

tries. While I do not desire to take from any man what he possesses without paying him ample compensation, I do not think it is the business of the State, in these circumstances which are extraordinary and unprecedented, to allow unrestricted speculation to go on in an area such as this.

For so long as I am Minister in charge of this legislation—if I am Minister when it becomes an Act—I assure the House that it will be administered with discretion and to the best of my ability and the ability of those who advise me, in order to ensure that provision is made for the future development and expansion of this area and the requirements of the people who are likely to settle in it because of the developments that are taking place there. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Wednesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 12th March, 1952.

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

The PRESIDENT: I am prepared to administer to members, who were not present at the previous sitting, the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Hon Sir Charles Latham (Central Province) and Hon. F. R. Welsh (North Province) took and subscribed the oath.

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Building of State Homes.

Hon. G. FRASER asked the Minister for Transport:

When does the Government intend to commence the building of the long-awaited and long-promised State Housing homes?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied:

The Government has already commenced the building of homes under the State Housing Act. The extent of operations is governed by the amount of loan funds available.

CEMENT.

As to Supply and Distribution.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What quantity of locally manufactured cement has the Government used for all purposes since the 1st November, 1951?

(2) Is the Government aware that many local authorities are unable to secure supplies of locally manufactured cement to carry out essential road repairs and maintenance?

(3) Can the Minister give an indication of when supplies of locally manufactured cement will be available to country local authorities to carry out essential works?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied:

(1) 2,323 tons.

(2) Yes.

(3) No. The Government has had to substantially augment its supplies of local cement with imported cement. In addition, it is pointed out that the quantity drawn by the Government from the local works was in respect of the Wiluna plant, the installation of which was finalised by the Government.

MOTION—DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

As to Development of Substandard Farms.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [4.40]: I move—

That in view of the serious decline in production of the dairying industry in this State this House recommends to the Government that a scheme for the development of substandard dairy farms be formulated and proceeded with without delay.

In the first place, I desire to deal generally with the problem and then gradually to confine my remarks to the smaller areas

in that particular section of this State where dairying is the principal industry. I believe that primary production generally has been taken far too much for granted, not only in this State but also throughout the Commonwealth, although lately greater attention has been given to it. Various suggestions have been put forward, but as yet we have had nothing concrete to improve the position. I think people realise now that we are facing a serious food shortage, as regards dairy produce, throughout Australia and in this State particularly. We need increased production from the dairying industry to improve the position in this State and we also need it for export purposes to build up some export credit balance in order to purchase those imports needed by our people.

In dealing with dairying, I would point out that of the beef brought to the metropolitan area, 65 per cent. comes from the South-West; the great bulk of that beef comes from dairy farms. Therefore, if our dairy farms are permitted to deteriorate, we shall be faced with a greater shortage of beef for consumption within this State. This shortage of beef also extends throughout the Commonwealth and, for the edification of members, I would like to quote three or four lines from the Statistics SS55 for the year 1951, dealing with meat production and utilisation in Australia. It states—

The total meat production in Australia during the year ended December, 1951, is estimated at approximately 987,300 tons. This is 1.7 per cent. less than the output during 1950. Meat production in 1951 was 6.6 per cent. below the wartime peak attained in 1942-43.

Many reasons for the decline in primary production have been put forward, the shortage of materials, machinery and labour, the lack of amenities in country towns and on farms and excessive taxation. Personally, I do not think taxation has anything to do with the decline in the dairying industry, particularly that section of the industry which is confined to the south-west corner of the State. I believe that it is partly due to the fact that we have inadequate advisory and research stations in the South-West; there are not many advisers available to the dairying industry, and very little research is done because throughout the South-West areas there is only one fully equipped research station.

There are two other research stations in that area, including one at Bramley—purchased some three or four years ago—utilised for investigating sterility in cattle. Another research station is established at Wokalup, and I hope that in the near future some further development will take place at that centre. Many problems are

associated with the irrigation areas, which are used mainly for the production of milk, that milk being supplied, in the main, to the metropolitan area. These problems are becoming increasingly evident because weeds, such as umbrella grass, nut grass and others, are gradually getting into the permanent pastures. Those weeds are definitely having an adverse effect upon production per acre and we may find, within a very short space of time, that permanent pastures, as we know them in the irrigation areas, will become a thing of the past and we shall have to have highly mechanised farms with annual pastures.

A number of weed destroyers, such as hormones, have been tried in an endeavour to get rid of these weeds, but unfortunately these weed destroyers kill the grasses too. There is one pest in that area called penisetum and there is a weed destroyer that will kill it. The weed has a big hold in the Waroona-Hamel district but fortunately it has not been found to any extent in other districts. The weed destroyer which will kill this pest costs about £60 an acre to apply and therefore it is impossible to use it on a commercial scale. If more research facilities were available, we might find that our agricultural scientists could do something to eradicate this pest, and probably quite a number of others as well.

