

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

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

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 24th June, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

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

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

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

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

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Railways:

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

The MINISTER replied:

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

SEWERAGE.

As to Completion in Claremont Area.

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

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

The MINISTER replied:

Provision has been made in the 1954-55 draft Loan Estimates for these sewerage works.

The carrying out of the works will depend upon the amount of loan funds made available.

BEACH EROSION.

As to Inquiry.

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

(1) How long does he expect the inquiry into beach erosion will take?

(2) Is the opportunity of checking up with other places within or without Australia to be availed of?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Up to two years.

(2) Yes.

SWAN AND CANNING RIVERS.

As to Dredging for Foreshore Reclamation.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the total mileage of tidal foreshore skirting the Swan and Canning Rivers?

(2) What is the estimated mileage of foreshore which is deemed necessary to eventually be reclaimed?

(3) Would he agree that the stream-lining or reclaiming of the river banks materially assists in flushing the river and helps in minimising pollution?

(4) What mileage of foreshore has already been reclaimed?

(5) In view of the rapidly increasing population along the banks of the two rivers concerned, and the possibility of this settlement causing additional pollution of the river, would he again examine the possibility of acquiring a second dredge of the "Stirling" type to expedite foreshore reclamation works?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Eighty miles.

(2) No firm assessment has been made.

(3) Yes, but there is also necessity to preserve natural beaches and foreshores.

(4) Ten and a half miles.

(5) Existing equipment is considered adequate for dredging for reclamation—having in mind finance available for this purpose.

TRAFFIC.

As to Reducing Accidents.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health:

In view of the fact that the report of the Health Department last year included a very interesting report by Dr. Snow on

the wastage of useful years of life by fatal accidents, both automobile and other—

(1) Has any further study been done on this subject:

(2) Are any steps being taken to reduce accidents—

(a) fatal;

(b) non-fatal?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. The purpose of the study was to emphasise the loss of useful time incurred through accidents and to draw this to the attention of the responsible authorities.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

HEALTH.

As to Lift, Bunbury Hospital.

Mr. GUTHRIE asked the Minister for Health:

Will he state whether there has been any alteration in the position regarding the lift for the Bunbury hospital?

The MINISTER replied:

There has been no alteration.

EDUCATION.

(a) As to East Maylands School, and Adjacent Swamp.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Does he agree that the swamp adjacent to the new East Maylands school is a menace to the health of the children who will be attending this school?

(2) Does he further agree that this swamp presents a real physical danger to the young children who will be attending this school?

(3) Does he also agree that it is desirable to drain this swamp in view of its proximity to the school?

(4) If the answer to any, or all, of the above questions is in the affirmative, will he take steps to have this swamp drained?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) The drainage of the swamp has been the subject of attention, but it has not yet been decided what body is responsible for financing the work.

Instructions have been given for the construction of a picket fence along the northern boundary of the school site as a preventive against access to the swamp by children attending the school.

(b) As to Site for Shenton Park High School.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Education:

Referring to the answer to Question No. 25 on Wednesday, the 23rd June, is it still the intention of the Government ultim-

ately to use the site at the north-east corner of Aberdare and Smythe-rds, Shenton Park, for a high school?

The MINISTER replied:

It is presumed that the hon. member means the south-east corner, in which case the answer is in the affirmative.

DAIRYING.

As to Artificial Insemination Centre, Wokalup.

Mr. MANNING asked the Minister for Agriculture:

What progress is being made with the establishment of an artificial insemination centre at the Wokalup research station?

The MINISTER replied:

A decision has been made to commence an artificial insemination centre as early as possible. To this end arrangements have been made for the construction of bullyards and shelters at the research station, Wokalup.

A sum has been placed on the Estimates for the construction of an office and laboratory.

LAND AGENTS.

As to Constitution of Supervisory Committee.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Has the Land Agents Supervisory Committee of W.A. as provided by Section 14A of the Land Agents Act, 1921-1953, been constituted?

(2) If so, who are the members appointed as—

(a) chairman;

(b) qualified accountant and auditor;

(c) licensee?

(3) (a) Were the respective institutes of the qualified accountant and the licensee invited to recommend an appointee?

(b) If so, was their recommendation adopted?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2). (a) Gerald Joseph Ruse.

(b) Charles Mervyn Hansen.

(c) George James Waters.

(3) (a) No, but a nomination was received from the Real Estate Institute pursuant to Section 14A (1) of the Act. The Act does not provide for a nomination in respect of the qualified accountant and auditor.

(b) Yes, in respect of the nomination of the Real Estate Institute.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Revaluations and Effect on Rates.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Has the revaluation of properties in Nedlands, Belmont, Floreat Park and Osborne Park districts been completed?

(2) If all the districts have not been completed, which ones have been completed?

(3) In respect of the districts that have been completed, when is it expected that the new valuations will apply?

(4) What is the general nature of the revaluations, i.e., what general percentage increase?

(5) What will be the effect on water rates?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Answered by No. 1.

(3) As from the 1st July, 1954.

(4) 51 per cent. average increase in annual values.

(5) This will involve a general increase in water rates with a consequent increase in water allowance.

DUST NUISANCE.

(a) As to Kwinana Oil Refinery.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Did he see the photo in "The Daily News" of the 22nd June, relating to smokestacks at the new Kwinana oil refinery site?

(2) Have any steps been taken to ensure that the public in the surrounding areas will be fully safeguarded as regards any dust or fume nuisance arising from the installation of these smokestacks?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is in the negative, will he take immediate action to ensure the public interests of that area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) I am advised that after the initial test period the discharge from the smokestacks at Kwinana will not create a dust or fume nuisance.

(b) As to South Fremantle Power House.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that there is an alarming dust nuisance caused by the smokestacks of the South Fremantle power house?

(2) If not, will he make an investigation and acquaint the House what is intended to allay the nuisance?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) At times there is a dust nuisance. This is caused by the precipitators—which are still under the contractors' control—being taken out of action for adjustment.

It is anticipated that within three or four months the contractors will have completed this work.

The precipitators installed at South Fremantle power station are the most modern and best means of eliminating dust nuisance.

(2) See No. (1).

OIL.

(a) *As to New Find at Exmouth Gulf.*

Mr. HEAL (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Will the Minister make a statement to the House with regard to the new find of oil at Exmouth Gulf?

The MINISTER replied:

I intended to make some announcement with regard to what I think is a matter of tremendous importance to the State. This morning I was advised by the geologist for W. A. Petroleum Ltd., Mr. Smith, that he had received information from Mr. Thomas, manager of the firm in this State, to the effect that at the horizon 9,789 feet a circulation of oil had come in in connection with a mudstream. He also advised that it would be necessary, before making any statement, to undertake formation tests because of the fact that there was some little doubt as to the size of the hole permitting the necessary tests at the present stage, and that some little delay might be occasioned. It appears at this juncture that there may be some slight variation in the hole which would need reaming out before they are able to make a through test.

We were also notified that the bore hole had entered a series of fractures. Members will recall that over the last two months the information we have been receiving from this area was that the operations, although continuing down at a slow rate, were in particularly hard and unattractive country. Apparently this strata has been passed through and the bore has now entered this series of fractures. The final part of the message was that there was an indication of increasing oil appearance.

(b) *As to Visit of All-Party Committee to Canada.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier: In view of the statement by the Minister for Mines concerning the further oil strike at Exmouth Gulf, has Cabinet given consideration to the suggestion by the member for Moore

that an all-party committee go to Canada for the purpose of studying the oil position in Alberta and gaining what is considered necessary experience for Western Australia in oil research and administration?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

The matter has not yet been considered by Cabinet.

(c) *As to Visit of Minister for Mines to Canada.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Is Cabinet still considering whether the Minister for Mines should go to Canada in respect of oil investigations?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

The question whether the Minister for Mines should go abroad for the purpose of making inquiries in connection with oil has not yet been brought before Cabinet, but it has been a matter of consideration between the Minister for Mines and the Premier. I dare say the Premier has had his reasons for not considering it necessary so far to raise that question in Cabinet; but the hon. member can be assured that at the proper time a decision will be made on the matter.

(d) *As to Construction of Northern All-Weather Road.*

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

In the event of the stability of the Exmouth Gulf oilfield being established, is it the intention of the Government to build an all-weather road to Exmouth Gulf and to the northern ports beyond?

The MINISTER replied:

The question of allocation for roads and the amount of work to be done on them is viewed in the perspective of the whole requirements of the State. The review takes place when the roads programme is drawn up at the commencement of each year. The expenditure programme is in course of preparation at present, and the requirements of all districts will be fully taken into consideration. Any special circumstances, such as mentioned by the hon. member, will not be lost sight of.

ABANDONED MINE SHAFTS.

As to Safety Precautions.

Mr. McCULLOCH (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Who is responsible for making safe abandoned mine shafts in the goldfields area?

(2) Is he aware of the great danger existing in certain residential areas in the Eastern Goldfields at the present time owing to disused mine shafts not being adequately covered?

