

percentage of total man hours worked to hours lost on account of strikes of only 5.8. In 1947-48 that percentage dropped to 2.5 and in 1948-49 it dropped further to 1.78—ample proof, I suggest, that all this talk about the men on the waterfront not working, is misleading.

It is quite evident from those figures, which were supplied by the Government Statistician, that the position is improving and in Fremantle, for the year ended the 30th June, 1950, the percentage of man hours lost through rain was 2.3, while the man hours lost through disputes was .7 per cent. That is further proof that lawlessness on the Fremantle wharves does not exist, even though the Press would make it appear otherwise.

Further, I wish to impress upon members of the Government that the federation does not condone, in any shape or form, and will not tolerate indiscipline on the waterfront to this extent: Every member who works on the waterfront has a working record card. If he commits any misdemeanour it is recorded on the card and he is brought before a select committee of the federation. If he should miss his morning tram, which is not an unusual occurrence in these days of unreliable transport, and on arriving at his place of pick-up happens to miss his number, he is penalised to the extent that he cannot offer himself for employment or receive it for 48 hours, which in these days means a fine of over £5 10s.

If such occurrences become frequent he has to face the select committee of which I speak, and I know from my experience that we have, for repeated offences, expelled members from the federation, which means that they are denied the right to work in any port in Australia. Many times we have suspended men for one month which, in effect, means a fine of approximately £60. That is a common occurrence and I could produce facts and figures for anyone who is interested. Members are fined £5 or £10 for misbehaviour. We call it misbehaviour if we are brought before the judiciary—I refer to the ordinary court—and it is possible that such a breach may be met with a fine of 10s. or £1.

I do not intend to speak at greater length on this question but I feel I should make a plea to members of the Government to try to ensure better relations between employers and employees and that the friendship existing between them is cemented. I wish now to refer to a case which appears in this evening's Press. These six men, in the first place, were prosecuted for attending a one-hour's meeting and, together with nine others, were fined £5.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Persecuted!

Mr. LAWRENCE: That was because they refused to do what the working class commonly calls "scabbing on their mates," which is an unpardonable crime among trade unionists. In fact, I suggest it is an

unpardonable crime for any citizen of our fair country to commit. The result of those prosecutions, which I suggest were provocative and intimidatory, was that whilst the State Government was approached to withdraw the summonses, or withdraw even some of them, it refused to take any action for the reason that they were not prosecutions by the Government but by the court. However, because the Government—if we take its word for it—did not have the power, the position has arisen that shipping may be completely tied up in the port of Fremantle because these tug crews have been prosecuted and have given a week's notice.

If we have any sort of bad weather, ships, especially the big passenger liners, will thus not be able to get into Fremantle and those that are already berthed will not be able to depart, which will be a severe blow to the economy of this State. I would therefore appeal to the Government to ensure at all times that better relations are maintained between the employers and the employees and that it will adopt a more lenient attitude towards the employees because, as I have attempted to prove by reference to certain happenings, the fault is not wholly that of the employee—I refer particularly to the waterside worker—that the slow turn-round of ships occurs and that friction arises between the parties concerned. I shall again deal with this question at a later date.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.47 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1951.

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

QUESTIONS.

WOOL.

As to Ship and Motor Freights from North-West.

Hon. F. R. WELSH (for Hon. R. M. Forrest) asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is the Minister aware that the present freight rates on wool shipped to Fremantle from North-West ports include surcharges totalling £1 11s. per bale, and that such freight rates represent increases on 1939 levels ranging from 450 per cent. in the case of Carnarvon, to 289 per cent. in the case of Derby?

(2) In view of the substantial fall in wool values since May last, when a freight surcharge of 16s. per bale was imposed, will the Minister indicate when he proposes to lift the surcharge?

(3) Is it a fact that it is cheaper to transport wool by motor truck from the Gascoyne district to Geraldton, then by train to Fremantle, than to transport it by the State Shipping Service from Carnarvon to Fremantle?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The matter is now under consideration.

(3) Yes, at present it is.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Refusal of Materials to Spec Builders.

Hon. G. FRASER asked the Minister for Transport:

Will the Minister supply the House with the particulars of the three instances where building materials have been refused to builders under the spec building scheme?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied:

It is felt that it would not be in the public interest to publish this information, but the hon member can see the files at the office of the Minister for Housing.

(b) As to Minimum Ceiling Heights for Sleepouts.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it intended that the Order-in-Council P.W. 235/41 gazetted on the 29th June, 1951, fixing the minimum ceiling height at not less than 9 feet for all rooms of a dwellinghouse shall also apply to sleepouts attached to a dwellinghouse?

(2) Will local authorities be permitted to apply by bylaw a ceiling height of less than 9 feet in respect to sleepouts?

(3) In view of the uniform general regulations fixing a minimum ceiling height of 9 feet for all rooms of a dwell-

inghouse, will this regulation override any local bylaw respecting ceiling heights of sleepouts?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied:

(1) Order-in-Council P.W. 235/41 and 435/44 is intended to apply to all rooms in a building used for dwelling purposes but is not intended to apply to sleepouts attached to a dwelling outside the main walls.

(2) Yes; provided such sleepouts are outside the main walls.

(3) Not if such sleepouts are outside the main walls, e.g. portion of a verandah enclosed for sleeping purposes.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [4.42]: In supporting the motion, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on the high honour conferred upon you. I would also like to congratulate the new Clerk of Parliaments and the new Usher of the Black Rod upon their promotion.