Many people seem to think that the only function of the man on the land is to produce cheap food; I have heard many people complaining when the price of our food increases. What these people do not seem to realise is that the producers' expenses go up commensurate, or to an even greater degree, with the added return they receive by way of increased prices. Most people are completely indifferent to the needs of the man on the land and many things that are considered to be necessities in the city are looked upon as luxuries for the man in the country. I have heard people say, "What does a man on the land want with a refrigerator? Why does he want a septic tank and all these other luxuries?" Those amenities are just as necessary in the country as they are in the city.

If members look back they will see that there have been party squabbles over the increased price for butter. I believe in a short time we will probably have a repetition of what happened last year, and as a result of the ultimatum—I think I can call it that—delivered last year, the Commonwealth, at the last Agriculture Ministers' Conference, stated that it wanted complete control of the ex-factory price of butter. If we have a squabble that goes on as long as the last one, then I am inclined to think that in the coming year we will have just as big a decrease in production in the flush period, that

is in the winter and early summer months, as we had during last year. We all know that we are living in an age of intense industrialisation and I do not think anybody will deny the fact that large numbers of people from the country are moving in to take up industrial jobs. I believe the emphasis now is not so much on pioneering as on comfort and on easy living and shorter hours of work. If a man can get a reasonably good income and a 40-hour week, I do not see why he should not be in a position to take advantage of those conditions.

A few moments ago I dealt with amenities that are considered necessary in the city and luxuries in the country. Anybody living in a built-up area can have the water supply connected to his property if he so desires. He has very little to pay on the capital cost. In the event of his requiring his property sewered, he can have his holding connected to the scheme. The man living in the country has to find capital to get such conveniences installed, and then has to provide maintenance and upkeep the whole time. Similarly, if the man in the country wishes to erect a fence or a building or anything like that, it is practically impossible for him to obtain the cheaper Australian product; he has to pay considerably more. If he uses $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. piping for water for his house and stock, he has to pay for it at the rate of 4s. 10d. per foot. For barbed wire he pays £6 5s. per cwt. and for plain wire £6 17s. 6d. All that has to come out of the profit he may be able to make.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Barbed wire is up to £8 15s.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am only quoting the cost I know. I believe it is essential that we should inspire in the young people in particular, some sort of love for the land. We should also endeavour to educate them and help them realise what the land means to us; that it is the basis of our whole economy. Research stations have done a great deal of good in producing the various types of wheat that have been grown in the wheat belt. I believe, too, that, with its expupils, the Muresk Agricultural College has also had quite an appreciable bearing on the better farming methods that have been introduced. But we find that nowhere is there any provision made for the higher education of those engaged in dairying and most of the primary production that goes with it in the south-west corner of the State.

Recently a suggestion was put up to the late Minister for Agriculture by a deputation that the rural training centre at Harvey, that has now ceased to function, be taken over by the Department of Agriculture and used as a wing to provide in-

struction in dairying and South-West methods of production generally for the students from there, and also to bring to the South-West a lot of the expensive dairying equipment that could be used to advantage in that area but which is more or less lying idle at Muresk. The late Minister's reply was "I am all for it." I hope the present Minister for Agriculture carries on where the late Minister left off.

Despite all the trouble of the man on the land, we still have one vital factor, and that is the farmer himself. The whole object of this motion is to try to improve the lot of the smaller man, and I ask the House to pass on that recommendation to the Government. After all, the small farmer is the backbone of our industry, but if we neglect him and do not do something to show we appreciate his problem and desire to help him, I think that what is beginning to happen now will happen on a far greater scale throughout the lower dairying area of the South-West. As it is, the men who have small dairy farms and have not the capital to improve them are allowing the calves to run on the cows; the men are taking jobs in timber mills while keeping their main asset there and are just able to maintain it in their spare time.

But the time will come when regeneration will cause those farms to go back and it will be many years before they can be used again. I do hope the Government will act before it is too late. Members may recall that during the last summer school, Professor Underwood delivered an address to those in attendance. I would like to quote one or two extracts from his remarks. He said—

Continued high prices for primary products must be paid by the Australian public, as the farmer must receive high returns if he is to continue to produce and increase supplies. A shortage of primary products was becoming a real menace to Australia; dairy farmers had benefited hardly at all by the inflationary rise, and it was no wonder they were turning more to wool and meat instead of to butter-fat.

I will say this, that there is a relatively small area in the South-West which could on the whole be switched to wool. Professor Underwood continued—

The average net income of butter-fat producers in this State was only £125. Many producers had negative incomes, which meant not only hard living but inability to pay interest on their debts. Most dairy farmers worked more than 60 hours a week with no public holidays and no annual leave.

He also said that in a survey of more than 5,000 wheat farms, taken before the war, it was found that only 2 per cent. had

sinks in their kitchens; 23 per cent. had laundries and less than half had a bathroom. Professor Underwood continued—

The position in the dairying areas of Australia was even more unsatisfactory. Added to these housing and amenities disabilities were the difficulties and costs of education, medical and dental attention and recreation. Was it any wonder that we read of the drift to the city? Too much ardent nonsense had been talked about this and the attitude of city-dwellers to it was frequently an emotional one.

