

of his own, even though it be not to the full extent desired, it is something far better than many thousands of people are experiencing at present, and have been for many years. I do not intend to weary members with examples of conditions under which people are living.

Finally, I might suggest to the Minister that some efforts be made to police more strictly the provisions of the Act and the controls that are in force. There are breaches of the controls taking place at present, I suppose, in every part of the city. They seem to be apparent to just about everybody except the responsible department. Owing to the alteration in system at the State Housing Commission, and as a good deal of tedious work has been overcome, surely some of the staff, which has built up from 130 three years ago to over 300 at present, could be detailed to the task of keeping a closer watch on the building operations that are in progress. I can assure the Minister there are very many breaches taking place.

I realise that I have spoken at some length on this all-important question of housing. Perhaps I might close on the note that this whole problem should, under no circumstances, be treated on a party political basis. There are occasions when we do hurl bouquets with bricks concealed therein at one another, but there are times and occasions when, even though it be the responsibility of the Government, we should endeavour to pool our ideas with the object of assisting those many people, young and old, who are in distress. I repeat that the number of persons on the books of the Housing Commission on every occasion that I ask a question—and I have done so repeatedly—is increasing. In other words, the position is getting progressively worse.

There are many houses, I should say thousands of them—and the member for Victoria Park and others who serve on local governing bodies can confirm the fact—that should be condemned or demolished, but those bodies have not the heart at the moment to issue demolition orders. They realise that a roof of some sort is far better than for a whole family to be huddled together on somebody's back verandah which is cold and draughty and has no amenities and, because of several families living in the same premises, ultimately and inevitably friction is caused. This is a most serious matter and I trust that the Minister, who is new in his office, will endeavour to have a number of improvements effected and a number of radical changes made. If we are to proceed with this idea that there must be a perfect house for each applicant, then this problem will be with us forever and a day. Something has to be done meanwhile and even if it means importing materials, or complete components of houses, or

materials unknown to Western Australia so far as home construction is concerned, it would be preferable. Even if the cost be considerably more than the erection of houses in the ordinary way, that should be passed by the Government. Costs will catch up to these increased costs before very long.

Even if the experts suggest that aluminium houses, or those constructed of fibres or plastics may not be completely suitable to the climatic conditions of Western Australia—in which respect I am inclined to agree—I again say it is not a question of that type of house as against a modern dwelling as we know it, but it is a question of that type of house as against the shocking and miserable conditions under which people are living at present. I trust that the Government will give serious consideration to the points I have submitted not only in respect of housing—which I might say transcends everything else—but also to the two other matters I mentioned earlier in my address.

On motion by Mr. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 7th September, 1950.

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

STANDING ORDER SUSPENSION.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move, without notice—

That Standing Order No. 15 be suspended so as to enable the motion standing in the name of Hon. J. G. Hislop to be taken before the resumption of the debate on the Address-in-reply.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: There being no dissentient voice, I declare the motion carried by an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

**MOTION—COMMONWEALTH
HOSPITAL SCHEME.**

*As to Effect on Hospital Benefits
Act—Negatived.*

Debate resumed from the 24th August on the following motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop:—

That this House requests the Government not to commit the State on any agreement with the Commonwealth Government or its Ministers which involves changes either in finance or in principle in relation to the Hospital Benefits Act until both Houses of this Parliament have been given the opportunity of discussing such proposed agreement.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [4.38]: In giving the House the views of the Government upon the motion submitted by Dr. Hislop, I first wish to state that the Government does not object to the acceptance by the House of the motion. Dr. Hislop's remarks were most interesting and the Government agrees with many of his conclusions.

The operation of the Commonwealth Hospital Benefits plan has reacted greatly to the financial disadvantage of the States by imposing upon them ever-increasing burdens of financial cost, which have been met by the Commonwealth only to the extent of an increase in hospital benefits payments from 6s. to 8s. Since the basic years upon which hospital benefits were calculated, the cost of maintaining a patient in hospital has increased from 15s. 3d. in 1943-44, to 29s. 4d. in 1948-49. This increase, which amounts to virtually 100 per cent., has been subsidised only by an increase in hospital benefits of 2s.

The abolition of a means test has had the effect of encouraging the transfer of patients from paying beds to non-paying beds to a marked degree. The whole of the cost of this transfer is borne by the State, which secures a return of 8s. only for each bed, instead of the normal fee, plus 8s. The Commonwealth Minister for Health recently suggested that the means test should be re-established to a substantial extent and be applied to all admissions to hospital. This would involve amendment to the Act in each State, as these measures provide for the abolition of the means test. The States have declined unanimously to make such amendments in the terms submitted by the Commonwealth. As I have said the Government has no objection to the acceptance by this House of the hon. member's motion.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan— in reply [4.41]: Again I must commend the Minister's action and I would leave

the question to the House because I have no desire to embarrass the Government. However, in view of the Government's decision that the House shall discuss this matter, it would be only just of me to ask leave to withdraw my motion and accept the Government's promise to go on with the matter.

