

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 23rd August, 1950.

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

QUESTION.

NEWS AGENCY CONTROL BOARD.

As to Organisation.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is the News Agency Control Board an official body constituted under the Price Fixing Branch?

(2) If not, has the Government any information as to the nature of this organisation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No.

MOTION—SOIL CONSERVATION ACT.

To Disallow Clearing Regulation.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [4.35]: I move—

That Regulation No. 3 made under the provisions of Section 22 of the Soil Conservation Act, 1945, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 14th July, 1950, and laid on the Table of the House on the 1st August, 1950, be and is hereby disallowed.

I have given this matter due consideration and for the benefit of members I will read Regulation No. 3 in the Schedule. It is as follows:—

No person shall, until the expiration of three months after he has given to the Commissioner notice in writing of his intention so to do and without the written permission of the Commissioner—

(a) remove from any uncleared land in any of the soil conservation districts mentioned in regulation 2 of these regulations, the whole or any part of any tree, shrub, grass or other plant whatever; or

(b) injure or destroy any tree, shrub, grass or other plant whatever on any uncleared land in any such conservation district.

Provided that this regulation shall not apply to the clearing of areas of two acres or less for other than agricultural or pastoral purposes, or the cutting of trees for firewood, posts or timber for domestic use, or improvements on any land in such conservation district.

The main point about the regulation is one portion of the proviso. I maintain that the latter part of the proviso which states, "or improvements on any land in such conservation district" nullifies the regulation. I believe that the regulation has been framed with good intentions and I am most concerned about the framing of good regulations relating to soil erosion.

The word "improvements" has a number of meanings which all more or less refer to one another. For instance, they include "acts of improving; state of being improved; a change for the better and a beneficial or valuable addition or alteration." I maintain that in the use of the word "improvements" there is no clear definition of what was meant when the regulation was framed. For instance clearing could be claimed as an improvement and if any person wished to do clearing of over two acres it would not be necessary for him to apply to the Commissioner for permission to do that clearing. Therefore, the terms of the regulation could be circumvented by a man claiming that because of the proviso included in the regulation he did not have to make an application. If a man did that I think he would be legally correct in assuming that he did not have to make an application to the Commissioner. That, I think, is sufficient to show members why I consider this regulation should be disallowed.

On motion by the Minister for Transport, debate adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.40]: I desire to support the motion and to make a few brief comments, mainly in connection with the goldmining industry. Before passing on to the main purport of my remarks, I join in the expressions of welcome that have been tendered to our new members. I have had the privilege of hearing the addresses which each of them has made, and I am sure I voice the opinion of most members that they acquitted themselves very well and their presence here is not only welcome but will give added strength to our debates. I greatly regretted that I was unable to attend the farewell dinner tendered to our old friends, Mr. Miles and Mr. Thomson, because I have always held both those gentlemen in the highest esteem, and I

congratulate them on the great work they contributed in the interests of the State during their respective lifetimes.

I am sorry that my friend, Mr. Hearn, is not here this afternoon because I do not feel quite happy about certain interjections I made last week during the course of his speech. I believe that interjections are very frequently justified and quite often are helpful to the speaker. After due consideration, I have come to the conclusion that my interjections on that occasion did not fall within either of those categories. Without further remarks on the subject and without any equivocation whatever, I tender my apology to Mr. Hearn.

With regard to the goldmining industry, members will agree that it is the one activity most readily associated with the name of Western Australia. For over half a century and with very many changes and vicissitudes of fortune, it can be fairly claimed that it has made a greater contribution to the welfare of the State than any other industry. It was the discovery of gold that laid the firm foundations for the economy of this country. Not only did it open up far distant portions of Western Australia that would otherwise have remained latent for many years, but it also laid the foundations for the development of the agricultural and pastoral industries. Large portions of the State and communities totalling many thousands of people are still directly dependent upon the goldmining industry. It still remains, and has every indication of remaining for years to come, at least one of our major activities.

