

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 19th August, 1952.

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

QUESTIONS

HOUSING.

As to Applications for Purchase of Homes.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many applications from tenants to purchase homes have been received by the State Housing Commission—

- (a) metropolitan area;
- (b) country areas—Albany, Bunbury, Collie, Katanning?

(2) What is the average purchase price quoted for homes—

- (a) metropolitan;
- (b) country—Albany, Bunbury, Collie, Katanning?

(3) How many homes have been purchased—

- (a) metropolitan;
- (b) Albany, Bunbury, Collie, Katanning?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) 2,138.

(b) Country areas, 550; including Albany 43, Bunbury 78, Collie 39, Katanning 13.

(2) (a) £1,430.

(b) Excluding the undermentioned towns, £1,120; Albany, no sales finalised; Bunbury £1,102, Collie £1,019, Katanning £1,306.

(3) (a) 939.

(b) Albany, no sales finalised; Bunbury 35, Collie 10, Katanning 4.

In addition 115 houses have been purchased in other country centres, excluding the above.

WATER.

As to Free Supply to Denominational Schools.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Minister for Transport:

In view of the vast saving on education expenditure as a result of denominational schools relieving the State of its obligation to provide facilities and education for many thousands of children, will the Government, in consideration of this, provide water for these schools free of charge, and so place them on the same basis as State schools?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member is under a misapprehension. In the financial year ended the 30th June, 1952, the Education Department paid to the Metropolitan Water Supply Department and the Department of Public Works and Water Supply the sum, of £3,095 10s. 9d. from the Education Vote in payment of water rates and excess water charges for State educational buildings.

The Education Department is required to pay for water used by Government schools, as are denominational schools.

BILL—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION ACT AMENDMENT.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: I explained when moving for the suspension of Standing Orders that the object of this Bill is to equip the State Electricity Commission with the power to negotiate its own loans. At the last Loan Council meeting the Premier obtained approval for the raising by the State Electricity Commission of a loan of £3,000,000. There is no provision, however, in the State Electricity Act giving the Commission power to act in this regard and this measure, therefore, seeks to rectify that state of affairs.

The provision in the Bill authorising the Commission to borrow money on the issue of debentures and inscribed stock is similar to that contained in the State Housing Act and the balance of the Bill is based mainly on Victorian and Tasmanian legislation. The approval of the Governor to any loan is required and power is given to the Commission to borrow money to repay any loan. All borrowings will be a charge on the revenues of the Commission and will be guaranteed by the State.

Trustees are given authority by the Bill to invest in loans raised by the Commission, and I understand that the rate of

interest will be $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The conditions governing the issue and administration by the State Electricity Commission of debentures and inscribed stock are detailed in the schedule. Among other matters, this provides for the establishment of a registry at the office of the Commission for the inscription of stock which may be sold in parcels or amounts of £10 or multiples of £10.

As I indicated when moving for the suspension of Standing Orders, money is urgently required for the payment of contractual obligations at the South Fremantle power station and to finance very necessary extensions at the East Perth power station, as well as for work on the South West power scheme. The raising of this loan will to some extent mitigate the substantial reduction in loan money made by the Commonwealth Government, and it is desired to take the earliest possible action to put the loan into effect. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 13th August.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [4.43]: Last year it was my privilege to receive the congratulations of members on my election to this House. Not only did I receive them from members holding different political ideas, but I also received much sound advice and a number of hints as to my parliamentary duties and conduct. This year I extend to new members my congratulations and I am certain that they will be made as happy and as comfortable in their association with members as I have been.

I also extend my congratulations to Mr. Fraser on his appointment as leader of his party in this Chamber. He has been extremely kind and has given me much valuable information. I take this opportunity of assuring him that I am grateful for the help he has rendered me. Whilst on the subject of congratulations, I wish to record my congratulations to those who were instrumental in settling the recent strike because I believe that as a result of their actions they have upheld the principles of arbitration.

Then again, I also congratulate those who received honours recently and this applies particularly to my friend, Mr. Hearn. Whilst agreeing with the general principle of conferring honours, I sometimes wonder how quite a number of people in the country are overlooked. I am now referring to some gentlemen in the South-West. I know a man who, four or five years ago, resigned after completing 50 years of road board service, during

many of which he served as chairman. I know another man who has resigned after serving for 28 years as a road board chairman and I also recollect others who have rendered 20 years of service on road boards.

I hope their services are not to be overlooked. I am certain, from my own short experience as a road board chairman, that no man can fill that position unless he is prepared to work at least 40 days a year at his duties. In taking the instance of a man who has served 20 years, and multiplying that period with the number of days he serves in a year, one can realise the extent of the service he has rendered. Not only have such men given service to their road boards but also they have helped to promote the general advancement of their districts as a whole. I repeat, therefore, that I hope that those who are responsible for bringing to the attention of Her Majesty the services of citizens in this State, will not forget those who reside in the country.