In the Speech of His Excellency the Administrator reference is made to rural industries as follows:—

The announcement that the Commonwealth will collaborate fully with the States on the urgent and important matter of food production and in promoting the stabilisation of our rural industries is welcomed by my advisers.

I, too, welcome the suggestion of full collaboration between the Commonwealth and the States, and I think that the whole House will welcome it. I hope, however, that it will be more than a suggestion, and that the proposal will not be discarded now that there has been talk of a tightening up of Commonwealth finances. The question is much too important to be allowed to lapse. The necessity for stabilising our rural industries is too urgent for the suggestion of full collaboration between the States and the Commonwealth to be permitted to go by the board on account of a shortage of money. It was noteworthy that the Premier pleaded for finance for public works, but I would have been very interested to see him stressing the necessity for finance to continue the development that is much needed in the outback areas of our great State.

In my view there has been much confused thinking and, worse still, much confused publicity with regard to the very serious position confronting the butterfat industry in the South-West. Over the last few weeks, some people have endeavoured to blame the Government for the serious situation that has arisen. Nothing could be worse, at this stage; because obviously they are endeavouring, purely and simply,

to make political capital out of something that is far too serious to be used as a political football. Very little has been said of the fact that some years ago, this industry placed itself wholly in the hands of the Commonwealth Dairy Produce Equalisation Committee. That makes it very difficult for this State, or any other State, to take unilateral action to obtain a higher price for butter.

In the first instance, three States co-operated to give the industry the benefit of the price that was to be fixed by the Joint Dairying Industry Advisory Committee but those three States did not produce sufficient butter to make the scheme workable. Now we find that a fourth State has joined the others. Even so, only 50 per cent. of the butter producers are concerned in the proposed scheme, with the result that money collected from the sale of butter in Western Australia will, from all appearances, go into the equalisation fund, and some of it will be paid out to New South Wales and Queensland to make up their quota.

Members of the advisory committee could have helped people in the country districts, and the public in Western Australia generally, to realise what butter producers are up against in this State had they, when these discussions were taking place, and prior to that time, told the people—and the butter producers in particular—that the reason why the latter are in such dire straits is that they have had to wait for the price increase that should have come forward on the 1st July. But even if the price increase is obtained, the costs in Western Australia are about 1s. per lb. higher than the average costs for the Commonwealth. That is not because we have bad dairy farmers in Western Australia; far from it. It is because the farms that are producing butter in the South-West of the State are "Mum-and-Dad" farms, and have not reached the requisite stage of production and have not the number of cows to make operations profitable. They have been handicapped right from the start.

In a survey of 20 farms in the South-West, it was found that 17 of the owners worked away from the farms as well as on them. That does not make for increased production or for economic management. But the fact remains that, in order to earn a livelihood, these folk had to go into industry at various times to make a weekly wage, and in addition had to work night and morning on their farms. While the cost of production in this industry in Western Australia remains approximately 1s. higher than it is in the rest of Australia, the salvation of the industry does not lie in the proposed and justified price increase alone. In my view, it depends on the sincerity of our Government in its efforts to secure the economic development of our dairy farms.

The Minister for Agriculture: Surely you do not doubt that!

Hon. J. MURRAY: The Minister questions whether I doubt it, but I intend to show that this House might have reason to doubt it. Of course, the Minister will not agree with that, but I think he must agree that the Government has not displayed any great sincerity towards this vital industry so far. Some weeks ago, the Premier issued a statement with regard to a £300,000 scheme to assist the industry. There is some merit in that scheme, but it is totally inadequate, as it will provide only £250 per farm. A further explanation published in the Press suggested that that money should be used to clean up those areas on existing farms where, through shortage of labour or some factor such as that, the pasture has become poor and out of condition. Apparently, the idea is to rehabilitate the present pasture, and nothing is to be allowed for new clearing, though new clearing is vital to the South-West generally.

Many dairy farmers are attempting to carry on with undeveloped holdings; and unless the Government comes to their assistance, the position will be hopeless, as these men have been living near the bread-line for too long to be able to pay out of their own pockets the cost of using the heavy tractors necessary for the work. The bulldozers and tractors required for the job will have to be made available to farmers on a purely cost basis, and not at a prohibitive figure. It is now suggested that a great deal of work can be done at a low rate which the Government intends to charge. I believe the rate is approximately £2 per hour, as that is the figure that was published and we must accept it. Private contractors charge up to £3 10s. per hour.

The Minister for Agriculture: Some private contractors charge £5 per hour.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It depends on the type of machine used. The bigger the machine, the more costly it is to run.

Hon. J. MURRAY: All the butterfat producing farms in the South-West should be brought up to the standard of the war service land settlement dairy farms which must be a workable proposition before they are handed over. They are brought up to the 33 or 40-cow stage before being allocated. At present, there are very few dairy farms in the South-West producing butterfat from more than 17 cows, and members will therefore realise the great deal of work that remains to be done. It is not sufficient for the Government to provide a sum of £250 per farm; and this scheme, involving a total of £300,000 does not, in my view, constitute an expression of sincerity towards the industry. The Government must do much more than that. The present scheme, as we know it, will simply amount to another case of "too little too late."

Some four years ago, the British Food Mission travelled throughout the Commonwealth; and while in this State, members of that mission said that the food production potential of the South-West and lower Great Southern promised unlimited scope for increased production in those areas. They expressed to the present Government the view that the easiest and best way of bringing about an immediate increase in the food supplies so badly needed by Great Britain and other countries was to go on with the development of the underdeveloped farms in the South-West and the lower Great Southern.

The Minister for Agriculture: They did not help us very much by providing tractors from England.