Hon. G. Fraser: No, go on with the motion.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I will leave the decision to the House. If it is the wish that the motion should be discussed, I am quite willing to abide by it. However, I feel somewhat at a loss because I believe that the generous act of the Government in saying that it will do that which it has been asked is something to which I must pay heed. I therefore think it would only be just to ask leave of the House to withdraw the motion.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.43]: On a point of explanation, Mr. President, I did not speak to this motion in view of its acceptance by the House, but if the House now agrees to its withdrawal, I shall be placed at a great disadvantage because my position is now greatly altered.

The PRESIDENT: If there is any dissentient voice against the request for leave to withdraw the motion, the mover must go on with it. I will put the request to the House.

Leave refused.

The PRESIDENT: As leave has been refused, I presume that Mr. Fraser wishes to speak to the motion.

Hon. G. FRASER: No; I wanted the debate on the motion to continue so that I would have an opportunity of replying to any of the remarks.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	.....	.....	.....	9
Noes	.....	.....	.....	.....	9
A tie	.....	.....	.....	.....	0
					—

Ayes.

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. J. G. Hislop	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. E. Hearn	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. H. L. Roche	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. C. H. Simpson	(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: The numbers being equal, I give my vote in favour of the noes.

Question thus negatived; the motion defeated.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Twelfth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. R. M. FORREST (North) [4.45]: First of all I should like to congratulate Mr. Simpson on his being elevated to Cabinet rank and appointed in charge of three portfolios, and I hope that in the near future I shall have the pleasure of interviewing him on matters of road transport and mining. I join with other speakers in congratulating and welcoming the new members to this Chamber. It is very pleasing to see amongst them the sons of two former members who played such a prominent part in the welfare of the State. Mr. Strickland I have known for a number of years. I think it was in 1920 he was working in a shearing shed on the Ashburton River, and in those days he was a very good amateur jockey, but I must say that he was then a good deal lighter than he is now. I have pleasure in congratulating him upon having been elected as a representative of North Province.

I wish to refer to a few matters affecting the North-West. The first is shipping. As members know, shipping is more vital to the northern part of Australia than to any other part of the coast. It is generally conceded that the present shipping service on the North-West coast is entirely inadequate to meet the needs of the residents. I am aware of the Government's plan to replace the "Dulverton," the charter of which, I understand, will expire towards the end of this year, with a new vessel named the "Dongara." Though the "Dongara" will have the advantage of being fitted to carry cattle, it will afford little if any relief in regard to the volume of general cargo to be handled.

I sincerely hope that the Government will take timely measures to ensure that the North-West people are not deprived of the services of the "Dulverton" before the "Dongara" is available to take up the running on the coast. Should such an event unfortunately occur it will, coming with the absence of the "Koolinda" in Melbourne for dry-docking, create a chaotic position in the shipping problems of the North and cause considerable inconvenience, if not great hardship, to the residents of that area. When the "Koolinda" last went to Melbourne for docking, instead of being away for two months, as was anticipated, she remained there for more than six months undergoing a major overhaul. We hope that will not be repeated this year.

A practical and commonsense approach to the shipping problem would be for the Singapore line of steamers to take part in the trading along the North-West coast. At the present time, the only occasions when those steamers call at our ports is when a request is made by the Government for relief because of some trouble with its own ships. The necessary permit to operate should be a continuous one for

a period of years, and frequent applications for renewal should not be required. Shipping time-tables must, of necessity, be adhered to, and made well in advance. Furthermore, regard must be had in the preparation of shipping schedules to the ships falling in with the tides. I strongly urge the Government to instruct the manager of the State Shipping Service to co-operate with the management of the Singapore line of steamers with a view to affording the North-West coast the best possible service by the use of the vessels of both lines.

Another matter requiring urgent attention by the Government is that of the dredging of the channel at Carnarvon harbour. Due to the silting up of the channel, ships proceeding oversea cannot call there, and we have the uneconomic and time-wasting spectacle of vessels proceeding from Fremantle to Carnarvon, to pick up freight, and then returning to Geraldton to top up because of insufficient depth of water at Carnarvon. There should be no occasion for that, as it is an absolute waste, and it means that stock which may be going to Singapore must be some days longer on board ship than it should be. As the Government has purchased a new dredge for use in the southern harbours, I urge that an investigation be made of the possibility of first using it on the urgent job at Carnarvon. Something has to be done with that harbour because it is gradually silting up, and if it is neglected much longer, no ship will be able to call there.

I wish to say something about the operations of Air Beef Pty. Ltd. at Glenroy. I was interested in what Mr. Strickland had to say on the subject, and also in the remarks of Mr. Dimmitt, who gave a good history of Air Beef Pty. Ltd. This company serves a number of stations in East Kimberley within a hundred miles of Glenroy. Those stations include Mount House, Gibb River, Fossil Downs, Mornington Tableland, and quite a number of smaller stations. Not only are there large stations in Kimberley, but quite a number that carry only 2,000 or 3,000 head of cattle, which are small numbers in those parts. The abattoirs at Glenroy are only in their infancy, and every encouragement must be given to those who had the foresight and initiative to start this venture. The Blythe brothers, the owners of Mount House station, are to be congratulated on what they did. Take Mount House station: Previously, the most cattle sent from there was 900 head per annum. This year, 1,800 cattle from Mount House were treated at Glenroy abattoirs, and they averaged 80 per cent. export quality. I guarantee that if Mount House had sent those bullocks to Wyndham, not half of them would have gone 70 per cent. The stock from Gibb River station, about 60 miles north-east of Glenroy by air, and 100 by road, averaged up to 92 per cent. export quality.

