 9th August, which is three days subsequent to when I raised the matter in this House.

Now, the Premier's reply amounted to this: it is very difficult to assess the situation in respect of drought areas. It has to be admitted that the Premier had been out of the State and would not be aware of the fact that emaciated sheep had been coming down to the market, and that 13,000 tons of coarse grain had been bought for feed. If he had been aware of those things, then surely he would not have said it was difficult to assess the situation of the drought areas.

The Premier then went on to say it was important that we do not make irresponsible decisions and thereby send the State bankrupt. We will send the State bankrupt if we do not do something to deal with this serious situation in the rural areas. These industries are still the backbone of the economy of this State, despite the wealth being produced from the iron ore.

The Premier then went on to say it must not be forgotten that the Government made a decision to make coarse grain available. The Premier then said he believed that in making coarse grain available the Minister for Agriculture took the first action first. So, surely, that was the first action. I repeat: the Premier said that was the first action, and that the Minister for Agriculture took the first action first.

Mr. Nalder: On the 1st August or the 2nd August.

Mr. TONKIN: That decision was reported in *The West Australian*. I cannot prove when the decision was made, but I will say this: it is passing strange that a decision of such importance, if made on the 1st August, did not appear in *The West Australian* until the 9th August.

Mr. Nalder: It appeared on the 2nd August; I think you will find that is correct.

Mr. TONKIN: Well, *The West Australian* must be changing its policy to make two announcements, weeks apart, on the same question. The Minister ought to send for the paper and have a look at it.

Our view is that instead of waiting until now to submit to the Wheat Board the question whether it would be prepared to release grain, this decision should have been obtained weeks ago.

Mr. Nalder: It was brought up by the Wheat Board at the last meeting.

Mr. TONKIN: It should have been brought up earlier so that the answer would be known.

Mr. Nalder: The Wheat Board had already discussed the matter, but had not made a decision. That came from the Chairman of the Wheat Board.

Mr. TONKIN: If the application had been put to the Wheat Board weeks ago, then the board would have had time to make a decision.

Mr. Nalder: It might have been a contrary decision. That is what I was told by the Chairman of the Wheat Board.

Mr. TONKIN: I am glad the Minister said that; because, what plans has the Government if the decision is a contrary one?

Mr. Nalder: We will wait.

Mr. TONKIN: We are waiting.

Mr. Nalder: We still have coarse grain.

Mr. TONKIN: A wide-awake Government would have its plans made already so that it could deal immediately with whatever decision is made.

Mr. Nalder: The decision will be dealt with. We will not make our decision until the Wheat Board has replied.

Mr. TONKIN: When I asked the Premier what steps he proposed to take to make the wheat available if an adverse decision were given, the Premier replied that consideration was being given to that aspect of things.

Sir David Brand: Well, that is right.

Mr. TONKIN: That is what the Government's attitude shows. I am complaining that consideration should have been given to this aspect weeks ago, not now, so that in the event of the decision being adverse the Government would have immediate plans to go straight ahead. However, the fact of the matter is that the Government does not know what it will do. It will have to think about the matter.

Mr. Nalder: An approach was made to the Wheat Board and it deferred a decision until the 4th September.

Mr. TONKIN: Well, I ask the Government now: what plans has it got for immediate implementation if the decision is an adverse one?

Mr. Graham: Silence.

Mr. TONKIN: The Government will think about it after the decision! That is our complaint. That is typical of the attitude of the Government. It has been oblivious to the real seriousness of the situation.

Mr. Bovell: Oh, no, it has not.

Mr. TONKIN: As my time is running out I must now deal with the second part of the motion. However, before I leave the question of wheat, I would say I hope a way will be found to make wheat available, under reasonable conditions, so that those people who desire to get it will not be obliged to run heavily into debt to obtain it. I hope the wheat will be readily available to them so that they can use it for the feed-starved stock, because the supply of coarse grain will inevitably run out.

Already the farmers have been asking that this wheat be made available to them, and have been asking for weeks. A meeting at Bencubbin made clear what the temper of the farmers was, when they suggested they should raid the bins and take the wheat there and then.

Mr. Nalder: Would you support that attitude?

Mr. TONKIN: The second part of the motion deals with the fact that the Government bypassed the Parliament. The Premier, when he was speaking, said that he wanted to emphasise that the question of the drought and the water supply was one which would face the whole Parliament. Of course it will. Well, why should not the Parliament have been told of the Cabinet decision in connection with this matter?

The Government expects to, and will, receive the co-operation of the Opposition, but we are not taken into the Government's confidence and we are not told what decisions Cabinet makes in connection with this matter.

Sir David Brand: The political road is strewn with the political corpses of people who make statements.

Mr. TONKIN: On the 21st July, 1965, when the Premier was opening an exhibition depicting the evolution of Parliament—the exhibition was mounted by the British High Commissioner—he had the following to say:—

It is worth remembering, especially at this time of our history, that when the influence of Parliament is diminished in any way for any reason the first casualty is the freedom of the people.

I repeat: when it is diminished, in any way, for any reason.

Sir David Brand: In any way. The statement was released when it was ready.

Mr. TONKIN: If the Government chooses only to make statements in Parliament when it suits it, and makes important statements on Cabinet decisions outside Parliament, then it is engaged in the very thing which the Premier said threatens the freedom of the people.

Unless we give the House the fullest prestige and regard—it is the most important forum: the place where important an-

nouncements ought to be made—then surely we are doing the very thing to which the Premier drew attention.

Sir David Brand: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. TONKIN: The Premier said "in any way for any reason," and surely that covers everything. So, there was no justification.

Sir David Brand: There was every justification.

Mr. TONKIN: There was no justification for the Premier, who knew the decision of Cabinet when I asked the question—the Cabinet meeting had already been held and the decision had been made—to say that Parliament could not be told. And Parliament was not told!

Sir David Brand: The information was not complete and was not ready to be told.

Mr. TONKIN: But the announcement was made outside Parliament.

Sir David Brand: I would point out that the whole of the information was not ready.

Mr. TONKIN: Those are the facts of the matter. The decisions were known to the Premier when the question was raised in the Parliament, and he had ample opportunity to tell the Parliament.

Sir David Brand: The statement was not ready and the information was not complete.

Mr. TONKIN: The Premier replied that some detail had to be attended to.

Sir David Brand: That is right.

Mr. TONKIN: Why could we not have been told of the decision of Cabinet with regard to this matter?

Sir David Brand: We will make a statement to Parliament when it is ready.

Mr. TONKIN: It is perfectly clear that the Premier decided to make a statement on this question outside Parliament when he could have made it in Parliament. However, he chose not to do so.

Sir David Brand: That is right because the statement was not ready.

Mr. TONKIN: I repeat: that is something which is calculated to reduce the prestige of Parliament; and the Premier's own utterances indicate that actions of that kind will result in the freedom of the people being the first casualty. So I consider that the Opposition is perfectly justified in bringing before the House this amendment to the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply.

Sir David Brand: It is full of political objective.

Mr. TONKIN: It is a strange thing that the Premier had a full three-quarters of an hour at his disposal—and the Minister for Agriculture likewise—finds so much to say on this subject.

Both the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture have been chattering away throughout the whole of my speech.

Sir David Brand: In reply to your chattering.

Mr. TONKIN: They both had ample opportunity to deal with the matter properly if they had had an answer. However, they did not have an answer.

Sir David Brand: We have all the answers.

Mr. TONKIN: Neither one of them is able to come along and say, categorically, what actions were taken prior to the 6th August. All the Government has done is appoint committees and ring up local authorities.

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

MR. O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Minister for Transport) [7.30 p.m.]: Upon returning from the country with the Deputy Premier last week I was surprised to find an amendment on the notice paper in connection with the drought problem. Also, I was most surprised at the terms of the amendment, and in order to refresh members' minds, I would like to read it again. It is as follows:—

;but we regret to have to inform Your Excellency that the Government has been so oblivious to the serious situation which was developing in the farming areas because of diminished rainfall, that no preparations at all were made to deal with the position until after the Opposition had drawn attention in Parliament to the necessity for action and as a consequence valuable time has been lost in taking remedial measures.

We regret also to inform Your Excellency that the action of the Government in declining to inform Parliament of its proposals and in preferring to make its statements outside, is an affront to Parliament and calculated to reduce its prestige.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The member for Victoria Park said that the Government had taken no action until the Leader of the Opposition spoke in this House on the 6th August. However, I would like to refer to some time prior to that date and we will see that the Government was well aware of the position and was taking action in connection with the matter. On the 21st July the Government formed a committee to go into the position and asked that committee to report back regarding any areas which were considered to be drought affected. Also, contact was made with the local authorities before the Leader of the Opposition spoke in this House, but, at that time, not one of the local authorities was prepared to state that its area was drought affected.

I should now like to refer to an article which appeared in *The West Australian* on Friday, the 1st August. Again, this was five days before the Leader of the Opposition spoke on the matter in this House. The article is headed, "Pledge Given by Commonwealth on Drought." It goes on to give details and states—

The Commonwealth has assured the State government that it will give urgent and serious consideration to any approach the State might make if parts of W.A. are declared drought areas.

That article appeared in the Press on the 1st August, and it is an indication of the action that had been taken already by the Deputy Premier in bringing the matter to the notice of the Commonwealth so that if a drought was experienced appropriate action could be taken quickly. The report in the paper goes on to state—

Agriculture Minister Nalder said yesterday that this assurance had been given to him by Deputy Prime Minister McEwen.

Further down it says—

The State government is waiting for a report from the committee it appointed to investigate the present drought situation. This is expected soon.

It will deal with pasture conditions, water availability and the general situation regarding stock.

That shows quite clearly that the amendment to the Address-in-Reply moved by the Opposition is really out of order—it is out of order because the Opposition says that no action has been taken whereas in the Press and in this House—

Mr. Bickerton: You say it is out of order. That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. O'CONNOR: If the honourable member wants to argue that point he can get up later on and do so.

The Government is well aware of the position and has kept in touch with the position as it exists in the country areas. However, it is difficult to know just when one should act. Should one act before a drought is declared; when an area is declared as drought-affected—when the drought actually occurs—or afterwards? In my view, the action the Government has taken is the right one to deal with the problem.

Mr. Bertram: It has done nothing.

Mr. O'CONNOR: The honourable member would not know, as probably he has not been outside Mt. Hawthorn. As I said, I think the action the Government has taken is the right one in that it formed a committee and asked it to report back to the Government in connection with any problems confronting those in

the drought-affected areas. The Government has already taken a good deal of action in this regard.

It was also surprising to note that in this instance the amendment was moved by the member for Victoria Park. We all know that when he speaks in this House the honourable member goes into his subject in detail and presents his facts very well. He is critical of the Government when he feels it should be criticised, and no one objects to that. He gives details to back up his case and he normally has a knowledge of the subjects on which he speaks.

Mr. Bickerton: You are giving him a lot of praise.

Mr. O'CONNOR: However, if we look at the small part of his speech devoted to this amendment—as the speech is recorded in *Hansard*—we will see that it is obvious someone pushed the honourable member into the position where he went ahead and moved the amendment.

Mr. Graham: We don't subject our members to the same sort of iron discipline that you have over there.

Mr. O'CONNOR: Maybe I used the wrong word.

Mr. Graham: Of course you did.

Mr. O'CONNOR: If they do not move they are steamrolled into it.

Mr. Graham: We will accept your apology.

Mr. Court: They have to distinguish between the academics, now.

Mr. O'CONNOR: When one reads the speech of the member for Victoria Park it is obvious that he has an extremely limited knowledge of the subject because he had little to say about it, and what he did say was, in my opinion, incorrect. He said that the Government was unaware of the problem and had taken no action in the matter. In my view, the Deputy Premier, when he spoke in the House tonight, gave a good resume of the position in the country areas, and I know he has been worried about the matter since mid-July. At that time he spoke to me and other members of Cabinet; a committee was formed; and it was decided to do all we could at that stage so that if a serious drought occurred immediate action could be taken.

We had the Director-General of Transport make a survey of the water supply equipment available throughout the State. This was in July when the Opposition says the Government was unaware of the position and had done nothing about it. We wanted to know what equipment, for both road and rail transport, was available for carting water. When we found that insufficient railway equipment was available to handle large quantities of water,

we made approaches to the oil companies to see whether they could provide equipment to help us at the appropriate time to handle the water necessary for some of the country districts.

During the past two weeks I have travelled by car to Carnarvon, Merredin, and Manjimup, and by plane I have travelled with the Deputy Premier through many other country areas. We travelled to places such as Wyalkatchem, Mukinbudin, Southern Cross, Merredin, Kondinin, Narembeen, Hyden, Gairdner River, and Jerramungup. It was obvious to us that a number of shire councils would have difficulty in declaring their districts as drought-affected areas because of the differing circumstances.

The affected areas are extremely patchy. There might be two or three good properties and then there will be a bad one next door. There are varying circumstances on farms which are close together, and I agree with what the Deputy Premier had to say—the drought-affected areas are not as badly affected as has been indicated. Not for one moment am I saying that the country districts are in good condition, because in some cases the position is not at all good. However, in some cases I was surprised to see water and pasture, particularly in view of what we had been led to believe by the Press.

In some cases farmers said that they had enough water to take them through till Christmas time. This alone is not good, I admit, but in some cases there were no immediate problems in this regard. However, if we do not get rain in substantial quantities in the very near future there will be problems because it is doubtful whether in some areas they will get any rain at all in October, November, or December. Therefore, they will have insufficient water to carry them through the summer, and this is when a serious position will exist, and it is something for which we must be prepared.

A farmer in one district was already carting water, but he had carted it in previous years. Therefore, although the drought might have made him cart the water a little earlier than usual, the position was that this farmer had carted it in previous years.

Mr. Bickerton: But at a little faster rate.

Mr. O'CONNOR: That is probably so. Also, it may be a little more difficult to get. In places serviced by scheme water the position is not as bad as in others where the dams are low and there is not a large amount of water available. In those districts the position can become critical unless we get rain in the near future. As the Deputy Premier pointed out, the position is deteriorating day by day, and if rain does not come soon, the



position will become as critical as it has been claimed to be in Press articles. Let us hope such a situation does not arise.

Opposition members said that the Government had done nothing until the Opposition made a move. I think that is quite unfair.

Mr. Graham: Have you read the motion and the amendment?

Mr. O'CONNOR: Certainly I have, and I have listened to some of the speeches.

Mr. Graham: The amendment does not say anything like that.

Mr. O'CONNOR: Have you read the motion?

Mr. Graham: Yes, and I have read the amendment.

Mr. O'CONNOR: The honourable member has not spoken yet but he will have the opportunity to do so if he wants to correct something I am saying.

Mr. Graham: I shall avail myself of the opportunity.