(3) If the Mines Department has any jurisdiction in regard to No. (1), will he endeavour to make the shafts safe so as to avoid further accidents?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member has been good enough to let me have a copy of his question beforehand and I have the information available. The replies are as follows:—

(1) The Mines Regulation Act provides that the owner, agent or manager of the mine shall, when required by the inspector, fence or securely cover in or fill with earth or rock every abandoned or disused shaft.

(2) In every case where dangerous workings are reported to the department, steps are taken to deal with the position. Where there is no proprietor, the local authority has co-operated with the department to do the necessary work.

(3) Yes.

METROPOLITAN MARKETS.

As to Reported Cessation of Meat Marketing Operations.

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

(1) Has he heard of any suggestion that meat marketing operations conducted by Nelson & Co. at the Metropolitan Markets, are to cease?

(2) Has he any comment to make on the suggestion?

The MINISTER replied:

In reply to the hon. member I have heard from some members of the South-West Farmers' Union who feared that some such action will be taken. I made inquiries accordingly and discovered there is no truth whatsoever in the report. The chairman of the Metropolitan Markets Trust knows nothing about the matter. In fact, he said last week that the trust was considering how it could increase the floor space so as to cater for increased business. So far as the trust is concerned, members can be assured that it has no knowledge of the report nor will it take any action in connection therewith.

NEW PETROL STATIONS.

As to Government's Attitude.

Mr. OLDFIELD (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Will he inform the House what his Government's attitude is to the large number of petrol filling stations being erected in the metropolitan area?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

This matter has not passed unnoticed by the Government and at present is receiving consideration.

FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

As to Copies of Brisbane-Dumas Recommendations.

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

(1) Is he aware that no copy of the Brisbane-Dumas recommendations on the amended location for the new railway bridge in Fremantle harbour is available to members in this House?

(2) Will he make copies available to members?

The MINISTER replied:

I was not aware that copies of the recommendations were not available. I shall see what can be done to provide copies for the perusal of members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the 22nd June.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [2.34]: The announcement just made by the Minister for Mines revives the anticipations of everyone in Western Australia—and will revive them, I am sure, in the rest of the Commonwealth—that oil will be found in this State in substantial and payable quantities. The observations of the Minister were of a moderate and conservative character, but one would suppose they would not have been made at all unless the management of the company was reasonably satisfied that what had been found at the depth to which the Minister refers did at least provide the strongest indication that oil will be found in the quantities I have mentioned.

I presume in view of the attitude of the company against the spreading of rumours that have little or no sound foundation, we can believe that the conservative utterance of the Minister indicates something more than he actually said. If that is so, it is something with which we should all be very pleased indeed, and which will undoubtedly enhance the hopes we have all had of this development and the increasing population and reliance upon our own resources which it would bring. I trust that the next news we hear about it will be that this company, which has expended vast sums of money in its efforts to prove the existence of oil in Western Australia will—in company with the other concerns that are endeavouring in a practical way to solve the same problems elsewhere—receive its due reward.

Of course, many of us believed—from the time when, in the term of office of the previous Government, these investigations commenced in the North, and were encouraged by that Government—that the intention of the companies concerned to expend so much money as they then proposed to disburse, indicated that they had as much reason as ever exists for the

belief—when oil has not exactly been found that oil did exist in Western Australia. Their subsequent first proof of the existence of oil in this State at a comparatively shallow depth obviously encouraged them to still greater expenditure in that area and the laying of plans for expenditure elsewhere. So I hope their faith will be justified, and that in due course Western Australia will benefit in every possible way from their venture. But I am inclined to agree that we would be well advised to investigate the methods, not only on paper but in actuality, that are in existence elsewhere for the handling of the problems by Governments that are associated with the establishment of oil-fields in any country.

It has been suggested that to do that the Minister for Mines—and, in fact, it has been suggested that other members of Parliament should be included, in order that there may be general information—should visit Alberta where, of recent years, there have been many discoveries of oil and where, to some degree, conditions can be regarded as similar to those existing in Western Australia; at least they were financially at one time. So I trust that the Government will now give prompt consideration to this question of whether it is wise and proper for the Minister for Mines—and anyone else with him—to visit such a place as Alberta to investigate on the spot what has been done there, so that we may profit by it if we can and by the avoidance of their mistakes if they have made any; because I think that first-hand knowledge of what has been done and what is going on is infinitely preferable, from the Government's point of view, to reading about it in books or papers.

The other day the Leader of the Opposition suggested that a select committee should be appointed to inquire into the problem of rents and tenancies. I do not intend to speak at length on this matter, but I strongly support the proposal and I shall give reasons why, in any such matter, there is a great deal of wisdom in the idea of having an inquiry by a select committee. Whatever the subject of the inquiry may be, it gives members an opportunity of obtaining first-hand information from such witnesses as the committee cares to call. It does not confine the information made available to members to an ex-parte or one-sided basis. It gives opportunity to bring all types of representation before the committee in order that they may in their own way ventilate any problem exercising their minds. In the circumstances surrounding this particular case in view of the difficulties which many members are experiencing, I feel that the subject definitely warrants such an inquiry.

The Minister for Housing: Do you suggest a select committee of this Chamber or a joint select committee?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: With the object of getting some reasonable legislation passed, I should like to see a joint select committee, but for the moment, I was speaking only of a select committee of this House. Now that the Minister has brought the matter of a joint select committee to my mind, I believe that it would be preferable, mainly for the reasons I have already advanced. I feel that grave and honest doubts exist in the minds of people on this question and, if those doubts could be resolved, this might result in a complete and satisfactory piece of legislation being put on the statute book.

If I remember rightly, I have sat upon 12 select committees, and I would say without fear of contradiction that nine of them achieved very satisfactory results and produced reports so nearly unanimous, if not unanimous, that they have been received by both Houses very well indeed and the principles contained in those reports at least have been embraced in the legislation. I have never regarded select committee inquiries as a waste of time. If we get three out of four producing good results, as has been my experience, we are doing fairly well.

Probably the Deputy Premier will recall having served on one which was most terribly involved. That was not the fault of the committee, but it achieved the right results, though nobody at the beginning thought that such results could be obtained. Therefore, I earnestly ask the Government to give close consideration to the suggestion. So far as I am concerned—and I believe I can speak for members associated with me—we want to do the fair thing in this matter, but we do not know at present just what it ought to be. That is the essence of my request to the Government to give favourable consideration to this proposal.

The Minister for Housing: There is some urgency with regard to getting the legislation through Parliament.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Perhaps so, but I think that a fortnight spent on inquiry by a select committee would save a fortnight of argument in Parliament.

Now I should like to say a few words on a question that has been discussed by two or three members and that is the proposed advisory committee which the Commonwealth has suggested be set up to deal with priorities in public works out of loan moneys. I have not the slightest doubt that this proposal has been made with the very best of intentions. Let me say very plainly that I see nothing sinister or improper about it. Still, so far as Western Australia is concerned, I doubt whether a method could be devised under which such a body would be likely to be very helpful to us.

Admittedly proposals for the expenditure of loan moneys have been put forward by other States that were greatly exaggerated

and I think were exaggerated in the belief that if they asked for a large sum, they would get a fraction of it, and that it would be better to handle that fraction than the fraction of a smaller sum. I do not think that has ever applied to Western Australia; certainly it has not applied recently. The net result has been that the loan moneys have been apportioned on a population basis, and I cannot see any assurance in this proposal that some variation of that basis would be made at any future time.

We in Western Australia know that our population in the last six years has increased at a faster rate than that of any other State. We also know that we have by far the largest area of any State to develop, but in the apportionment of loan money at any time, I do not think that those two factors have been taken greatly into consideration. They may have been considered in a small way in assessing the proportion of the funds available to come to this State. The Loan Council which governs this matter consists of six representatives of the States and two representatives of the Commonwealth, and therefore three States voting with the Commonwealth can outvote the other three. In those circumstances, are the more thickly populated States likely to condescend to allow any undue proportion of the money to come to Western Australia?

The Deputy Premier: But the vote does not mean a thing. No matter what the vote may be, the Commonwealth pleases itself whether it takes notice of it or not.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Presumably an advisory committee would work in the same manner as does the Loan Council, except when it comes to the final stage as to how much money can be made available. The decisions on the final question are always made on that basis.

Hon. D. Brand: If there were sufficient loan money, the vote would count.

The Deputy Premier: The point is that the Commonwealth Government does not pay any regard to the decision of the Loan Council if the decision does not suit the Government.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not think that is so; I think it is a question of impossibility of performance. If the Federal Government is advised that it cannot be done, then it will have to exercise what authority it has to deal with it.

The Deputy Premier: But it is only in the Government's opinion that it cannot be done.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I think the Deputy Premier is going a bit far there. How many loans attempted have been under-subscribed? At least one that I know of was attempted against the advice of the Government's advisers, including the Commonwealth Bank, and was a flop.