The first mob treated at Glenroy this year came from a southern station adjoining Glenroy, which consists of rough, inaccessible, mountainous country, and the cattle had not been mustered for over six years. The average age of the beasts was nine to 10 years, and some were up to 12 and 15 years of age. Not half of those bullocks would have withstood the arduous journey along the stockroute to Wyndham, a distance of 300 miles. Bad as those cattle were, 62 per cent. of a mob of 250 were of export quality. Also, 36 per cent. were banned and sold for small goods and only two per cent. were condemned because of T.B. and emaciation. The property obtained a net return of £6 per head. That is a struggling station and has been for many years. When I was at Glenroy last May I was impressed with the entire operation I witnessed. The day I was there three return trips were made to Wyndham and on each trip the plane carried 6 tons of beef. I saw the beef being loaded into the plane at Glenroy and unloaded at the airport at Wyndham. I saw the beef loaded into the covered vans at the airport and thence put into the freezers at the meatworks.

It is economically sound when one realises that the average weight of cattle that enter Wyndham meatworks is about 540 lb. With these inland works, such as those at Glenroy, much younger beasts can be slaughtered. This means that we receive beef of a quality nearer to prime. It means that beasts can be killed up to three years old, but if beasts had to be driven for two or three hundred miles it would be foolish to put them on the road at less than four or five years of age. I happen to know a little about that because I send cattle down.

The experimental station on the Ord River is situated opposite the Ivanhoe homestead. I regret to say that I read in the paper yesterday that this homestead had been burnt down. That experimental station is proving that almost anything will grow in the area, provided water is available. Experiments are also being made with grasses, and therefore I hope it will not be long before the Government makes a start with the Ord River scheme. When that scheme eventuates the killing works at Wyndham should be operating for about eight or nine months of the year.

The iron ore deposit at Yampi Sound is of immense value to Australia. There are 30 million tons of ore in sight without looking for it at low tide and the B.H.P. Pty. Ltd. has expended 1½ million pounds there on developmental work. Up to last month no iron ore had been shipped but the company is hoping to make a start this month. Provided shipping is available, the company has plant for dealing with 1,000,000 tons per annum. To my mind the power station there could not be equalled anywhere in Australia and I do not suppose any em-

ployees are treated better than those at Cockatoo Island. With the loading arrangements the company can load ships at any tide, although there is a rise and fall of 30 feet. Koolan Island belongs to the State Government and Brasserts Ltd. I would like to know who Mr. Brassert is, but no-one seems to be able to tell me. All the information I can get is that he is a German. It is a pity that the Government could not enter into a contract with a firm like B.H.P. If that had been done we could have developed Koolan Island along the same lines as Cockatoo Island.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: If that were done W.A. would not get much out of it.

Hon. R. M. FORREST: I think it will be a long time before it is worked. Today Broome is coming into its own again. The population is increasing, but it is unfortunate that there are only 20 or 25 luggers operating from the port. I can remember the time when 320 boats were working in that area and 60 from Onslow. The meatworks at Broome are a great asset to the town and relieve the position in the West Kimberleys. Shipping is very limited and any stock that cannot be shipped from the West Kimberleys can be treated at the Broome meatworks. About 80 to 100 bullocks per day are killed there and the output this year, I understand, will be 8,500. That illustrates the value of these works to the West Kimberleys.

Great development is taking place at Wittenoom Gorge and a new town has sprung up in the last two years. At present the population is about 500, but it is anticipated that in twelve months' time the population will have increased to 1,000. Something like £8,000 has been expended there on developmental works and the company is shipping a considerable amount of blue asbestos away. A fine hotel called the Fortescue Hotel has been built by the company. This development is pleasing when one remembers that this country is 200 miles inland, on the tableland, from Roebourne. A thriving town has sprung up, and a doctor and hospital are badly needed at Wittenoom Gorge. At present the doctor has to come from Roebourne or Port Hedland, and I strongly recommend that a flying doctor be stationed at Wittenoom Gorge to serve Marble Bar and Nullagine—they are the three inland towns—and that other doctors be stationed at each of the ports on the coast.

One reads in the Press about a place called Babbage Island, but that does not convey much to most people. Members would be astounded at the development taking place on that island. I am not quite certain of the sum that has been expended there, but the authorities claim that it will be the most up-to-date whaling station in the world. They expect to catch about six whales per day and I have

been told that whales are worth £1,000 each. That, in itself, will be a boon to the Gascoyne district and this whaling station should be the means of bringing dollars into the country from oversea as I understand that most of the oil will be shipped to America.