Mr. O'CONNOR: I am pleased about that. When speaking, the member for Victoria Park said that no preparations at all were made to deal with the position until the Opposition had drawn attention to it in Parliament. This is completely incorrect, as preparations had been made—maybe not as many as some people would like, but preparations had been made—and the Government was doing what it thought it should do in regard to the matter. When the Government asked the local authorities whether they considered any of their areas were drought-affected, and if so they should be declared, up to the 5th August I do not know of any authorities which said their districts were drought-affected.

Mr. Bickerton: Did you get the impression from what the farmers said that the Government had done what it should have done in connection with this matter?

Mr. O'CONNOR: I think the farmers were reasonably happy. They were extremely happy about the coarse grain position and the fact that freight was being paid in connection with it. However, they were disappointed about the fact that no decision had been made up to that stage regarding wheat because once the coarse grains were used up they would, in most cases, have to use wheat, which is most expensive. They were concerned because they wanted the price to be set at a reasonable level. They wanted the price to be brought down, and we hope it will be brought down.

Mr. Bickerton: Don't you agree that an amendment like this does a lot of good in that the matter is being debated in Parliament whereas normally that would not be the case?

Mr. O'CONNOR: I have no objection to that, but I do object when the amendment states that the Government has done nothing, whereas in actual fact it has done everything asked of it. Had it not done so, I would have no objection to the amendment.

The supply of coarse grain is very limited and that grain will not last for any length of time. Therefore we certainly hope that wheat will be sold at a lower rate than the \$1.70 indicated. The Government has also said that it will assist in stock-carting by subsidising or paying the freight one way, and in paying the freight on coarse grain.

Through the Departments of Works and Mines, water supply equipment has been sent out to the worst affected areas so that drilling can commence in those districts to enable water to be supplied if it is required by the farmers.

Mr. McIver: Are these operations to be carried out by employees of the Public Works Department?

Mr. O'CONNOR: I do not know, but I do know the equipment was being sent to Westonia and Jerramungup, the two worst affected areas. A week before we arrived, Jerramungup had 82 points of rain, which could make a substantial difference and, in some instances, could bring the crops up to the required standard.

The Government has also appointed a committee to assist with any water supply equipment that is required. The Department of Agriculture is setting up an office and has indicated to the local authorities in the drought-affected areas that its officers are available to them at all times. The authorities concerned have agreed to keep in touch with the department and to advise it of any deterioration or alteration in the present condition. In conclusion, I wish to say, categorically, that I oppose the motion.

Mr. Bickerton: Oh, no, surely not!

Mr. O'CONNOR: The honourable member would not have known, of course! I do so because the Government has taken action and intends to take further action on this matter.

Mr. Jamieson: The Government will be pleased to hear what you have just said.

Mr. O'CONNOR: What was that?

Mr. Jamieson: That you oppose the motion.

Mr. O'CONNOR: I meant to say that I oppose the amendment. The Government believes that it has taken action and has taken it in time. As I have said, the position can deteriorate, but if rain falls in the drought-affected areas—which we all hope will occur—the position will be considerably eased for all concerned.

**MR. McIVER** (Northam) [7.47 p.m.]: Without any hesitation I say there is definitely substance in the amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park. I do so because I consider the Government has failed to realise the actual situation in which the State is placed in regard to water supplies. Up until now most of the speakers have confined their remarks to the conditions in the drought-affected areas, but the whole State is affected, and the position will continue to deteriorate, because most of the water that will be supplied must be drawn from the comprehensive water scheme.

Already the water in the Mundaring Weir is 7ft. 8½in. below the crest. This time last year the level of the water flowing over the crest was 4ft. 3½ in. Up until now the metropolitan area has received only 1,938 points of rain, and the average rainfall at this time is 2,815 points; so we are 877 points below the average now. I will not bore the House with the many statistics I have here, but if one studies them one will realise that the expected rainfall will not exceed the evaporation rate until March, and that is a long time to wait.

I am most critical of the lack of action shown by the Government, because I consider it should have already imposed water restrictions in the metropolitan area. I do not know when rain will fall, but gazing into the heavens will not bring it about. We have to face reality and the seriousness of the position in which we are placed. Throwing political brickbats in this Chamber will not bring about a solution and rectifying dates on which such-and-such a statement was made will not help, either. It must be realised by all members that the quantity of water drawn from Mundaring Weir means that the present storage capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of not only those in the drought-stricken areas, but also those in the metropolitan area. Therefore I would like to see water restrictions imposed immediately.

**Mr. Rushton:** How many years' supply of water is there in the reservoirs now?

**Mr. McIVER:** In the dams serving the metropolitan area?

**Mr. Rushton:** On the present rate of consumption from the reservoirs serving the metropolitan area.

**Mr. McIVER:** Irrespective of the quantity of water in those reservoirs, it will not be sufficient to meet the demands that will be made. It is irrelevant to ask how much water is in the reservoirs at the moment. The fact remains that the comprehensive water supply scheme must supply thousands of gallons of water which will have to be carted to the properties of those farmers who are in serious need of it. I can remember, in 1949-50, before the diesel locomotives were introduced, the quantity

of water that had to be carried on the northern line for the requirements of the railways only. There were countless trains running 24 hours a day carting water to meet the needs of the Railways Department.

We are now faced with the situation where not only the requirements of the farmers, but the requirements of the consumers in the whole of the metropolitan area, will have to be met. At present there is only a trickle of water at Koojeda, which is the highest point in my electorate served by the goldfields water supply scheme. Towards the end of this year moves will be made to have extra pumps installed to increase the pressure in the pipes.

As a result of questions asked in this House we have heard from the Minister that booster stations will be installed at Wundowie and Meckering to ensure that the needs of the goldfields are met. This has been brought about by the great demand for water by the nickel industry at Kambalda, but the fact is that by supplying water, not only to farmers in the drought-affected areas but also to consumers in the metropolitan area, there will be a greater drain on the comprehensive water supply scheme.

So I consider that a full and careful analysis of our water resources should be made immediately and restrictions should be imposed not in December, but now, so that all consumers will be assured of an adequate supply of water.

**Mr. Ross Hutchinson:** There is no necessity to do it now.

**Mr. McIVER:** I am pleased the Minister has made that statement because I feel a lot easier in my mind. Nevertheless, when one sees the low level of the water in Mundaring Weir—it is the lowest on record for this time of the year—I think the present situation should be reviewed.

**Mr. Ross Hutchinson:** The metropolitan area is not served from Mundaring Weir.

**Mr. McIVER:** That may be so, but I was under the impression that the comprehensive water supply scheme could be supplemented by water drawn from other reservoirs, such as Canning Dam.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I draw the honourable member's attention to the wording of the amendment. The subject he is dealing with has no relation to it; it refers to matters which have occurred before a certain date.

**Mr. McIVER:** Quite so, Sir, but I was pointing out to the Minister, in answer to his interjection, the position in regard to reservoirs.

**Mr. Graham:** It is a pity the Deputy Speaker was not in the Chair earlier; the Minister for Railways would have been rendered speechless.

Mr. McIVER: This is one facet of the problem that has not been considered strongly enough by the Government, and that is why there is substance in the amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park.

I was extremely interested to hear the Minister for Railways mention that every assistance will be given in regard to the carting of water to drought-affected areas. I suggest that steps should be taken to ensure that the tanks will be in good condition now and not wait until they are needed, because in past years when a call was made to use them it was found that only half the tanks available were usable. It was found that many of them were full of mud and slush and not in a very satisfactory condition.

Mr. O'Connor: Most of those areas are connected with scheme water.

Mr. McIVER: Of course most of the water which will be carted will be used to assist those outside the comprehensive water scheme. Therefore, I consider that the present water situation should be closely investigated; more closely than it has been up until now.

This brings me to another point which I raised when speaking during the Address-in-Reply debate. I suggested then that when the State was asking for funds it should seek assistance to relieve the serious water shortage in this State. I now feel that the drought has strengthened my case for a State disaster fund to be established, because if assistance had been granted along those lines the State would have had available funds to draw upon and so have been in a much better position to face the situation in which it now finds itself. As I said then—and I say it again now—such a fund could meet any demand made upon it in times of drought, fire, or flood.

Mr. Gayfer: You never mentioned the word "drought" in your speech on the Address-in-Reply.

McIVER: That could be so, but I was referring to all disasters. If I did not mention the word "drought" at the time it did not in any way detract from my suggestion that a State fund should be established so that money could be available to meet any urgent situation.

It is interesting to hear of the role the railways will play in this emergency by carting water to the drought-affected areas. I believe this highlights the policy of the Government in regard to the closure of railways in this State. In the past the railways have played an important part in the agricultural areas by supplying the farmers with water, and later on with feed which the farmers so badly needed. If the Government contemplates the closure of some railway lines in the agricultural areas we will face a worse

situation than that with which we are faced now. The closure of these railways would be a retrograde step.

In bringing to the Government's notice the true situation in regard to water supplies, I feel I have made my point, and after hearing the Minister for Water Supplies say there is no need for any anxiety, I am a little relieved.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I did not quite say that there was no need for any anxiety. We are anxious to have water.

Mr. Bickerton: Is the Minister anxious?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I am always concerned about the welfare of the country.

Mr. McIVER: When one considers that a 42-inch main has had to be installed now to meet the demands of the gold-fields, and the quantity of water that will be consumed within the next six months, there is no doubt that there is a definite need to have a close look at our present water resources and, if necessary, impose restrictions at an early date so there will be ample water in this State for everybody. I support the amendment.

MR. STEWART (Merredin-Yilgarn) [8 p.m.]: I have been very interested in the remarks of members in giving their opinions on dry land farming. As one who has spent a lifetime in this type of farming and been able to survive, I would like to make some comments on what the Government proposes to do. In dry land farming one of the factors is to organise against the variable, and one often faces a difficult time at some stage of the season. It might be at the beginning of the season, or it might be at the end. On the present occasion the difficulty has been a rather long and sustained one.

When we look at the countryside—I am dealing particularly with the Merredin-Yilgarn electorate, and centres like Southern Cross, Westonia, Narembene, etc.—we find thousands of acres of crops which are still green in colour and which have not browned off as yet. The President of the Yilgarn Shire was most annoyed that the Southern Cross district was declared a drought area in the area designated as section 3. Only on Thursday last the member for Katanning, together with the Minister for Railways, visited the district.

Mr. Jamieson: You are referring to the Minister for Agriculture.

Mr. STEWART: Yes. When he left, the district received 25 to 30 points of rain. The Minister for Agriculture is coming up again next Saturday, so we all hope that more rain will fall when he leaves. So far as the water shortage is concerned, not every farmer is affected. A proportion of the farmers has sufficient water, but some others do not.

Regarding the key dam scheme, a fortnight ago I saw three dams on one farm at Warrachappen which had 14 feet of water in them. The water had been stored from the previous year. This shows that the difficulties of providing sufficient water for stock can be overcome. A positive step, by way of sending out water boring plants to drill for water at likely places, has been taken by the Government to assist farmers in areas outside the modified comprehensive scheme.

I now refer to the rainfall pattern of this State. The statistics show that in June of last year very heavy rainfall was experienced. If we look at the rainfall pattern of the two worst drought years experienced in Western Australia—that is, in 1914 and in 1940—we will see that the summers of those years were reasonably wet. Under this pattern it could be expected that in the coming months the season would break and rain would fall early next year.

As far as the feed position is concerned, the Government has acted very rationally, by releasing coarse grain and by paying the freight rates. Certainly there was not a great quantity of coarse grain available; the Leader of the Opposition has spoken of 13,000 tons being available, but what is that when it has to be distributed among 33,000,000 sheep? If the drought continues—which I hope it will not—what I would like the Government to do is to release wheat from the wheat pool to the farmers who are affected, on the basis that the wheat so distributed will be returned to the pool from the next harvest. This could possibly be the key to the whole problem if the drought worsens.

One aspect that has to be recognised is that the sheep should be retained on the farms as long as possible. If a farmer can afford to retain the sheep on the farm, he will be able to double or treble their value, as compared with the value to be obtained by a forced sale.

The Government has instructed officers of the Department of Agriculture to prepare a booklet on drought feeding. Last week a field day was held at Merredin, and 140 farmers turned up to receive advice from the departmental officers on how to feed their sheep. I would commend the Minister for this rational and realistic approach to the problem. He is taking some positive action without panicking. When one is in difficulty, what one should not do is to panic.

**MR. JONES (Collie) [8.6 p.m.]**: I would not agree that I have been pressured to get on my feet to say a few words on this amendment. That is far from the truth. Irrespective of what has been said by members opposite, they did not express the true views of the farmers who have been affected by the drought. During the last weekend a number of farmers in the

drought affected areas took the opportunity to phone me, and the position as revealed by them is somewhat different from that outlined by members opposite this evening.

**Mr. O'Connor**: Where have you obtained that information?

**Mr. JONES**: I can give the names of the persons concerned. I also received a number of telephone calls from farmers in branches of the Farmers' Union requesting me to urge the Government to take more active steps in the field of relief; and these branches are in districts within my electorate.

I agree with the amendment wholeheartedly. The Minister for Railways said that some action has been taken by the Government, but I think the right terminology is to describe it as very slow action. What concerns me is whether the Government has given close attention to all factors which would be of assistance in this desperate situation.

I do not know whether this is generally accepted by members opposite, but to me it does not matter very much whether or not an area is declared to be a drought area. When we see the large numbers of sheep which are dying—as indicated by reports which have appeared in the Press—there is need for urgent action to be taken. I asked a question of the Minister for Lands last week in relation to the grazing of stock on Crown land that has been handed back to the Government, because I thought that here was an opportunity for some stock from the northern drought areas to be grazed on these areas in the south. The Minister's reply was—

Urgent consideration is being given to all requests for rights to graze stock on Crown land.

In my district, and a number of other districts extending as far as Boyup Brook, there are numerous properties which had previously been used for grazing, but which are not now so used. These properties could be used to graze stock from the drought stricken areas.

**Mr. Young**: Where are they? I am looking for some of these!

**Mr. JONES**: The honourable member seems to have a doubt. If he cares to take notes of the names I mention he will be able to verify that what I have to say is correct. One of these properties is just east of Collie, and this had been used for the grazing of sheep. On this property there are dams, and it comprises 19,000 acres. It had been occupied by Mr. Eric Kelly. I understand this property is still open for lease. Here is a property of 19,000 acres which could be utilised in an emergency such as the present one.

A similar property of 7,000 acres was previously occupied by S. Jackson & Son. This property also contains dams, and could be used for the grazing of stock from the drought areas.

Mr. O'Connor: Did you forward this information on?

Mr. JONES: I asked the Minister for Lands a question in this House on Wednesday last in regard to this aspect, and the reply I got was—

Urgent consideration is being given to all requests for rights to graze stock on Crown land.