The Deputy Premier: Not during the last 12 months.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: No, about three years ago when this disputation was commencing. It was a flop which indicated strongly that the advice of the Commonwealth Government's financial advisers ought to be accepted in the ultimate, because to have any proportion of loans failing in the manner that that one did can only be disastrous to the whole structure of loan-raising. So I come back to my original point, that I do not think the representatives of the more populous States are, on any committee on which they, we and the Commonwealth are represented, likely to agree to a proposition which gives Western Australia any great advantage.

It is not that I see any harm in this proposal, but I do not see any good in it so far as Western Australia is concerned. I admit that if this scheme can be made—and I would like the Deputy Premier to take note of this point—to regiment to some degree the ambitions of the more populous States in favour of this State, then we ought to support it, but I do not see that prospect. Of course, we do not yet know exactly what the proposition is, and it may be that it will have that virtue, but I certainly am not one of those who believe that whatever the proposal is it ought to be accepted.

I suggest that when it is put forward, the scheme should receive very close consideration before being accepted, and should be accepted only if it is likely to mean any advantage to Western Australia in its present developmental state and rapidly increasing population, which has imposed on Governments in the last five or six years problems that were never experienced by any of their predecessors and which, in all probability, after the next decade, will not be experienced by their successors in anything like the same proportion.

The Minister for Health: I think it would be only another channel of confusion.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: It wants the utmost consideration. Unless it is likely to confer some advantage on this State, which at the moment I cannot clearly perceive, I would not be very anxious to have it.

From time to time in the past I have made some reference here to the reservation of areas for war service land settlement. I obtained some figures from the Minister for Lands and Agriculture during the earlier session to discover that out of something like 2,600,000 acres of Crown lands that were reserved for war service land settlement in various parts of the State, 1,800,000 acres, or approximately 75 per cent., were in the Stirling area. I complained at the time—and, as will be seen in a few minutes, I have not got away from the complaint

entirely—that the Land Settlement Board is over-reluctant to release any of this vast area of land to civilian settlers.

According to reports recently published, it would appear that when the development projects now proposed are completed in about three years' time, the problem of ex-service land settlement will be over. That is a statement virtually word for word with one appearing in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" as coming from the Minister for Lands and Agriculture himself. The projects which are in hand at the present time, or contemplated for completion during the next three years, involve, as far as I can discover, an area of 1,000,000 acres. Therefore, only 1,000,000 acres of reserved land are necessary for war service land settlement.

There is an area of 1,500,000 acres, or thereabouts, which has been reserved, of which at least 750,000 acres are in the electorate of Stirling, and this area is just being held by the Land Settlement Board for no purpose that I can discover. I would not mind in the least were it not for the fact that the Government is hard-pressed for funds. If it wants to go on with a scheme for civilian land settlement, it will have the greatest difficulty, I suggest, in finding the necessary money to conduct it; and the people who are applying for this land in various odd spots are, in the main, folk who have the requisite funds or can obtain them without going to the Government or to Government institutions for assistance.

I am going to say this for the Minister, that when I brought this matter to him some few months ago he advised me to put up the requirements of certain people in whom I was then interested, and he would see what could be done. So, about the beginning of December last year I put up a number of applications for this land to be released, and the Minister subsequently wrote and told me that an area of land, which might be granted to these people or made available for their selection, was under consideration, and I anticipated that they would have a decision one way or the other in time for them to start farming operations before the winter rains set in.

Now my latest information on this subject is that the departments concerned are still playing about with designs and so forth. The land has not been thrown open for selection, and these people—half-a-dozen of them, roughly speaking—are continually writing to me asking what their prospects are.

The Minister for Lands: Which land are you talking about?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am talking about land in the Borden-Ongerup area. I have again made application to the departments concerned, but they still have not got it quite ready.

The Minister for Lands: Many of your applications simply mean that you are picking out the eyes of country that has been set aside for a specific purpose, and no one will agree to that.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not think these four people are picking out the eyes. I subscribe to those sentiments in regard to one or two others, but four of these people are not picking out any eyes at all. In fact, as I say, the area of land from which they wish to make their selection is, I am informed, designed by the department expressly to be thrown open for selection, but the time is so long that it seems extraordinary to me that a conclusion could not have been arrived at earlier—within a period of less than seven months.

The Minister for Lands: They must have overlooked that when we were throwing open 1,000,000 acres somewhere else.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: They had not much chance of overlooking it. If the Minister looks at the file, he will see that.

The Minister for Lands: According to you, they must have done so.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The departments have not finished it yet and I say that is too slow. If the Minister were the applicant for the land he would think so, too. I do not want to stress it any further, but I do say that now that the Government knows reasonably well what area of land is wanted for the settlement of ex-servicemen, the best thing to do is to throw the remainder open for public selection as quickly as possible, because now is the time to obtain revenue and to secure private development. The Government must be losing a fortune in revenue at present by withholding this land from selection and not receiving land rents.

The Minister for Lands: We have increased the revenue tremendously over the past 12 months.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Perhaps, but these settlers would increase it more.

The Minister for Lands: You are only concerned because you have not got what you want.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: No, I am dealing with the general issue now and I say the Government should throw the whole of the balance of the land, which is not needed for soldier land settlement, open for selection.

The Minister for Lands: As soon as the surveys are completed that will be done.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I suggest that the Under Secretary for Lands agrees with me.

The Minister for Lands: I know he does, but he agrees with me also. It is a matter of getting the survey work done and there is a bottleneck in that respect.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Then the Minister had better go back to the old system of throwing land open for selection before survey.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Now is the time to get revenue, while the markets for primary products are still reasonably secure and when there is a demand for land. In those circumstances, surely to goodness we do not want to discourage that demand. There was undoubtedly a great deal of substance in the deputation reported in the Press today as having been introduced to the Minister for Lands and Agriculture by the member for Roe. There is room for Government finance to some degree in such cases as were given by that deputation. They do not exist only in the district of Hyden, but also in other parts of the State where people are prepared to pioneer to some degree and to live under not very happy conditions so far as habitation and the like are concerned. But they are willing to work, and I think it would not be a bad idea in those circumstances—in approved cases at all events—to make advances against the improvements that they had effected.

I do not believe it would be desirable to advance the whole of the value of the improvements, but some reasonable and satisfactory proportion should be made available if funds were in the hands of the Rural and Industries Bank for that purpose. I say, without fear of contradiction, that we would get more development with the expenditure of less money in that way than we would obtain by entering upon a Government sponsored scheme of civilian land settlement. We have a duty and an obligation under the war service land settlement scheme, but we have not the same duty to other sections of the community.

The Minister for Lands: I think we have.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: All we have to do in their case, I believe, is to ensure that they are given a fair opportunity. Under the war service land settlement scheme, the Government is probably going to write off substantial sums and it is right that that should be done where it is warranted, but in a civilian land settlement scheme we should reduce that possibility to a minimum and take advantage of every avenue through which funds are available without Government assistance.

That is not being done at the present time because civilians are finding it so difficult in many areas to obtain land within reach of the premises of relatives and so on from whom they could get their funds. In other instances they are of the pioneering spirit, as I think was made clear by the deputation which waited upon the Minister yesterday and I am convinced that favourable consideration should be given to some such programme as was then put forward to him. In both those cases, the cost to the Government and the risk of loss would, I believe, be considerably less.

I wish now to refer to another matter of great interest to me seeing that I was fairly closely connected with it in its early stages. I refer to the action of the Government in withdrawing the long service increments of certain female teachers. I think, notwithstanding the letter which was received—if I remember rightly—on the 4th May, by the Teachers' Union according to their journal, and in which the Minister for Education made some changes in his original communication—

The Minister for Works: No changes.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: If the Minister does not like the word "changes," we will say that he indulged in some reflections—

The Minister for Works: I went in for a more elaborate explanation.

Hon. A. F. WATTS:—when he indulged in some reflections, we can safely say that the increments have been withdrawn. It is a well-known fact that teachers, in common with other sections of the community, have sought equality of payment for both sexes. This matter, of course, was brought up to the member for Melville when Minister for Education, prior to 1947 and it was brought up to me afterwards. We both agreed on the subject, because in my reply to the Teachers' Union I quoted with approval the observations which he had made in his reply two years before and I said that both of us held the view that this was a matter for the Public Service Appeal Board after the views of both the department and the union had been aired before it.

There was a reclassification made in 1951 and I think it was generally regarded as a pretty generous one. At all events, but few successes were achieved by the union in the appeals that were lodged against it. One of its successes had to deal, to some extent, with this question of equality of payment, because women teachers were to be given an allowance of £25 per year after 25 years' service, rising to £50 per year after 30 years' service, provided that a certain efficiency mark was reached and maintained. So far as I was concerned, the appeal board having reached this decision on top of its decision to give female teachers 80 per cent. of the male wage, I regarded it as an established principle and an established fact.