I would like to give now figures as regards the decline in dairy cows—those either dry or in milk. In 1949 we had 133,219 cows and the estimated population was then 544,815. In 1950 the number of cows had dropped to 129,365 and our population had gone up almost 8,000. In 1951 there was a further drop in the number of cows to 127,544 and our population had gone up to over 584,000. I would like to add that most of that decline has taken place outside the South-West No. 1 division. In that section of the State, the decline has not been so great. In 1949 the total was 107,223 and in 1951 it was 106,673. Those figures include not only the cows used for the production of wholemilk, but also those privately owned and used entirely for farm purposes and not commercial purposes. A little later I shall give figures to show the decline that influenced me in bringing forward this motion.

We have heard frequently that one of the reasons for the decline is the inadequate price paid for butterfat. I do not wish to discuss the question of prices and whether they are adequate or inadequate, but to bring before members the recommendations that have been made and on which the price for butterfat is based, for that is the crux of the whole motion I am submitting. I shall next quote from the recommendations of the Joint Dairying Industry Advisory Committee that were drawn up on the 22nd June last and placed before the Federal Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, the part I wish to deal with being the basis of the recommendation—

The committee has based its recommendation on data provided by a field survey designed in conformity with technical advice tendered by officers of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics who, also, were responsible for the analyses and tabulation of the results.

The samples were distributed over all States in proportion to the quantity of milk produced for manufacturing purposes over a period of three years ending June, 1950, and were restricted to farms, selected at random, on which the average output for the five-year period under investigation fell within a range of 8,500 lb. to 12,000 lb. commercial butter equivalent.

I hope members will bear those two totals in mind.

It had been demonstrated statistically by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, using the results of an earlier unrestricted random survey, that this range would provide all the essential cost characteristics of the "representative farm" upon which the earlier costs structure had been determined.

Instead of "representative," I have used in the motion the word "substandard."

Serious delays and inconveniences were experienced by the teams in practically all States because of the difficulty of discovering eligible sample farms from the current records available at dairy factories. As a consequence, the committee, in its desire to adhere to a prearranged time schedule, accepted, out of the total of 500 samples collected, the results of a completed analysis of 376 farms. Costs derived from these farms were corrected for State sample size, and the analytical staff forecasted that the final results of all samples would show a variation in the net cost of less than 4d. lb.

The total area of the farms was 313 acres and the area used for dairying 281 acres. The herd size was 49 cows and the production per cow was 205lb. of commercial butter. The production per farm was 10,064lb. of commercial butter. Those are the figures on which the whole price structure is based. The recommendations, in the main, were accepted. At the moment, I am dealing with one portion only. After it had been analysed again by the Bureau of Agriculture Economics, it was decided that the farmer's reward, including management, should be 16.76d. per lb. of commercial butter. Taken on the basis of 212lb. of commercial butter production per cow, it means £14.16s. per cow as the production. Prior to last year, it was only 10.64d. per lb. or £9 8s. per cow. What chance has a man on that income of improving his farm? It is practically impossible. Since that assessment was made, the basic wage has risen by 34s.

Butter production has declined by 1.5 per cent. annually from 1947-48 to 1950-51. Cheese, another derivative, has dropped 25 per cent. from 2,300,000lb. to 1,750,000lb. When we take the July and December periods of 1950 and 1951, we find that butter has declined a further 2.2 per cent., cheese another 1.8 per cent., and condensed milk 2.6 per cent. Those percentages do not sound very great. We have read of a possible shortage of butter during the ensuing year and, to overcome it, 50,000 cases have been ordered.

In December, 1950 and 1951 alone, butter declined a further 10 per cent., cheese a further 16.5 per cent. and condensed milk a further 12.1 per cent. I believe that the quantity of butter ordered in the Eastern States, which was 50,000 cases, was based on last year's production but will fall short to the extent of 20 per cent. of requirements, and that the State has been fortunate in getting another 4,000 cases of butter from Tasmania. I think the Minister for Agriculture will agree that we were quite fortunate in being able to get that consignment of 4,000 cases which was originally ordered from New South Wales. Last year I pointed out that, generally speaking, we were 10,000 cows short of requirements. If we could get the figures, I believe that an even greater shortage would be revealed today.

As we travel through the lower portion of the State, we observe quite a lot of clearing going on. A large amount of excellent work has been done, but we must bear in mind that that work is being done under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. What has been done as regards men going on to dairy farms under that scheme, I do not know exactly, but I know that the Director of Soldier Settlement in Victoria stated recently that ex-servicemen placed on the land had been responsible for 37,000 extra cows and that they had boosted butter production by 5,000 tons. I admit that the conditions in that State are vastly different from ours.