If the organisation which the Minister has suggested the Government has formed has been making investigations then it must have found what I have indicated is the position.

Mr. O'Connor: This is Crown land to which you are referring?

Mr. JONES: Yes. I have just started to give the names of the suitable properties which can be used. Another area in my district, formerly occupied by Woods, Harley, and Hunter, and used for grazing, has been returned to the Crown. This could also be used for the grazing of sheep.

If we look at the forest areas of the State we will find there are 4,500,000 acres in the south-west. I do not suggest that all this land would be suitable for the grazing of stock; some of it is reserved as water catchment areas and will not be available for grazing. I am sure that some of the forest areas could be used, and it is much better to have the stock grazing in these areas than left in the drought stricken areas.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Are any of the farms which you have mentioned as having been returned to the Crown in water catchment areas?

Mr. JONES: I doubt whether they are. Of course, all the Collie district is a water catchment area. The two properties that have been used for grazing purposes have dams on them. Farmers asked me during the last weekend why the Government cannot make available this forest land for grazing in the present emergency. Even if water has to be carted to the stock in the forest land, it would be preferable to carting water to stock left in the drought-affected areas.

This is the point I am raising: if the committee is as active as has been suggested, it should have looked into this situation. Nobody can tell me that some portion of our forest reserves could not be made available for grazing purposes. It strikes me that what was suggested as having been done has not, in my view, really been done. I suggest that it is not too late at this point of time for the Government to consider the proposition which I have advanced.

Another aspect which exercises my mind is the position in which the farmers will find themselves when they restock their farms. Even the Minister for Agriculture indicated this evening that some of the stock which is now reaching the Midland

Junction Abattoir is not acceptable. What will be the situation when farmers reach the stage of restocking their properties?

The Minister has suggested that the trade unions might be asked to co-operate. I wonder whether the interests represented by members opposite will also co-operate when the time comes for restocking. I realise that in a number of areas the situation is very bad, and that more bad times have yet to come; but I hope that when the farmers have to obtain finance to restock their farms the terms will be more favourable than they are now.

Mr. Graham: The trade unions will not have any relationship to the restocking of the farms. The purpose which the unionists serve is to slaughter the animals that are sent to the abattoir.

Mr. JONES: It has been suggested that trade unionists could assist at this point of time at the abattoir, but I suggest that other interests could also give assistance when the time for restocking arrives.

Mr. Dunn: At what point of time are we now?

Mr. JONES: I am glad some member opposite supports me! This takes me to the question of finance. Last week I asked a question in regard to the releasing of wheat for stock feeding. I do not know how far the State Government has gone in this regard; but I do think it would be preferable for the Commonwealth Government to make wheat available to the farmers from the wheat pool, on the basis that the wheat so taken is replaced by wheat from subsequent harvests. I am of the firm opinion that when the farmers reach the stage of restocking their properties they will be affected financially. The scheme of advancing wheat from the pool would be one method of assisting the farmers to overcome their financial problems when they are restocking.

It is all very well for Ministers to say that the Government is doing all it can to relieve the situation. What I have said in regard to making available grazing land in the south-west held by the Crown clearly indicates to me that all that could be done has not been done. I do hope that the Government, after hearing my views, will undertake an immediate investigation to determine whether there is any essence in my recommendations. I support the amendment.

MR. YOUNG (Roe) [8.15 p.m.]: I have listened with interest to references on both sides of the House in regard to the drought problem we are experiencing at the moment, and I will try to confine myself to things that happened prior to the 6th August. We seem to be bogged down on that date as being the one on which the Labor Opposition suddenly realised these conditions were prevailing in the agricultural areas and that we on this side of the House were not aware of the position.

It was at a meeting at Boxwood Hill on the 31st May that the first mention was made of drought conditions in this State and, at that stage, one could hardly have referred to the situation as a drought; the conditions were brought about by the lack of late spring rains. Would anyone suggest that a drought should have been declared last spring, in a year of plenty? It was a wonderful year in most parts of the State but the southern coast missed out on late spring rains which meant the farms there had no supply of clover seed.

The problem actually started in February of this year with sheep that have normally relied on clover seed for feed. This was not prevalent as the burr did not contain any worth-while amount of seed. Had we been aware that this would be the position, we should have declared a drought last September, when the rains were light along the south coast.

After the meeting at Boxwood Hill, the position was put before the Government and assistance was immediately given. Transport restrictions were lifted so that operators—these were not farmers, but contract carters—could operate outside their zones in order to cart feed. We approached Mr. O'Neill—of whom we have heard so much tonight—who is Manager of the Grain Pool, and no coarse grains were shipped from that area after the week immediately following the 31st May. In fact, a boat which was tied up in Albany and being loaded with oats from Tambellup was diverted to Fremantle for topping up, and all grain in the southern areas was reserved for grain hand feeding. So, at the 31st May, the Government was well aware of the position in the southern districts.

Mr. Moir: What did it do?

Mr. YOUNG: It lifted transport restrictions and allowed grains that were normally shipped out to remain in the area. The Government also made provision for a geologist to operate in the area for some five weeks prior to the 6th August. He entered farmers' properties to assess the water potential of the area. Now that summer is rapidly approaching and winter is finished there is a water problem, and a boring plant will operate in the area from Monday next.

The ground work was carried out months ago and I am afraid I cannot, for a minute, go along with the supposition that nothing was known about this drought before the wonderful date of the 6th August.

The question of stock in an emaciated condition being sent to Midland has been discussed here tonight. I think all practical farmers realise that the greatest number of these sheep would be old—those that had been retained in years of plenty. We are all aware that over the past five or six seasons we have enjoyed above average rainfall throughout the greater part of the agricultural area.

The Leader of the Opposition made play tonight of some seven inches of rain received in Dalwallinu last June and some two inches received this year. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition was not prepared to say by how much the seven inches was above the average applying generally throughout the agricultural areas last year.

I know that in my own case I experienced 626 points of rain in June and if I could have obtained any relief it would have been flood relief, not drought relief.

Some reference was made tonight to the water position. The member for Northam mentioned that the level of Mundaring Weir is very low. Of course, the greatest amount of water drawn into the comprehensive scheme in the southern districts comes from the Wellington Dam. The member for Collie may be able to inform me of the position in regard to the Wellington Dam.

Mr. Jones: In respect of marron?

Mr. YOUNG: No, water. There have been substantial rains in the south-west corner of the State and I understand there is plenty of water in the Wellington Dam. This can be piped into the southern areas of the State which are badly affected because of the dry situation and which are not dependent upon water from Mundaring.

In the country districts there is still available some 14 days' supply of coarse grain. Play has been made tonight on the fact that no decision has been made as yet regarding the release of wheat at \$1.10, less freight, as suggested by the Government. This wheat belongs to the Wheat Board and is under its control. My understanding is that the board meets tomorrow and will make a decision.

Mr. Jamieson: Is any member here on the Wheat Board?

Mr. YOUNG: No, I do not think so. For some time the farmers have been very distressed that the board has not been prepared up to this time to allow the wheat to go out at a figure below \$1.71, the home consumption price. However, the Government has announced that it has approached the board on the subject, and the board is to make a decision tomorrow, and if that decision is not the one we are hoping to hear, we will still have ample time in which to make a decision regarding the redelivery of wheat to farmers. The drought committee has been in operation for over a fortnight now, and the answer will be forthcoming as soon as we know the reply from the board.

I do not think—although this has been suggested by members opposite—any good purpose would be served by the announcement of an alternative scheme prior to the receipt of the board's decision, because immediately such an announcement were made the board would be let off the hook.

If we state now that if the board does not agree, we will do so-and-so, the board will immediately say it did not agree with the programme and that the Government should carry the baby. If some system could be adopted under which the farmers could get their own wheat back, on a redelivery programme, every farmer would be more than happy, particularly at that price. It would bring the price of wheat well below that of oats and barley.

I know that some farmers at this point of time are not taking delivery of coarse grain, hoping for a decision on wheat, because wheat will be better value. The Government must feel great satisfaction from the implementation of a scheme to get feed to the sheep at such a low price.

Mr. Bickerton: I gather you are supporting the amendment?

Mr. Dunn: How long can a sheep survive on a bushel of wheat?

Mr. YOUNG: I now have two interjections.

Mr. Bickerton: Don't worry about the other one.

Mr. YOUNG: One question was, "How long can a sheep survive on a bushel of wheat?" That question is a bit beyond my arithmetical ability at the moment, but I understand that two-thirds of a pound a day will feed one sheep on drought feeding, which is 90 days for one bushel. I understand that at the moment no area of the State would be 100 per cent. drought feeding. Some pickings are still available in the paddocks, so it would require less than that amount to keep a dry sheep—not a lactating ewe—in a forward store condition, which is a little better than poor condition, for the information of those who do not know the meaning of "forward store condition." Now what was the question of the member for Pilbara?

Mr. Bickerton: I take it from your remarks that you are supporting the amendment. Would I be correct?

Mr. YOUNG: The honourable member would be definitely wrong. Now I am lost; where was I? The member for Collie mentioned the areas in and around Collie, including the McAlinden area, in connection with the agistment of sheep. He mentioned two or three places in which I am very interested, because I am looking for such an area myself.

Last week I approached the Conservator of Forests regarding the areas of State forests which would be thrown open for agistment. I was informed that all this land is now in the hands of the Rural Drought Relief Committee, which is allocating it to groups of farmers on a priority basis so that no speculators can move in, take a lease of Crown land, or

forest land, and then let it out and fiddle with the cost and the amount of agistment they make available.

Mr. Jones: Don't you think the Government has been slow in this respect?

Mr. YOUNG: No. Hope springs eternal in the farmer's breast, and we have been waiting until the death-knock—the farmers have been, not the Government—to see whether we have to shift our sheep out. The winter rains are usually finished by August and the farmers are dependent on a good thunder storm or rain storm to replenish the water supplies. However, the point of no return has been reached and large numbers of sheep will have to be moved out.

The biggest drawback in regard to the land around Collie is that most of the forest country is riddled with poison.

Mr. Jones: Only certain areas.

Mr. YOUNG: It would not be much advantage for a farmer to dash to Collie with a few thousand sheep and then return later to find they had died because they had eaten poison. They might as well stay where they are. Until these areas have been delineated there is nothing the Government can do about them. It would be useless for a farmer himself to seek agistment if there is a lot of poison in the area. The member for Collie did mention some areas which had already been used for grazing, and I am pleased to hear of this because I imagine they must be poison-free.

I think I have covered all I wish to say on this subject. Regarding the area I represent, and the questions I have asked over some 12 or 13 weeks—since the 31st May when the problem was first publicised, both in the Press and by virtue of a meeting held at Gairdner River—the Government has been on the ball. It has done everything I have asked for the farmers—I have been only the spokesman—and it has given every assistance. I therefore oppose the amendment.

**MR. MOIR** (Boulder-Dundas) [8.30 p.m.]: I support the amendment and I think it is highly justified. I have listened with interest to what members on the other side of the House have had to say. Some of the members sitting behind the Government seem to have gained the impression from the amendment, and from the speeches made on this side of the House, that it is a reflection on them for not knowing what the position was in the country.

Last week I pointed out to the Deputy Premier that the members of his own party representing country electorates had no doubt told him of the position; I have no doubt they have so informed him. I have never been in any doubt about them at all, and they probably know

the situation better than anyone else in this House. What we are criticising is the non-action on the part of the Government.

This is quite obviously brought about by the remarks and statements made by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture when he denied that there was a drought in the State on the 6th August. He denied that in very dogmatic terms too. The member for Roe said that the word "drought" was first used on the 31st May, at Boxhill.

I have an earlier reference to the drought which appears in a headline on the 19th May. It was rather optimistic because it appeared after some rain had fallen in the country districts. The heading was, "Drought Breaks", and appears in big print. That heading appeared on the 19th May, so there was talk of drought at that time. This situation has gone on for some time. There is no doubt that in some areas it was not serious, but in other areas it was serious and people were fearing what might happen.

I suppose everybody was hoping against hope that the rain would come and the water supply worry would be over, or would not eventuate. However, a person who has had any farming experience at all knows that he is apprehensive when a season does not start off right. True, we see seasons which start slowly and turn out quite well. Again, rain can fall very well in the early part of the season, but conditions can be dry towards the end of the season.

However, the present situation has developed gradually. I draw the attention of members to the Jerramungup district. We have been hearing about the critical situation which has existed there for quite a long time. It was rather disturbing to hear a Minister who holds the portfolio of Minister for Agriculture and at the same time is the Deputy Premier of this State absolutely denying that the position was as serious as it obviously was. The position was obviously serious on the 6th August, and I think some members are aware of that fact because they have been pointing out what has been done since that date.

The result of what has been done since then is the matter brought forward by the Opposition. It should not be the function of the Opposition to point out to the Government a serious state of affairs in the farming areas when it is obvious to everybody. I would like to refresh members' minds by referring to page 88 of *Hansard*, where the Deputy Premier interjected when the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the word "drought" and said—

You are trying to panic a situation. What areas of the State are suffering from drought conditions? Name them please.

The Deputy Premier went on to say—

Yesterday we were in touch with 15 local authorities and not one will admit at this point of time that drought conditions obtain in its area.

What knowledgeable person here, from a farming area, would seek that information from the shire office? That information is sought from resident farmers who would be more likely to know the conditions than the officers of the shire. At any rate, the officers of the shire would not take it on themselves to say that conditions were as bad as they were.

Mr. Young: The question could be put to the shire clerk.

Mr. MOIR: The member for Roe would know, as well as I do, that the word "drought" is used very reluctantly in any farming area. Very often the existence of a drought can be seen by observers but the people concerned will not face up to the fact. They do not like the word "drought". It is a horrible word as far as farming areas are concerned.

The Leader of the Opposition, during his speech, said—

I am concerned as to whether the Government believes there are any areas of real distress in the farming community.

The Deputy Premier then interjected—

That is a different situation altogether. You said "drought." The Government admits there are some areas of distress, but not areas of drought. There is a difference.

Of course, we know there is a difference between areas of distress and areas of drought. I do not think it can be denied that at the time the debate took place, and those interjections were made, there was a drought in some of the areas. There is no doubt about that. The Deputy Premier further interjected and said—

The Government has everything under control.

What a fatuous remark, because it is quite obvious the Government does not have everything under control. Even now the Government is only getting things under way, 21 days after the exchange to which I have referred took place in the Parliament.

The member for Roe mentioned the Government geologists making a survey in an area, and he mentioned that a drill would be starting next Monday. That is very pleasing, but I ask him, through you, Mr. Speaker, what will one drill accomplish? Not very much in dry hungry districts. We think the Government should have got cracking long ago, because the location of water supplies is always an asset in good years, bad years, or indifferent years.