The Minister for Works: You had no option. You could not upset it if you wished to.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I had not any option at that time, admittedly. It was the decision of the board. It was one of the few successes that the union achieved if the Minister will allow me to put my own view which I had then and which I hold now—that having been directed by the board in those circumstances, it was an established principle and an established fact. Looked at from most angles I would say that it could be regarded as eminently

reasonable. So I was considerably surprised when the classification issued this year appeared without these allowances and therefore cancelled them. I felt that it was a most retrograde and improper step and one that warranted the strongest criticism on two grounds; firstly the principle, as I have said, having been established by the Public Service Appeal Board, should not have been laid aside.

The Minister for Works: Whether it was good or bad?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I say it is a good principle.

The Minister for Works: It might be a bad one. That is only your opinion.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am sure that I shall satisfy at least myself before I finish. I say it is a good principle.

Mr. Hutchinson: Does the Minister for Works think it is a bad one?

The Minister for Works: Yes, I think it is a bad principle.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: He said so subsequently in a letter on the 4th May.

The Minister for Works: And I have reasons to back it up.

Mr. Hutchinson: Not very good ones.

The Minister for Works: Yes, first-class.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am ready to go on when the Minister has finished. The second reason was that I could see no reason why one should cause, as one obviously would, discontent among the number of persons concerned and who were already in receipt of these particular allowances. One, shall we say, was a matter of principle and the other might be classed as a matter of tactics.

The Minister for Works: The efficiency of the service must be maintained.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The Minister decides, however, to lose both of them. He is not going to have the principle and cares naught for the tactics. All right!

The Minister for Works: The most important thing being the efficiency of the service.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: To put it in common parlance, I do not think that has two hoots to do with it.

The Minister for Works: Again, that is just your opinion.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Maybe. From this point, I am indebted to the "Teachers' Journal" for information as to subsequent events; I have little or no other source of information. But it appears that the union, having the provisions of the Act in mind, lodged an appeal within the prescribed 28 days, and asked the Minister to receive a deputation, to which at first he agreed. But upon hearing of the appeal he withdrew his assent on the ground that the matter was sub judice. However, he went further. There was a meeting of

teachers called to protest against this proposal at which about 400 attended, or so I understand. The Minister had some correspondence, telephone conversations and so forth, with the union prior to this; these are reported in the "Teachers' Journal" but I need not refer to them.

On the day of the mass meeting—which I recollect was on the 4th May—a letter was received from the hon. gentleman in which he said, among other things—

The reasons I dropped this payment from my recent classifications were that I disagree with such payments in principle, and further that I find that such allowances militate against the effective conduct of the department.

Knowing the hon. gentleman who was Minister at the time—and I think my view on this subject is supported by his recent interjection—I suggest that the first reason, namely, that he disagreed on principle was the governing factor. Of course, I allow his right to disagree; do not imagine that I quarrel with that! But I challenge his right to reverse a decision given by a statutory tribunal.

The Minister for Works: Which has the right to give it again.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Yes, but not according to you.

The Minister for Works: Oh, yes, according to me.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Wait until I quote further from your letter; this was the part that was most astonishing to me.

The Minister for Works: They have a perfect right to give it again.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Well, we shall see. The other reason, given in the letter, was that such allowances militated against the effective conduct of the department. If the facts stated in the "Teachers' Journal" are correct, and so far as I am aware they are, I think that observation is a mere quibble.

The Minister for Works: You are giving a lot of opinions.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am entitled to do that, am I not?

The Minister for Works: Yes, but back a few of them up.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Would you like to lay all the papers on the Table of the House?

The Minister for Works: What you have there is substantially correct.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I thought it was, so do not quibble with me now as you apparently quibbled with the Teachers' Union.

The Minister for Works: I am not quibbling; there is no need to quibble with this question.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: You were quibbling a moment ago, or I misunderstood you. That is the situation. However, in earlier correspondence on the same subject, the Minister is reported as saying that there were 14 vacancies for women teachers, nine of which were in the metropolitan area; they were advertised towards the end of 1953 and did not attract a single eligible application. He also observed that this situation was not unrelated to the payment of long service increments. I suggest that that last utterance is definitely only an expression of opinion because he cannot look into the minds of the persons who might have applied and ascertained whether it had anything to do with it or not. It was just an expression of opinion. All that we need refer to is the fact that he says that there were 14 vacancies for women teachers, that they were advertised and did not attract a single eligible application.

The Minister for Works: Yes, but what you overlook is that that expression of opinion might be the opinion of more than one person.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Maybe it is, but all the same, there is no proof of it.

The Minister for Works: Yes, there is proof of it, too.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: According to information given to me there were, at the end of 1953, 167 teachers in receipt of the allowances—female teachers with over 25 or 30 years' service in the department, who had attained the requisite efficiency mark. According to the list published, the 14 vacancies were all in primary schools. Of the 167 women recipients of these allowances, 63 were already teaching in high schools, technical schools or the Teachers' College. I suggest that it was not reasonable to expect those persons to transfer to primary schools when a vacancy occurred.

Five of these teachers were on specialist duties and they are in the same category as the others, in my humble opinion. Of the others, 69 were already occupying positions equivalent or approximate to those advertised. So of the 167 receiving the allowances, 30 could be reasonably expected to apply for the vacancies. Therefore, because out of those 30, there were no applicants for the 14 vacancies, the Government chose to deprive 167 female teachers of the amount of allowances that had been granted to them by a court of appeal after a long period of effort, so they tell me, and I do not think that that was a very proper thing to do.

Mr. Hutchinson: The Minister gave them the cane.

The Minister for Works: No, the Minister wanted the opportunity to argue the point before the appeal board.

Mr. Hutchinson: Punishment!

The Minister for Works: No punishment at all, and if their case is strong, they lose nothing.

Mr. Hutchinson: That is strong enough, is it not?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Their case always was strong.

The Minister for Works: If the appeal board agrees with you, they will get it.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Well, I am not a betting man but I do not think much of your chances. As I say, the whole 167 were penalised, apparently in an effort—as it appears up to date—to dragoon some of them into making the requisite applications. But I think the Minister's final effort in the matter was the brightest of them all. I think he reached Everest heights with this little bit of his communication to which I will refer.

The Minister for Works: You are not without imagination!

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I have very little imagination unfortunately. I try to stick to the facts if I can get them. This letter, which was published in the "Teachers' Journal," speaks for itself. In it, he says—

I therefore propose, no matter what the finding of the Public Service Appeal Board in regard to the general principle of long service increments is, to approve the payment of a special allowance to these women teachers who were receiving a long service allowance in 1953 in order that their salaries adjusted now be no less than that which they were receiving on December 31st, 1953, and any of these teachers who receive subsequent rises in salary the allowance will reduce so that their maximum would remain as at December 31st, 1953, until the salary, minus the allowance, goes beyond that point.

Now, just what does that mean? I think one thing is crystal clear, namely, that the Minister never intended that the long service increments should ever again be paid as such because despite what he has said by interjection earlier on, he has said, "No matter what the finding of the Public Service Appeal Board is—

The Minister for Works: You are not that obtuse; you know what that means!

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not a bit obtuse; the letter speaks for itself. The Minister said, "I therefore propose no matter what the finding of the Public Service Appeal Board in regard to the general principle of long service increments is, to approve the payments of a special allowance to these women teachers" It can mean nothing else but what it says. The Minister intends that the long service increments shall never again be paid as such, if he can avoid it.

So while those teachers approaching 25 years' service, could, before this new ukase, look forward, having the required efficiency, to receiving the allowance when they reached the required stage respecting the period of 25 years' service, so far as the Minister is concerned, while those who received it before the 31st December last will be in a different position and will forgo increases in salary until the increase cuts out—they are in one category—those who reach 25 years' service after the 31st December will get nothing at all. That is what it amounts to. No matter what may be the finding of the Public Service Appeal Board, the Minister proposes to do these things. Is that fair and reasonable?

The Minister for Works: Yes, that is very fair.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Leaving out for a moment his reference to carrying on with this proposal, no matter what the Public Service Appeal Board says, is it just that the vested right of these people should be taken away from them by the ukase of the Minister simply because there are a few people who have not applied in order to make it more easy for the Minister to administer the department which he then controlled?

The Minister for Works: The Minister cannot take it away from them if the appeal board says "No."

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The Minister can be made to pay it, but I refer to what the Minister intends. So far as the Minister's intention is concerned, he knows that there has been an appeal made to the Public Service Appeal Board. It was therefore totally unnecessary to write that letter in the terms that the Minister did at the time.

The Minister for Works: It was quite necessary, because—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. F. WATTS: There was no justification for it at all, and it has created more dissatisfaction in the teaching service than anything else in the last decade. I sincerely hope that the board of appeal will give them back these things which the hon. gentleman has seen fit, on very slender grounds, to take away.

We have heard much about the housing efforts of the present Government. We can hark back to the speeches of the Premier very early in 1953, when there was to be such an increase in the erection of houses in Western Australia that the problem of housing, notwithstanding what might occur with regard to increased population, would be solved in three years. To do that, it would have undoubtedly necessitated the erection of a great many more houses per annum in Western Australia, in total, than were being erected at the time.