Hon. J. MURRAY: The Government itself did not help either. I have quoted the view of the British Ministry of Food. At that time, a co-operative company which is interested in this question put forward a suggestion which, if implemented, would have accomplished what the Government proposes now to do. In fact, it would have gone much further, using the money available from the British Ministry of Food. But the Government did not sponsor the scheme, because it originated from a private source. As I have said, that scheme was, in the main, just what the Government now proposes to do, except that it was on a larger scale and repayments of the finance involved were to have come from the butterfat cheques accruing from increased production on farms that are at present badly underdeveloped.

Both the British Food Mission and the co-operative company drew attention to the state of butterfat-producing and other dairy farms in the South-West. The present Government set up a South-West Zone Development Committee which took a great deal of evidence in the area concerned. That committee is composed of men serving in a voluntary capacity and receiving no remuneration and very little kudos. Despite that, they were keen and went to some lengths to get the facts and put them before the Government. Despite all that, we find, at the present time, that the scheme I have mentioned, involving a mere £300,000 to rehabilitate an industry that is dying on its feet, is the best the Government can do.

The Minister for Agriculture: What a pity!

Hon. J. MURRAY: The Minister did not realise the state of the butterfat industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, he did. He knows as much about it as you do.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I do not think he showed much concern about it.

The Minister for Agriculture: I got £300,000 as a result of a trip down there recently. I do not know what you have done. I hope you will be fair in this matter.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I come now to the question of timber production.

The Minister for Agriculture: You know something about that.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I know something about the butterfat question, also. His Excellency the Administrator said, in the course of his Speech, that new mills which are gradually commencing operations will overcome the present shortage of timber. I hope the Government's expectations in that regard will be realised; but, despite the size and number of the mills that are being built in the lower South-West, there is grave doubt whether we shall be able to get the manpower to work them, and we certainly shall not be able to obtain sufficient experienced key personnel, as they are just not available in the State at the present time.

I suggest that the Government should do something now to encourage the migration of people from the Scandinavian states. They have proved that there are no better workers in the timber industry than themselves. This Government should go all out to get as many of them as it can for this vital industry. At present all mills are understaffed and suffer from a lack not only of labourers but also of important key personnel who understand the various skilled jobs around the sawmill and in the bush. The average New Australian who is coming here now has no knowledge of the industry and has little interest in it. Some of them are manpowered and are committed to stay on a job for two years; and by the time they are trained at the end of that period, they just leave and create another gap in the ranks of the employees engaged in the industry. But these men from the Scandinavian countries, whenever they enter an industry of this description, remain there.

I am rather concerned to note that the Royal Commissioner who was appointed to inquire into forestry and relevant matters is now in the Eastern States and will be taking evidence in South Australia. That, of course, is necessary, because that State depends on Western Australia for its jarrah and karri requirements, if not for softwoods. However, from the dates published in the Press as to the sittings in South Australia, it would appear that there is every probability that the Commissioner will not have concluded the taking of evidence before this House rises, and members will have little opportunity of studying his findings.

In the main, all questions relating to sawmilling that are put to the Government are replied to in almost stereotyped fashion. What we shall probably discover, after the Royal Commissioner has concluded his

investigation, is that a statement will be issued as to his findings. However, I trust that the Government will not wait until the Commissioner has made his report but will do something in regard to the cutting of timber for fruit cases. Sawmillers have decided that it is unprofitable to mill timber for fruit cases. On the other hand, they cannot obtain the necessary skilled men to work the benches; and, until the new mill at Kent River is brought into production, there will be a distinct shortage of fruit cases throughout the South-West.

It should be possible for the Government to include in the special purpose mill permits a condition that permit holders should cut fruit cases. That would not only improve the position but would also save the wastage that is taking place in various parts of the State today. Some people might be inclined to say that the amount of timber wasted is inconsequential; but throughout the South-West these special purpose mills are cutting 8 ft. and 9 ft. sleeper lengths and they leave their timber ends in the bush. Those ends, measuring anything up to three or four feet, lie in the bush, and at some future time they might be used for firewood. However, if the special purpose permits compelled the sawmillers to set up a fruit-case bench, much of that timber could be saved and used to advantage.

I would also like to refer to timber on holdings that are being developed for land settlement throughout the State. In some instances—it might be in all instances—the Forests Department has retained rights over that timber and permits have been issued to sawmillers to remove what is marketable before the bulldozers clear it, such as has been done at Rocky Gully. But there seems to be some lack of co-operation between the land settlement organisation, the Forests Department and the sawmillers generally. The Rocky Gully timber, which is some 45 miles from Mt. Barker, was sold to a timber mill at standard royalty figures.

It would be in the interests of the Government and the State generally to cut down the royalty figure on that timber, not only because of the difficulties caused by the length of the haul, but also because of the nature of the country, which is extremely wet. Much timber that was left for land settlement and eventually put into winrows would have been brought into the mill for cutting and been of value to the State had there been a reduction in the standard royalty figure. Although probably some 30,000 acres have been set aside for land settlement near Rocky Gully, not one road has been built to serve that area. In the main, the timber is second-grade and will have to be worked by the sawmillers from the Denmark road or from a second-grade road in the vicinity.

It is almost impossible for any sawmiller to lay down a road to obtain that timber, but sooner or later those in charge of the land settlement scheme will be forced to

build roads the same as were constructed for the group settlers in the early days. Had there been co-operation between the land settlement organisation and the Forests Department, the first thing done would have been the construction of some type of road in order that the timber could be taken out. As to housing, I am not aware of members' views, but my own opinion is that the State Housing Commission, in the main, has long since outlived its usefulness. However, it appears that we must put up with it for some considerable time yet.