I pointed out just recently how the Labor Government, when in office, started a hydrological section in the Mines Department with the idea of carrying out systematic drilling in the recognised dry areas of the State in so far as underground water supplies were concerned. I am quite sure that if that programme had been developed and carried on by this present Government a far different situation would exist in many of the areas of the State today and the Minister for Water Supplies would not be facing the shortage which will occur later in the year if the affected areas do not get heavy rains. We hope the areas will get the rain.

I do not think the Deputy Premier really believed what he said when he interjected during the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition. I think he was playing politics at the time, because he had the situation brought very forcibly to his notice prior to that date. I will refer to a report published in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of the 26th July, 1969. The article is headed, "Stock feed position critical in W.A. agricultural areas. Farmers faced with expensive prospect of extensive hand-feeding." The dateline of the article is Perth, July 25th, and reads as follows:—

The stock feed position in most W.A. agricultural areas had almost reached the critical stage, Mr. T. E. Sullivan, secretary of the Farmers' Union, said to-night.

Representatives of the union's general executive met the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Nalder, to-day to express concern at the situation.

Mr. Sullivan said that reports of the feed and water supply shortage from delegates to the union's quarterly executive meeting, indicated that an emergency situation was imminent.

Widespread rain was required urgently. Even daily delays would mean an increase in stock losses already occurring in some districts.

Mr. Sullivan went on further to say what the conditions were in certain country areas—

Many farmers were seeking the release of grain from country storage installations. They were faced with the prospect of spending considerable money on grain for hand feeding to livestock.

It was contended that:—

The pasture supply had rapidly deteriorated and that tentative arrangements should be prepared now, rather than wait for the situation to reach emergency or drought proportions.

Even if rain was received in the next week or so the pasture growth would be retarded by starving stock.

There could be a disaster if nothing at all was done except to wait for rain. Some immediate action was needed.

That is the way the situation impressed me at the time the Deputy Premier spoke on this subject. He spoke the other evening. I think he must have realised undoubtedly the situation that existed but he is like the fictional character, Micawber; he was waiting for something to turn up. In this case, the Minister was hoping that it would rain. We heard his philosophy tonight when he said that a deluge or a good heavy fall of rain could change the situation overnight. Members on the other side of the House must know that while that could be true, the situation is not going to be relieved overnight. We must still face the facts of the situation. As a matter of fact very heavy rains could mean a disaster. Heavy rains followed by cold weather would cause enormous losses amongst the stock in the country at the present time.

I consider the Opposition has every right to be critical of the Government when it sees a situation like this which is alarming to everyone. Whether one is a farmer, just an ordinary member of the community, or a representative of other sections of the people the position is alarming. We all know that nobody can stop a drought if it comes; that is something beyond our control. At the same time, though, we can take measures to alleviate the consequences of a drought and we should take those measures quickly when it is expected that the most good will be gained.

I take exception to another utterance made by the Deputy Premier; namely, his statement that the Press misrepresented the picture in country areas. The Minister even went so far as to imply that a photo which appeared in the paper, and which members saw, was faked. He even went so far as to suggest that the photo of the ewe and the lamb on the front page of *The Countryman*, which is where I saw it, was, in fact, a photo of a wether and a lamb. In my time I have had something to do with sheep and I do not know who could tell me whether the sheep was a wether or a ewe.

Mr. Cash: One could not tell you.

Mr. MOIR: All I know is that it was not a ram, or it does not appear to be. I consider the Deputy Premier was in a critical position and prepared to say anything to try to smooth his way out of it. The Minister for Transport also referred to the misrepresentation of the Press.

Mr. O'Connor: I did not.

Mr. MOIR: My hearing must be very poor. Perhaps we should look at *Hansard* when it is published.

Mr. O'Connor: We will. I did not use that word at all.

Mr. MOIR: The Minister may not have used that word but what he said means the same thing.

Mr. O'Connor: I said the position was not as bad as it appeared to be.

Mr. MOIR: In other words, the Minister was saying that the Press had misrepresented the situation. He said that it was not as bad as it appeared to be.

Mr. O'Connor: I did not say that. I said that in some spots you might get a bad section; that the position is patchy; but that, generally speaking, the position is nothing near as bad as it appears.

Mr. Graham: You found all that out in a day?

Mr. O'Connor: No, I have had a couple of weeks in the country which is a couple of weeks more than the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has had.

Mr. Graham: You would be wrong.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Then, one and three-quarter weeks.

Mr. MOIR: I do not think the Press in this State is an alarmist Press. I consider it would be as concerned as we are about the effects in the country. I do not think the Press would knock things in the country.

Mr. O'Neil: You will get on.

Mr. MOIR: For the benefit of the Minister for Labour, I do not care whether or not I get on with the Press. I would like to refer to an article which appeared in *The Esperance Advertiser*, which I consider is a very conservative type of journal and not given to panic headlines or anything like that. An article appeared on the 8th August, which stated, in part—

Conditions in some parts of the mallee are reported to be the worst since 1924.

Certainly the conditions must have been bad when this article appeared; because, unfortunately, there were very dry years in the 1930s in the mallee which caused considerable distress at the time. Nevertheless, it was stated that the position was the worst since 1924. It goes on to say—

Large numbers of sheep are dying as paddock feed has been eaten down to the sand.

Every member would agree that if paddock feed is eaten down to the sand there is nothing left for stock to eat. It says—

Several farmers are reported to have used root rakes to heap dead sheep ready for burning.

Farmers are buying large quantities of seed oats to feed their dying sheep and frail cattle.

From what I have learnt of that area, that statement is perfectly true. Further on in the same edition of the paper there is

a photo of a farm. The condition of the land is poor and the following appears under the photo:—

Dams are dry and sheep are dying. Other areas of Esperance and at Ravensthorpe and beyond the situation is becoming more desperate.

I do not think that paper would exaggerate the conditions in an area such as that; because Salmon Gums has had many good seasons in latter years and has been looked upon as a very prosperous district.

Mr. O'Connor: Would you say all that area is in the same condition?

Mr. MOIR: No, not all of it is. As a matter of fact the position is quite good a little south of Salmon Gums at Grass Patch and at Scadden where the Minister has had the recent railway trouble.

Mr. Young: Scadden is good, but Grass Patch is no good.

Mr. MOIR: The areas are in patches. I understand that some parts of the Esperance area could have quite a good season. There seem to be good feed prospects and good crop prospects, but these are isolated areas and represent no consolation to a person who happens to be in an afflicted area. Probably he might be glad to know that somebody a few miles away is doing all right and, at least is not in the same boat, but it does not help him much. That is the situation.

I think the amendment moved by the Opposition is perfectly justified on the grounds mentioned and also because the Government did not see fit to make the announcement in this Parliament with regard to the steps it was going to take. I hope the Government will take notice of the objections taken by members on this side of the House. After all, in all probability it is not such a great number of votes which causes the Government to occupy that side of the House and the Opposition to occupy this side. We are all members elected by the people and, as members of the Parliament, we have a right to know all these things.

I should think that the announcement made by the Minister for Transport tonight has probably allayed quite a lot of fear. Again, had this motion not been moved, probably we would never have learnt about it; or, at some future date, the Minister might have made an announcement in the Press. The Government should not be afraid to take the members of the Parliament into its confidence.

I was very pleased to hear the remarks made tonight by the Minister for Water Supplies; because those of us in the distant parts of the State are concerned about how we will fare and how industry will fare with regard to water supplies.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I said that three weeks ago.

Mr. MOIR: In the House?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: No, in the Press.

Mr. MOIR: That means the Minister said it outside Parliament. Why not say it in the House and let members of Parliament into it?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I was questioned by a reporter.

Mr. MOIR: We cannot read all the papers. This is my objection, Mr. Speaker. It is the easiest thing in the world for a Minister to receive the permission of the House to make a statement on some serious aspect of the State's life. The matter before the House is very serious and it may become far more serious.

We fervently hope it will not. Considering our experience in past years, it could become worse, and I think nothing short of a miracle will alleviate the present position. It could be, of course, that the State will still enjoy bounteous rains in the few remaining weeks of the season, but I think the prospects of that are becoming fainter and fainter.

I think the Government takes the wrong attitude altogether when members on this side of the House show concern about the situation. The welfare of the State is not the prerogative of the Government alone; it is the concern of every member in this House. I am certain that each and every member, as well as the majority of the people outside Parliament, is concerned about the current position. The repercussions of the drought could be extensive, because we know that even now the damage that has been done will take a long time to repair, and the farmers will take a long time to recover. It will take a considerable time to replace the flocks that have been depleted, because they cannot be built up in 12 months. I feel sure that what I have said will indicate that I believe the amendment to the motion for the adoption of the Address-In-Reply is completely justified.

MR. McPHARLIN (Mt. Marshall) [8.52 p.m.]: On Thursday afternoon last I was most surprised to hear the member for Victoria Park move the amendment which we are now debating. In perusing it I agree with the Minister for Railways that it is incorrect to claim the Government has been oblivious to the position. In his speech the member for Victoria Park referred to an interjection by the Minister for Agriculture during the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition on the 6th August. He said that the Minister for Agriculture denied there was any drought. The Minister said the Government admitted there were areas of distress. That was on the 6th August.

On Monday, the 4th August, the Minister for Agriculture, who was Acting Premier at the time, announced that

freight concessions would be granted on the transport of coarse grain for stock feed. That was two days before the 6th August. Therefore, how can the Opposition fairly claim that the Minister was oblivious to the situation when, two days before this speech was made, he announced that freight concessions were to be granted on the transport of coarse grain for stock feed? That is a point which clearly indicates that the amendment is incorrect.

A little later in the speech made by the member for Victoria Park, the Minister for Lands and Forests interjected by asking, "Have you been out to find out about the position? I have travelled over 3,000 miles in the last few weeks to see for myself." At that point the Deputy Leader of the Opposition interjected by saying, "Some of us on this side have." On the 15th July, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, accompanied by other members of the Opposition, travelled through the Kellerberin area. In that area no mention was made of declaring it or surrounding parts to be drought areas, and that was more than a fortnight before the 6th August, when the interjections were made during the speech by the Leader of the Opposition. So, on the 15th July, there was no talk of these areas being declared drought areas.

At Bencubbin, on the 12th August, 1966 farmers and businessmen attended a meeting at which I was present, together with The Hon. N. E. Baxter. During the course of the meeting, discussion took place on the current position in the shires surrounding Bencubbin, Mukinbudin, Westonia, and Merredin, and there were many who stood up and claimed that their particular areas should be declared drought areas. However there were others who stood up and denied that they wanted their areas to be declared drought areas. At that meeting, on the 12th August, the opinion of those present was divided. This was almost a week later than this magic date, the 6th August.

During the discussion at this meeting held in Bencubbin one shire president said that at that point he was not prepared to support any motion which claimed that his shire should be declared a drought area. After considerable debate a motion was moved to the effect that the eastern and north-eastern agricultural areas should be declared drought areas. The motion was carried in that form despite the fact that its wording was rather wide and sweeping and somewhat vague. I therefore insisted that those present at the meeting had to be more specific with the wording of the motion, because in its existing form it covered such a wide area, and I said that before an investigation could be made by the Minister the motion would have to be more specific in the information it intended to convey.

Lengthy discussion ensued and it was then agreed to name the shires which they thought should be declared drought areas. This was on the 12th August. Information was then given by a man who had conducted a survey through the areas affected. Ten shires were named and the information was given to me to pass on to the Minister for Agriculture. The next day I conveyed this information to the Minister who invited me into his office. He called in the President of the Drought Relief Committee (Mr. Burvill), and we spent two hours discussing the situation. For the Opposition to claim that the Government was oblivious to the position is, I repeat, totally incorrect.

If they do not wish to continue to play politics, surely it must be obvious to the members of the Opposition, in making statements such as this, that those farmers on this side of the House who are directly affected by having farms situated within the drought-affected areas would be watching the position very closely.

Mr. Jamieson: We saw how your hair stood on end when the Acting Premier made the original statement.

Mr. McPHARLIN: I do not recall my hair standing on end when the Acting Premier made his statement.

Mr. Jamieson: Well, it did. There was a row of four hairs and they really stood on end.

Mr. McPHARLIN: I do not recall that, I usually know when my hair stands on end, and I think it stood on end when the member for Victoria Park moved this amendment. At the meeting held at Ben-cubbin on the 12th August I was pleased to be able to tell those present that the Government had certain proposals in mind for the extension of water supplies to those areas urgently in need of it for stock and domestic purposes, by subsidising the boring for, and the cartage of, this water.

The general comment was that the farmers were very satisfied to hear the Government was at least studying the proposals to give assistance to farmers who were being so seriously affected. There was a reluctance, and there still is a reluctance, on the part of farmers in these areas—and in other areas now—to have their areas declared drought areas.

I have been in these areas during the last two days and I have talked to dozens of farmers and there still seems to be a reluctance on the part of some of them to do this. Those of us who have been associated with the farming industry for many years will appreciate the stigma which attached to the marginal areas, where, as a result of an irregular line drawn on a map, one could get a bank loan if one lived on one side of the line, but could not if one lived on the other side.

This stigma is still remembered by many people in the farming areas, even though the stigma is not as evident as it was at one time; it has faded a bit now and is of no importance. It is because of this, however, that farmers are reluctant to have their areas declared drought areas.

Accordingly, it was of great interest to me to hear the member for Collie take such an interest in the affairs of the farmers. He has frequently asked questions on agriculture and it is refreshing to know he is seeking knowledge to try to catch up with what we on this side of the House have learned through our long association and involvement in farming.

Mr. Graham: He would have to be in reverse gear to do that.

Mr. McPHARLIN: It would seem that the member for Collie is trying to become an adviser to the Opposition on matters connected with farming. It is commendable that he should be taking this interest.

Mr. Jones: You will not get a bowl next time we play cricket.

Mr. McPHARLIN: I will not put the honourable member behind the stumps in the next cricket match.

Mr. Graham: The West Arthur wool baron.

Mr. McPHARLIN: As I have said, it is interesting to know that the member for Collie is taking this interest in matters connected with farming, because he will be able to discuss the information he receives with the farmers when he meets them.

Mr. Jones: Do you always get the information you want?

Mr. McPHARLIN: I think we do.

Mr. O'Connor: You get correct information, but not always the information you want.

Mr. McPHARLIN: I oppose the amendment because, as I have said, in my view it is incorrect.

MR. BRADY (Swan) [9.3 p.m.]: I would like to make a small contribution to this debate, because of the remarks made about the abattoir and the men playing their part and generally assisting the farmers in their dilemma. The amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park is worth repeating. For the benefit of members it states—

; but we regret to have to inform Your Excellency that the Government has been so oblivious to the serious situation which was developing in the farming areas because of diminished rainfall, that no preparations at all were made to deal with the position until after the Opposition had drawn attention in Parliament to the necessity for action and as a consequence valuable time has been lost in taking remedial measures.