Naturally I expected to see some result by the end of 16 months, and I am indebted to the Government for the paragraph in the Governor's Speech which told us the number of houses completed in 1953, because it was 7,642. I am also indebted to the Government Statistician because in his latest quarterly abstract he gives the number of houses that were built in 1952. That was 7,730. So for 1953 there were 88 houses fewer completed in Western Australia than there were in 1952, and I do not suggest that that is going to make a very substantial contribution to the carrying out of the promise made by the Premier in the course of his policy speeches, but rather indicates that he will have greater difficulty, more than ever before, in view of the increasing population, which state of affairs is still going on.

I hope further that the State Government will take advantage of the offer now made by the Commonwealth Government to sell these rental homes on long and easy terms. Hitherto, I understand, the situation has been that if the State Government wanted to sell a house on terms, it had to pay the full cost to the Commonwealth and carry the terms itself. I believe it is now proposed that the Commonwealth should enable the houses to be sold on terms and not look to the State for immediate cash payment. That will be a great improvement, and one that should be taken advantage of as much and as repeatedly as possible because the problem of maintenance, if the State is to continue to have thousands of rental homes on its hands, is one that will give successive Ministers and their staffs very considerable headaches in the next few years.

Today I asked some questions about diesel locomotives. All I wish to refer to in the time now available to me is the desirability of making more use of these locomotives in the country areas during the two hottest summer months, namely December and January, while the risk of bushfires is great. I noticed in the "Farmers' Weekly" the other day a statement made by a railway official—I am not sure, but I think it was the Assistant Chief Traffic Manager—that it was intended to use some of these diesel locomotives in the northern areas, not only for the purpose of carrying water by the railways, but also to minimise the risk of fires.

There has been evidence in the last year or two that there is just as much, if not more risk of fires in the two months to which I have referred in the areas south of the Eastern Goldfields line as there has been north of it. In consequence of the severe damage done by fires, there has been very strong agitation, where it has been established they were started by sparks from a locomotive, for representations to be made to the Railway Department to accept responsibility for the damage. And one can readily understand

that demand. I am convinced that the agitation and annoyance and, indeed, worse than that, in the rural areas when the fires do take place, to say nothing of the considerable loss of property and stock, and, in some cases, the loss of life, would be obviated if during the summer months these diesel engines were used.

The Minister for Railways: What would be meant by the northern areas?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I should think between Goomalling and Mullewa.

The Minister for Railways: Between Mullewa, Geraldton and Northampton.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: In conclusion, I do ask the Minister to give consideration to the use of these diesel locomotives at the time I have mentioned. I think it will put an end to a great many difficulties with which the department would otherwise be confronted. As I said to the Minister, when introducing a deputation a few weeks ago, the Government of which I was a member decided to order these locomotives at very considerable cost. Their purchase was agreed to by me because I believed they could be used to minimise the loss by fire as well as the loss to the railways for water carting. It was for that reason I was prepared to support their importation. Now they have been enthusiastically received by the department and by the public, and I think the best use to which they could be put is that which I have suggested.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [3.35]: There are three matters to which I wish to refer during this debate and I would like to deal with them on as non-political a basis as possible. I will do so by dealing with those subjects which are facts drawn from official sources; perhaps giving my opinion on those facts. A fact carries no political content at all. It may be open to criticism, but whether or not a fact is acceptable by people all round the Chamber does not alter its being true. I think we can assume that statements made by the various statisticians in their statistical tables as published and laid before this Chamber and the Chambers of other Parliaments, as well as the documents of the various courts, must be regarded as accurate.

There are three subjects I wish to discuss and the one on which I have the least accurate facts, and most of which is opinion, is the one with which I shall deal first. It is the matter of instalment credit. As I think everybody knows, the habit has been growing in recent years of purchasing a great number of commodities on instalment credit—payments over long terms. That practice has spread over the postwar years into a number of fields which were, prior to the war not given to that form of credit. The motor-car has been a long-term credit job for a long time, so has the house.

But since the war we have seen it become a habit for such large consumer items as refrigerators to be taken for granted as being the type of article for which nobody pays cash; they are bought on the lay-by system, or on the buy-and-buy system, which is a little down and the rest over the remainder of one's life. This has spread into a great number of other fields and particularly with lines such as household equipment. It is also evident in various clothing sections and I wish to give it as my opinion that it is not a good thing. The practice of forcing sales on a long term basis is bad for the whole community.

The individual who is able to purchase now something which he imagines he needs—which he has been persuaded by advertisement he needs—may be adding a comfort for himself and his family, and who can say that he should not do so, if the opportunity is available to him? I do not think any man can be criticised for taking the opportunity of adding to the comfort of himself and his family. When these things are done by a large number of people, they do have an effect upon the economy as a whole. The result is that there has been a very great increase in the total volume of debt in the community because this instalment credit is a debt. That is not a matter of opinion, but one of fact. In many cases the debt is one which remains long after the goods have lost any real value.

Mr. Oldfield called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. JOHNSON: I thank the member for Maylands for giving me the opportunity to rest my voice. I regret that there are not more persons present to listen to the few things I have to say. I would mention that the state of the House was almost identical before I rose, so I cannot claim credit for emptying it on this occasion.

To return to the matter of instalment credit, the effect of a heavy increase in debt is to the detriment of the community. It is not dangerous during a period of inflation but we cannot guarantee that inflation will last for ever. Although it has been promised that it will be cured, the promise is not necessarily a reliable one. Should overseas conditions reduce the overseas income of this country as a whole, the pressure of this debt upon the economy of the country is going to be very great and very dangerous.

It will be of more danger to the community now than it was at the beginning of the last depression because the percentage credit issued is a great deal larger. The danger to the community in instalment credit is in proportion to its size in the whole of the economy. I draw attention to it because I am not the only person who is concerned about the matter. I understand that in New South Wales a

law has been introduced to ensure that a minimum of 10 per cent. deposit is placed on all instalment purchases.

Mr. Court: Previously in that State there was a minimum of 20 per cent.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am not sure of the figure. It may have been 20 per cent.

Mr. Court: It was reduced to 10 per cent.

Mr. JOHNSON: The habit has been such in the U.S.A. that at various periods of financial stress the Government introduced varying laws dealing with consumer credit in order to control the amount issued. I would like to see some steps taken to control those traders who are pushing various items of consumer credit sale on the promise of a very low or no deposit. To my mind, it is not good for either the trader or the purchaser. The purchaser gets something which he cannot really afford. The trader who has to carry the load of credit, has to finance it in the knowledge that it is not a very safe type of credit because a person who cannot put down a substantial credit on some item he wishes to purchase is a bad risk.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.5 p.m.

Mr. JOHNSON: There is a great danger in consumer credit and the danger is greater now than it was at the beginning of the depression because the percentage of credit in the community is greater and the possibility of a downsurge in our economy is greater now than it has been for some years. There does not appear to be much likelihood of the price of wool rising; there does appear to be a great possibility of the price of wheat falling, and the pattern of events as a whole is much similar to the pattern of events in the late twenties just before the financial storm.

Hon. C. F. J. North: Do you mean the world pattern?

Mr. JOHNSON: Yes. I would not pretend that we in Australia could be completely insulated from those overseas events, particularly as we are so dependent upon the overseas returns from our primary industries for the supply of so many of the goods we require. As I have said, the pattern of events is very similar to that which immediately preceded the depression. We know the effect of that, and I am echoing a warning that has been given by people of much greater importance in finance than myself that we are increasing the vulnerability of our economy by allowing too great a credit for items that are not sound in an economic sense.

The credit of the community is too large unless we are to have a continuing inflation. This is the warning I wish to sound in this Chamber, and I invite anyone else who is concerned about the matter or

anyone who thinks that what I have said is not correct, to make his own research and voice his conclusions in the Chamber so that we shall have an informed body of opinion in a place of some responsibility.

My reference to the likelihood of the price of wheat falling is the second question with which I wish to deal. The larger proportion of the Country Party members present will agree, I think, that on the matter of wheat prices there is a good deal of confused thinking, and we would be well-advised to have a more accurate knowledge of some parts of the subject at least.

Wheat is not an industry entirely by itself. The growing of wheat is part of a great process and that process is the feeding of people, not necessarily only Western Australians, but people as a whole. Wheat, when milled into flour, gives us bread and many other things. It takes 46½ bushels of wheat to produce one ton of flour. In round figures, of the product of the wheat, 72 per cent., is flour, 18 per cent. bran and 10 per cent. pollard. On these two last percentages—a total of less than one-third of the wheat—several other industries which provide more particularly for the people of Western Australia, largely depend.

The poultry industry—the production of eggs—is largely dependent on bran and pollard. Pork, which is available through the butcher, although perhaps not a very important meat, is one which does enter slightly into the consideration of the "C" series index, and bacon, which enters much more into it, both depend to some extent upon the availability and the price of bran and pollard. The wholemilk industry requires a proportion of bran and pollard, and so does the butter industry. Therefore the milling of wheat into flour is an important industry right through the whole of our economy.