Already it has produced wealth to the value of over £300,000,000 and those who are capable of expressing expert opinions say unhesitatingly that, with proper care, it can reproduce this splendid effort in the years that lie ahead. Gold is a commodity that is still avidly sought after by almost every country in the world. I think that today its market value in Australia is £15 9s. 10d. per fine ounce, and every ounce produced can be exchanged for sorely needed dollars. These considerations, therefore—and many others that I will not mention—surely should convince every responsible citizen that the goldmining industry of this State is one that should be maintained and encouraged in every possible way.

The future well-being of Western Australia is largely dependent upon the future success of the goldmining industry. In the circumstances, it is with regret that I express the view that all is not well with the industry. It is also with regret that I express the opinion that the present State Government has shown lack of interest and enthusiasm in its support of that industry. Reference to His Excellency's Speech, which he delivered at the

opening of this Parliament, shows that the only reference made to it was as follows:—

An improved outlook for goldmining has resulted from the rise in the price of gold following devaluation of sterling.

I could find no other reference to the goldmining industry at all. There is no mention made of the difficulties confronting it as a result of the upward spiralling of costs, nor is reference made to the fact that there are very few prospectors out looking for new mines. Nothing is said about the alarming fact that many mining towns outback that for years have been landmarks on the map of Western Australia are now almost out of existence.

It is an axiom in mining practice that constant attention must be given to development work so as to ensure the life of a mine for a maximum period. In other words, firm foundations must be laid for the future. Surely the State would be wise to adopt that principle in dealing with the goldmining industry as a whole. If its record in the past is any guide to what it is capable of in the future, everything possible should be done to conserve and foster its development. In brief fashion, I have done my best to draw attention, firstly, to the great value of the goldmining industry to the State and secondly, to point out that all is not well with it. It is perhaps only right that I should offer some suggestions.

Briefly, what I suggest is this: In the first place, it is my contention that people must be encouraged to live and rear their families in the outback mining towns. Simply because they are courageous enough to leave the cities and seek their fortunes in these far-distant outposts of the State, they should not be unnecessarily handicapped. On the contrary, if our State is to progress, and if we are sincere and practical in pursuing a policy of decentralisation, it is my contention that every encouragement and inducement should be given to them to live and work in such places. For instance, railway fares and freights should be reduced rather than increased. Water should be supplied to them at rates at least bordering on those charged to people living in the city. Better hospital and school facilities should be provided for them.

But I am afraid that in the past we have adopted a policy which has been tantamount to saying that they are foolish to live out at Wiluna or Laverton or Meekatharra. We do not actually say it in words, but we do not provide them with the hospital facilities that should be available; they have to pay heavily for the water they consume; we almost deprive them of the right of having a garden, which surely is one of God's gifts in this world; and, when the time comes for these

brave people and their families to go for a holiday at Christmas, we charge them as much as would provide a family living in Perth with a fortnight's holiday. Generally we have adopted a policy which has been directly responsible for causing people to leave those parts and clutter up the city.

If more inducement and encouragement were given to people living in those places, some of the mining towns that are rapidly going off the map would revive. More prominence would be given to these outposts and in the long run a great benefit would accrue to the State. Another suggestion which I have repeatedly made in this House and elsewhere is that the State Government—and this is a direct way in which the Government could assist the goldmining industry—should revise and bring up to date what is known as the Government prospecting scheme, and in other ways adopt a vigorous policy to assist prospectors.

Just recently I asked a question in the House and the reply to it by the Minister indicated that at present, in the whole of Western Australia, there are only 18 men working under the Government prospecting scheme, and only 12 are on the Eastern Goldfields. That shows clearly that the prospecting scheme is no longer attractive. As a matter of fact, I know that to be the case. The Government would do a splendid job if it were to investigate this position, because the old race of prospectors, who possess knowledge and experience that can never be replaced, is rapidly dying out. With them is going the knowledge and experience which, if utilised, might have the direct result of reviving our goldmining industry in some tangible way. The Government prospecting scheme offers 30s. a week to a man who has little or no means of his own. No man can equip himself and go out looking for gold and sustain himself for months on 30s. a week. For a start, he wants a truck and equipment. Then he probably has a wife and dependants. The result is that there are very few prospectors working at present.