For many years I have been advocating a thorough survey of the Gascoyne River to ascertain the quantity of water which is available there for growers. There are well over 100 growers on the river at present and unfortunately the river has not run this year. Whenever the Gascoyne River does not run, there is a shortage of water to some growers. Therefore I think it only right that the Government should make a survey to find out where the channels are. The plantations are a great asset to the State and something like £300,000 worth of produce is grown there on a few acres. About 600 cases per acre are produced and the growers receive £3 5s. per case. I understand that in Queensland the average per acre is 38 per cent. of that obtained on the Gascoyne. I am not sure, but I think it is the only place in the world where people are growing bananas artificially and commercially.

We can take our hats off to the late Mr. E. H. Angelo who proved, in 1911, that bananas could be grown on the banks of the Gascoyne River. He was the pioneer of that industry and the first man to export bananas from Carnarvon. Of course, scientific developments have improved the industry since then, but Mr. Angelo—the two brothers had a farm called Leura Farm—was the first man to send away bananas from Carnarvon.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Was that from Yankeetown?

Hon. R. M. FORREST: Yes, at Leura Farm. I was at Shark Bay recently. It is an isolated place because it is 200 miles from Carnarvon and 200 miles from Northampton. There is no aeroplane service to the bay and the people depend entirely on shipping, although they have road transport, by way of refrigerated trucks, which take a lot of fish to Geraldton. However, it is very difficult for the residents of Denham—that is at Shark Bay—to obtain accommodation on the "Kybra" which is the only passenger ship that calls there. The ship is generally full up before it reaches the port and to my mind priority should be given to the residents of the town.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Hear, hear!

Hon. R. M. FORREST: Invariably the residents must hire cars from Geraldton which cost £35 per car. They have to do that in order to catch the train, as shipping space is not available. As the "Kybra" is the only ship that does call there, I think the Shark Bay residents should have priority as regards the accommodation available.

I had the pleasure of accompanying the Grants Commission on its extensive tour through the North and far North, and I would like to thank the Premier for kindly inviting me to be one of the party. I am sure that what the Commission saw was an eye-opener. Unfortunately, however, I think we were too long on the "Koolinda." It was a three weeks' trip and we spent a fortnight on the boat. It would have been all right to travel by sea to Yampi, but I would have liked the Commission to have proceeded overland from Broome to Wyndham. They did travel overland from Wittenoom Gorge, a distance of some 200 miles, and some of the Commission went to the experimental station at Ivanhoe, 50 or 60 miles from Wyndham. They would have got a better idea of the roads in the North-West had they spent a little more time inland.

We must have better roads in the North-West because it depends entirely on road transport. It might be an ambitious scheme but I would like to see a road started and bituminised along the coastal highway from Northampton to Carnarvon as a start. I have heard people say that it would involve a large expenditure merely to deal with £250,000 worth of bananas, but that is not the point. Stock could also be brought down on that highway—not only a few hundred, but in their thousands. I cannot see how the North is to develop unless we have an up-to-date highway. As you know, Mr. President, the other highway is called the Great Northern-highway, which goes through Meekatharra and by-passes Marble Bar by six miles. This is unfortunate as I think there should be a main road through Marble Bar, which is about 115 miles from the coast. I should like to see a start made on that coastal highway because it would serve not only Carnarvon but also Onslow, Roebourne, Port Hedland and the inland stations.

There is a good deal of mining activity in the North today. I mentioned Yampi Sound and Wittenoom Gorge, but there is also a lot of lead mining going on outside Derby and Onslow and also on the Ashburton. Every encouragement must be given to these men who are suffering all sorts of disabilities. I have heard quite a lot about the disabilities of mining on the Eastern Goldfields, but they do not compare with those these men are suffering in the North-West. We also have a tantalite show at Wodgina, which is a very valuable asset to Australia and the British Empire.

We have heard a good deal about the shortage of meat. I should like to make a suggestion. A fact-finding committee should be appointed, consisting of members from both sides of the House. The importance of providing food should, I think, be regarded as above party politics, and no member or party should seek to exploit this problem for political purposes.

In conclusion I should like to say one or two words about soldier settlement. I consider that every returned soldier should have an equal priority. Such, however, is not the position. A young soldier who saved his money before going to the war, or has his own resources to establish himself on a farm becomes a No. 3 priority, which is worth nothing, whereas the soldiers for whom the Government is preparing these farms and for whom it is providing a house and everything else that is possible, are given a No. 1 priority. I think this is very unfair.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.22]: I should like to support previous speakers in expressing regret at the passing of the late Mr. Baxter. He had a unique record in the Parliament of this State and I know of no other member who represented a province for so long without on one occasion being opposed at an election. He was a keen debater and was very kindly disposed towards his fellow members. I was very grateful to him for having assisted me at the last election. I would also like to support the welcome accorded to new members. From their appearance they are very young, and I hope they will have a long and useful career in this House. I congratulate the Government on being returned to office. It has not increased its numbers, but I think the fact that the Government was returned goes to show that it has the confidence of the electors. I would, too, congratulate the Leader of the House, who has been elevated to Cabinet rank.