We regret also to inform Your Excellency that the action of the Government in declining to inform Parliament of its proposals and in preferring to make its statements outside, is an affront to Parliament and calculated to reduce its prestige.

It is possible that members on the Government side do not agree with the second portion of the amendment, but if they do not they will be letting themselves down, because they will be saying, in effect, "We are prepared to get our information from the Press in the morning, or from the TV, or from whatever mass media there might be."

I am concerned with exactly what the amendment says. The entire amendment can be summed up by saying that the Government is giving too little too late, and in a few minutes I will prove that, because it is well known that the drought position has worsened to a tremendous degree even in the district of the Minister for Agriculture himself.

I would now like to quote some remarks from the *Great Southern Herald* of the 6th June, 1969, which state—

Substantial movement of sheep and fodder. During the past few days there has been a substantial movement of fodder into the drought afflicted areas.

It does not say, "into the seriously afflicted areas, or the areas of sparse rainfall"; it refers to the drought afflicted areas of Jerramungup, Gairdner River, and South Stirling. The article continues—

A considerable number of trade and dry sheep have been sold from the area.

Members may believe it or not, but in the *Great Southern Herald* of the 20th June we find the following statement:—

Sheep Sales Big Money Earners. Special June sales—3 brokers—should bring the number of sheep to pass through Katanning saleyards to 78,530. The previous highest yarding in any one month is understood to be 69,524 during off shears in November last year.

I have not given the entire statement in the paper, but just part of it. In June of this year it was apparent that there was every indication that a serious position had arisen, yet we find that, in actual fact, this Government did nothing concrete until after the Leader of the Opposition had drawn attention to the serious position which had arisen.

Mr. Court: Nonsense!

Mr. BRADY: It is all very well for the Minister for Industrial Development to say "Nonsense," but let him tell us what happened. All the Government did was to run around appointing committees, and this when the Press had shown the position

to be serious in June. There is no doubt that the Government should have been doing something early in July or, at the latest, early in August.

There are also other references in the paper which deal with the handling of wheat and oats in the Nyabing area and which set out the quantity of wheat railed from that area during the year ended June when, in my opinion, quite a lot of the coarse grain and wheat cereal should have been left in the areas concerned to tide the farmers over their emergency.

I said I felt the Government was giving too little too late. I say this, because I understand from one of the papers that it was estimated there could be anything up to 11,000,000 sheep involved as a result of the drought conditions throughout the State; that is, if the drought continues throughout the State.

There was sufficient warning to the Government that it had to make coarse grains and cereals available in the early stages, so that the farmers would know where they stood. But we found it was not until the 21st August that action was taken that *The West Australian* and the *Farmers' Weekly* informed the public that the Government had decided to request the Australian Wheat Board to release grain from country bins for feeding stock in declared drought areas at less than the home consumption price of \$1.71 per bushel.

The 21st August—the date on which the report appeared in the newspapers I have mentioned—was the day after the Leader of the Opposition had asked the Premier whether any action had been taken by the Government to ease the position. He was told the matter was being given consideration. Apparently the same evening the information which I have mentioned was released to the mass media instead of to Parliament.

In this debate an effort has been made by members opposite to blacken the newspapers for the part they have played, and to show that the newspapers had set out to show that the drought position was serious. In the opinion of the Minister for Agriculture the position as outlined by the newspapers was not true. I have a report from the *Daily News* of the 14th August which contained a photograph of a sheep trying to get a feed of leaves from a small sucker. I cannot imagine that the incident was set up artificially, because it is of a rural scene that is too pathetic. The picture shows the animal in its last throes of life.

The report contained a photograph of some sheep, which had been dead for some time, alongside a fence. These sheep were in full wool. The report states—

It's Official, says Westonia Shire Westonia Shire Council declared the district a drought area after paddocks had been inspected by shire clerk Dennis Marsh and president Bill

Day. Said Mr. Marsh: "Conditions in the northern half of the district are terrible. Many lambs are being lost because their mothers are wandering off in search of food which just isn't there."

"Some farmers have suffered 75 per cent. losses; others have sold their sheep in a falling market."

"There has been only two inches of rain since last September."

Those were the views of the shire clerk, and not of the A.B.C. reporter or *The West Australian* reporter. I say that the Minister for Agriculture is hard pressed to show that the newspapers have misrepresented the position. The report to which I have just made reference carried this heading—

Minister: I can't free wheat.

There is no indication that at that point of time, the 14th August, efforts had been made to sell wheat to the farmers at a considerable reduction in price. There was no mention of concessions in freight rates, or of concessions for the haulage of stock. Yet the member for Roe and the member for Mt. Marshall gave the impression, while they were on their feet, that the farming community is quite happy with the situation. I am amazed that they should take this line.

In *The West Australian* of the 24th August, appears a map of the areas in which the drought has affected the wheat-grower. This shows the portion with good or satisfactory pasture growth; the portion with sparse short pasture which will respond to good rains; the portion with pasture which will not respond to good rains; and the worst affected area. This is the very newspaper which the Minister for Agriculture has represented as having failed to put forward the facts. I say the facts have been before us since May, June, and July, because these very matters were reported in the newspaper in the Minister's own district.

As I see the position, the Government is giving too little too late. As a consequence of this drought many farmers in the areas affected will suffer, and they will experience more difficulties in the future. If cereals had been made available in the quantities required in early July or August, some benefit would have been derived. Now the only people who are benefiting are the stock firms.

Mr. McPharlin: How?

Mr. BRADY: They handle the stock which has to be sold. They receive a commission on the sale of stock, and they will receive another commission when stock is bought to restock the farms. As most of the stock firms operate at the Midland Junction Abattoir, I shall now deal with the main point I wish to make. Tonight the Minister for Agriculture made a slight reference to the workers at the abattoir.

He hoped that they would play their part, and pointed out that in the past they had caused difficulties.

He did not tell us that a report has appeared in *The West Australian* containing an appeal to farmers to hold back their stock because the abattoir could not handle the number that was coming in. He did not tell us that the workers at the abattoir have to work long hours to cope with the influx of stock. Probably he is not aware that many of these workers can obtain more money by working elsewhere. Some of these men, in order to continue working at the abattoir, have refused employment in other industries. Only this week I dealt with a case in which a person asked me for assistance in procuring someone who is interested in working in another activity. I told him of a man working at the abattoir who might be interested. An approach was made to this man but he refused the offer; he preferred to remain at the abattoir.

The workers at the abattoir have given 100 per cent. co-operation. Some of the workers are coloured men, but they are all doing their jobs magnificently and in a co-operative spirit. I feel they will continue to do this for a long time to come. I even had occasion to write to a member of the Legislative Council in Tasmania in an effort to obtain workers for the Midland Junction Abattoir.

The trade unions are playing their part, and their members are working overtime and are co-operating; but when industrial conditions become bad they have to make a stand. Even the Minister for Agriculture told us that the abattoir is running three chains at the present time whereas previously it ran two chains. Therefore these workers are playing their part in every way possible. Only last night the Trades and Labour Council, which comprises 30 to 50 unions with the best part of 100,000 members, carried a resolution of sympathy for the drought-stricken farmers, and indicated that it was prepared to co-operate with and help them.

Therefore I thought that as the abattoir is in my electorate I should give a few facts to the House in regard to what trade unionists are doing to try to help in this situation. I feel the amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park is right on the ball—too little is being given too late. The difficulties are already there. Half the farmers in the drought-stricken areas are worried with financial and economic difficulties and their families are upset. I am sure it will be many years before the position is retrieved so that it becomes what it was before the drought.

I feel the amendment is in order and I have much pleasure in supporting it.

MR. DUNN (Darling Range) [9.21 p.m.] : Once again we have been afforded an interesting discourse by the member for

Swan. He has been talking about the Government doing too little too late. He has been talking for some 15 minutes without saying anything about the amendment before the Chair.

Mr. Jamieson: You will be able to do that.

Mr. DUNN: I only hope the honourable member has the patience and common sense to listen to the pearls of wisdom I am about to deliver. In speaking to this amendment I will endeavour to deal with the subject before the Chair.

None of us would suggest there are no problems or great hardships being experienced by certain farmers. I am not going to discourse on the particular aspect of what is going on in regard to the problem of the lack of rain throughout the season, but I am concerned indeed with the complete and utter irresponsibility of this amendment. Anybody with an ounce of common sense must regard it as ill-advised and a sudden whim of the Opposition to try to embarrass the Government in order to gain some political advantage.

In listening to the debate tonight I have not heard one constructive suggestion come forward from the Opposition. During the plaintive talk by some members of the Opposition in regard to the problems of farmers involved in drought hardship, one would have thought they would at least make constructive suggestions as to what the Government should do.

I am prepared to admit the member for Northam suggested the Government should apply water restrictions in the metropolitan area. I have no doubt he made this suggestion with the greatest sincerity for the benefit of those who will need water in time to come, but I think that such a statement is an absolute and utter slight on the capabilities and worthiness of the public servants. One can only come to the conclusion that he has satisfied himself that those responsible for looking after the affairs of the State are not aware of what they should be doing.

Mr. Toms: There was a statement in the Press a fortnight ago telling people to be careful not to use too much water.

Mr. DUNN: In the circumstances, I consider that to be a sensible suggestion, but to say that water restrictions should be applied in the metropolitan area as from today or tomorrow to save the present situation is rather senseless. I am prepared to admit that the member for Collie was quite genuine when he suggested that certain Crown lands should be made available for grazing. I am also aware that the member for Roe very smartly explained what he had done and how he had supported the Government in its endeavours to overcome the situation. He stated how he had worked with the Government in regard to this problem and, in point of fact, after discussions with the

Forests Department, he made the statement that certain areas of land had been submitted to the committee that was appointed to investigate the problem and the matter was receiving proper and sensible attention.

I wonder what the position would be if the Opposition suddenly found that in a couple of days' time it rained like the devil so that the water supply problems of the State were overcome, but the Government had committed itself to spend millions of dollars to alleviate the present situation? I imagine its members would be up in arms and we would again be confronted with an amendment as frivolous, in my humble opinion, as this one.

Mr. Jamieson: Are you talking to the amendment?

Mr. DUNN: Yes, and stating how irresponsible it is.

Mr. Jamieson: Could you read it again?

Mr. DUNN: Would you like me to?

Mr. Graham: No.

Mr. DUNN: It is of very little importance. I doubt whether it is worth reading again.

Mr. Graham: Obviously you have not read it.

Mr. DUNN: I would like the Opposition to state in a constructive way what the Government should do that it has not done. On this side of the House we have demonstrated that the Government has been quite aware of the problem—and well before the time this amendment was moved.

The amendment is not constructive in any shape or form—it is utterly irresponsible. It has to be because the Government has been well aware of the situation. The amendment has been moved without thought and without any desire to assist.

Parliament did not open until the 31st July, and we did not sit again until the 5th August, but to the best of my knowledge I can say that as far as the joint parties are concerned, our meetings have been very concerned with this problem, and I want to commend members from many electorates for the positive and helpful manner in which they have contributed to the discussions which have resulted in the action which the Government is apparently taking. I want everyone to believe, as I do, that the Government did the right thing in appointing a committee of responsible persons to handle this question.

It is not possible to shift stock or water willy-nilly around the countryside, or bore wells where one wants to without some proper approach being made. Surely advice should be obtained from the other States that have experienced drought conditions

before seeking Federal assistance. This is a responsible action and clearly indicates that at no stage has the Government been oblivious to the situation. Therefore one can utterly and completely disregard that part of the amendment.

I heard the member for Swan talking about a map which was published in *The West Australian*. I am advised on good authority that the map is not correct.

Mr. Brady: Who is your authority?

Mr. DUNN: Not all of the areas disclosed are drought areas.

Mr. Brady: The same map was published in the *Farmers' Weekly*.

Mr. DUNN: It is not correct.

Mr. Graham: Who was your authority?

Mr. DUNN: People who know—people who live in the area. One is sitting not far from me; in fact, I can touch him from where I am standing.

Mr. Graham: You have been touching me often enough.

Mr. DUNN: If this honourable member does not know, does the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggest the member for Swan knows? Of course not; and the Kulin Shire itself has disputed the fact.

So here we find this careless approach to this drastic problem. No-one can deny that the problem is with us, but it must be treated sensibly. The Government must surely watch the way the money is spent and the effort is directed.

At no stage during this debate have I heard any suggestion from the Opposition which would make me believe, one iota, that the Government has not acted rationally, has not been positive in its actions, and has not had full regard for its complete responsibility.

Let me repeat that the Government contains men who represent rural industries and interests, men who are capable of assessing the problem and the correct way to handle it. Let me say also that the Government has sought the knowledge and assistance of these men and they, in turn, have been into their own areas and districts, have discussed the problem with the farmers and have then returned to the Government with the positive suggestions we have been seeking.

I for one could not possibly believe that this amendment is anything but a political gimmick which displays a complete lack of responsibility. For the Opposition to move such an amendment against the Government on these grounds, without thoroughly going into the matter, makes it perfectly obvious to me why we sit on this side of the House.

The member for Maylands once accused the Premier of leading a football team of old men. I regret very much having

to say that as far as the Leader of the Opposition is concerned, he is leading a team which has not even reached the reserves grade.

Finally, I just want to say that we look forward to the Opposition, some time in the future, moving a censure motion which is constructive and designed to do some good for someone. I cannot support the amendment.

**MR. BOVELL** (Vasse — Minister for Lands) [9.32 p.m.]: The purport of the amendment—

Mr. Graham: The big guns are coming; the big artillery!

Mr. BOVELL: —is to indicate that the Government has not been conscious of the problems which have confronted the State because of a dry season. This is totally incorrect. The Government has been concerned about the problems which could face the State throughout a dry season, which we have not experienced for some considerable time. It is many years since we have experienced a season such as this.

Some parts of the State are enjoying a satisfactory season. The area I represent, in particular, although not enjoying the normal average rainfall, is enjoying a satisfactory season.

Mr. Davies: It is well represented!

Mr. BOVELL: The primary producers in my area are quite satisfied with the season, and that has always been so.

Before this present session commenced, I, as Minister for Lands, went into the outer agricultural areas of the State. As a matter of fact, I spent two nights in the electorate of the member for Northam, and I think I saw him while I was there. I admit that I was not in the town during the daytime as I would leave early in the morning and arrive back late at night. I went through the north-eastern wheat-belt areas. As Minister for Lands, I had released many millions of acres and the Government and I were concerned to know the condition of the newer areas of the State. I travelled north of Beacon to the emu fence and down through Bencubbin and Trayning and into Northam.