This is a state of affairs that has been growing worse as the years have gone by. There are plenty of men willing and anxious to go out; but with the cost of living and of commodities what it is to-day, the task is quite beyond them. Consequently towns like Kanowna, Mt. Monger, Menzies, Morgans and Laverton, just to mention a few—towns which, for half a century have been household names and towns which a reference to the report of the Mines Department will indicate have made a splendid contribution to the economy and development of our State—are now rapidly going off the map. The solution I propose is that new mines must be found and the ones who will find them are the prospectors.

If the Government were to investigate the position and formulate some sound, workable scheme I think it might pay splendid dividends. It might mean the revival of towns such as those I have mentioned and that large communities could once again live in those places. It would mean increased business to the railways and the opening up of our State. At present nothing concrete is being done and, as I see it, the position is deteriorating year after year. On that note I will leave the goldmining industry. But it reminds me of another difficulty—or perhaps it may be a blessing!—in which people in those far-distant places find themselves.

While Parliament is sitting members have to keep in touch with their electors and their districts. The whole of our activities are not centred in this House. But we who represent these far-flung centres have not the opportunity of meeting our people for about six months of the year. It is out of the question for me to visit Laverton, Leonora, Wiluna, Meekatharra, Big Bell or any such far distant portion of the North-East Province while the session is in progress, and yet the residents of those areas are passing through very trying and difficult times and have plenty of matters that they desire to bring to the notice of their parliamentary representatives. Many of those matters are such as should be voiced in this House or in other places, from time to time. I have always contended that those outback areas should be visited by their representatives, not every week or every month, but at regular intervals throughout the year.

The only way in which that can be done at this time of year is to travel by aeroplane. One can fly to Big Bell, for instance, in a morning, and return the next morning. Unfortunately air travel has always been expensive and I feel that the time has arrived when members representing those remote places—I am confining my remarks to the North-East Province—should be allowed the use of aircraft for a certain number of visits during the year. One does not travel to such places for fun, and the privilege for which I am asking is one that I am sure no member would abuse. I reiterate that these outback areas are vital to the State and their parliamentary representatives should be granted facilities for visiting them more frequently than is possible these days by using our outmoded train service.

It is with some trepidation that I touch on the liquor question. I listened with great interest to Dr. Hislop's speech, and I subsequently read his remarks with even more interest. I heartily agree with most of what he said, but feel we should realise that the public attitude towards liquor and the abuse of liquor are things that have not come about in just the last

year or so. One of the most adverse effects of the war was that which it had on morals and on the consumption of liquor. A great number of young men went into the Services. Many lost their sense of balance and the consumption of liquor received a great boost during those years of conflict.

I feel that every responsible person should endeavour to contribute to the solution of what is becoming a frightening phase of our social life. It is easy to moralise on this subject, but it is far more difficult to make concrete suggestions to remedy the position. By and large our licensing laws, whilst not perfect, are, I think, at least the equal of those in any other State of the Commonwealth. I feel that the trading hours in Perth, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., are reasonable and that the standard of the men who are licensees in this State is equal to that of men in other occupations or professions. Before a person is granted an hotel license, or any license under our Licensing Act, his bona fides are carefully scrutinised. He must produce testimonials from reputable citizens; his record has to be checked by the police and, finally, a magistrate has to say "Yes" or "No" to his application.

From my experience I say our licensees are a good body of men, who try, to the best of their ability, to observe and implement the provisions of the Licensing Act. It is rare to see drunks about the streets of Perth and I agree that anyone serving a person who is obviously under the influence of liquor and incapable of looking after himself is deserving of a heavy penalty. However, from my observations and experience, both in Perth and on the Goldfields, I believe our licensees do their utmost to protect the public from an abuse of liquor.