Hon. H. Hearn: Another 50 years.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Might I suggest that the State will shortly be the biggest landlord?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Surely that is the intention of the Government today; to be the biggest landlord?

Hon. J. MURRAY: That appears to be so, but I do not favour it. I suggest that if the Government is to continue with this policy, it should build houses where they are most needed in the State and also prove to the people that it really believes in decentralisation. As long as it follows the present policy of building large estates round the metropolitan area, we in the country will have to face the fact that we will not be able to obtain labour in the outback parts. That is the position today. I suggest that the Government should examine the position thoroughly and build houses in places such as Manjimup, Northcliffe, Donnybrook, Bridgetown and other centres right throughout the South-West.

In the North also people are crying out for houses to be built in order that the residents there can obtain labour when they desire it. If the Housing Commission really wants to do a job, let it turn itself into an employment bureau and say, "There is work available in Manjimup and also houses in which you can live." What it is now telling the people is that there are houses to be obtained in Perth and that one can soon find a job, and workers are thus leaving the country and coming to the city.

Before resuming my seat, I would like to thank members for the extremely kind way they have welcomed my election and I trust to be of some credit to this Chamber in the future.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [5.12]: Before proceeding to discourse on matters which affect the Commonwealth, this State, and my electorate, the Central Province, I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on the honour which has been conferred upon you by His Majesty. Undoubtedly, you have richly deserved that reward for the public service you have rendered to the State. To you and Lady Seddon I express the wish that you may have long life and good health to enjoy

that honour. I would also like to join with other members in welcoming to the House our two new members, Mr. Henning and Mr. Murray.

In Mr. Henning we have a man who has had considerable experience in the dairying industry and in primary production generally in the South-West. It is very heartening to members, and particularly myself, as one who has had experience as a dairyman for 15 years, to have someone in this Chamber who has kept himself right up to date on the affairs of dairy farmers. I maintain we should all take great interest—and I think we do—in every section of our community.

In offering a welcome to Mr. Murray, I should say that we ought to be pleased to have in him a member who has an extremely extensive knowledge of the timber industry. Not all of us can claim that we understand the problems of every industry, and I doubt if any of us would do so. To both the new members I extend a cordial welcome. I also congratulate the new Clerk of this House and Clerk of Parliaments, Mr. Sparks, because it is a position which he richly deserves. To Mr. Roberts, also, I offer my congratulations on his appointment as Usher of the Black Rod.

I wish now to deal with a matter which is of vital concern to Australia and of which I spoke on the Address-in-reply last year. I refer to communism. On the 22nd September, the electors will be asked by referendum to grant power to the Commonwealth Government to deal with communism.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: You know that is not a fact.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the hon. member understands the measure, that is the reason pure and simple—to deal with communism. Copies of the "Yes" case were released on Sunday last and published on the following morning. I feel rather disappointed at the fact that the Prime Minister does not propose to open his campaign until the 4th September, a short 18 days before the referendum, particularly as we read in today's issue of "The West Australian" that Dr. Evatt has opened his campaign for a "No" vote, though he did so with two of his colleagues missing—Mr. McKeon and Mr. Mullens—so that evidently this is something that is not receiving the whole-hearted support of the Labour Party.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about the Young Liberals League in Victoria? Have you seen tonight's "Daily News"?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: When Mr. Watson was speaking last week, I was rather surprised to hear him say that he would prefer the State to handle the situation in respect to communism. Could anyone imagine Mr. McGirr, the Labour Premier of New South Wales, or Mr. Hanlon, the Labour Premier of Queensland, joining with other States

in introducing legislation to deal with communism? I am very doubtful of such co-operation being forthcoming. We cannot afford to be divided in this fight against communism as the Federal Labour Party is divided. We have seen what has happened in other parts of the world; and if communism is allowed to go unchecked here, there is a danger of its spreading like a raging bushfire, particularly if prices of primary products decline and we all have to tighten our belts a little. Who is in a position to take action against communism? Only the Commonwealth Government.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I trust that Mr. Watson was merely expressing his own private opinion and not that of the Liberal Party of Western Australia. There is only one authority in this country—the Commonwealth Government, which is responsible for national and international affairs—that could deal successfully with communism. Members can judge from the interjections how Labour is intent upon drawing a red herring across the path.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Apparently you disagree with Mr. Watson.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have already said that I disagree with him. I remind members further that during recent election campaigns, organisers of the Liberal and Democratic League travelled from one end of the State to the other telling the people that, in order to fight communism, they must be united. Therefore, we should have unanimity in the coalition body to fight communism.

Hon. W. R. Hall: But you would be fighting the Labour Party, too.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I deplore the presence of this rift within the ranks of the Liberal Party. Unless the Commonwealth Government handles the matter, where is the sense, rhyme or reason of taking action? We have a coalition Government and it is up to individual members of the coalition parties to stand firm and fight with the Government.

I propose now to speak of the free milk scheme. Mr. Bennetts, in the course of his remarks yesterday, referred to the shortage of milk throughout the country and to the fact that free milk was being provided for schoolchildren in the metropolitan area. It was heartening to read in today's issue of "The West Australian" that a test had been made of the practicability of extending the scheme to the country. The Press report reads—

Trial Supply of Free Milk.

To test the practicability of extending the Commonwealth-State free milk scheme to country schools, a trial consignment of 252 bottles of pasteurised milk was sent to the Cunderdin

State School yesterday. It arrived at a temperature of about 50deg. and was eagerly drunk by the schoolchildren before the morning recess.