In His Excellency's Speech I was pleased to read certain parts and disappointed to read others. One statement in particular that drew my attention was—

While a period of adjustment lies before us, we can face the future with confidence.

That refers, of course, to the agricultural industry. That confidence will be all the greater if the position of many farmers in the State at present is consolidated. In another part of the Speech, there is the statement that at least 10,000,000 acres of additional land are suitable for development. I do not know who compiled those figures, but recently I read an article by the associate chief of the division of plant research of the C.S.I.R.O., and the figures quoted by him were entirely different.

He said that in Western Australia there were 64,500,000 acres of well-watered land, of which 6,500,000 acres were taken up by forests and 8,250,000 were utilised. From the remainder he deducted 20 per cent. and stated that 39,000,000 acres could be used profitably for agriculture in this State. Compared with the 10,000,000 acres mentioned in His Excellency's Speech there appears to be a wide discrepancy. I believe that we will always get these discrepancies unless we have sound planning.

In his speech last week Dr. Hislop mentioned the subject of planning and I am now going to say a few words on the subject in a broader sense. Probably every member read the opening remarks made by the chairman of the Land Settlement Board at the twenty-first annual conference of the W.A. Division of the Institute of Dairy Factory Managers and Secretaries. His remarks were published on the 20th March, 1952, and the article included the following—

Twenty Thousand More Land Workers Needed in W.A.

"If we are going to succeed in feeding our people, we must get an additional 20,000 workers on the land in the next ten years," said the chairman of the Land Settlement Board (Mr. G. K. Baron Hay) in an address last week to delegates attending the 21st annual conference of the W.A. division of the Australian Institute of Dairy Factory Managers and Secretaries.

"But this is not all," he continued. "A start must be made now, for by 1970 at least 50,000 more people will be required on the land to feed our prospective population."

He gives figures showing that we have now slightly under 600,000, that by 1960 the figure will be 750,000, and by 1970, the State's population should total 1,000,000. That will involve opening up vast new areas, the surveying of country roads, townsites and various agricultural blocks, the supplying of water, electricity and all the thousand and one requisites essential to the opening up of large areas.

In the past—I am not now referring to the immediate past of the last year or two—we have indulged in haphazard methods. We know the difficulties that have cropped up as a result of those methods. I believe what is necessary is planning and co-ordination in these respects on a wide scale, not only by zone development committees but also by the establishment of a central co-ordinating authority. At the present time, we have in the country districts various zone development committees. The chairman is usually a Government official and the members of these bodies are generally drawn from each Assembly electorate concerned. I believe they are appointed without any suggestion of political bias or bar.

I cite as an example the South-West Zone Development Committee, with which I was associated for almost three years, right from its inception. The difficulty that always confronted that committee was to get its views accepted by the Government. The chairman of that committee is the Superintendent of Dairying—an excellent man. The committee reports to the Premier, and it may, for instance, make some recommendations regarding land improvement methods. Reports dealing with that subject go to the chairman of the Land Settlement Board, who is also Under Secretary for Agriculture.

It is not very easy, should that officer disagree with any of the recommendations submitted by the committee, for the chairman of the committee, who is an officer of the Agriculture Department and subordinate to the Under Secretary, to fight to any

great extent to secure acceptance of the committee's recommendations. The result is that many of the recommendations that are submitted, and which have been arrived at only after long and careful consideration, are certainly not readily accepted. The impression has been gained that that is the position because the recommendations have come from a committee that is not in any way professional in character and that recommendations are knocked back because the departmental officers did not think of them first.

Recently, a land development scheme was announced, and the Minister for Agriculture answered a question I submitted to him regarding that matter. That scheme was recommended by the development committee three years ago, but nothing was heard of it subsequently. In 1945, the Premiers of the various States met in Canberra and it was decided to have a proper plan drawn up for future development, and more or less to tabulate the resources of the Commonwealth. I will read some of the aims set out with regard to the provision of the regional planning as set out in a booklet entitled "Regional Planning in Australia," issued by the Commonwealth.

The foreword to the book was written by Hon. J. J. Dedman, the then Minister for Postwar Reconstruction, and contains statements that, if they applied then, definitely apply now. In the course of the foreword Mr. Dedman said—

One of the primary tasks of the Governments of the Commonwealth and all States is to consider how the resources of this continent can be wisely developed. This is a responsibility with which Governments are faced irrespective of their political background and there has been general agreement that the development of Australia's resources must be pushed ahead as vigorously as possible. During the war attention was being given to the problem of regional development, not only because of the emergencies which the war had created, but also as it was realised that Australia would be faced in the postwar years with the responsibility of developing her unused resources and of planning for the full employment and general welfare of the Australian people.