The other night I was sorry to hear criticism of the Agricultural Department. We have two Ministers—the Minister for Lands and the Honorary Minister for Agriculture—who are both Country Party members, and I feel sure they have done a very good job. In fact, I cannot recall when we had a Government that was more sympathetic towards the primary producers. The Honorary Minister for Agriculture has worked very hard for all sections. I would say that the shortage of veterinary officers—which seems to be one of the bones of contention—is not a new problem. It has been with us for many years, and to say that the Minister in charge of the department today is responsible for not sending out men when and where required, is altogether unfair. The services of such expert officers cannot be secured. This particular question is pretty involved.

I can remember some years ago when a young veterinary officer was appointed at Busselton. He was very well liked by the farmers and was doing a good job in the dairying industry. One day he noticed an opportunity to improve his position by going outside Western Australia and, after having given the matter consideration, he indicated that if he could get an increase in salary of £100 he would not

leave his job. I think that some inquiries were made, but it was found that, owing to the salary implications the Government could not increase this officer's remuneration. To do so would have had far-reaching consequences. The officer resigned and went away from Western Australia. That has been going on all the time.

Very largely, I think Western Australia is somewhat of a training school for places outside the State. That does not apply to veterinary officers only for the same can be said about our engineers and our surveyors. The departments are very short of qualified men. Only recently I had an experience. I had a small subdivision of land of six quarter-acre blocks, which I desired to sell. A number of people wanted to buy them. It took about eight or nine months after the Town Planning Board had approved of the subdivision to get the Lands Survey Department to check it before the transfers could be put through. This is no fault of the department. There is a very competent man in charge of the department and the officers are working hard. It is just a question of shortage of staff. The Agricultural Department is not the only department feeling the pinch.

The time is coming when the Government will have to find ways and means of paying these men well. It seems that just when they become valuable to this State and have had a full training which is very necessary in this work, they are sought after and go elsewhere. We must face up to it sooner or later or we shall continue to lose trained staff. In the Press only recently the case was reported of one of the senior departmental officers going away to take a very good job elsewhere. I do not know how the departments are to get officers to take the places of those who are leaving. They cannot put a man on a job one day and hope that he will be all right and capable of doing the work straight away. The man must have adequate training so that when he becomes qualified he will be an asset to the State. We must do something to retain the services of our trained experts.

A lot has been said about s.p. betting. Mr. Logan complained about a fortnight ago of the Government's inaction in not doing something to stop the practice. He said that one move was made to license betting shops but the hotel keepers stepped in and put a stop to it, because they were afraid that the licensing of shops would interfere with the patronage of their hotels. I do not think there was any ground at all for that conclusion, because I know that hotel keepers have notices posted up warning people against betting on their premises. They do not encourage that sort of thing. I am not interested in the trade, but I know that a lot of good people are conducting hotels

and are doing their best to conduct them decently. To say that they are responsible for preventing the Government from licensing betting shops is altogether wrong.

I was going to discuss the meat problem, but I do not know that I can add to what has already been said, except that I think we would have been just as well off if meat had been de-controlled. People cannot tell me that butchers are going to the saleyards prepared to pay £30 to £35 a head for cattle and then sell them at a loss, week in and week out. In some way or other they are getting a price to cover their costs, and I think it will be found that in the long run the people are paying. It may look all right on paper to say that meat is controlled and that people have to pay only 1s. 6d. per lb. for chops, but butchers are not so silly as to continue to buy and sell at a loss. They would rather close down.

From what I have been told by reliable men, I know that they generally charge sufficient to cover the cost. Control has caused a good deal of trouble in many directions and it would be far better lifted. I do not think that consumers would pay a penny more for their meat. I know that it may be said to the Government that if control was lifted there would be a hue and cry on the part of a section of the people for an increase in the basic wage. That would place the Government in a difficult position. It would mean a tremendous expenditure all round. But I would like to ask whether, if the price, were lowered 25 or 30 per cent. tomorrow, would there be a decrease in the basic wage? Of course there would not! Generally speaking, the basic wage is fixed to allow a margin for temporary increases in the cost of living.

Hon. G. Fraser: When did that start?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: It might be said that when vegetables rise in price by 200 or 300 per cent. that is the time to ask for an increase in the basic wage. But that is not thought of. Yet, because meat goes up 1d. or 2d. per lb., there is a threat that there will be an application for an increase in the basic wage. I do not think there is much in that argument, but if control were lifted it would be the means of creating better trade arrangements; it would give people a better opportunity to do fair business; it would eliminate black marketing; and the consumers would be just as well off.

I come to another question, about which I do not know that much can be done. A move was made some years ago to try to prevent the slaughter of heifer calves. We know that the Government's policy for settling the land is a far-reaching one. The Government must look ahead to find ways and means of stocking farms in time to come, and every effort should be made to prevent the slaughter of the heifer calves so that the necessary cattle will be

available for breeding purposes. A whole-sale dairyman told me the other day that he destroyed approximately 50 calves a year.

This is done because, with the high price of whole-milk, farmers cannot afford to supply the calves with this food, and in some cases the animals are knocked on the head the day they are born. This means a very great loss. Some years ago there was a suggestion that the Government should subsidise the growers to the extent of about £3 a head to enable them to feed the animals, because concentrates cost a lot of money. Probably they could not be obtained, and in that case it would be impossible to do anything about this matter. I raise the question, however, because I think it should be kept in mind, and it would be a good thing if some arrangement could be made to prevent the destruction of such valuable stock.