The milk left Perth on the Kalgoorlie express on Monday night. It was contained in the usual one-third pint bottles and was packed in special crates to ensure that it arrived in good condition.

The headmaster of the school (Mr. T. Chester) said that he thought the scheme would be feasible during the winter months but that only experience would show whether it could work in the summer.

This is a matter in which I know the Minister for Agriculture is greatly interested, and he is doing his best to ensure country centres receive supplies of milk, not only in the winter months but also during the summer.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Cunderdin should not need to have milk sent there at this season of the year.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am not saying that I am in favour of or opposed to the free milk scheme. Personally I think the people are receiving too much in the way of socialistic benefits. Wherever milk is scarce, or wherever in industrial areas hardship might exist in times not so good as those now prevailing, a free milk scheme would be good; but in the circumstances existing today, I cannot say that I favour it very much.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

Hon. G. Bennetts: Why not extend it to the Goldfields children?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: A test of the practicability of extending the scheme to the country has been made by sending milk as far as Cunderdin.

The Minister for Agriculture: It will be sent further than Cunderdin.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Both the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Lands are interesting themselves in land more or less adjacent to the metropolitan area capable of being put under intense culture for vegetable growing, milk production, etc. Recently an invitation was extended to them by the Mundaring Road Board to visit that district and consider the matter of opening up some of these areas. I feel very strongly on this subject because I consider that the bulk of the milk supplies for the city should be drawn from areas within 50 miles of Perth. I referred to this matter in my remarks on the Address-in-reply last year and will continue to speak of it until these areas are developed.

Travelling to within a few miles of York, one passes through hundreds of thousands of acres of undeveloped country—some of the best country in the State for dairying and for vegetable and fruitgrowing. This land is simply being held out of production.

If one proceeds along the York road, one can see small lots of similar country that have been brought into production. Clover may be seen growing there and I should say there is no better clover in the State. I trust that Ministers will join in the effort to ensure that this country is opened up.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do not forget the bees.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the country were opened up, that would be another helpful industry. Mr. Murray referred to the subject of butter and butterfat prices, and also dealt with the scheme of assistance to the industry to the tune of £300,000. As an old producer of butterfat, I was pleased to read that Victoria was coming into line with Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. This action on the part of the Victorian Government should help to break down the opposition of the New South Wales and Queensland Governments. We have to break down that opposition. It is all very well for some members to contend that the State Government is not taking any interest in the industry; but when we have an equalisation and stabilisation scheme in danger of breaking down, we have to find a way out of the difficulty. Only by some States combining and thus forcing the others to come into line shall we be able to get anywhere.

The Minister for Agriculture: And the Government of this State led the way.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The State Government has shown itself very progressive in leading the way and in doing everything possible to persuade the other States to come in. In referring to proposed clearing in the South-West, Mr. Murray suggested that bigger tractors were required for the work. One or two may be required, but to go beyond that would be rather ambitious, seeing that it would involve the Government in finding millions of money for the purchase. The money could not possibly be provided by the dairy farmers; their financial position would not permit of their repaying money to the extent of millions of pounds. I started on a dairy farm in the bad year of 1931 and continued in the industry till 1946. The best years were 1938 to 1940 when we had a margin over the cost of production. It was not a huge margin, and I could not at any time in the 15 years have found a large sum of money to pay for extensive clearing.

The work of clearing is hard when one has to deal with logs 25 feet or 30 feet long and four or five feet in diameter. In clearing the South-West country, it is not necessary to push down all the timber. At Denmark, the settlers leave the bigger timber standing and clear only the lighter stuff. Then they lay down their pastures between the larger timber left standing. Thus it is unnecessary to go to the extent of clearing everything in sight for a dairy farm.

There is a tendency amongst many people today to say, "The Government has plenty of money; let us spend it and spend it as fast as we can." I am satisfied that a halt will have to be called to Commonwealth borrowing. It is the duty of Governments to run the country as a business, not as a social service, though the tendency is for it to develop in that way. If we do not call a halt to some of the borrowing, we shall find ourselves in a very serious financial position. There can be no illusion about matters of this sort.

Reference was made by Mr. Murray to the shortage of fruit cases and the suggestion was made that permit holders—sawmillers—should be compelled to cut a certain number of cases. We have had a shortage of fruit cases, but I believe the position is not quite so acute today as it has been. It would have been more acute if the severe frosts had not largely affected the Geraldton tomato crop. I happened to be discussing fruit cases, a few days ago, with a sawmiller. This man is vitally interested not just in sawmilling, but in the State in general, and in primary production, particularly fruit and tomatoes. He has a small mill, and at the present time is cutting 9,500 dozen cases a week. He is not doing this to make a profit, as he gets only a small amount out of them. He said that in the long run it was a losing proposition to him. He could cut another 3,500 dozen a week, but at the present time he is cutting to satisfy the needs of the growers in his district.