He continued—

In adopting regional planning as a method of development, the Governments of the Commonwealth and States firmly believe that it is only by the scientific study of resources and the careful working out of long-range plans for development that the best use can be made of our resources.

Further on he said—

In New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and Western Australia, in order that the knowledge and experience of local residents could be brought to bear on the problem of developing regional resources, regional development committees have been established, and it is believed that these committees can greatly assist.

Mr. Dedman concluded his foreword by stating—

I am firmly convinced that the work of regional planning, if vigorously pursued, will lead to the best development of Australia's resources, and to the moulding of the type of environment that every Australian wishes to see.

The technique of regional planning to be adopted is divided into seven parts. The first deals with the delineation of regions throughout the States and territories of Australia. If I remember rightly, Western Australia is divided into 17 regions. The whole of the metropolitan area is included in one region, the others following more or less in line with the particular type of produce in specific areas. The next deals with the survey of the resources of each region, mainly through the assembling of existing data in a form that will enable possibilities of regional development to be assessed. That provision is absolutely essential if the various development committees are to do their work efficiently.

The idea is that these committees will be afforded assistance, but it has been found in the past that some departments do not relish the idea of giving assistance and advice to regional committees. The intention here is to bring together all the information available regarding regional resources to assess the resources of the State as a whole in the first instance and ultimately of the nation itself. The other objects are—

(iii) bringing together information on regional resources to assess the resources of each State in the first instance, and ultimately the nation as a whole;

(iv) encouraging functional departments and local government councils to plan for conservation and development of resources on a regional basis;

(v) decentralisation of the planning of the regions through representative local regional bodies, thus enabling the people themselves directly to participate in planning their regions;

(vi) relating the development of each region in the first place to State and ultimately to national economic policy;

(vii) adequate administrative machinery to enable the Commonwealth and each State to organize regional planning within their respective field.

Some States have gone in for planning in a big way, and there is no doubt that it has been most satisfactory. I have here details of the resources survey of the Goulbourn region in Victoria. The work there has gone on very well and the evidence has relation to the resources of the State as a whole. They have their regional committees, the members of which are local residents. Above those committees is the central planning and co-ordinating authority. The chairman is a Minister of the Crown and, in this case, he is the Minister for State Development. The vice-chairman is also a Minister of the Crown, while the deputy chairman is the secretary of the Premier's Department.

So it goes on, and those associated with the organisation are people having, because of their wide range of experience, the necessary qualifications. I do hope Western Australia will put forward a great effort to secure comprehensive planning along these lines, particularly in view of the present drift from the land, the development of centralisation and the great need, as mentioned in His Excellency's Speech, consequent upon the opening up of vast tracts of country here. I also know that Dr. Frenzell and Mr. Allan came over on behalf of the Commonwealth last January or February to try to persuade the State to foster planning on a bigger scale than in the past. I was very interested to listen to those gentlemen speak; but, unfortunately, no announcement has been made up to the present as to what are the intentions of the State.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Would they take Esperance into consideration?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: It would extend to all regions and industries, no matter whether it be gold or something else. I would like later on to lay on the Table these publications from which I have quoted, so that members can see what is being done and what is the essence of planning. At the back of one is a map showing the division of Western Australia into various districts.

Recently, the Agricultural Council held its meetings in this State. I was very disappointed at the type of publicity given to the meetings. The council did not seem to be able to put forward, or at any rate there was not publicised, any definite and workable plan. Admittedly, it was said that food production was to be increased 20 per cent., but very little was said as to how it would be done. The Minister for Trade and Commerce was reported to have said he expected the target of 20 per cent. increase would be realised before the target year, which is 1957-58. That may be so for certain industries, but I am sure it will not be accomplished within that time in the dairying industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: That statement was not made by the Minister for Trade and Commerce.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: According to the Press it was.

The Minister for Agriculture: It was by the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am sorry. That is correct. One gets these Ministers mixed up. In reply to a question from me the other day, the Minister for Agriculture gave the target for this State as being 20 per cent. If that can be achieved, there should be no wholemilk or butter shortage. Cheese, of course, is another matter. Last year we were short of butter by 50,000 cases. Under the target, after allowing for an increase in wholemilk, we will require an increase in butter of 2,500,000 lbs or, in round figures, 84,000 cases.