Now I wish to deal with a smaller section of the South-West. When I refer to the dairying country, I am speaking of an area within a line drawn from Albany to Perth and including the country in the 30-inch rainfall and better. As members are aware, that is one of the earliest settled parts of the State. Development has been extremely slow owing to the very laborious task of clearing the wealth of timber and owing also to the regeneration of growth. As I pointed out last year, there were quite a lot of activities in the "twenties" in the way of group settlement. Unfortunately, nothing much has been done under that scheme apart from putting men on the land with very small herds that were definitely not an economic factor on which to work, and the result has been that in a certain district we have about 100 abandoned dairy farms, which were hardly productive, reverting to Nature.

To get clearing done in that part of the State, it is necessary to employ mechanical methods, which are cheaper and which accelerate the land's being brought into production. Three years ago, the Rural and Industries Bank was able to obtain two heavy tractors and, in one area, they have done extremely good work. Roughly, 4,000 acres of land have been cleared and

will be brought into production, I should say, within another year, but it is very slow work.

Private people have been granted permits to get tractors and go into those areas, but a farmer on a small holding cannot have all his land cleared at once; he would be unable to deal with it because of the regrowth of timber, scrub and bracken, which has to be reckoned with. Consequently, it is possible to do only a very small area of clearing on each holding each year. So, instead of those small farmers getting clearing done on their small areas, the contractors are going to places where they can get large areas and remain on the one farm for a matter of weeks, whereas their services would be required on a small farm for perhaps only a day.

Coming to production, the first consideration is the yield of the cow. In Western Australia, the yield has increased over the last 30 years by about 60 lb. mainly as the result of the use of super and subterranean clover, the adoption of the standard bull scheme and the importation by the Government of a number of good bulls from the Eastern States. But, though yields have increased, it is extremely difficult to maintain any great rate of increase. The yield increase, as it proceeds, becomes definitely slower. It is all very well to compare our yield with that of New Zealand. We are 25 years behind New Zealand in the matter of the productivity of our cows and also in research work, but we must not lose sight of the fact that, in the Commonwealth as a whole, the average production in Western Australia is second only to that of South Australia.

The yield will improve when the carrying capacity of the pasture is increased, particularly with a view to extending the lactation period. I think the improvement in the productivity of the pastures will come when the Department of Agriculture is able to establish research stations in that part of the State. Another factor that I think would increase productivity is artificial insemination. Although the evidence is not complete, it has been found in other parts of the world that the progeny from artificially inseminated cows have shown an increase in productivity in proportion to the backing of the bull, and I believe that before very long a centre for artificial insemination is to be established at Wokalup.

A further requirement is an increase in the area of irrigated land. The wall of the Wellington Dam is at present being raised in order to supply the Great Southern with water and to irrigate further land, particularly in the Dardanup and Boyanup areas. Unfortunately the Irrigation Commission was advised the other day that no detailed survey had

been made of the new land which is expected to be brought under irrigation. It will be a waste of time if, when the raising of the wall of the Wellington Dam is completed, and the facilities are there to supply the water, surveys have not been made and channels and drains have not been dug to convey the water to where it will be wanted.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We want some of the water over our way.

Hon. G Bennetts: We could do with some of it at Kalgoorlie, too.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Still another way to increase production here is by expanding the small holdings—those that could be called the substandard holdings.

Hon. G. Fraser: Would you class all the small holdings as substandard?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: No. I will give a better illustration later on, but will confine myself for the time being to the South-West Province because that area carries over 80 per cent. of the commercial dairy cows in the State. I am dealing principally with the cows that produce butterfat, and quite a number of them are to be found in the South Province as well. I gave figures of the reward to the farmer and I want members to recall those details in relation to what I am about to say. In the South-West there are 3,036 farms classified by the Department of Agriculture as dairy farms. I am excluding one wholemilk area—the Serpentine-Mundijong country.

In order to bring it down to the areas dealing more or less exclusively with dairying, I am cutting out over 1,200 farms, and of those quite a number of 3,000 acres or more are carrying large numbers of sheep and beef cattle. That reduces the number to 1,898 farms, the average size being 226 acres, of which 106 acres are cleared. Those farms carry an average of 20.6 dairy cows. If we take those farms and work on the fixed profit per cow, £14 16s., which is arrived at after allowing 20 per cent. for sidelines over and above the butterfat return, we can see what the position is.

To illustrate my point I will deal with the Margaret River Road Board area where the land is used practically exclusively for dairying. In that district there are 386 farms, of an average area of 300 acres, of which only 103 acres are cleared. These farms carry an average of 22.4 cows, so on the basis of £14 16s. per cow, the average income of those farmers is £330 net. Taking the owner's reward from the price guaranteed in the year 1950-51, that shows an average of £207 per cow, so what chance has such a farmer to improve his property on that basis? The total area of those farms is over 115,000 acres, of which just under 40,000 acres are cleared.

Let us assume that 50,000 acres of the uncleared land are suitable, and on that basis, if that area were cleared and in use tomorrow, we would have no shortage of dairy products in this State. Another district where the position is similar is Manjimup and there the dairy farms total 168,000 acres, of which 56,000 acres are cleared. The average farm is 343 acres, of which 150 acres are under pasture. They carry an average of 20 cows and the average return is £296.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is nothing like the basic wage.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: No, and yet we wonder why people leave these districts! In those two districts we have probably the greatest untouched area of land, not only in Australia but in the world, in a temperate climate, with an assured and excellent rainfall and suitable for dairying.