I emphasise that, because he gave me some figures in relation to cutting cases as against other timber. The information he gave me is that it takes 25 super feet of timber to cut a dozen three-quarter fruit cases, for which he receives 17s. a dozen. He has to transport them from the mill to the rail, and he pays 9d. per dozen commission, so that nets him 16s. 3d., and out of that sum he has to stand the expense of cartage. In a dozen fruit cases there are 110 pieces of timber—approximately 74 quarter-inch boards and 36 half-inch boards, so members can imagine the amount of saw work that has to be done to produce 12 fruit cases. Against that, 25 super feet of timber can be cut into 3 x 2 scantling at 8½d. per super foot, for a return of 18s. 3d.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He does not use that class of timber for cases.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, he uses the same class of timber.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I have not seen that done.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: He does, because he could not otherwise get out the quantity. Where there is a huge mill, the mill-ends, as they are called, can be cut for cases, but not in a small mill where they cut the number that this one is producing.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why is he doing it if he is working at a loss?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: To supply the needs of the local growers.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: He is a philanthropist, and is prepared to lose?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, to see that the local growers are kept supplied. I suggest to the Minister for Agriculture that he take up this matter with the Prices Commission to see what can be done. The miller suggested that a payable price to him would be 26s. per dozen. I do not say that is right, because I personally do not want to see the cost of fruit cases increased to the producer; but at the same time I feel that the growers would rather pay an extra price for cases than not have them for the marketing of their produce. The gentleman to whom I have referred assured me that, given a decent price, he could cut an additional 3,500 dozen cases per week, and, if the same thing applied to the other mills cutting fruit cases, it would probably meet the overall position without our having to introduce new mills and mess about with permit holders.

If we have to say to a man, "Under your permit you have to cut so many dozen fruit cases a week," we are in a pretty sorry position. No business man likes to be dictated to to that extent. We have enough controls on business today, without that. It is time we approached this problem by saying, "What is the reason for this? Can we meet it by assisting these people to get at least a reasonable margin for their work?" There has been no increase in price, in this particular instance in the sawmilling industry, since before the second last basic wage rise. I could not estimate what would be required to cut 25 super feet of timber into 3 x 2 scantling as compared with fruit cases; but I would not like the job of milling these little pieces and then not receive as much as I did for cutting bigger timber. I reiterate that if the Minister would go into the matter, he might find it would be a help to our producers securing cases in which to send their produce to market.

The Minister for Agriculture: I think you have something there.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Getting away from State matters, and on to something that affects my province, I make a plea to the Minister for Agriculture, and to the Government, to give consideration to the resettlement of the North-Eastern wheatbelt. We have an area there which, in our Lands Department, has been more or less condemned and called marginal country, although it comprises some of the best land in Western Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: Has it sufficient rain?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I maintain it has. From Kulja to Wialki, and south from there to Mukinbudin, without going too far east, there is an average rainfall of more than 11 inches annually. If the rainfall position and the production per

acre of wheat were checked we would find that for some 10 or 12 years this area has produced well above State figures. The average there is approximately 15 bushels, and, as members know, the State average for the period I have mentioned has been approximately 11 bushels. It is surprising to me that people in the Great Southern district and at places like Wickopin lose money year after year on the growing of wheat, because of the rainfall, and yet up in those areas it can be grown successfully and profitably, although they are termed marginal areas.

Actually they are not marginal areas. Certain farmers in those parts applied for assistance in the depression days, and their properties were called marginal farms, whereas another farm five miles south, and others east and west, were not. Some of the marginal farms are in the hands of people who are well off today. They are more or less wealthy. I do not say they are plutocrats, but they are well off and comfortable. They have their amenities and motorcars, and are just as affluent as the majority of other farmers in the State. There are a number of abandoned farms in the area, which is subject to such pests as the grasshopper, emu and kangaroo. The resettlement of this country would mean the setting up of a buffer area to hold back these pests from our inner agricultural districts. I have taken up the matter with the Minister for Agriculture in respect to linking the rabbit-proof fences with a view to holding back the emus; but up to date, unfortunately, on account of the lack of wire netting and labour, a successful conclusion has not been reached.

If the area were fully resettled it would be a big benefit to the farmers in the inner regions. Some of the farmers have too much land to handle because it is more or less thrown on to them by the Lands Department which wants to get rid of it. Instead of encouraging new settlers to go there, the department pushes the land on to the existing farmers, who realise it is too much for them to handle. Much of the country has to be ploughed in order to deal with grasshoppers; and because of the super. position today, even if the farmers plough it they cannot put it under crop, so their work is practically a dead loss. I hope the Government will take an interest in that belt of country.

The Minister for Agriculture: A lot of it has been resettled.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but a lot more could be resettled if the Lands Department would try to remove the stigma attaching to the term "marginal area." This country could be the means of providing some of the cheapest capitalised properties for men to take on. Instead of going into the central wheatbelt—I saw the other day where a farm at Seabrook in the Northam area was sold for £25 an acre, which is colossal in the wheatbelt—

men could go out there and acquire properties at a low cost. Even to develop our light lands is a costly proposition, because a farmer cannot expect to get much return from a light land property for at least three years, until his pasture is established. With ploughing in and putting the country under clover, and supering it each year, a large sum of money is involved before there is a likelihood of much return. As I have said, some of the properties in this north-eastern area would be ideal for the man with a small amount of capital. They can be acquired for a nominal sum, and cropped in the first year; and then, if some fencing is erected, sheep can be run.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What about the rain position?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I explained that a few minutes ago. Even out as far as Wialki, one man successfully grew an 18-bushel crop with only eight inches of rain last year; and that was after the emus and grasshoppers had had their cut out of it. So I can assure members it is not rain which prevents this area from going ahead. The producers there are not scratching, but are men of substance. Any other man who would like to go there could, within a few years, and particularly while the good prices hold, build himself up and never look back.