It is of interest to note that the flour-milling industry is probably the only activity whose whole economy is based upon the complete use of the equipment of the industry. It is based on the three-shift use of the machinery. The costs relating to the industry, and taken into account by the Arbitration Court in fixing awards for the industry, are based on the three-shift principle. I regret to say that at present the flourmilling industry in Western Australia is not in the best of health. I do believe there is one mill that is working the full three shifts. I know there are others which are working only one shift, and I have reason to believe that one or two of the smaller mills are only working that one shift occasionally.

Mr. Yates: Is that caused through the falling off of overseas sales of flour?

Mr. JOHNSON: It is caused by a reduction in the sales of flour. The point I wish to make is that the reduction in the sales of our flour has reduced very seriously the availability of bran and pollard

upon which other industries depend. It was reported to me today, when I made a few inquiries, that certain sections of the poultry industry are paying as much as £2 a ton above the market price for bran and pollard to ensure supplies.

Mr. Yates: The position is serious enough for a select committee to inquire into all this, I think.

Mr. JOHNSON: That could be so, although I do not think it is necessary to have a select committee, as the facts are so readily obtainable.

Mr. Yates: Nothing is done about it.

Mr. JOHNSON: What is required is to know what is the correct action. The facts are fairly simple. They are quite easily obtained, and research will produce them to anybody who wishes to have them. I have no doubt they are fully available in the various Government departments. I cannot see that a select committee would be of any value, except, perhaps, to give greater publicity to the whole problem.

The fact that people are prepared to pay high prices for bran and pollard for the poultry industry is naturally going to be reflected in the price of eggs in some way or another. There have been people leaving the poultry industry because of the cost factor: because even at the present price of eggs, they are unable to make a decent living. They find it better to take a job on wages than to have the worry and the long hours associated with the egg industry without a decent return.

The matter is quite serious. A reduction in the price of wheat at the mill, in my opinion, is well justified. Such a reduction would be reflected in several industries. Whether it would regain the overseas flour market which we have been in the process of losing is something respecting which I am not able to express an opinion. It would depend upon the amount of the decrease. A reduction of 1s. a bushel would lower the price of flour by something in the vicinity of £2 a ton and make more bran and pollard available, perhaps at a cheaper price.

As I said earlier, it takes 46½ bushels of wheat to produce a ton of flour and its accompanying bran and pollard, so that a reduction of 1s. per bushel would lower the cost of these commodities by a total of 46s. 8d. How that reduction would be distributed, I do not know; but it could be assumed that the price of flour would be reduced by something approximating £2 a ton, which might give us a competitive advantage in the overseas market, at the same time reducing the price of these other commodities which enter into other industries. A reduction in the costs of these other industries would be reflected in the "C" series index, resulting in a down-turn in costs of all industries.

This is a matter that needs grave consideration. It is my opinion that the price of wheat at the mill could be reduced by 2s. a bushel without the slightest damage to the industry; and I am going to back that opinion with a few facts which, I think, no one will quarrel with as they come from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and so are not a matter of opinion. The price of 12s. 7d. per bushel, which is given as the cost of production of wheat, includes a great number of factors, and, as I have said on previous occasions, is miscalled because it has induced very loose thinking.

It is a cost of production price more in the terms of the cost accountant than a normal business estimate of cost, because it includes besides its cash costs, a number of imputed costs and I wish to give some details of them from the official document. The imputed cost includes £958 8s. as the owner-operator's allowance for the 1953-54 period, according to this document. I have reason to believe there has been a further adjustment of that amount in accordance with the movement in the basic wage, but it is not quoted in this document and therefore I will not, for the moment, use that point.

There was, members may recall, some query about the capital values of land which entered into this cost factor and the note here, at page 2 of the document, says—

Land values to be advanced from the survey period in accordance with the rise in the level of conservative valuations by the Commonwealth Bank.

If I can interpret that, it means that the land values used in these figures are banking values and not necessarily market values, but they are in relation to the market—probably below it—and are presumably values which are regarded by a bank as being sound, so they would not be very far below the market values.

According to the document, the plant is to be increased by 15 per cent. in volume. The rate of interest is five per cent. and the rate of profit on side lines is 10 per cent. on the cost. For the information of those not quite aware of the structure of this cost price, some allowance is made for the fact that practically no farm runs without some side-lines. There are practically no farms that are wheat farms alone, and nothing else. Nearly every farm runs sheep, cows, pigs, or some other form of side-line which produces some income and that is taken into account.

It is of interest in this State—by way of an aside—that the yield upon which these figures are based is 13.5 bushels per acre, which is above the average yield in Western Australia. The average yield in this State has run from 9.81 bushels in the 1946-47 season to as high as 15.66 in the 1950-51 season and down to 11.73 in the 1952-53 season. It will be seen that that

yield is a bit high, but what its relationship is to the cost of farming in this State as compared with the other States, I am not quite aware. I would like to make sure that members understand that the cost of production does include a number of factors which are not customarily regarded as being in the cost structure of normal industry. It includes not only the wages of those employed by the farmer, but also this allowance for the farmer himself—of which I have spoken—amounting to over £900 per year.

Mr. Court: Would you not have to include some allowance for the private effort of the farmer?

Mr. JOHNSON: I am aware that if we are to take true costs as seen by the cost accountant, that is so; but the attitude of the farmer appears to be that he must have a margin above what is called the cost of production figure or he has nothing for himself, and my point is that the cost of production figure does include £900 per year for the farmer at 12s. 7d. per bushel. If he is getting more, his income is increased proportionately and £900 per year is a medium sort of income, particularly for a person who gets his living largely from the production of the farm sidelines.

The cost of production figure of wheat very properly includes depreciation, but the farmer does not need to have anything over the cost of production price for the replacement of his machinery, because that is included in the price and amounts to 20.73d. per bushel. As one would expect, it very properly includes fuel, fertilisers, cornsacks, and seed. It also includes 33d. out of the 12s. 6d. for interest. There is no need for the farmer to have anything above 12s. 7d. per bushel in order to pay his interest—not even if he owes for the whole of his property and has no part of it under his own ownership, but has borrowed the whole cost.

In his price he is given the interest on that figure at 5 per cent., and that is not an opinion, but a fact as given by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, which established this figure. As one would expect, it includes cartage and a figure for rent and that, although it is only small—1d. per bushel—is a considerable amount on a large farm where some thousands of bushels of wheat are produced and is a figure which I think has no bearing on the majority of farms. There is an allowance of 12.2d. or 10 per cent. for miscellaneous costs which, according to page 7 of this document, includes such items as subscriptions to organisations, bank charges, stationery and clerical assistance.

Mr. May: What about grasshoppers, and that sort of thing?

Mr. JOHNSON: I presume it includes the cost of dealing with vermin and such other items, but I want to make it clear

that there is no doubt that any farmer who is farming on an average or better farm is getting a very reasonable return, covering all his costs in every form, if he receives 12s. 7d. per bushel. Anything he receives over 12s. 7d. per bushel is something which any person in a controlled business is quite entitled to regard as excessive, because there are many industries which are not getting 5 per cent. on the whole of their invested capital.

Mr. May: Are you aware of the price paid for last year's crop?

Mr. JOHNSON: If he receives 12s. 7d., he will be very well paid.

Mr. May: He will be lucky to receive 12s. 7d.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is not a matter of opinion, but if he receives 12s. 7d., he is being quite well paid. That is a fact. It will be remembered that in the dairying industry the return is less than the cost of production because, although the figures of that index rose, the authorities decided that the industry would have to absorb the rise. It was their opinion that the increase in price of the product of the industry was such that it would damage the market and that the industry could carry the increase. As a result, the dairying industry is receiving less than the cost of production price based on a figure which is established by the same bureau and, in general, on the same terms, having the same general aspects.

I have no doubt that the wheat industry could absorb a price below the established figure. As I have pointed out, wheat enters strongly into the figures of many other industries, and a reduction in the price of wheat would be reflected in the cost of a number of food commodities contained in the "C" series index, on which our basic wage is calculated. I wish to express as my opinion, that the industry could afford a lesser price and that the economy of the country could not afford a greater price. If the farmer and his supporters disagree with that, they are entitled to their opinion; but they are not entitled to say that they do not believe in the socialisation of their losses.

Hon. D. Brand: Do you consider yourself to be a farmers' supporter?

Mr. JOHNSON: Not particularly. I wish the farmers to be treated fairly, as I wish everybody else to be treated fairly. But I express the opinion that if the farmers were treated poorly when they were the backbone of our economy in the bad times, they have been more than well paid for it since, and I consider it is time they came back to the field and were treated fairly, like the rest, because they are being overpaid now. However, that is purely an opinion. They are an important factor in our economy but that is no reason why they should not be treated fairly.