Later in the week I went through the Gairdner River area, the Jerramungup area, the south coast, and Albany, and then back through the great southern and home again. That is the reason I have risen to indicate that the Government has been conscious of the problems which could face the State because of the dry season.

Mr. Davies: Did you make that trip solely to inspect for drought conditions?

Mr. BOVELL: There was no drought at that particular time. It is a fact that the State was not enjoying its average rainfall, and that was known to everyone.



I could not give the exact mileage I covered, but I should say it would be something approaching 2,000 miles, which is a long way in the course of five days. I met people on their properties. I did not make any arrangements with local authorities because at that particular time, as far as I knew, local authorities had made no representations to the Government, although I know they were concerned. I talked to people in the towns, and in some of the districts where I had previously worked as a bank officer. I talked to some of the farmers in Beacon on my way through to Bencubbin and Trayning, and then I returned to Northam.

Mr. Davies: Like the return of the prodigal son!

Mr. BOVELL: Strange to say, it was a number of years since I had been in some of the areas, but there were still people there I knew in the old days, and it was great to renew their acquaintance. I admit that when I was there before, the depression was on us. The primary producers were then facing adverse economic conditions. Then it was due to the depression but on this occasion it was as a result of the dry season. We certainly hope that the primary producers will not experience what we understand as being the true meaning of the word "drought."

The Government appointed a Cabinet subcommittee headed by the Minister for Agriculture, who was Acting Premier at the time. Also on the committee are the Minister for Transport and myself. Since the appointment of that committee I have made another 1,000-odd mile journey through the northern wheatbelt areas up the Wongan line, east of Mullewa to Geraldton, and down the Midland line, to obtain a complete survey of conditions prevailing in the various districts. Strange as it may seem—and this was also mentioned by the member for Darling Range—although there are specific dry areas, the dry conditions are patchy. The area east of Mullewa out to Pindar impressed me as being perhaps one of the best areas as far as pasture is concerned.

The great problems are the lack of pasture and the lack of water. Although not up to the stage they should be at this time of the year, the crops generally are healthy and green, and, with further rain, should yield an average quantity of grain.

Furthermore, the Cabinet called in the advice of the farm water advisory committee, headed by Mr. Gabbedy. All possible advice has been obtained as well as liaison and co-operation with local authorities and other organisations.

On this side of the House are members representing those areas. Who better could there be than those members to convey to their own Government and Ministers the problems which are prevailing in their areas?

I think this amendment to the Address-in-Reply is untimely and unwarranted and I cannot support it.

MR. GRAHAM (Balcatta — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.40 p.m.]: First of all I seek your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, to make reference to a certain matter. You, Sir, and members generally will probably recall that last Thursday evening there were some verbal unpleasantities exchanged between the Premier and myself.

I have subsequently discovered that this arose very largely because the Premier felt that in some way I was ridiculing the fact that he had been the recipient of an award. Such was certainly not my intention, nor do I think that the *Hansard* report bears out that there was any such suggestion. However, I want to make it perfectly clear that when honours are the order of the day, in my view, politics and policies apart, if ever a person warranted the granting of an honour it would be one who had served for a record time as has the present incumbent of the office, Sir David Brand. I feel that I owe it to him, and to the House, to make that explanation.

The amendment we are debating at the moment has an origin. It derives from certain occurrences last Wednesday. Members will recall that the Leader of the Opposition asked a question of the Premier as to whether any firm decisions had been made on proposals to assist farmers in the present situation. The Premier replied that certain decisions had been made and that a public statement would be made later that afternoon.

The Opposition feels that its leader, having asked the question in this Parliament, was entitled to some information. If the Government had come to conclusions on only a certain number of points, then, to that extent, the information should have been made available to us. It was not.

The following morning, however, a full statement of the plans and intentions of the Government appeared. Somewhat naturally this caused the Opposition to be upset and, on account of that, we have the amendment before us. I ask members to remember, as well, that this matter actually started on the 6th August when the Leader of the Opposition was making certain observations which were repeatedly denied by the Acting Premier, who charged the Leader of the Opposition with trying to stir up trouble.

Having regard to the fact that that was the conception of the situation I feel the Government had an obligation to supply some information rather than hold everything back for the purpose of supplying it to the Press a few hours later. Because of this, the member for Victoria

Park has been chided for having submitted the amendment. The reason the amendment was brought forward by the member for Victoria Park, as I understand it, is that he was one of the only two members of the Opposition who had not spoken and it was therefore necessary for somebody, from this side of the House, to make a move and register a protest, and also to bring about an opportunity—which it has—for members to express themselves regarding the unfortunate situation which has developed in certain rural areas.

As a colleague of mine has pointed out tonight, we have had the rare example—probably for the first time in the history of this Government—when a matter has been raised by a member of the Opposition that the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Transport, and the Minister for Lands—all members of the Ministry—have sprung to their feet in order to debate the issue. That, in itself, I repeat is exceptional and it gives some idea of the importance of this question. Those Ministers have spoken, as have the backbenchers who are supporting the Government and from whom we hear exceedingly rarely, and those speeches indicate that all members are seized with the seriousness of the situation and the necessity for something to be done urgently. It is in respect of that last word that the Opposition complains.

I will first of all deal with the latter portion of the amendment which reads as follows:—

We regret also to inform Your Excellency that the action of the Government in declining to inform Parliament of its proposals and in preferring to make its statements outside, is an affront to Parliament and calculated to reduce its prestige.

On a number of occasions I have been critical of the Government and I have raised the point that the Premier and Ministers of the Government go out of their way to humiliate members of the Opposition. In so doing they render less than justice to this Parliament.

Let me give a couple of examples of my own, one of which occurred during the present session. I asked a question of the Minister for Works in relation to plastic piping and he replied to the question but went on to say that a Press statement would be released in the next few days. This matter had been before that Minister since February, 1968, and only portion of the information was available to me in this Parliament. Several days later he delivered a statement in order that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's name should not be associated with the matter.

I say that because I had an earlier experience when I asked a question regarding certain restrictions which had

been placed on power boats. I placed a question on the notice paper for the Thursday afternoon sitting and the reply I received from the Minister was that his decision in connection with the matter appeared in that afternoon's edition of the *Daily News*. Obviously the reply was given because there was restiveness amongst boat owners and the Minister did not want it to be thought that the Opposition had stirred the Government into action. The Minister wanted to come out with a statement in order to capture all the glory for himself. That sort of action renders less than justice to this Parliament.

As my final word on this point I suggest, very seriously, that some attention might be given to Standing Order 82 which lays down the routine of business in this House. I suggest that between paragraph 2 and paragraph 3—that is, between "Giving Notices of Motion" and "Questions on Notice"—there should be inserted "Statements by Ministers". I think that would add to the interest, importance, and dignity of Parliament if, as often as possible when Parliament is sitting, important statements were made by Ministers in this House. Proper provision should be made for that to take place. Fortunately, under the new arrangement we will now be sitting at more frequent intervals than hitherto.

In all seriousness I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, and the appropriate committee might give some attention to this matter. Naturally enough, in order to guard against a party political propaganda session there should be some safeguards to ensure that Ministers give factual data of some magnitude and importance to members of Parliament who, after all, should be the first to hear of governmental decisions where that is practicable. On many occasions, of course, it is not.

I say that without any party rancour and I feel it is a procedure which could be adopted irrespective of the party label attaching to the Government of the day.

It has been mentioned that the Minister for Agriculture told us there had been an increase—almost threefold—in the number of carcasses rejected at the meatworks during the months of July and August. Surely this indicates immediately that during those months, and for some time prior thereto, there was an unusual circumstance of some seriousness to the farming community; otherwise why should they be sending to the market livestock in increasing numbers with up to 4 per cent. of such animals being rejected because of their poor, emaciated condition? This indicates there was something unusual occurring in the rural areas.

Mr. O'Connor: Does the Deputy Leader of the Opposition know the normal rejection rate?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes. it is about one-third of 4 per cent.

Mr. O'Connor: About 1½ per cent.

Mr. GRAHAM: It is somewhere thereabouts as the Minister for Transport, who, incidentally should have been listening to the Minister for Agriculture, can check for himself when he makes reference to the speech made by the Minister for Agriculture which is recorded in *Hansard*.

Mr. O'Connor: I was called out.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, of course the Minister was.

Mr. Jamieson: You were caught out on that one.

Mr. GRAHAM: I, for one, was interested in the discourse of the Minister for Railways, who represents the wheat fields and rolling plains of Mt. Lawley! He told us quite a lot about what he discovered in a few hours in the eastern wheatbelt and other localities. He thought the situation was not nearly as serious as the Press represented it; as the Opposition represented it; and as many other people felt. Accordingly, I think I can do no better than to quote from somebody who is an undoubted authority in connection with this matter. This is what he said—

... according to the old hands, since 1914, when there was a severe drought, the drought which is being experienced at the present time is the worst that has been experienced. This is the worst drought in the last 50-odd years.

I repeat: this is an authority, almost without peer. I am somewhat astounded that we have not had the benefit of a further instalment from that eminent authority, who is no less a person than the member for Avon, who enlightened us just one week ago today with these famous words. He is completely contradicting what the Minister for Railways has told us and is completely at variance with what we were told some three weeks ago by the then Acting Premier.

I am wondering just where it is necessary to go in order to ascertain the truth. To which section of the Government and its supporters do we pay some heed? Who is right? They cannot all be right. This much is certain however: the Acting Premier was definitely wrong on the 6th August.

Our criticism has grown, because the Government has acted too belatedly with regard to this matter. Again, I emphasise that three weeks ago the Government would not acknowledge there was a drought problem. It acknowledged a little distress here and there, but that was all. However, I think the perfect summary came from the member for Avon. Any member who cares may check what he said on page 435 of *Hansard*.

Mr. Gayfer: Thank you. I was just looking it up.

Mr. Bertram: Was he pushed into the debate?

Mr. GRAHAM: We also heard from the member for Roe. He is another one whose voice should be heard on a question such as this. As I have already remarked, it is refreshing to see that some of the backbenchers have sufficient courage to stand up and make speeches—albeit they religiously follow the old pattern of supporting the Government up to the hilt. The member for Roe did himself a little injustice, however, at that time. I hope I am not doing him an injustice now; but, as I recall, he was chiding the member for Northam. No; I realise I have made a mistake; it was the member for Avon who, by way of interjection, chided the member for Northam to the effect that he had made a speech on the Address-in-Reply and had made no mention of the drought.

In this respect I draw members' attention to page 280 of *Hansard* of this session. If I am permitted, I should like to quote the words of the member for Northam. He said—

I would like to see a State fund created to operate in conjunction with a national fund, so that money will be readily available for distribution to the victims of whatever the disaster might be—earthquake, fire, flood, or the particular situation which the State now faces. I am referring to the present drought...

At this stage I pause to allow the member for Avon to tender his apologies to the member for Northam.

Mr. Gayfer: I shall do that afterwards in the appropriate place.

Mr. GRAHAM: Thank you very much. It does not matter where it is tendered so long as it comes forth.

Mr. Jamieson: Members on the other side of the House are having a rough time tonight.

Mr. GRAHAM: The member for Avon apparently feels it is necessary to go to such desperate straits to preserve—if he can—the fair name and reputation of this Government, even to the extent of misquoting the member for Northam. I anticipate that the moment I resume my seat we shall hear thunderclaps from the seat of the member for Avon. I look forward in eager anticipation—if I might borrow the words of the member for Darling Range—to the pearls of wisdom which might flow from the member for Avon.

I will confess it is quite a few years since I was a son of the soil. I still have recollections, nevertheless, of some of the features which beset farmers from time to time.

Mr. W. A. Manning: You came from a good area.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Graham family was doing all right, but there was a firm of Manning's who used to overcharge from time to time.

Mr. Bertram: Habitually!

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not know what goes on there at the present moment.

Mr. Bertram: The same situation.

Mr. GRAHAM: The member for Mt. Marshall made reference to the fact that a number of distinguished members paid a visit to the area which he endeavours to represent. It is perfectly true that I had three of my colleagues in my company when a call was made at Kellerberrin, at Merredin, and at other points *en route*. We discussed matters with the civic fathers and the farmers; we inspected farming areas; and the rest of it. This took place on the 15th and 16th July.

It was obvious to us that something was wrong. Indeed, in the Merredin locality, we were informed that unless there were rains aplenty by the end of July, the district would be confronted with a most serious situation. We saw for ourselves that dams should have been full and which should have provided a plentiful water supply which were little muddy puddles. The crops were stunted, and I suppose the blades were an inch to two inches high. It was obvious to us that the crops had stagnated—if that be the term. In other words, there was no growth. Natural grass was more apparent by the fact that it was not there rather than by the fact that it was there. General concern was being expressed.

Let me say here and now that we did not run to the Press seeking headlines when we returned. A report was made to the Parliamentary Labor Party in connection with the matter.

Mr. McPharlin: The Merredin Shire President was one who was most reluctant to declare that area a drought area.

Mr. GRAHAM: That could be so. Have we reached the stage where the Government is completely beholden to other authorities? We heard this afternoon, by way of a reply to a question, that a local authority was asking the Government to transfer a person from a certain area because he dared to interest himself in a question of some public concern when he was not a ratepayer.

There are many people in the community who are not ratepayers, but nevertheless they are still citizens, and the Government is supposed either to represent the people of the State, or to do something in their interests. If a certain situation is developing, the Government has advisers and experts readily available to it,

apart from the evidence available to all and sundry, to enable it to make a decision.

Several times this evening it has been pointed out that the principals of local authorities hesitate to declare or acknowledge that their areas are the subject of drought, and this applies particularly in the border areas where there is such a restricted rainfall and, as members have pointed out, where there are many critics who, when this land was thrown open for selection, doubted the wisdom of the scheme. I am aware of that, because at the time I was a humble officer in the Narrogin office of the Lands Department when land was made available for the majority of the blocks allocated under the 3,500-farm scheme.

I am aware of the reticence that was shown in regard to the scheme by some, the enthusiasm that was shown by others, and the scepticism of the old hands to whom the member for Avon made some reference. Therefore it was no stroke of genius for us, some weeks earlier, to have reached the conclusion that a serious situation was gradually but inevitably reaching a crisis.

Mr. W. A. Manning: Why inevitably?

Mr. GRAHAM: It was inevitable unless there was a fall of rain. At that time the position was serious and it was then that the Government should have been making the decisions it has been making, particularly since last Thursday; almost the end of August. It would have been more proper if those decisions had been made a month or so earlier. Although plans are made in advance, there is no necessity, perhaps, to announce them at that time, and there is certainly no necessity to give effect to them. However, the plans should be prepared to meet an eventuality such as the one with which we are now confronted.