If I were to make a concrete suggestion it would be along these lines: There are religious and other organisations that are constantly doing their utmost to combat the evil of excessive drinking and I feel we should sponsor them in every way possible and do all we can to maintain the home life of our people and engender a healthy public attitude towards the use of alcohol. With the greatest respect to Dr. Hislop, and while commending him for the interest he has aroused in this topic, I suggest that the medical profession could make a great contribution towards a better outlook on the question of the consumption of liquor.

The people with whom a start should be made are the teen-agers, the young people who are about to leave school and the young men and women at the University. Surely there are public-spirited men in the medical profession who could spare the time to give lectures periodically and point out to the young folk the foolish-

ness of excessive use of alcohol. I believe it is largely a habit which grows upon the person who carelessly uses liquor. If young men and women about to start off in life were forewarned in this regard by a doctor, I think he could make a good impression on them and that would be a worth-while contribution towards the solving of the problem. I believe, but only from hearsay, that there exists an organisation known as "Alcoholics Anonymous." Judging by the results it is reported to have accomplished, this organisation must have been inspired by God himself; but whether the State can do anything to sponsor a movement such as that, I do not know. If half of what I have heard of that organisation is true, it is deserving of the support of our Government and people alike.

I was interested in the suggestion that we should send a delegate to the conference called by President Truman to deal with the problems of the aged in the United States, and I was pleased to hear that a similar conference is to be called in Canberra in the near future. I am sure all members would wish our State to be represented at that conference. From time to time I visit friends at the Kalgoorlie hospital and see there the spectacle of aged persons occupying accommodation that is badly needed for more urgent cases. There is nowhere else for those aged people to go, except back to their camps.

There are many of these splendid old pioneers on the Goldfields and they resent the thought of having to come down to the "Sunset" home. They have spent all their lives on the various goldfields and have become used to their mode of life and do not wish to leave their circle of friends. It is frequently a mystery to me how they battle along in their camps. They are found in every mining town and one cannot get them to leave the place to which they are accustomed. When they do get some minor illness, they are unable to fend for themselves, and the only institution for them to go to is then the hospital. In the bigger centres such as Kalgoorlie and, I should imagine in Perth, they create a problem to the disadvantage of persons who are really sick and hospital cases.

For a long time there has been a point of view on the Goldfields that a home should be provided where these people could receive some attention. The pension rates are more liberal than they were some years ago and I am sure a number of these people when sick could make their pensions available and so a home should become largely self-supporting. It is a problem which is becoming more acute not only in our country but also in others and society will have to devise some means of coping with it.

I have a few other notes here but as they deal with topics which have been adequately traversed by other members during the course of their remarks I will not weary the House by referring to them. In conclusion, therefore, I heartily support the motion and in doing so I would congratulate you, Sir, on being in much better health this year than you were last session when you had us all extremely worried.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.17]: I wish to speak on one or two matters which are controversial, but, firstly, I join with other speakers in welcoming the new members who have been elected to this Chamber. I hope they will be happy here and will make some contributions to the good laws which I trust will be passed during their stay in the House. The question I want to speak on first is that of meat control, probably because it is controversial and because I generally pick a subject which is so. During my election campaign I quite openly stated that I, personally, would abolish meat control; I did not make any bones about it. I said I would abolish it because it was not workable and I believe that laws which do not work should be abolished.

I know the Government has been placed in a very awkward position. It has sought the best advice that was possible to obtain, which was not to decontrol the price of meat. However, that still does not alter my opinion. I do not think control of meat makes twopence worth of difference to the price of it. I sell quite a lot of cattle and know I am being paid many pence per lb. above its real value and controlled price. Therefore, the purchasers of it have to lose large sums of money or, alternatively, have to be dishonest. No man is willing to continue to lose money in the trade in which he is engaged, so many of them have to resort to subterfuge in order to carry on their industry.