Hon G. Bennetts: What is the average rainfall there?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: At least 40 ins. I will deal now with Northcliffe, which is 250 miles from Perth, and in this case I can not give the area of the farms, but simply the production. At that centre there is only one receiving depot for milk and the result is that all of the 75 dairy farmers send their product to that depot. Of those farmers only four supply over the standard of 8,000 lb. of butterfat per farm. That is the standard laid down by the J.D.I.A.C., and they total 41,000 lb. of butterfat. The other 71 farmers between them supply 268,000 lb. of butterfat, which shows an average of 3,774 lb. per farm.

Translating butterfat into commercial butter, we find that these farms average about half the standard farm on which prices are based, and I do not believe that in any other business or trade men would be content to receive as little in the way of return as these farmers earn. I do not think the average net income of those 71 farmers would be as great as that of a third-year apprentice.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why have they not increased their production?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: It can be done only by increasing the productivity of their holdings and that cannot be achieved until we obtain the machinery necessary to bring those farms up to an average of about 75 per cent. pasture. It will be a slow job and will require four or five years before even a slight return is obtained by the farmers. From statistics issued recently, we find that even the number of dairy heifers is dropping, and if that trend continues we will, in the near future, have nothing upon which to base our dairy production.

I realise that heavy tractors such as the D.8. and D.7. are difficult to get and that there are not a great number of them being used by the Government in this State. I understand that the number is about 30, but we must realise that food is the first basis of defence. About 150 years ago Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach, and that is as true today as it was then. If we want rural life to continue and expand, we must create more prosperity in the farming areas, and after all the farm is the backbone of the country. I would like to sound a brighter note in regard to one particular area.

The Minister for Agriculture: If you want to strike a brighter note, tell us the prices they are asking for those farms.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: They are the same as the Minister would ask if he were one of those farmers. I refer now to the Capel area where there are 134 farms carrying an average of 43 dairy cattle per farm. If we could raise the rest of the dairying areas of the State to three-quarters of that standard, our troubles in relation to dairying would no longer be of any considerable importance.

I recently travelled through Manjimup and other districts with the Premier and at a public meeting at Manjimup he was asked whether the Government would, or could, formulate a scheme for the development of these small holdings. He replied, "If you form a small local committee of experienced farmers I feel sure their recommendations will be accepted by the chairman of the Land Settlement Board." For three years the South-West Zone Development Committee has been working along those lines and has put forward recommendations based on the evidence of experienced farmers, but nothing has come of it.

The Farmers' Union has put up a scheme on the same lines and, although all these suggestions receive sympathetic consideration, I believe the time is past when sympathy will get us anywhere. What is required now is action. As I said before, I realise that great difficulty may be met in trying to obtain these tractors. Let me draw what I consider is a parallel, namely, coal production. The production of coal has decreased considerably because of lack of development in the deep mines. As a result open cuts have to be worked and the only way they can be worked is by big and heavy tractors. I know that coal is very important, but food production is equally so.

If tractors can be obtained for the coal-mining industry, why cannot they be obtained for the agricultural industry? How they are to be obtained is for the Government to consider. It would not be able to obtain immediate cash payment for

the work from many of these people. The Government would have to institute a scheme whereby the dairy farmers would have to pay for the work carried out over a period and as their land became increasingly productive. That is the solution of the problem of cost.

Hon. G. Fraser: Are you blaming the Government because there are standard dairy farmers?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Yes.

Hon. H. Hearn: Are you blaming this Government or past Governments?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am not blaming any particular Government, but the general apathy that is shown to the problems of the dairy farmer.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am almost finished. I do ask everybody again to remember that the real wealth of the country stems from the soil; that we all owe a duty to the State to ensure that the soil produces to the fullest extent. Had the people I am asking to be assisted sufficient income in the past they would have produced to a greater extent themselves, but all they have earned has gone into the normal upkeep of their farms and the maintenance of their families in order to continue the work they can do on their properties. Money is procurable for secondary industries. Last week it was reported in the Press that the establishment of an oil refinery at Kwinana would be a milestone in the progress of Western Australia. I sincerely hope that it is not to be the tombstone insofar as the primary industries are concerned.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.33]: I understand the Minister desires to finish the session by this week-end or before it.

Hon. G. Fraser: What's this?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am only guessing; I do not know. Therefore, we do not want to prolong this discussion on the motion by Mr. Henning. Nevertheless, as a colleague of his, I must have something to say on it. Mr. Henning, in effect, says that dairy production is declining in Western Australia and we should do something about it; the Government should take some action to arrest the decline. I agree with him. When things become bad and a Government can prevent them from getting worse, it is its duty to do so, but I would point out that not only is dairy production declining but also other primary production. The production of fat lambs has declined tremendously; more so than dairying.