Because that course has not been followed there is a great deal of concern about the present situation, and some of it has been expressed by the Opposition. This stems very largely from the fact that the Leader of the Government would not acknowledge that a drought existed. In fact he went to the other extreme, I repeat, by saying nasty things about the Leader of the Opposition. Of course it has been proved that the Leader of the Opposition was correct in what he said, and it is also true that he had a duty, having regard to the position he occupies, to draw attention to the fact that the Government did not make any reference—not even a single line—in the Governor's Speech to the situation that was developing.

This evening it is quite easy for Government supporters, and indeed Ministers, to come in with cries of "Hear, hear!" and the rest of it when speakers on this side

of the House are emphasising the importance of primary producers, notwithstanding that there is tremendous mineral wealth in this State. Apparently the primary producing industry is so important that, notwithstanding the anxiety caused by the drought, not one line appeared in the Governor's Speech; not even a prayer that some measures might be taken in an endeavour to protect the farming community.

The position is serious. This evening it has been suggested that the Opposition has been unduly destructive. We have been asked: Where are your plans? The other evening we were admonished by the Premier and told this is a responsibility of the Government and not of the Opposition. We are not necessarily saying that the steps taken by the Government, or those contemplated by it, are wrong. What we are saying is that the Government should have been stirred to action much sooner in order to have been prepared for the event which all of us have hoped and prayed would never develop. Nevertheless the drought is still with us and we are almost into September. Therefore the situation of the farmers is critical.

A suggestion was made by the member for Collie this evening. If, as we have been told, sheep are being sold for 20c or thereabouts, there is something wrong, especially when a large percentage of the stock being slaughtered is useful only for pets' meat or for the manufacture of blood and bone manure. Also, surely something can be recovered from the sale of the skins, although I do not know what happens in regard to condemned carcasses.

There are areas, however, including Crown land, where at least some of the thousands of sheep which are perishing at the moment could be sent for agistment, because, in my view, there will be a very serious reaction when farmers start to recover from the effects of the drought. This reaction will be brought about by the efforts of farmers to restock their properties. This will involve them in great expense, which they can ill afford in many instances. I am thinking particularly of those new farmers at Jerramungup and other areas who are battling to survive, because they do not have any reserves.

All of these farmers, apart from competing with the normal bidding for stock, will be competing in order to survive by endeavouring to obtain some stock to carry on. What will happen with the price of sheep then? It will be bad luck for the farmer, and equally bad luck for the housewives and the workers; those who, under the existing conditions are called upon to pay out of their weekly pay packets \$20 and \$30 a week for rents in the metropolitan area.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that in many respects there will be adverse effects felt by the community generally and, of

course, all the while, under the Government's plan, calls will be made on the Treasury as well. I do not believe that the answer lies in allowing stock to die on the farms or brought to the metropolitan area and slaughtered when they are in no condition to be prepared as meat for human consumption. A little more foresight and planning could have resulted in the stock being transported to certain localities, and to Crown land where no doubt there would be certain losses caused by poison in some areas, perhaps by dogs in other areas, and perhaps by those on two legs who drive motor vehicles and those who are prepared to help themselves, and so on.

If this had been done, at least more sheep would have been saved than are likely to be in the current situation, and at least there would be a reservoir or pool of livestock from which sheep could be sent to restock the farms that had been affected by drought. This would assist those farmers who had recovered to the extent that they had some fodder and water, or, in other words, were in a position to continue as they would have done had they not been affected by drought.

I will now summarise what I have outlined. Firstly, I would ask the Government to give more consideration to the Opposition—indeed to all members of Parliament—when important ministerial statements are to be made. Secondly, because of the rough treatment shown by the Government right from the inception, when drought was first mentioned on the 6th August, until the situation which developed on Wednesday of last week, it is considered that the Opposition, and the subject, have not been treated by the Government in a manner that both deserve.

Because of that, and as anyone would expect, the Opposition has made its protest; but, in so doing, it has provided an opportunity for quite a number of members to express themselves on a most important question; and perhaps this evening's debate will arouse a little more interest among those members who probably have only a nodding acquaintance with farmers and farming matters generally and those who have not spoken.

**MR. GAYFER (Avon)** [10.11 p.m.]: We have listened to a rather peculiar debate on the amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park. At one stage it seemed to reach a crashing crescendo after which it fizzled out as a result of the views put forward by the Government members who have spoken; so much so, that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who has just resumed his seat, spoke in one of the quietest strains in which I have heard him. Not once did his brow even pucker. I must admit quite frankly that when his brow puckers I really begin to worry, because in such circumstances one never knows what is coming next.

I feel the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been very constructive in his criticism. He pointed out that there must be a greater extent of co-operation by all parties in this Chamber if the crisis—and it looks like being a crisis if rain does not fall in the near future—is to be averted or even its effect on the populace lessened. When I refer to the populace I do not mean only the farmers but the city dwellers as well.

I have always believed that the definition of co-operation is a unity of many minds towards a common ideal, and if this debate has brought forward an opportunity for the Opposition to air some of its views, then so be it. But I would remind the Opposition that, during the course of the Address-in-Reply, its members had ample opportunity to refer to this matter and even though several of them have spoken not one has mentioned the drought. The main constructive criticism on measures that might or might not have been taken did, in fact, arise from members on this side of the House.

There is no doubt that over the last two weeks conditions have deteriorated considerably. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggested that perhaps a prayer might bring rain. It is of no use praying, however, when there are no clouds in the sky.

Mr. Graham: Then we must pray for clouds.

Mr. GAYFER: Each and every one of us who has lived with his family in the affected areas, where he has bred stock over the years, knows exactly what he is facing; each one of us is aware of the difficulties in relation to restocking and the other matters referred to. But we are still praying for rain, because we know that if we get 130 points, as did Albany last night, it will put a new face on much of the agricultural areas; not on all of them, but on some of them. As the member for Roe and the member for Mt. Marshall said, a tremendous amount of land will be reprieved by good rains.

I would now like to get back to the amendment which has been moved to the motion. The member for Victoria Park spoke at little length on the amendment which, I notice, he moved when his time had almost expired; indeed, at the time the copies of the amendment were handed out from the drawer of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Graham: The copies were; not the one the member for Victoria Park had.

Mr. GAYFER: There were 12 or 15 copies handed out from the drawer of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Graham: The member for Victoria Park gave the copies to his leader.

Mr. GAYFER: I am not at all worried about this, so the honourable member

should not get his bangles jangled. The point is that there was ample opportunity for such a reference to be made by members of the Opposition who are more *au fait* with agricultural matters—and I refer particularly to the member for Boulder-Dundas and the member for Gascoyne, who are two of the few on the Opposition benches whom I could call farmers. Why one of these members did not bother to move the amendment or to indicate alarm at a time closer to the 6th August I will never know.

The Opposition had to wait until the last moment; until the rains held off and it became more apparent that a real crisis was being reached, before it finally came in with its tombola.

Mr. Davies: Like the Government, we were waiting for rain.

Mr. GAYFER: When that eminent authority on farming, the member for Victoria Park, did in fact finally move an amendment he said in the main section of his speech—

It seems that members opposite are shedding crocodile tears over the plight of the farmers.

Mr. Davies: The member for Stirling accused us of doing that the night before; that must be a misprint.

Mr. GAYFER: I am quoting from page 504 of the unbound volume of *Hansard*. Seeing that we have on this side of the House at the moment 12 practising farmers, while there is perhaps not a single practising farmer on the opposite side of the House, I should think we would certainly not be shedding crocodile tears, but very real and genuine tears, over the plight and the lot of our fellow farmers. Apart from this, four of us on the Government cross benches are actually farming in the drought areas; so if any crocodile tears have been shed they will have been shed from the other side of the House.

Mr. Graham: You do not believe that.

Mr. GAYFER: I do.

Mr. Davies: The member for Stirling accused us of that.

Mr. GAYFER: In his amendment the member for Victoria Park said that the Government was oblivious to the serious situation and, in essence, the amendment states that no preparations at all were made to deal with the position until after the Opposition had drawn attention to it in Parliament.

The member for Victoria Park said that no preparations at all were made. I have in front of me a copy of the *Farmers' Weekly* of Thursday, the 31st July, which, in its leading article, talks of a deputation which it took to the Minister for Agriculture on the 25th July. This is well

and truly before the 6th August—D day. The Minister listened to the deputation which made the point that—

Both executives had studied reports from executive members—

These are farmer members—

—on the growing seriousness of the State's long "dry" and its possible effects—

Not its effects at that time, but its possible effects—

—if enough rain was not received within the next week or so.

So even the Farmers' Union admitted what the possible effects would be if rain was not experienced within the next week or so. From the 31st July this would bring the date to about the 6th August. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that they were concerned about the possible effects, they decided to talk to the Minister for Agriculture to see exactly what was taking place, and what could take place. Through their official newspaper they reported back to their members as follows:—

A committee, set up within the Department of Agriculture to evaluate reports on the seriousness of the extremely dry conditions prevailing in most agricultural areas of the State, is expected to make recommendations to the Government within the next few days.

Mr. T. D. Evans: Did it?

Mr. GAYFER: The report in the *Farmers' Weekly* goes on to state—

Mr. Nalder took immediate action in calling for reports from every area in which his department had advisers.

He has also called for reports from other States on how they handled similar situations with the distribution of grain and other stock fodder reserves.

On Tuesday Mr. Nalder discussed the State's near-drought conditions with the deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr. McEwen, who is in Perth this week attending the State's Country Party annual conference.

Mr. Nalder said that he discussed what reaction the Commonwealth Government would have towards relief if the position here became critical to drought conditions.

He said that Mr. McEwen assured him that the Federal Cabinet would consider relief action as soon as the full details of the State's position was made known to it.

All this was based on the supposition that there could be a drought. There was definitely a period of what might be

termed a critical outlook. The Minister was aware of the situation, as was the Farmers' Union; but at no stage in the newspaper report was the word "drought" mentioned by either the Farmers' Union or anybody else.

I was interested in the comments of the member for Swan. He said there was no mention of the Government making approaches to the Australian Wheat Board until the 21st August. In this respect I refer to another report which also appeared in the *Farmers' Weekly* of the 31st July under the heading of, "Board Cannot Lower Australian Wheat Prices—McDougall." Mr. McDougall is the growers' representative on the Australian Wheat Board, and for the information of the member for Belmont, I am not a member of that board.

Mr. Jamieson: I did not say you were.

Mr. GAYFER: The honourable member implied there was a member in this Chamber who was on the Australian Wheat Board.

Mr. Jamieson: I did not say you were.

Mr. T. D. Evans: The report to which you are referring contained the word "drought."

Mr. GAYFER: Yes. The Australian Wheat Board decided that it could not lower the wheat prices. This indicated that the board had been approached in relation to wheat prices. I should point out that the approach is still proceeding, and we all hope that some decision will be made at the meeting to be held in Melbourne tomorrow.

It has been said that the Government has no other plans, if the approach for a reduction in the wheat prices does not succeed. It is interesting to look at the information that has been received from the Eastern States in relation to drought relief—and this information has been available for a long time. I spoke at length on this aspect on Thursday last, and I outlined the various alternatives that are being used in the other States. I have photostat copies of the forms that have to be filled in by applicants for drought relief in Victoria. When the Minister for Agriculture said on the 25th July that he was investigating all the conditions in the Eastern States, I think he was well aware of how far the other States had gone in this matter.

After moving the amendment to the motion, the member for Victoria Park concluded with a most amazing remark. He said—

As a matter of fact, the Country Party has done very little since the subject has been given the full glare of publicity.

In other words, he implied that the Country Party had said plenty to bring about

the full glare of publicity, but since then it had not said anything else. If all the credit is claimed by the Opposition for drawing this matter to the attention of the Government, then the concluding words of the member for Victoria Park are open to some doubt. I can assure him that the members of the Government parties have been combining in an endeavour to bring about whatever relief is possible when areas are declared to be drought-stricken areas.

The member for Northam mentioned the water supply from Mundaring Weir, and the possibility of applying water restrictions. I would refer him to the speech I made last Thursday, and I agree with what the honourable member has said. Seventeen days ago a combined delegation of the Liberal Party and the Country Party waited on the Under-Secretary for Works and the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department, during which this very point was discussed. The delegation asked whether the department had looked at this aspect and at the future livelihood of the people who rely on water from the city dams. What the honourable member brought up was not new.

Mr. Graham: Your delegation took place after the 6th August.

Mr. GAYFER: It was after that. In fact, many districts are coming in and now declaring themselves to be drought-affected areas. I have here a map which shows that on the 21st August the Corrigin district, or portion of it, was declared to be a drought-stricken area. At the meeting with the officers of the Public Works Department the delegation discussed the possibility of installing more standpipes along the comprehensive water scheme, so that farmers could be supplied with water at closer intervals. We realise that by adopting this proposal there will be a heavy drain on the water supply, and that by installing too many standpipes the pressure will be reduced and so defeat the purpose of their installation. I am saying this to show that many of us have been working to try to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

Certain proposals have come from the Opposition, and I feel sure all of them will be most useful in the drawing up of the plans which will be implemented by the Government. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that we on this side have tried to humiliate the members of the Opposition. I would like to point out that the most humiliating speech I have heard was made on Thursday last against the Premier, by a member in the Opposition. Nobody on the Government side is trying to humiliate anybody. We are trying to point out fairly and squarely that action had been taken by this Government properly, and in accordance with the wishes of farmers, prior to the 6th August.

As the whole amendment hinges around the supposition that no preparation at all was made until after the 6th August when the Opposition drew attention in Parliament to the necessity for action, the amendment is without foundation because the supposition is entirely wrong. I must oppose it and sincerely hope it will be struck off the record.

Mr. Graham: It will be in the records; do not worry about that.

Mr. GAYFER: The most important thing to come out of the debate has been the constructive criticism from the various members who have spoken. I would like to withdraw my statement, or apologise to the member for Northam who did, in fact, in two sentences mention the word, "drought." I apologise for saying he did not mention the word at all.

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [10.31 p.m.]: I rise to speak briefly on this amendment. I want to refer more particularly to the second part of the amendment which is before the Chamber, because I feel that a comment should be made in defence of the Premier and the Deputy Premier. There was no affront to Parliament intended and, in fact, they were acting in a conscientious and responsible manner in withholding the statement from Parliament on the afternoon in question.

The first part of the motion has been completely debunked by the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and others who have spoken, particularly the back-bench members who have practical farming experience. If anyone stopped to think for 10 seconds, he would realise that a Government of our particular ilk would not get away with not attending to the needs of farmers, particularly at a time which some shires now acknowledge as drought.

On behalf of the Ministry, I want to thank some of the back-bench members with practical farming experience for the down-to-earth and positive comments they have made. They have debunked and disposed of the amendment, but I wish to refer to the second part. It states—

We regret also to inform Your Excellency that the action of the Government in declining to inform Parliament of its proposals and in preferring to make its statements outside, is an affront to Parliament and calculated to reduce its prestige.