Personally, I think it is much better to face up to the position and not to fool the people. Everybody knows the basic wage is based on the cost of living and those people who are on the basic wage are spending more on meat than their wage entitles them to pay. Meat is a commodity which I claim cannot be controlled. It can be rationed but it cannot be controlled because we have the stupid spectacle today of veal not being controlled but beef being controlled; lamb not being controlled but mutton being controlled. When does a lamb become a sheep for the purpose of meat, and when does veal become beef? A beast of 200lb. is beef, but a beast of 199lb. dressed is veal.

This week one farmer told me that he sold two animals dressed, one weighing 213lb. and the other 197lb. They were sold on the meat market and not on the

livestock market, and so were subject to inspection. For the animal that weighed 213lb.—I might state that they were prime baby beef both straight from their mothers and therefore of the highest quality—he received £8 10s. because it was beef, but for the one weighing 197lb. he received £12 10s. The one was classed as veal and the other as beef. I now ask this House: Would the one that weighed 213 lb. be sold over the counter as beef and the one that weighed 197lb. be sold as veal? It is too stupid and therefore control is just not working. At what stage does a lamb, for the purposes of sale as meat, become mutton? Lamb is not controlled and is bringing 1s. 8d. and 1s. 9d. a lb. on the hoof. The controlled price of mutton is about half that. Consequently, we have grown sheep sold as lamb and the people are being fooled.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They are being robbed, too.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It cannot be helped. What is the solution? Personally, I think the only real solution is to decontrol meat and allow wages that are based on the cost of living to go to their right figure.

Hon. G. Bennetts: On the Goldfields they advertise that only lamb is available now.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member means that they are calling it lamb. Let me tell members another story and there are hundreds similar. This story is true. The wife of a senior executive in one of the stock firms, who knows all the butchers, last week entered a shop and bought a piece of meat. When she arrived home she thought it appeared lighter than it should be. She had bought, say, 6lb. of meat. Because it looked light she decided to weigh it. It weighed 5lb. and she was a bit hostile.

She rang up the butcher and said, "This morning I was in your shop and bought 6lb. of meat but now I find, on weighing it, that it only weighs 5lb.; that is not good enough." The butcher replied, "Mrs. So and So, I cannot discuss the matter with you over the phone but I know your husband quite well and will see him about it," and he did so. He said to the husband, "Your wife rang me about some meat that she bought from me," and the husband replied "Yes, I know, and she is a bit hostile about it." The butcher then replied, "The position is that if she is going to question the weight of the meat which she buys from me, will you ask her to go somewhere else to buy it?" Mr. Mathea also is aware of the position because he has had some of these experiences himself.

Difficult as the position is for the Government, I personally would face up to it and say, "Well, as we cannot control it, let us do the next best thing; let it

go and decontrol it." I know the Government is in an extremely awkward position, but I do not think it ever pays—and I have had a lot of experience—to thrust aside difficult questions. It always pays to face up to them and arrive at some decision, even if one makes a mistake.

The other matter I wish to deal with is milk. Dr. Hislop has talked very intelligently about it. The Commonwealth Government, in its wisdom, has decided that all schoolchildren under 13 years of age shall be supplied with one-third of a pint of milk free each school day. That is quite a desirable intention. However, in Western Australia it would be much better to ascertain where this large quantity of milk is coming from in the summertime. Members know how difficult the position became last summer and we now have a fast-growing population. This State is one of the peculiar countries of the world inasmuch as it has a tremendous winter rainfall in the dairying districts and a complete drought in the summertime.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We have some good irrigated country.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but we have climatic conditions which are entirely foreign to the production of milk. Milk cannot be produced under dry feed conditions except in special circumstances of feeding with concentrates and in other ways by which one can always produce a limited quantity. That position is becoming aggravated as our population increases and those areas which turn from the production of butterfat and cheese to wholemilk will have a serious effect on the butterfat position.