I am afraid the Federal authorities did not go to very much trouble to find out what the position was when they decided to make free milk available to school children. They certainly did not know much about the situation in Western Australia. I think most of us are aware that it is impossible to supply free milk to the children of this State unless we deprive other people of what they are getting. I do not think that parents have been able to obtain all the milk they would like to buy; and if the Government is going to take away from what they are getting in order to supply children at school with milk, then those children will receive less at home.

The Commonwealth Government has adopted a pretty lax way of going about this matter and I cannot see how it is going to work out. To my way of thinking our milk supply is in a very bad position. It is deplorable that a member representing Kalgoorlie should have to come here and say that steps are being taken to try to obtain supplies of milk from South Australia because they are unobtainable in this State, especially when we know that enough milk can be produced between Perth and Bunbury to supply the whole State. There is no question about that.

While the Goldfields people are trying to make arrangements to obtain milk from South Australia, we are expected to provide supplies for school children in this State. It is just too silly, and something should be done to ascertain what supplies will be available before any attempt is made to implement the scheme. With regard to increased production, there are large areas of land nearby that could be used for that purpose if put under irrigation. Irrigation is the principal key to the problem, because it is in the dry seasons that we need the extra milk. Then occurs a greater shortage than at any other time.

In this respect I would refer to the Serpentine River, which is a wonderful catchment area. That district has been surveyed, and it has been admitted by the Government to be an excellent place for impounding water. For some years the people of that district have tried to have an irrigation scheme established. In the past I have taken several deputations to the Minister for Works and we have made efforts over and over again to have something done. I remember that on one occasion we waited on the late Mr. Alex McCallum when he was Minister for Works. He told the deputation emphatically that the Government would not agree to allowing the Serpentine to be used by the farmers, because it had been earmarked for use by people in the metropolitan area. I understood from what he said then that by this time that water would be impounded and sent to Perth for use here. Of course that has not eventuated because the construction of the Canning Dam has helped to augment the supply for Perth. So nothing has been done with the Serpentine.

I think it is only fair that steps should be taken to obtain water for the metropolitan area from other sources. Suppose the Serpentine were used to supply the metropolitan area: It would not suffice for all time, because the population of the city is only a drop in the ocean compared with what it will be in 50 years' time. Surely it will be 20 or 30 times larger in a very few years. Consequently steps should be taken to obtain water from some other source and allow the Serpentine, which is naturally situated for the purpose, to be used for irrigation. I am satisfied that the use of that one river alone would lead to the production of thousands of gallons of milk as well as other dairy produce. It is right at the back door of Perth, only a few miles away.

Further down there is the North Dandalup River. I do not know that that is not a better stream than the Serpentine. There is a magnificent area for impounding water. It is 10 miles this side of Pinjarra which itself is only about 54 miles from Perth. All along the railway in this area there is first-class land which, to the eye, appears to be fairly level and thus eminently suitable for grazing and irrigation purposes. Some members may have noticed reference in the paper to the sale of a block of land in that region which brought £45,000, a huge price. That is really a dry farm. What would it be worth if it were irrigated? I think it has been suggested that the Government should resume that land for soldier settlement. If this is going to be done, why not harness the river and use its water? My idea is that we should plan ahead and that something along the lines I have suggested should be done, so that the best

possible use can be made of this country and a large population can be established in a small area.

The streams I have mentioned are not the only ones available, but they are adjacent to the metropolitan area and flow through good land. I would harness not only those two rivers, however, but every stream further down. The tragedy is that millions of gallons of water run to the sea in winter from these streams which, if they were properly utilised, could be the means of irrigating thousands of acres of dry land in the summer. I hope that an effort will be made to look elsewhere for water for the metropolitan area. I had it put to me by an officer who knew something about the matter that the Avon Valley was the place to which to look for water for the City of Perth. That valley has a larger catchment area than any of which I have spoken.

It was contended that the Avon Valley could not be used for water conservation purposes because the broad gauge railway line would run along the bed of the valley. I would take that line over the top of the hills, or I would try to do so. I would certainly endeavour to find some way out so that the valley could be utilised for water conservation. It is most important to have adequate water supplies. If we cannot get bore water, we cannot obtain supplies from near the surface, unless the area is dammed and the water conserved in that way. I do not know how we are going to encourage a greater population unless people are supplied with water in that manner.

Some discussion has taken place with regard to the coastal land between Mandurah and Bunbury. I know that country well and have good reason for believing that it is capable of producing a large quantity of wholemilk and other dairy products. Unfortunately it is inaccessible, being cut off from the railway by 20-odd miles of the Mandurah estuary. Further down there is the Harvey River and, from there on, a lot of swampy country. To reach that area one has to cross the river at Mandurah. The road is not very good for the first few miles and at certain times in the year part of it is practically impassable.