So I believe the root cause of the problem is economic and nothing else. If something is not paying, it is only human nature for one to try something else or,

if the work one is engaged on is too difficult, naturally one looks for something easier. That is what has happened today in the farming communities generally. A great deal of the dairy production in this State came from big farms which were not engaged solely on dairying. They produced beef and a good many sheep, too. After the war labour become expensive and, worse than that, difficult to obtain, and dairying is a 100 per cent. labour proposition with no set hours. I believe that the first real decline in dairying production took place with the introduction of the 40-hour week.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The introduction of butter rationing during the war.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, the 40-hour week made the employees on dairy farms extremely dissatisfied with their lot, because they found that people engaged in other occupations were enjoying Saturday and Sunday off and on dairy farms the employees enjoyed neither a free Saturday nor a free Sunday. The employers could not release them at the week-ends because there was no labour available to take their place.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Could they not work shifts, like the employees of the Tramway Department?

Hon. L. CRAIG: If they did, that would mean extra labour. As a result of labour shortages, one farm milking 120 cows and another 200 went completely out of dairying, not because they were not paying but for the reason that the farmers became unduly worried over the lack of labour. It was not a question of having to pay for it; it was because they could not get the necessary labour. They went out of dairy production because their other forms of farming returned a sufficient income and they concentrated their efforts upon those. Wool cheques doubled and trebled and the price of beef rose. So they said, "Why should we go to all this trouble to produce butterfat when our income is adequate without producing it? If it is any greater, the Taxation Department will take it anyhow." That is the way they argue.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Is it not a sound argument?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Very sound. My reasons are these: The price of dairy cows is higher than it has ever been before; up to £60 per head. So there is a demand for dairy cows and, also, the price of land for dairying has never before been so high. Stupid prices are being paid for first-class dairying country. Therefore members will agree with me that the problem is economic. Mr. Henning has rightly pointed out that there are many small farms that could not go out of dairying production because they are not big enough

to produce beef or sheep and, as a result, they have to stick to dairying. They are mainly farms which employ no labour at all.

Hon. H. Hearn: They could not afford to.

Hon. L. CRAIG: They are undeveloped, and the people on them are the ones who are producing butterfat today. I am not dealing with wholemilk. Mr. Henning's idea is that if we can, we should allow those farms to be developed by Government assistance—not by gift—to provide machinery, the cost of which is to be charged up to the dairy farmer—and it is a good idea.

Hon. H. Hearn: Will they remain on the dairy farms?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I think they will. The type of farm of which I am speaking will always be too small for beef production. I therefore think that the men on them will always be dairy farmers, who will also turn their attention to pigs and commodities such as potatoes, tobacco or hops. The main production of small farms, for all time, however, will be dairy products. Most of such farms are less than half-developed. I do not excuse the farmers themselves for that, because many of them have definitely been neglectful.

The other day I went to Manjimup to open the show there and I was shocked to see how the bracken fern has taken such a hold upon the cleared land in that district. That fern is more detrimental to pasture than the trees. Perhaps it is only the visitor to such places that notices the change. The people living in them do not notice the gradual "creeping out" of hundreds of acres by bracken fern. However, that is by the way. Undoubtedly, farmers have been neglectful over the maintenance of their farms.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: They could not afford to be otherwise because of the low prices they have been receiving for their products.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think the prices are too bad at all if production can be raised. Any decent farm can earn £50 per annum from a cow producing butterfat. I do not think anyone will deny that.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: On what do you base the price for butterfat?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Before I answer that question, what is the price today? I am not going to attempt to answer the hon. member if he knows nothing about the industry.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You are telling us about it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But the hon. member is asking questions and I am trying to give him the answers. I do not think

that £50 worth of production is too much for a cow producing butterfat. If that is not true, the hon. member can dispute it. Twenty cows earning £50 per annum represents an income of £1,000 a year gross. Most farmers possess milking machines and a farmer should be able to earn £2,000 per year by carrying 40 cows, which is a fairly good income.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: If he were milking 40 cows, he would need labour.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The dairying industry is a family business, and a dairy farmer can earn that amount if he has sons to assist him. I know something about the industry and I also know that if someone says that he has earned nothing at the end of the year I would not believe him. The net profit at the end of the year is really net profit. If he has saved £300 after maintaining his family, paying all his debts and making some improvements to his property, then a dairy farmer would not be doing so badly.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: He has to work pretty hard for it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think we can keep on chasing higher prices. That will not get us out of our trouble. A farm has to be an economic unit. The basis of Mr. Henning's proposal is that the Government should provide the machinery to be made available to those who are on farms already settled and debit them with the cost, which will be added to their total indebtedness, because nearly all of them owe money now to the Rural and Industries Bank. His proposal is a good one. Today these people cannot get big tractors because they are mostly on contract work, and they go to the farms with the bigger areas. The transport of tractors is an important item. Therefore, Mr. Henning's suggestion is not difficult; it is not one that the Government could cavil at because what it would be doing would be what is now being done for the development of new farms.