My main reason for speaking on this subject is that I am convinced that on the question of the cost of production of wheat there is a great deal of confusion about the meaning of the term. It is a subject upon which we cannot afford to be confused, and it is my opinion that the farmers, and the farmers' supporters, are confused in their thinking in relation to it, because I believe they are regarding the meaning of this term—the cost of production—in the same way as it is regarded in a manufacturing industry—a price which is struck before profit and managerial expenses are added. For that reason, I wished to discuss the matter and produce some of the statistics. If anybody wishes to query the figures, the statistics are here and I am prepared to make them available. I want, in particular, people in public positions, like members of Parliament, to be clear in their thinking on this particular point. Until I examined the position, I was of another opinion.

Hon. D. Brand: Have you discussed it with the Farmers' Union?

Mr. JOHNSON: The Farmers' Union Officials did not have the figures. I went to see them about it but they did not know how the index was compiled. They may know now, or they should know now, but they should have known then. However, they could not tell me when I discussed the matter with them. They had the established basis, which had been determined way back in 1948, but they were unable to tell me with any accuracy how the variations had been made. The 1953-54 cost of production index issued by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics gives the whole history of it and the details reduced to two decimals of a penny.

Hon. D. Brand: Did not the Farmers' Union have that?

Mr. JOHNSON: They should have had it. I received a copy as a result of one small letter to the bureau, and I presume the union could have obtained a copy; but one would imagine that it would be sent to that organisation automatically.

Mr. May: Those figures were compiled before the present world situation was created.

Mr. JOHNSON: They were undoubtedly compiled before the present change in the world situation, but it does not alter the fact that they are still the same figures about which we talk when we speak of the cost of production figure. I am not entering into the overseas marketing side of the subject; I am trying to discuss only one conception, which is purely the internal side, and to say that it is my opinion that the farmer could afford to sell his wheat at the mill at more than 1s. a bushel less than he is receiving now, without damage to the industry.

I wish to mention briefly one other matter on which I have spoken before; I refer to accidents in industry, and accidents generally. Today I asked a question as to whether the Department of Health had followed up its useful summary in last year's report on the greatest cause of wastage of useful years of life as a result of fatal accidents, both automobile and other. In last year's report, there was a summary which showed that fatal accidents were the largest cause of wastage of useful years of life. The wastage was greater under the heading "other accidents" than it was under the heading "automobile accidents". We know how damaging automobile accidents are, and how many lives are lost as a result of such accidents. In addition, many years of useful life are wasted as a result of automobile accidents which are not fatal; and I thought it might be possible to discover whether this investigation had been followed up in an effort to show the wastage of useful productive time caused by non-fatal accidents. Apparently, in this State that investigation is not being made.

The Minister for Health: I think more are caused by traffic.

Mr. JOHNSON: Being a member of the National Safety Council I have considerable knowledge of what is being done to obviate traffic accidents, but the greatest waste in industry is caused through fatal accidents other than traffic mishaps. It is a reasonable assumption that the same conclusion can be drawn in regard to non-fatal accidents.

Early this year I made a short trip to the Eastern States and I was given the opportunity of investigating the position there. In the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories of Victoria there are some very interesting statistics, this report being made available to me by the Chief Inspector himself. It would be generally thought that non-fatal accidents in industry would be caused by the circular saw, but that is not so; the power press has been the cause of a greater number of such industrial accidents. Various other wood-working machines are also high on the list.

In the wood-working industries the circular saw was the cause of 11 accidents as a result of which people lost various parts of their hands greater than a finger. I think there were another six accidents whereby each worker lost portion of the finger as a result of working on circular saws. In Victoria this year the power press was the cause of 12 accidents in which each worker lost a portion of a hand greater than a finger and a proportionate number of accidents as a result of which the workers lost one or more joints of the finger.

The loss of a finger or a portion of a finger may not seem very serious, but the effect on the production capacity of a

skilled tradesman is very considerable. The time he loses from his place of work is very great and amounts to a pure waste of production because it has been shown that not one of these accidents need have occurred if adequate precautions had been taken.

The accident figures from New Zealand are interesting. The normal person generally considers that most accidents in industry are caused by machines and therefore it is most interesting to note that the New Zealand report of 1952 contains this—

Fatal accidents in factories during 1952 numbered 7, compared with an annual average of 9. None of the accidents occurred on machinery. It is significant that all except one were related to the movement of materials, particularly heavy materials, such as logs.

That shows, I think, that the effectiveness of our factory legislation dealing with the guarding of machines has been very satisfactory. I should think the conditions in New Zealand are much the same as they are here. New Zealand statistics on accidents show that the major cause of the 9,000 accidents reported was the handling of objects. The figures show that these accidents were more than 33 per cent. of the total. The next greatest number of accidents was caused by machinery and they totalled 1,400 and the third cause—use of hand tools—was responsible for 1,300 accidents. Falls of persons, the fourth cause, was responsible for 1,200 accidents.

It is interesting to note that the New Zealand figures are very similar to those given by Victoria and I would like to commend to the Minister in charge of the factories branch in this State the suggestion that, if it is possible to obtain the necessary staff, it would be of great assistance if similar statistical information were available respecting the accidents which occur in industry in Western Australia. I know it is not possible at present with the existing inadequate staff, but I wish it were.

The figures for Victoria are tabulated at very great length giving the causes of the accidents together with the number of persons involved, and the work of the officers concerned would be made a great deal easier in their efforts to remove the causes of these accidents if such information were available so that more adequate precautions could be taken for their avoidance in the future. As a result of a report by a Victorian board of inquiry, which was published in 1950 and which is available to the public at the moment, the State brought in a new Act.

I would like to point out that that piece of legislation has gone a great deal further than any that has been passed in this State, but it has not gone any further than I hope the Western Australian legislation

will go before very long. The Victorian legislation covers every piece of machinery no matter where it may be operating and I think it would be of particular interest to the farming community because the statistics in that State show that a very large proportion of fatal accidents occurred as a result of the working of miking machinery and chaff-cutting machines.

In the issue of the "Western Mail" dated the 11th March, 1954, there appeared a headline on page 53 which read, "Six children in 25 Tractor Fatalities in Western Australia." The article deals with the experiences of New Zealand because I presume that the statistics are not available for this State. However, I should imagine that they would be in like proportion compared with those for New Zealand and are possibly worse. There have been several tractor fatalities in Western Australia this year due to various causes. I hope that when the legislation is eventually brought before this House in relation to accidents it will be drafted in such a way that nobody will be permitted to manufacture machinery that is not completely guarded and safe, and that no one will be allowed to sell machinery unless it is fully equipped with proper guards, electrical earths, and so on.

Mr. Hearman: Some of them do not want guards.

Mr. JOHNSON: Any management that is not capable of ensuring that the work carried out under its direction is done in the safest manner, should not be permitted to be in management; it should be removed. Should an unintelligent worker break reasonable safety rules, the management that employs him is as culpable as the worker concerned. The management is paid to manage, and it should do so. If it cannot do so, it should go out. I do not think anybody will argue about that.

Anyone who blames the worker for what goes on in a factory does not realise the responsibility of management. I repeat that management is paid to manage just as the worker is paid to do his job. Safety is important and management should see that it is carried out. It is my opinion that safety legislation should be overhauled and it should not be, as it is now, spread under different pieces of legislation. I think it would be a very good idea if all safety legislation were brought under the head of one ministry of safety. Whether it would be possible to include traffic and other safety measures I do not know, but all matters of safety other than traffic safety should be brought under one ministry, administered by one set of inspectors with very strong powers.

At present we have legislation under the Shops and Factories Act relating to safety; we have it in the machinery inspection branch and under various Acts in relation

to electricity and mining. There are inspectors dealing with all those matters. Finally I would like to draw attention to the fact that in New South Wales there has recently been a move which did not get pressed from the employees side but from that of the employers, for the reduction of accidents. I do not think it was done for any reason other than that it was realised it was bad business and cost money to have accidents in industry.

I will quote a paragraph of a letter I received from a gentleman closely concerned with the matter. It reads as follows:—

Our greatest hurdle is the firm who employs a safety engineer merely for the look of the thing and won't carry out his recommendations on the score of expense, and we are trying to knock it into their skulls that they would be saving money, quite apart from the employees' personal safety.

I will just quote one instance. Rheem Australia Pty Ltd. was at one time known as "The Butcher's Shop," had difficulty in securing staff and paid the highest insurance premium. Today Rheem has a wonderful name, has gone up to 280 days without an accident and pays the lowest insurance premium.

I quote that to show that it is in the interests of the management side of industry financially to get rid of accidents. If it is financially advisable in manufacturing industries, it is also financially advisable in farming industries—as it is in all walks of life—to prevent accidents. It is important to those concerned with hospital administration, because a reduction of accidents increases the availability of beds for purely medical cases; it is particularly important to those who meet with avoidable accidents.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time has expired.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [5.55]: There appears to be the usual tendency during the Address-in-reply debate for members to discuss projects which nearly always involve the Government in additional expenditure. This afternoon I wish to discuss ways and means by which we might be able to reduce some of the costs.