If that district is to be opened up a new bridge will have to be built at Mandurah. It would be over 600ft. long, including the approaches, in order to span the river there. After the bridge is built the worst sections of the road will have to be made usable. Miles of the coast road are quite good and I believe that if some work was done on it many more people would travel by that route. They would see the country, which would advertise itself and I am sure many of them would take up farms there, even in the absence of a bitumen road. There are one or two sandhills over which the road would have to be surfaced in order to make

it fit for car traffic, but if that were done I think people would settle in that area, thus saving the Government the necessity of spending a lot of money in other directions in order to develop the land.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I have been over that road in its present state.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Then the Honorary Minister will agree that much of the road could be used, even in its present condition. I would not ask that the whole of the road be bituminised, as that is out of the question. It has been my experience that many people say "You are a member of Parliament. You should be able to do this or that," but they do not know much about parliamentary procedure or what members have sometimes to do in order to get things done. Over the years I have found that though some most important recommendations and suggestions have been made by members in this Chamber no notice has been taken of them. I have heard it said that if one is not a member of Cabinet, one is not in the race at all. I would not like to say that about the present Cabinet, which has treated me very well, but I know that over the years I have listened to some very informative debates in this House and have heard some fine suggestions put forward by members of various parties, but nothing has been done to implement them. It would almost seem that unless those in authority can claim such ideas as their own, they will not give the credit to anyone else and, consequently, say that the suggestions are valueless.

At a conference held at Collie many years ago by the South-West Road Board Association it was decided to recommend to the Government that the auditing of accounts of local authorities should be done on a zoning system. At that time there was a lot of trouble due to the lack of effective audits. Some secretaries used to get down on the cash. It will be remembered that on one occasion a considerable deficiency was discovered at Fremantle. All that was due to the Government Auditor going round only once a year, and perhaps not even as often as that. Local authorities used to appoint local men to the position of ratepayers' auditor. Such men were the best available, but were not necessarily qualified.

The suggestion was made that the State should be divided into zones and that auditors should be appointed for each zone and should do regular quarterly audits so as to keep the books of local authorities up to date. The local governing bodies were willing to pay their share of the expense involved under the proposed new system, but the scheme was declared to be no good and the idea was ridiculed. Later on the person mainly responsible for turning that suggestion down made a strong point—after he had left the public service—of patting himself on the back as

the originator of the zoning system, which was eventually introduced by the department. It is operating today in spite of the fact that when the South-West Road Board Association originally put the suggestion forward, it was said to be not worthy of consideration. It was only at a later date, when someone else claimed the idea as his own, that the suggestion was accepted and the scheme put into operation.

A matter which I have mentioned here on other occasions, and to which the Government should give serious consideration, is the spread of noxious weeds in this State. If we allow such weeds to take charge in our primary producing areas we shall be doing a great disservice to Western Australia. Many years ago it was reported that skeleton weed had been discovered on a farm in this State by an officer of the Department of Agriculture. Because it was thought to be impossible to eradicate that weed, the location of the farm where it had been discovered was kept secret because, if it was known generally to exist in a certain district it would cause land values there to depreciate. I expect that the weed is still present there, as it is said to be impossible to destroy it. Cape tulip, a deadly stock poison, is also present in this State. It is spreading and nothing is being done to prevent its doing so.

While I was connected with the road board at Pinjarra I discovered that weed near the saleyards there—four or five years ago—and the board took steps to have it grubbed out. Later it was discovered along the railway line, in the railway reserve, and a settler lost a valuable bull which had got through the wire fence on to railway property. I asked the Railway Department to take steps to eradicate the Cape tulip, which was spreading along the railway. The department informed me that it could do nothing in the matter, but would authorise the board to cut the fence and plough in the Cape tulip on railway property. I pointed out that the board could not do that because the railway land was covered with stumps and logs and the weed would have to be grubbed out.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: In any case, you could not spend your money on railway property.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That is so. This poisonous weed is still spreading and I believe the Murray Road Board is keeping it in mind. On one occasion, when motoring some six miles from Pinjarra, I saw two or three plants of this weed on the roadside and I stopped and grubbed them out. I understand that an officer of the Department of Agriculture has discovered Cape tulip at Bridgetown within a few chains of the road board office. Possibly the people there would not recognise Cape tulip if they saw it.

Recently, when at Marradong—a new part of the South-West Province—I was told by one of the leading farmers that there was very little Cape tulip in the district but that it was to be found on one farm a few miles away. He said that that farmer was cutting hay and selling chaff from the paddocks in which Cape tulip was growing. Surely something should be done to check that sort of thing. A little over two years ago I had an opportunity of inspecting some land in South Australia, by arrangement with the Department of Agriculture in that State. I inspected some of the irrigation area on the Murray River as well as some of the back country. The driver of the car in which I travelled was a man who knew those districts and when passing along through one area where the soil was of a dark red colour and where there were small granite outcrops I remarked that similar country had been regarded as some of the best grass-land along the ranges in this State before superphosphate came into general use.