The Government in this State, probably more than in any other part of Australia, could do the greatest and best possible work by conserving every gallon of water that is possible. Only by the irrigating of pastures and the provision of green fodder will we be able to provide an adequate supply of milk in the summertime. The position is becoming more acute every year. Even with irrigated pastures, cows will not produce the same amount of milk in summer as they will in winter. Nature makes it repugnant for them to produce milk in hot weather. They will dry off very quickly in hot weather whether they have green feed or not. In the winter and spring their production is much better than in summer.

Moreover, grass in the springtime has more protein value than it has in the summertime and is more conducive to the production of large quantities of milk. What ought to be done is that we should make every effort to find a substitute for milk. Of course, I am a layman and I may be talking rubbish, but I do not believe that milk is essential to the human body.

It is not a natural food. A calf or a foal is weaned when a few months old and never tastes milk again. I cannot believe that milk is essential to the human body.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Commonwealth scheme is to provide milk for children up to 13 years of age, just as milk is provided for a calf or foal up to a certain age.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, up to six months.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That represents a quarter of its growth.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Normally a child is weaned at the age of eight or nine months. I repeat that milk is not a natural food and I do not believe it is essential for human beings. I feel convinced that research would indicate other foods which could be provided for children and which would give just as good results as milk does. Of course, milk is a complete food in itself and therefore is an easy food, but it is a dangerous food unless it is clean and pure and is kept cool. Amongst native populations in tropical countries where lots of vegetables, nuts, etc., are eaten, the children grow as well. Look at some of the African tribes; those people are strong and healthy.

In Western Australia, the production of milk in the summertime presents a very difficult problem, and when we get a population of a million people, I do not know how we shall be able to find in summertime adequate milk supplies for the whole of the population. In countries with a hot climate, efforts should be made to find a substitute. I believe also that we should endeavour to supply the milk not in liquid form. If I were living on the Goldfields, I would not give my children liquid milk because I would know that it was not fresh. It would have come from the South-West, been kept hanging about and then been transported to the Goldfields, and sometimes would be days old before the consumer received it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about pasteurised milk?

Hon. L. CRAIG: If pasteurised milk becomes heated, it is much more dangerous than fresh milk. In those cases where it is necessary to supply milk for children who are not properly fed, I believe they should be given milk in powdered form.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Commonwealth is recommending the use of powdered milk where fresh milk is not available.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But even where fresh milk is available, powdered milk should be used because it is safer and easier.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: And it would be skimmed most of the time.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Skim milk is richer in proteins, which are the essential parts of the milk, than is fresh milk. When separated milk is used—milk with the fats taken out—the fats can be replaced. These matters I have been mentioning are vital and I believe we can do something about them. It is just a matter of our giving some attention to the problem. I doubt whether we shall be able to provide all the milk required next summer. If we experience a dry summer like the last one, I am certain we shall not be able to provide all the milk required, whether powdered or fresh. It is all very well to make plans for the distribution of free milk to children, but if the milk is not available, of what use are the plans? Every effort should be made to find a substitute, which I believe could be done.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about Nestle's milk?

Hon. L. CRAIG: That firm cannot get the quantity of milk it requires. I cannot see how, with an increasing population, we shall be able to provide the large quantities of milk that will be needed.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think labour conditions constitute one of the problems. It is a seven-days-a-week industry.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Some people like it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Very few.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is not the point. I do not think we have sufficient country available to produce large quantities of milk in the summertime. The third question with which I wish to deal is that of country roads and I am speaking as the chairman of a road board. With the heavy carting that is taking place on country roads by vehicles with weights up to 12 tons and more, our roads are being chopped to pieces.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: The road to Bunbury is not too bad.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is a main road and it is a good road.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Are you referring to gravel roads?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, the roads maintained by road boards. Some of them have a bitumen surface, but with 12-ton loads going over them, the bitumen is being pressed into the surface and road boards will not have anything like enough revenue to maintain the roads, culverts and bridges that these visiting trucks with their tremendous weights are damaging. The only solution, to my mind, is that the Commonwealth should make available to country road boards, not a small sum, but ever so much more money for the construction and maintenance of roads that will be able to stand up to this heavy traffic. I sometimes wonder whether such heavy vehicles should not be taken off the