The circumstances are simply these: The Government had arrived at certain conclusions all of which are very clearly set out in the statement subsequently made. Quite frankly, we have been more concerned about finding a practical solution for farmers than we have with a bit of publicity. So it was necessary for certain consultations to take place with those who



could assist in the situation, rather than make a premature statement which could have completely prejudiced representations being made, particularly in respect of wheat.

If members will reflect on the position in this Chamber on the day in question, they will recall some of the Ministry sat here, but other Ministers were absent the whole of the time, not only before, but also after the evening meal. The reason for this was that they were, at the top level, endeavouring to make contact with those who were best informed as to the correct procedures to follow to achieve a particular result.

Had the Government been interested in publicity or forestalling the Opposition, it would have made the statement after the Cabinet meeting on the Monday evening, or at least the Premier would have sought an early opportunity to make a statement to Parliament because in no other place would he have got more publicity for the Government and a quicker statement of the position than in this Chamber. However, he was in a position that he could not make a statement then if he wanted to achieve on behalf of the State and the farmers the best practical result. So, in all good faith, and with all sincerity of purpose, he had to refuse to answer the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

If members reflect further, they will appreciate that we would have wanted, in the interests of the peace of mind of farmers and in the interests of the Government—if we looked at it from a selfish point of view—to get this announcement out in the afternoon so it could be included in the 7 o'clock news, in the country edition of *The West Australian*, and in the later edition as well. Because of the desire to achieve the maximum practical result by consultation with the people who could best help, it was necessary to withhold a statement and I do not think it was issued until about 9.45 p.m. or some similar time.

Those are the simple facts and it does not matter what construction the Opposition seeks to put on them. The Government, in endeavouring to achieve the greatest practical result—and without having an eye to publicity—had to withhold this statement until the necessary consultations could be made. The statement was issued, for all practical purposes, in the form the Government had previously decided, but until these consultations had taken place, it was in the interests of the State, and particularly in the interests of the farmers, that the statement be withheld.

I make this explanation in fairness to the Premier, in fairness to the Deputy Premier, and in fairness to the Government, because there was no affront in-

tended by the Premier. From the Government's point of view, he had everything to gain by making the statement in the House or answering the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Graham: If the Government were more fair to the Opposition, it would save the time of Parliament.

Mr. COURT: In speaking of the Premier, I know of no other man with whom I have ever worked who tries to be so fair to both parties. There are times—and this was one—when he has to decide whether to go for the publicity or whether he should endeavour to achieve the greatest result. That was the situation on this day and he and the Deputy Premier, by arrangement with the rest of the front bench, continued to work throughout that afternoon and evening to try to bring about the best possible result, which culminated in the statement.

Mr. Graham: You have been there too long. You must recognise that this side of the House is part of the Parliament. You do not do that.

Mr. COURT: I would not accept that criticism in respect of the Premier.

Mr. Graham: The Government as a whole.

Mr. COURT: I want to say that during my comparatively short political career, no-one in the Ministry has been as fair, not only to his own people, but to the Opposition also, as has been our Premier.

MR. JAMIESON (Belmont) [10.38 p.m.]: I felt I must rise in support of this amendment even if only to point out a few facts to the Minister for Industrial Development. Perhaps this amendment would never have come forward had it not been for the indiscretions of both the Deputy Premier and the Premier.

Dealing with the Premier first, the night he was asked about making a statement you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that he turned to you and mumbled in almost inaudible tones something about what would be taking place. It was hard for us on this side of the House to hear what he was saying, but I think mention was made of this by the member for Victoria Park when he moved his amendment. Had the Premier clearly indicated to the House that further negotiations were taking place and that further time was needed, there would have been no argument in regard to that part of the amendment. However, he did not state clearly what he intended doing. Instead, he spoke inaudibly. I do not know what caused him to do this. No-one seemed to have a clear indication as to what was going on except that he would make a statement at a later time.

I chided him on this matter in the general Address-in-Reply debate; and after hearing this debate, I wonder whether members on the other side of the House

protest too much. This is the eleventh session of the present Government and on nearly every occasion there has been some form of censure motion but never has one brought five of the Ministers to their feet, as well as a galaxy of talent from the back benches.

They must be worried about something. If it was so insignificant as the member for Darling Range said, they would not be worrying about it at all. Something has prickled their skin to cause them to start to worry. I would think that what has prickled their skin was the indiscretion of the Deputy Premier when in the first instance he made a rather unfortunate interjection. I am sure he could have bitten off his tongue afterwards. I happened to be looking at the Country Party members and saw some of them put their hands to their faces quickly as much as to say, "What is he going to say next?"

Mr. Court: He said there was a difference between "drought" and "distress".

Mr. JAMIESON: He did not.

Mr. Court: He did, and he had very good reasons.

Mr. JAMIESON: I do not know why we produce *Hansard* because—

Mr. Court: It has been explained a dozen times tonight why there was a difference at that particular time.

Mr. JAMIESON: The Minister, after all, is the Minister for Agriculture, and not the Minister for Industrial Development.

Mr. Court: I know.

Mr. JAMIESON: Every time the Premier was contacted while he was overseas—and this is at least to his credit—he asked how the situation was. On the other hand there seemed to be disregard on the part of the Minister. His whole attitude indicated he was perturbed, upset, and annoyed that anyone would suggest there were conditions in this State in any way resembling drought conditions.

Mr. Court: You do him an injustice, because he was the one keeping the Premier informed, which is further proof of his interest.

Mr. JAMIESON: I am not doing him an injustice, because he uttered words he should never have uttered. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Graham: He accused the Leader of the Opposition of trying to panic a situation.

Mr. JAMIESON: The Minister said—

You are trying to panic a situation. What areas of the State are suffering from drought conditions? Name them, please.

I am sure that if the same situation developed, he would never say that again. It was that unfortunate interjection which provoked this particular amendment.

Mr. Rushton: He was looking for constructive criticism.

Mr. JAMIESON: He would not get it from the member for Dale!

Mr. Rushton: Nor from the members of that side of the House; that's for sure!

Mr. Court: It is interesting that, to the best of my knowledge, the Leader of the Opposition did not name any areas that day.

Mr. JAMIESON: Maybe he did not, but within a few days of that speech the newspapers were featuring the areas which had been subjected to drought, or parched conditions, or whatever one likes to call it. It all amounts to lack of natural rainfall; and, as a consequence, those in the areas affected were suffering a hardship.

The Minister relied on obtaining information from local authorities and, as has been said in cross-chat in the Chamber tonight, they were not a very reliable source. I maintain that the Minister, with the help of his advisers, should have had a better knowledge of the situation. Agricultural people are constantly on the move throughout the length and the breadth of the farming districts and they surely should have been in the position to give correct advice even if the local shires were not supplying it.

I do not know the President of the Narrogin Shire. He is probably a businessman in Narrogin and would therefore not like to indicate that his shire was suffering drought conditions, because if he did so this would be a bad sign and people might be more inclined to be careful about giving credit or advancing loans to farmers or what-have-you. However, that is beside the point.

The point, which is a very firm one, is that the Government through its disclosures and Press statements—despite what the Minister for Railways read out—failed to acknowledge that the situation was as bad as it was, when it was. Now the Government has been pricked by the Opposition through this amendment and, of course, it does not like it.

The Deputy Premier chided the member for Victoria Park over his lack of reasons. He said he gave no information. This is not quite correct, because he gave about half a page of reasons. However all members would realise, because they are not naive, that no matter who is in Opposition, when a censure motion is moved—and an amendment to the Address-in-Reply is tantamount to a censure motion of the Government—it is not moved by one member without the co-operation of his colleagues. If it were, the mover would not get very far with it and would be left holding the bag.

Consequently the Opposition knew what was being moved, irrespective of whether copies of the amendment were taken from

the drawer of the Leader of the Opposition or the drawer of the member for Victoria Park. The simple fact is that it was a motion which the Opposition agreed should be moved for the purpose of indicating its displeasure concerning the Government. It felt there was a necessity to draw public attention to two features, the first being the apparent inability of the Minister to appreciate that conditions were as bad as they were, and the second being the Premier's inability to make a disclosure to the Chamber at the time, and his reasons for not being able to do so.

I feel the amendment is quite justified. I am not going to argue the pros and cons. I am not a practical farmer. We have on this earth only one life to live, and I am not a practical farmer any more than farmers are practical carpenters. We follow our own particular bent, and know more about it than a person in another line. However, that does not mean to say we should not adopt a common sense approach when a drought or any other calamity occurs in Western Australia.

We are quite justified in taking up the cudgels on behalf of those we think deserve a better go from the Government. Having done so, though, I am sure we will not benefit any more at the polls in the country than we have ever done in the past. We do not expect any better treatment in that regard. However, I would like to point out something for the benefit of the new members who support the Government. Do those members know what their job would be if they were in Opposition? Indeed, I believe they would be completely lost in such a position. The Opposition's job is to chide the Government and draw attention to its failings. On this occasion the member for Victoria Park endeavoured to do this on these two issues, and I support his amendment.

Mr. Graham: The member for Victoria Park did it very successfully, too!

MR. MITCHELL (Stirling) [10.48 p.m.]: I feel this debate has dragged on too long.

Mr. Jamieson: There is a cure for that, you know!

Mr. Graham: Sit down and shut up!

Mr. MITCHELL: However, this indicates the importance of the matter and I, too, would like to make a few comments. The member for Beeloo chided those—

Mr. Jamieson: What member?

Mr. MITCHELL: The member for Belmont chided the Ministers because so many of them spoke on this matter.

Mr. Jamieson: They have also had fair support, you know. I gave credit to the back-benchers too.

Mr. MITCHELL: The point is that since I have been in this House, I do not think that any matter has exercised the mind of the Government, and the minds of the

Ministers, so much as has the present situation. However, I do take exception to the timing of this amendment. Members of the Opposition are not so naive as not to know that on the two days preceding the day on which the amendment was moved all the Ministers were occupied in serious consultation on matters of some importance. No-one can tell me that members of the Opposition did not know what those matters of importance were.

The mere fact that the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Transport were away at the time when the member for Victoria Park chose to move his amendment would have indicated to the Opposition that something was about to take place, so they had to get on the bandwagon and make a statement before the action took place.

The Premier, of course, was forced to be the first speaker because his chief Minister, who would have replied to the amendment, was away doing the practical work of studying the effects of the drought on the site.

Mr. Jamieson: He was not forced to answer; he could have adjourned.

Mr. MITCHELL: We have to appreciate the comments of the Opposition because they do show that the members are at least aware of the serious problem which can arise in a State if the farming community is not in a healthy position.

Most members on this side of the House drew attention, in their Address-in-Reply speeches, to the serious position facing the State because of the drought. My own particular area was one of the first parts of the State to be affected by the early dry season. Soon after my return from overseas my attention was drawn to this problem. On the 17th July, I met a number of members of the farming community who were affected and I drew the attention of the Government to the problem which existed on the south coast. The member for Roe also mentioned earlier that he had conferences with the farmers and the Government knew from that that a problem did exist. The Government was taking active steps to alleviate the position.

It is not necessary for me to go into all the ramifications, but the Government has been taking steps ever since early in July. As pointed out by the Minister for Industrial Development, a decision was about to be reached when, unfortunately, for some political gain the Opposition decided to jump on the bandwagon. The Opposition saw the opportunity while the Minister was away examining the position.

Mr. Jamieson: Can you explain the political gain?

Mr. MITCHELL: The Opposition hoped for political gain.

Mr. O'Neil: It missed out badly.

Mr. MITCHELL: The debate has been very successful because it has drawn the attention of members to the serious concern of the farmers. If members look at page 92 of *Hansard* for 1966 they will see that we on this side of the House have a very serious appreciation of the situation that can exist. When speaking to the Address-in-Reply in that year, I made the following comments:—

I issue a word of warning to those in the stock industry: They should remember that successive good seasons are often followed by one or two bad ones. Therefore it behoves them to take particular care of their position.

I went on to say that all farmers should, at least, make provision for one year's supply of feed and water irrespective of previous seasons. I think that shows to members on the opposite side of the House that we are constantly aware of the situation which can and does exist when drought conditions affect farmers.

We are taking all possible steps to alleviate the position at the present time. We on this side of the House are grateful for the support given by the Opposition and I want to remind those members again that it would have been far better had they moved this amendment earlier during the debate on the Address-in-Reply and not 10 minutes or an hour or two before the decision was to be made.

Mr. Jamieson: At that stage the Premier had refused to make a statement.

Mr. MITCHELL: I do not know what political gain Opposition members thought they would derive but, unfortunately for them, it did not eventuate. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

#### Ayes—19

Mr. Bateman	Mr. Jamieson
Mr. Bertram	Mr. Jones
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Brady	Mr. McIver
Mr. Burke	Mr. Moir
Mr. H. D. Evans	Mr. Norton
Mr. T. D. Evans	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Toms
Mr. Graham	Mr. Davies
Mr. Harman	

#### Noes—23

Mr. Bovell	Mr. Mensaros
Mr. Cash	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Court	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Dunn	Mr. Ridge
Mr. Gayfer	Mr. Runciman
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Rushton
Dr. Henn	Mr. Stewart
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Williams
Mr. Kitney	Mr. Young
Mr. W. A. Manning	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. McPharlin	

#### Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr. Hall	Mr. Burt
Mr. Tonkin	Sir David Brand
Mr. May	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Sewell	Mr. Lewis

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr. Bickerton.

House adjourned at 10.59 p.m.

## Legislative Council

Thursday, the 28th August, 1969

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

#### WOOL EXPORTERS ROYAL COMMISSION

*Position of Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd.*

The Hon. J. M. THOMSON asked the President:

Following the question without notice I asked of the Minister for Justice yesterday afternoon, I notice that it is not placed on today's notice paper. You may recall, Sir, that the Minister asked me to put the question on the notice paper, and pointed out that he regarded some portions of it as being inadmissible.

I now ask: Are you able to indicate whether parts (1) to (6) of my question are admissible?

The PRESIDENT replied:

I direct the attention of the honourable member to the notice paper on which the honourable member's question is set out in an amended form for reply next Tuesday. On examination I found that parts (3) and (4) of his original question were inadmissible, and these have been deleted.

### QUESTIONS (3): ON NOTICE

#### 1. WATER SUPPLIES

##### *Survey for Rock Catchments*

The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS asked the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Has there been a complete survey of rock masses in the agricultural areas of Western Australia to ascertain the possibility of suitable rock catchments for the conservation of water?
- (2) How many are in use at present, and where are they situated?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) The majority of rocks with a catchment potential for water supply purposes have been surveyed.