The Minister for Agriculture: What actually is stopping men from going on these abandoned farms?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: As I explained before, there is a stigma attached to the area, in that it is termed marginal. In other words, it is thought to be country where there is not sufficient rain to produce anything. The country there was taken up in 1927-28, approximately, by battlers who went there with little capital, to grow wheat to commence with, and so build up their places. The majority were very unfortunate. These people were there for a few years and had just been able to get two or three crops in when the bottom dropped out of the wheat market. This left the settlers in a hole and they had to battle along as best they could. Some of them stayed, but many left the district. Those that persevered did so with a very small amount of capital. That was in the depression days and the farmers could not get any credit during those years. They were almost all up to their ears in debt to machinery firms; and, as members will recall, before the depression, representatives of the machinery companies went down to the rural areas and said, "We will give you all the credit you want." The farmers had so many goods on credit that they could not meet their commitments.

Hon. H. Hearn: What do you want the Government to do in this regard?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I want the Government to advertise this country. One can go into the Lands Department and ask if there is any land open for selection

—abandoned properties and the like. But the officers of the department will not recommend this area; they say it is a marginal area.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Did not agricultural experts declare these to be marginal areas?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No, it was all done when the Commonwealth grant for relief was made.

The Minister for Agriculture: And the farmers were very glad to get that relief. They did not care then whether the country was called marginal area or not.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No, that is quite true. As long as they were able to get the relief, that was all they wanted at that time.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Do you want it to be an open go so that the big cocky can get in?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No, I explained all that, and the hon. member would have understood if he had taken the trouble to listen. The farmers in that area have had the land pushed on to them; they have more than they can handle, and some of them are prepared to release part of it if settlers will go there.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Have they not a system of share farming? Could they not introduce that?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but they have to get somebody with machinery if they want to work it on a share-farm basis. It is not as easy to get share-farmers as one would think; one must have machinery and super.

Hon. A. L. Loton: And someone to work, too.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, there are many things to be taken into consideration. As I have tried to show to the House, if we can get new people up there, people interested in farming, the area will be developed. We could even call it a buffer area, because it will prevent the grasshoppers, emus and kangaroos from coming into our inner districts. I can assure members that if the farmers were to abandon that country it would not be long before we would have to abandon a further stretch of territory because of grasshoppers and other pests.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Is it Crown land or privately-owned property?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Most of the area consists of abandoned farms which have reverted to the Crown. I previously referred to the question of fences and, as I said, I discussed the subject with the Minister. If the Minister speaks to the Address-in-reply, I would like him to tell us whether it is true that portions of the rabbit-proof fence are being pulled down and sold to farmers as fencing material for their own properties? If that is so, it is quite a laudable idea provided it is

done within limits. But we must look at another aspect of it. This is fencing material that could be used to keep out the emus. If we had two fences, it would prevent the emus from coming through—that is, with one fence running north. If that were done, the emus could be left to the North-West squatters.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Will two fences keep out the emus?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The one fence did not keep the rabbits out.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There are rabbits inside the fences. If the emus could be kept out it would pay handsomely; and even though it may cost a large sum of money to put this scheme into effect, it would pay in the long run. If something is not done to keep the emus back, they will come south.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do not forget that the Government pays a bonus.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, the Government pays a bonus on beaks.

The Minister for Agriculture: And people are doing well out of it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but the Government would save a large sum of money in bonuses if a fence could be put up. The Government will be paying bonuses for many years to come while there is nothing to keep the emus back.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do not forget that there would be a lot of emus on this side of the fence.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but the breeding areas are north of where this fence would run.

The Minister for Agriculture: Not all of them.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No, but the majority of the breeding is done north of that line and the emus are coming down all the time. If we could keep the emus north of this area, the settlers would very soon deal with those inside that boundary.

Hon. A. R. Jones: North of the parallel.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There is one other matter with which I wish to deal and that concerns the chain of rock catchments that run almost in a semi-circle. If one took this Chamber as an example, they would run from the front bench and then around the Chamber in a semicircle. It is a large chain of rock catchments just north of Nungarin. There are thousands of acres of bare rock, the biggest harnessed being Berringbooding out from Bonnie Rock. There are 87 acres in that rock alone and there is a 5,000,000-gallon catchment tank situated on it. With two inches of rain that tank is filled, and the position is similar with other rocks which are harnessed in that area; but, unfortunately, there are only a few of them harnessed in that way. Actually,

the biggest percentage of rainfall in that catchment area runs away. The tanks fill until they overflow, and something further should be done with this system that Nature has provided.

In the ranges we conserve water for the coastal areas, and pump a certain portion of it back. I maintain that we must use these rock catchments in conjunction with the catchment areas in the ranges. I say this because there is not a drop of water which hits those rocks which could not run down into tanks. If we had a central reservoir, and these rock catchments were linked to it, thousands of acres of country could be reticulated, right through to Koorda. In many parts of that country it is not possible to obtain fresh water by boring, and there is a fair amount of salty country around; although, in some parts, it is possible to obtain fresh water by boring. If this rock-catchment scheme were put into effect, the area just slightly north of Wyalkatchem to some 20 miles east of the Wongan Hills line could be reticulated. This would come in from the east and north; and with the present goldfields scheme extended through to the Midlands area, all that part of the country would have a satisfactory water supply.

Members may recall that I asked some questions on this subject not so long ago, and I am pleased to see that the Public Works Department is taking the matter up and making an assessment of the possibilities of this rock-catchment area. Members would be amazed to see the possibilities there. There are two or three of these rocks south and east from Bonnie Rock and they run into some 1,000 or 1,500 acres each. From what I have told members about the Berringbooding Rock, they can see the quantity of water that could be caught and stored for future use. Of course there are rocks harnessed at Barbalin and Wadderin and another one with a peculiar name which I am unable to pronounce.