roads. I am not exaggerating when I say that we could spend £200 or £300 on a small stretch of road and that, if heavy loads of timber, bricks or stone were carted over it, it would be in worse condition at the end of a month than before. Hundreds of pounds of the revenue of small road boards is being lost in this way.

My board is in the position of having had six miles of bitumen-surfaced road constructed by the Government and handed over to it, and I suppose that section is used more than ever before. It is the strip from Waterloo through Dardanup and onwards, and is used as a main road, though it is not a main road. There has been very heavy cartage on that road in the last few months, and we have no more chance of maintaining it than we have of flying over the moon.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Why did your board take it over?

Hon. L. CRAIG: We had no choice in the matter; it was handed over to us and we were told we had to maintain it. Now it is crumbling to pieces. All our culverts are breaking down as a result of the visiting trucks carrying 12-ton loads using that road. I stress that boards will not be in a position to keep such roads in order. We are doing our level best, but I consider that the State Government should point out to the Commonwealth that if country roads are to be maintained—and heavy loads seem to be the order of the day—much more substantial grants will have to be made, not only for developmental roads but also for other roads.

I should not like members to think that I am cavilling at the Commonwealth grant for developmental roads. That is a splendid gesture and is being availed of by many boards to open up new roads. But it is essential that money should be made available in large sums for the maintenance and improvement of existing roads in country areas, not for the sole benefit of the people living in those parts, but to provide for the very heavy loads passing over them in trucks which are not licensed in the road district.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There are plenty of them, too.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. I cannot see what solution there can be to the problem unless a substantial sum of money is made available from outside for this work. It will also be necessary to provide the local authorities with heavy plant. To make a serviceable road today is impossible without having thousands of pounds worth of plant.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Many road boards have not the plant.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is so; nor have they the money to buy it. We have reached an era of heavy transport that country roads are unable to stand up to, and I see no solution except the provision of large sums of money for their maintenance. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. W. R. Hall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.41 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 23rd August, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL.

As to Patient's Belongings.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is she aware that on the 10th March last a patient named Mohr was admitted to Royal Perth Hospital, and that on the day of his discharge he reported to the C.I.B. that certain of his belongings were missing?

(2) Does she know that at the time of admission entries were made in the property book which were signed by the admitting orderly, the ward sister and the patient himself as being correct?

(3) Is she aware that on discharge the patient signed the book as having correctly had returned to him the articles mentioned in the property book?

(4) Is she aware, further, that following the patient's report to the C.I.B., inquiries were made of three orderlies, their persons and domiciles being subjected to a search without search warrants being produced, although with the consent of the three persons concerned?

(5) Does this not indicate that there is no proper protection for the staff against mistaken or malicious allegations?

(6) What does she intend to do about it?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2), (3) and (4) I have been so informed.

(5) No. The system has been carefully reviewed and found to be satisfactory. In this instance, the property alleged lost had never been in the possession of the hospital.

(6) No action is necessary. No-one can be prevented from lodging complaints with the police, and the orderlies have the same protection against wrongful accusations as every other member of the community.

ELECTORAL.

As to Boulder Postal Vote Officer.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Attorney General:

What was the reason for the removal of Mr. William Joseph Kenneally of 102 Forrest-street, Boulder (where he and his wife and family have resided for many years), from the list of postal vote officers?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

Control of appointments of postal vote officers is in the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer.

I am informed that with the introduction of absentee voting at the last election the same number of postal vote officers as previously in some districts was not required. Mr. Kenneally was a resident of the Boulder district where there was no contest. It was considered his services, amongst a number of other postal vote officers, were no longer required.