At the moment the Government is charging up the total debt to these new farms and to the settlers who go on to them. At Rocky Gully and Mt. Many Peaks the whole of the cost on the properties will be charged as debts against the settlers concerned. Those debts will be very much greater than if they were incurred on farms already occupied. Is it not wise to develop places in districts where we already have railway communication, roads, schools, bus services and so on, all running past partly-developed holdings? It is economically sound to develop areas where those amenities are available rather than to spend too much money developing new properties in connection with which the debts incurred will be two or three times as much as are involved in the development of dairy farms.

I believe that, in respect of some of the land that is being cleared today, when the soldier settlers who will be placed upon the holdings are in a position to pay interest on their indebtedness, the amount involved will be well over £10,000 per man. I do not suppose that in the group areas the debt now owing to the Rural and Industries Bank in respect of established farms, would be more than £1,000 per settler, because the farms have been written down to such a low figure. I shall not delay the House much longer. I have digressed somewhat. I hope the House will agree to the motion because it does not propose the expenditure of money that will be wasted. It does not ask the Government to give anything to anyone. Its object is to procure and make available to the small established farmers the power plant necessary to enable them to carry more stock and increase development.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.48]: I cannot let this opportunity pass without having something to say about the dairying industry. With me it is a burning question, especially as it applies to the Goldfields areas which, being dry, have to depend upon milk supplies from the coastal areas. The supply of powdered milk has been very short and is still unsatisfactory, although not so bad as it was in the past. In view of the fires and other occurrences in the Eastern States, the position will again be very difficult. During the course of the debate, members have referred to the cost of clearing and machinery requirements in the coastal areas, and it is about time that we set up a committee to investigate the position.

What the land in the Esperance district is capable of the Minister for Agriculture knows quite well. With an annual average rainfall of 28 inches in a section of the country there that would be suitable for dairying purposes, attention should be given to the development of that part of the State. We have at Esperance a power station capable of developing the electricity supplies that will be necessary, a port that can cater for the needs of vessels of any size, and also thousands of acres of land suitable for dairying. Recently, I took a party of farmers who had had considerable experience with cattle, round parts of the Esperance district, and they considered the land ideal for dairying purposes. The time is approaching when the Government should endeavour to induce the Commonwealth to inaugurate a land settlement scheme in the Esperance district.

Hon. H. Hearn: On a point of order, Mr. President. Is the hon. member in order in speaking along the lines he is following? He is not dealing with the motion at all.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am dealing with the production of butterfat and milk!

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member should keep his remarks within the scope of the motion which relates to the development of substandard dairy farms.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There are some such properties in my district and, if Government assistance were available, they could be brought up to a proper standard. All that is required is the availability of a little capital to encourage those desirous of participating in dairy farming. There are plenty of young men willing to engage in that class of work. Reference has been made to the difficulty regarding labour. We have the labour available, if only the requisite finance were forthcoming. I am pleased that Mr. Henning has moved the motion under discussion. In view of the great increase in our population, the State must depend upon the men on the land to produce the additional food requirements that will be necessary. Unless we can increase our dairying operations and cattle herds, the position in the future will be more difficult than it is today. I hope the House will agree to the motion.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [5.52]: I intend to support the motion. I am one of the few members in this House who has had actual experience in dairy farming.

Hon. L. Craig: In the South-West.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes. I farmed on a property that was more or less substandard when I took it over. I experienced the problems that have confronted so many in the South-West, particularly during the depression period. In those days, there was no hope of getting any money and at that stage the return for butterfat was down to 8d. per lb. We did not make a living on our properties at that stage, let alone have money at our disposal with which to develop our properties. Any development that did take place was by dint of real hard labour.

Hon. L. Craig: You and I know all about that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: We do. Mr. Craig was rather inclined to take me to task when I put a question or two to him, but my object was merely to clarify the position. When members talk about a return of £50 per cow, that would apply to a well developed property and, with butterfat at 4s. 2d., the position of men on such properties would be quite satisfactory. On the less developed properties the dairy farmers would not average £50 per cow.

Hon. L. Craig: The average production is about 212 lb. of butterfat.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I know that on some of the more highly developed farms production is as high as 350 lb. That does not apply to substandard properties.

Hon. C. H. Henning: That would apply to the bigger farms where they are able to rear the young stock and cull the rest.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Quite so.

Hon. L. Craig: That bears out my argument that it is development we want rather than increased prices.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That would apply to some, but there are others who cannot and never will attain such a standard under existing conditions. The farmers cannot increase their herds because they cannot get a larger area under pasture without much further development. Under existing conditions, they can make only a scanty living on their properties. As Mr. Henning and Mr. Craig have already told the House, there is little chance of those people obtaining additional money for developmental purposes.

I trust the motion will be agreed to and that the Government will follow the matter up with a view to assisting people who are battling on substandard farms. If that course is adopted, it will mean much to the State and its production. In my Address-in-reply speech last year, I submitted a scheme for the development of areas in close proximity to the city, the object of which was to secure increased butterfat production, thereby allowing milk that is now sent from distances upwards of 140 miles away, to be used for the production of butterfat, cheese and so on. The Government must realise that something has to be done to increase dairy production.