The Minister for Agriculture: I know it but I have forgotten the name.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: When we are considering the water supplies of this State, these areas should be taken into consideration, because they would mean so much to the primary producers there. I now wish to make some reference to civil servants in general. In dealing with some of these people I find that I get prompt attention, and in this regard I have found Mr. Williams, the Under Secretary of the Public Works Department, to be most helpful. He gives prompt attention to all matters I take up with him, and I have had a good deal to do with him on this rock-catchment question. It was not before time that some attention was given to these rock-catchment areas, because on one occasion we turned on one of the taps and received a supply of liquid manure from it. However, through the efforts of Mr. Williams, a lot of these matters have been put in order.

Unfortunately, Mr. Williams' example is not followed throughout the Public Works Department, and one usually waits eight or nine weeks before one's submissions receive any attention. If one puts up a suggestion to the department, one waits at least 12 months, generally speaking, before the officials get round to doing anything about it. This is most discouraging to people making suggestions, and I consider that such questions should be dealt with more promptly than they are at the moment.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Very often there is a two-year lag.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That happens frequently. I wish now to deal with the question of land resumption by the State Housing Commission. This department was formed at the end of the war, and everyone thought it would be a temporary department—that it would be in existence until such time as we caught up with the demand for houses. But what do we see today? We see a department which is not temporary, but of a permanent nature. The further the members of that organisation go, the more permanent they try to make themselves. The State Housing Commission has resumed some large areas of land behind Mt. Yokine; an area in the Wembley district; one in the Midland electorate; and another big area in Victoria Park. Everywhere one looks, one sees land resumed by the State Housing Commission. I maintain that this is a socialistic policy. Thirty thousand houses could be built in the Mt. Yokine area alone, and I understand that this year the Government plans to build 6,000 homes.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: They might all be golfers.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the Government builds 6,000 houses a year, it will take five years to use up completely all the land in the Mt. Yokine district. The same applies to the areas in Midland, Wembley and Victoria Park. I can see the Government still building Commonwealth-State rental homes in 30 and probably 50 years' time.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Government can build 6,000 any time it likes in Fremantle.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member might be right in welcoming 6,000 houses in his district, but what is going to happen when the bubble bursts? People will not want these types of houses then.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Where will they live?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The people will live the same as they did prior to the war. Our population has not increased as much as one would think; certainly not sufficient to warrant all these thousands of additional houses.

Hon. G. Fraser: We need them.

Hon. A. R. Jones: There are too many being built in the city.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is quite correct. If more houses were built in the country districts it would be a much better idea. It would encourage people to leave the city and go to the country. But at the moment they say, "There are not enough houses for us in the country, so we will go to the city." Thus many people drift to the city who would otherwise be engaged on work in the country areas.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We cannot get enough timber in Kalgoorlie.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, I will admit there are difficulties. But this is a socialistic policy being carried out by the State Housing Commission. This Commission was originally supposed to be a temporary department and we did expect to go back to the private builder. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. I think we would get more houses built through private builders than through the State Housing Commission.

Hon. G. Fraser: No. Who is doing the job for the State Housing Commission?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Contractors.

Hon. G. Fraser: About 95 per cent. of them are private contractors.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, about 95 per cent. If we were asking the men to build Government houses, one might understand their attitude. We see them sitting down and having tea for half an hour and then doing a bit more work. I deplore the slowness of the department in dealing with the matter of compensation for land that has been resumed. I know of one case in Victoria Park where land was resumed in 1947, and up to date the person from whom it was resumed has not received any compensation; he still has to pay rates on the property and will probably get a nominal amount for it eventually.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I have two or three cases like that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I dare say the hon. member has. The position exists everywhere. While the Government is deciding the question of compensation, what does it expect the individuals who own the blocks to do? In some cases they are people who have not a great deal of money and probably acquired their blocks on time payment. They may want to build a home and have no other block on which to build, nor sufficient money to buy another. While they are waiting, the price of blocks is going up steadily.

As an example, I would like to state a case I know of in the Wanneroo district, where a number of blocks were resumed for a school. It has not yet been and may not be erected for a number of years;

it might never be built. I came into House 15 months ago and the matter under consideration six or seven months prior to that. I was approached by people concerned and asked to try to speed the matter up, and it is only recently that the question of compensation has been justified. In order to get this done, however, I have had to be on the track of the department for fully 10 months. It is not so much a matter of paying the money as of deciding which blocks were to be given to the men who had to be compensated for the land which had been resumed.

I quote that instance to show that there could be more speed in Government departments. As a rule no action is taken in these matters until someone gets the track of the department. I would like the Government, therefore, to see that their employees put a little more speed into their work; and I am sure that if the Minister got on their trail and made inquiries as to what they were doing or had not done, we would get a lot more satisfaction from them. I have had some experience in a business house and I can assure you, Mr. President, that some of the employees in Government departments would not last very long in business establishments if they worked as they are doing at present. In commercial firms there are matters to be attended to and one has to make sure that they are attended to by the specified date and not delayed until a member of Parliament or somebody else gets on to one's tail about it. I do not want to condemn the Government or the civil servants, because in other respects they are doing quite a good job.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You have just told us they are not.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have referred to some of them, particularly in the land resumption office. I do think that some are not pulling their weight, but that others are.

Hon. G. Fraser: You have to allow a certain time for a right of appeal.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I admit that; but if the hon. member had had the experience that I had in connection with these blocks at Wanneroo, he would probably appreciate the position. Every few weeks I had a ring up the department concerned, with no results, and things went on and on before anything was done.

Hon. G. Fraser: I admit the Treasury is very slow.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I think I have covered the entire field, and I do not wish to travel any further around my electorate or Australia. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. H. C. Strickland debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.