The biggest single headache we have in this State financially is, I think, the railway deficit which, the Minister has informed me, this year will run out at £3,000,000 to £3,500,000 in round figures. This, for Western Australia, is a very considerable sum. This figure is all the more alarming when it is viewed in the light of the very sharp freight increase last year which followed on a previous freight increase two years before; and this was also quite a considerable increase.

We must consider the effect of these freight costs on production costs. I think it would seem that overseas prices generally cannot be expected to continue at quite the level we have enjoyed over the past few years. This matter of cost production is a very serious one and one to which we shall have to give very close attention. Furthermore, I would suggest that the case of railway freights is essentially the responsibility of Parliament. It is not one for which we can find a scapegoat.

If we cannot provide an efficient and reasonably cheap transportation plan ourselves then we cannot blame other people for not doing so. It is one of those cases where the major transport medium in this State is State-owned and State-controlled. I think it does indicate that we have to look into this matter pretty closely. There is obvious need for economy. Anybody who makes anything in the nature of a study of these matters will agree that in many instances the morale of the railway staff is not as good as it should be. Many railwaymen will admit that this is so if the matter is discussed with them.

They will point out, I think very logically, that it is most difficult to maintain good morale among a band of workers who know perfectly well that the instrumentality for which they are working is being run at a tremendous loss, and in which they feel little effort is being made to develop efficiency. They also feel that political considerations enter into management to a great extent and, in the circumstances, I think it is understandable why the morale of the railway staff is not as good as it should be. If the morale is not good, then I suggest it is not possible to get efficient work from the staff.

One section of the railways that is considered to be more efficient than the others is the road transport section. This is almost paying its way and a good type of man has been recruited for it. He is keen and interested in his job and is giving good service to the public. If we can inculcate a little more of that spirit into a lot of the railway workers, a good many of the staff problems would be solved. The other biggest single factor which has a most depressing effect on railway personnel is the very large number of services which are of a developmental nature and which are completely uneconomical under present conditions.

Since the war, quite a number of new areas have been opened up for development and there is talk of even more areas being opened up. All these areas are not yet served by railways. As far as I know, there is no suggestion that they should be served by railways. It would appear in those areas that transportation will be effected by road; whether it be co-ordinated with the railways or not is hard to say. We should have a definite policy so that we know where we stand on that matter.

It is significant, despite the fact that a great many miles of railway line have been put down in the past leading to areas which it was thought would expand considerably in agricultural production, that this expansion has not materialised, and new development is going into other areas which will not be served by the railways. It does pose the question of what is going to happen in those areas in which these very uneconomic lines are operating.

I would like to make it clear at the outset that I have no wish in any way to escape the obligation that we unquestionably owe to those settlers and people who have set up businesses or established farms in the areas served by those lines. There is a very clear-cut and inescapable Government obligation to provide a transport system in those areas, but I do question, particularly in view of the policy adopted towards newer developmental projects, whether it is wise to continue with this very considerable mileage of railway line into uneconomic areas.

It would seem to me that if we continue to manage the railway system as it exists today, we must face up to the fact that we are going to have a continual high freight level. I know it has been suggested that our standard of freights here is no higher than in other States, and in some cases lower. I am not very greatly concerned with the argument that we are no worse off than somebody else, particularly when I realise that the standard of comparison is made with some of the Eastern States railway systems which are acknowledged to be most uneconomic and inefficient. It does not seem to do us much credit to say that we are no worse off than somebody else. Certainly it is no satisfaction to those who have to compete for sales in the world's markets to know that although the freight here is very considerable, it is no worse than in some other production centre in Australia.

There is a clear-cut responsibility on Parliament to produce a transport policy which will give cheap and efficient transport. To do that we must be prepared to acknowledge that times have changed since many of those lines were put down. Under modern conditions they would not have been built. We would provide a service to those areas by other means of transport, principally roads. We have to consider the wisdom of substituting road transport for some railway lines. I think it is very clear that we owe an obligation to the people who have established themselves in the areas I referred to as a result of undertakings to build a line there.

The fact that as a State we are not prepared to expend large sums of money on land development projects in those areas rather indicates that we have lost faith in those particular districts. It must

be recognised that if we do keep the long miles of uneconomic lines in operation, then it is not only the people in those particular areas who have to put up with high freights, but people throughout the State would suffer.

For instance, when I was a member of the committee going into the question of freights in 1951, up to that stage the freight rates for the Perth-Bunbury line returned a profit to the railways, yet the freights on that line were increased, and they have since been increased again. There is a limit to what may be asked of people using that line, who through no fault of their own, are required to contribute to the upkeep of inefficient services.

There is misconception as to the increasing potential possibilities of modern road transport, and its effect on roads. It seems to me that there are considerable indications to those who are sufficiently interested to seek them out that modern road transport can do a remarkably good job and that its effects are not as bad on our roads as one might at first think. In discussing this matter with the Commissioner for Main Roads, Mr. Leach, I ascertained that he had no particular objection to axle-loads being considerably increased on the present seven-and-a-half ton per axle for certain areas. Peculiar as it may seem at first, those areas are not around the city. The fact is that Mr. Leach is concerned about heavy loads on bitumen roads, but on gravel roads he feels that the present limitation might not be necessary under certain conditions.

The limiting factor in many areas served by roads is the capacity of bridges and culverts to carry heavy loads, rather than the damage that might be done to road surfaces. There is a very good indication of what can be done by heavy trucks under adverse conditions. In the timber industry a road has been established at Bunnings' mill at Donnelly River, and a line has been built which carries winter and summer loads up to 40 tons and over, along a gravel road, the formation being 8in. of gravel laid over relatively spongy karri country. That road is standing up remarkably well under the considerable loads even in the middle of winter. When it is wet there, it is really wet, yet the large loads carried by the trucks appear to be doing the gravel road no harm at all.

The Minister for Health: They would help to consolidate the road.

Mr. HEARMAN: Yes. There is no question that more use could be made of heavy transport, but if road transport is to be economically used, it must be allowed to cart considerable loads. I believe that it would be possible to substitute economically services by vehicles of that nature in quite a number of areas and give a very much better service to the people living

in those parts than is at present being provided by the existing railways. A more economical and better service could be provided by road as against running a train once a week or a fortnight, and goodness knows what the cost of operating such a line is.

There are lines of that sort on which the speeds have already been reduced to about 15 miles an hour, and it is only a matter of time before the commission will have to close some lines completely for safety reasons. Otherwise, we shall be faced with the problem of incurring considerable expenditure for putting those lines in order. It is a question whether we would be wise to maintain what may be termed two separate transport systems operating in the one area in which the traffic is not sufficient to maintain either one economically. Much better would it be to concentrate on the one system and ensure that the best possible use was made of it.

An examination of this sort might lead to a reduction in the mileage of lines to be maintained and to a considerable reduction in the wages bill paid by the Government. I believe it would make for a much more efficient and economical operation of such trains as were operating. I know there is objection to the closing of certain sections of lines and there are political difficulties in the way of doing so. Should those difficulties continue to stand in the way, or should we allow the lines to reach such a stage where they have to be closed, and then deal with the crisis? It would be much better to remove the whole question from the sphere of party politics and endeavour to evolve a policy whereby the existing uneconomic railway lines that do not hold out hope for improvement in future should be replaced by an efficient road service, bearing in mind the obligation of providing a satisfactory transport service in those areas.

I think it more than ever necessary that we should make this decision now because considerable funds have been expended on railway rehabilitation, particularly on rollingstock and locomotives. There are extensive tracks still requiring rehabilitation, and so it is necessary to determine what our policy shall be when considering the rehabilitation programme. I know that this is not the appropriate time to move in that direction, but I suggest that possibly this is a case in which a select committee could provide very useful guidance for the future. Unfortunately, recommendations made as a result of expert investigations, if not politically acceptable, have a habit of being shelved. I think the member for Fremantle can bear out that statement.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are telling me!

Mr. HEARMAN: We have had expert investigations relating to the Fremantle harbour, the needed extensions and future requirements, but there always seem to be

obstacles in the way of expert investigations. I think it was in 1929 that recommendations were made regarding the Fremantle bridges, etc., and now 25 years later we are still having committees investigating these matters. I think we might as well face up to the position and see whether a select committee could not formulate some specific recommendations on policy that would be a guide for future Governments.

Many people may not agree with this idea, but if anyone has an alternative suggestion to make, I shall be glad to consider it. At the appropriate time, I intend to submit a notice of motion along the lines I have indicated, and meanwhile I should like members to consider the suggestion so that the matter may be dealt with fairly quickly. If a select committee were appointed, it could get straight to work provided the matter were kept reasonably clear from party politics.

On motion by Mr. Brady, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.19 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 29th June, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

As to Cost.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON asked the Chief Secretary:

What was the total expenditure for maintaining the Legislative Council in the financial years ended the 30th June, 1951, 1952 and 1953, including cost of printing, salaries, parliamentary allowances, and any other expenses associated with running this Chamber?