The driver said that the country through which we were passing was splendid station country. I noted that it was carrying no stock and he said that because it was full of Cape tulip the owners had had to abandon it, as the rocky nature of the ground made it impossible to plough the weed out. There was an instance of some of the best grazing land in that area being rendered entirely useless by the spread of this weed. If we are to stop the spread of Cape tulip in this State it must be taken in hand in time. If it is left to individual local authorities to deal with the matter such weeds may not be recognised until they have obtained too great a grip on the areas concerned. This is a matter in which the Government should take immediate action.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Wait till you have seen the new noxious weeds legislation.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I hope that amending legislation will be introduced to deal with some of the aspects of the housing problem. I believe we are to have amendments brought down to at least some of the Acts relating to housing and building materials. I have received several complaints on this question, and an extract from one letter received only recently from a resident of the metropolitan area is as follows:—

I am the owner of the house at 209 Townshend-road, Subiaco, which is occupied by tenants—Mr. and Mrs. X. The house consists of three bedrooms, a sitting-room, dining-room, kitchen, etc. Only Mr. and Mrs. X. live there and to my knowledge two rooms are unfurnished and therefore unused. One room is also used as a workshop.

My wife and I have three children, aged ten, seven and five years, and a fourth is expected next January. At present we have absolutely no home. My wife and two of the children are in Kojonup, my son is boarding at Christchurch Grammar School, and I am living with my parents-in-law. It is completely wrong that such a young family should be separated, at a time when education and the guidance of parents is so important to the upbringing of children.

My tenants refuse to leave, as they claim protection under the Landlord and Tenant Act, because Mr. X is a pensioner from the 1914-1918 war. To my mind, such protection is fantastic and it is well time the Act was drastically altered. In a few weeks' time, the opportunity will arise for you and your fellow members to see to it that house-owners are enabled to gain possession of their own homes without having to go to court, and then be told that their tenants are protected and nothing can be done about it. From a moral aspect, I should walk into my own home tomorrow, but the law, as it stands today, says No.

I am being put to tremendous expense keeping myself and my family in three homes, while the rent I receive from my property is subject to income tax. I appeal to you to see that justice is done and that if there must be hardship, the tenants shoulder their share after five years of peace.

I have had similar complaints, and I know that this kind of thing has been going on for some time, which is most unjust. It is a dreadful thing that the Government does not do something about it. I would do anything to be fair to ex-servicemen, but I have discussed this matter with a number of them and they do not approve of the existing position. Therefore it is only right for the Government to act in the matter.

Because a man is a pensioner from the 1914-1918 war, I do not see why he should not make provision for himself. In the instance I have just quoted to the House, I consider it is most important that the owner should regain possession of his home. I know of an elderly lady, in a worse position than that man, who also can do nothing to regain possession of her property. It is high time the Government amended some of the laws and abolished the restrictions that are imposed today upon the rights of landlords and owners.

Reverting to the question of noxious weeds, I sincerely trust that something may be done to overcome this problem, because it is not only the Cape Tulip and the thistle that are aggravating the problem, and it is important to agriculture that steps should be taken to effect some

remedy. I congratulate the Government on the good work it is doing, and if it obtains the help and assistance from members of Parliament to which it is entitled, it will continue that good work. We are passing through an extremely difficult period mainly on account of the international position, and I therefore hope the Government will receive all the help possible from members of Parliament.

We have heard a great deal of criticism of the Government in this debate. We have been told that we are getting only 100 miles of bitumen road constructed a year. I could talk for half an hour on that subject, but the fact remains that although the Main Roads Department is doing an excellent job, it is a long way behind in its works programme, through no fault of its own. One of the main drawbacks is that it cannot get men, and those it does have will not work in outlying districts. Often, when it desires to do a job, it has to suspend one operation to proceed with another.

I know that has happened many times. When it was working on the 60-mile Bussell-highway between Busselton and Nannup, there was a request for some work to be done on a section of the Nannup-road, which was practically impassable, and, after pressure had been brought to bear, the department had to stop work on the Busselton highway to attend to the Nannup section. There was a terrible row about that, but what else could the department do? I have been told time and again by Mr. Young, the Commissioner of Main Roads, that in various districts he could have used one or two more gangs, but could not obtain them.

Then again, I have also been informed that in several instances, if it had not been for local labour being obtained, the work would not have been done because the men who are in the metropolitan area will not go to the country. Therefore, the department has only half the number of men which it requires at its disposal. It is simply a question of obtaining the proper facilities to carry out its work. It is all very well for members to put forward suggestions, but we must face the true position. I think it would have done members good if they had gone to the Eastern States and seen the effect of some of the industrial strikes there, especially the one affecting the metal trades and the iron and steel industries. They would then have had a better conception of all the difficulties which are confronting the Government. We talk about spiralling prices, but 50 per cent. of the trouble is due to lack of production. If no-one will work, how can we ever produce? I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7th September, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

ROADS.

As to Port Gregory and Balline Areas.

Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister for Works:

Will he approve of a grant of money to the Northampton Road Board for the purpose of constructing a road to Port Gregory and for the construction of roads in the Balline area, which would assist in opening up a large area of good farming land?

The MINISTER replied:

An allocation has been made on the 1950-1951 programme of works for the improvement of the road between Northampton and Port Gregory.

No allocation has been made for the construction of roads in the Balline area.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Additional Storage, Geraldton.

Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister for Water Supply:

Will he give an assurance that the provision of additional storage tanks for the Geraldton water supply will be commenced at an early date?