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.55]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 11 a.m. on Friday, the 14th March.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.56]: That is rather a bald motion. I have become rather suspicious, in view of a statement made a little while ago by a private member.

Hon. L. Craig: I was referring to the session, not to the debate.

Hon. G. FRASER: I would like to get some information from the Minister regarding the Government's intentions respecting the legislation we are to deal with. The idea is that we are to meet on Friday next at 11 a.m. If the object

of that is to enable the Minister merely to introduce the Bills and the House is then to adjourn, I will support the motion. If it is the intention of the Government that the House shall meet on Friday next at 11 a.m. for the purpose of going right through with the two Bills that are to be dealt with, I shall most certainly oppose it.

The measures were, I understand, introduced in another place last Thursday, after which the debate was adjourned until today, so that members of the Assembly were given a week to study the legislation. I assume, from what I can gather, that the legislation is to be placed before us at 11 o'clock on Friday next and the Bills are to be passed that day. We have protested on other occasions against treatment of that sort, and I certainly enter my emphatic protest on this occasion if what I suggest is the Government's intention. I know the principal measure is very important and we all wish to deal with it as quickly as possible.

I will do everything in my power to assist the Government in that direction, but it must be appreciated that we can go a bit too quickly in dealing with such legislative proposals. That we should be asked to pass the measures in one day is not at all fair. Let us consider the expenditure that is involved under the legislation that is to be placed before us. It is expected that the company will spend upwards of £40,000,000, and we must recollect that millions of the taxpayers' money will also be involved in the project. We are asked to meet at 11 o'clock on Friday next, when we will be first told about the contents of the principal Bill, and we will be asked to pass it right away.

Is that fair and reasonable? Of course it is not. I hope it is not the intention of the Government to do anything of the sort, but that the Bill will be introduced and members will be given a week or so in which to study the proposition. If that is done, I shall raise no objection. I am surprised that the Minister has merely submitted his bald motion without any explanation of the Government's intentions. That attitude is quite wrong.

I trust I am incorrect in my conclusion and I shall be interested in the Minister's explanation.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland—in reply) [5.59]: In explanation to Mr. Fraser, I may state that the sitting of the House today was timed as far as possible to follow the introduction of the legislation in another place, and to allow members an opportunity, either by perusal of the Bill, by reading the accounts of the debate in another place as reported in the

daily Press, or possibly by hearing the continuation of the debate in the Legislative Assembly, so that they could become familiar with a matter, details of which they have already become acquainted with through the published statements. It is the wish of the Government that on Friday, when we meet early, we will have the opportunity to continue the debate. Whether the House will decide, in its wisdom, to adjourn to allow of further time for consideration of the measures is in the hands of members themselves.

Hon. G. Fraser: Would you be pressing to finish the debate on Friday?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I hope we do finish it on Friday.

Hon. G. Fraser: Would you press that?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Yes. It is the intention of the Minister for Works in another place to make the Bill available to all members of this House so that they can study it in detail. There is no desire that any member shall not have the opportunity of fully acquainting himself with its intention and its terms. But it is hoped, in the interests of a number of members of the House, that they will not be called upon to come back next week and make unnecessary trips, since we believe that members as a whole know all about the Bill and have only to acquaint themselves with minor details of the agreement.

Hon. G. Fraser: We do not know what the Bill will be until they have finished with it down below.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is true; but the actual text of the original Bill will be distributed amongst members, because the substance of the Bill is contained in the schedule; that is, the agreement.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Will that be done tonight?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I was under the impression it would have been done before now, because the aim in distributing the Bill is to give members an opportunity to study it.

Hon. G. Fraser: We do not know what might happen down below.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We have a pretty good idea. We know that it is the intention of another place to accept it in substance at least. The estimate of those best in a position to judge is that the debate in another place will finish some time tomorrow and that will give us an opportunity of dealing with the Bill at 11 a.m. on Friday, as suggested.

Hon. G. Fraser: They are given eight days and we are expected to do it in one day.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The Bill will be distributed this evening before members leave. The position is not exactly as the hon. member suggests. In another place the Bill was presented and that was the first opportunity members had of seeing it and studying it. But the substance of the Bill and the tenor of the debate will be available to all those members who wish to follow it in another place and through the Press, and there will not be the same novelty about it when it comes to this place as when it went to the Assembly. As we know from experience, there are fewer members who wish to debate a Bill in this Chamber as compared with those in another place and I am confident that there will be ample time for members to acquaint themselves with the terms of the measure and become thoroughly conversant with the different clauses and the details of the schedule. I hope members will accept the motion, in the hope that we can get the Bill through and finalise it.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	10
Majority for	1

Ayes.

Hon. L. Craig	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. H. Henning	Hon. Sir Frank Gibson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. E. M. Heenan
	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 12th March, 1952.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.30 p.m., and read prayers.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "B", 1951.

The SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "B" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1951. This will be laid on the Table of the House.