That may be achieved; but already the first year has started and there can be no increase this year, because the gestation period of a cow is nine months and we cannot get these cows served and the land handled until another year has passed. The proposed increase requires 20,000 cows, and they will want between 70,000 and 80,000 acres of land. Apart from pasture, we will need large numbers of young cows and heifers coming in. It takes a cow from the time of first calving up to three years to reach full production, and at least 25 per cent. fall by the wayside with various troubles. Dairy breeds are also required. No doubt the Minister for Agriculture, in his trip through the South-West during the weekend, saw the number of beef bulls that are being mated in dairy herds. I mentioned this matter last year, and it is becoming more evident this year.

It was mentioned that one of the methods to obtain greater output would be by new areas being brought into production through war service land settlement. That is almost complete so far as dairying is concerned. No fewer than 205 farms have already been settled, and this development will come to an end completely when the 20 at present being prepared are ready for occupation. Most of those farms are over 75 per cent. stocked, so the increase from that source will be more or less negligible. As regards new settlement, I do not think there will be much result in the short time that is being allotted.

Irrigation can certainly lead to an increase but it will be mainly in the direction of wholemilk. So far as I am aware, only a small area can be included in the present scheme unless quite a large amount of money is made available for development south to Capel. Large areas are obtainable there, but, until two months ago, no survey and no preparation whatsoever had been made.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They cannot get surveyors, can they?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: That is for wholemilk only. Another proposal is to extend the development on existing farms. I do not wish to go into that, because the House has already passed a motion in connection with the matter. Farmers have been asking for this assistance and so has the South-West Zone Development Committee. Unfortunately, however, although the Premier made an announcement some time ago, which was well received by everybody, we have had no further intimation of what is to be done, and confusion has resulted from the statement by the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture when he was here. From questions I asked the Minister for Agriculture, I believe that the State had previously asked for assistance in this regard, and I hope that as soon as the money is made available—

The Minister for Agriculture: You are anticipating that it will be.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The Minister is. The Minister for Agriculture: You are!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: By the way the Minister answered the question one was under the impression that it would be made available. I do not know what will be the position in the dairying areas if it is not. In the formulated scheme an amount of £10 an acre was allowed for clearing, anything needed over that being borne by the Government. That may appear to be a very fine gesture, but if one goes down into the heavy country now one finds that the Forests Department is getting total clearing done for £9 per acre.

Where a bulldozer cannot knock over the timber, somebody else has to get to work with an axe, and the original cost is very small to what the farmer's ultimate layout will be. It will cost him an additional £10 to £15 an acre before he gets a blade of grass from the land. I hope that money will be made available. I realise the difficulties of the State and Federal authorities, but I think everybody will agree that no industry responds more quickly to capital invested in it than does the agricultural industry. I trust and believe that every effort will be made by the State to secure the necessary funds.

Not long ago—as a matter of fact, last year—I mentioned that people generally relied on the farmer to produce cheap food. I think the truth of that remark was exemplified when the recent price of butter was announced. One lady mentioned that once she had a considerable amount of time for the primary producers, but now that enthusiasm was beginning to wane. It is difficult to understand that attitude. Even today, with butter at 4s. 2d. per lb., the farmer receives 4s. 7½d. for his butter-fat; and yet the assessed cost of production

is 4s. 10½d. while the more butterfat produced in Australia the more there is exported and the lower becomes the price.

A very interesting comparison was made between a loaf of bread produced some time ago and one produced today. The article appeared in one of the farmers' papers quite recently and was designed to show what the farmer gets out of the price paid for such a loaf. It was pointed out that 20 or 30 years ago, when bread was 6½d. a loaf, the farmer's share at the port was 3½d. Today, with a loaf at 11½d., the farmer's share is 4½d. That applies to most primary products.

I would like to touch for a few moments on the subject of wholemilk, in view of the fact that recently the chairman of the Milk Board announced that there would be no increase in price until further consideration was given to the matter. The last increase granted was in June, 1951. Since then, the basic wage has risen by £2 8s. 4d., and with the increase in that wage, the cost of commodities required by the farmer has risen correspondingly. Now, although the price of milk is fixed by the board, the farmer does not know the basis on which that fixing takes place. I believe that a deputation waited on the Minister concerned with a request that a costs survey be undertaken in connection with the dairying industry. The request was that that survey be made by the Institute of Agriculture, and it was not required that a representative of any farmers' organisation should be concerned in the survey. I hope that the request will be granted.

It is not suggested that the price of milk shall be fixed on the result of the survey, but rather that an idea should be obtained of values and cost of production throughout the industry in the areas north of Pinjarra and the wet area south of Pinjarra as far as the Capel River, which is the present boundary of the area from which the Milk Board collects. The price of wholemilk has certainly risen. It has gone from 1s. 3d. a gallon in 1939 to 3s. 4½d. at present. But that price of 3s. 4½d. is at metropolitan treatment plants, and the farmer has to have his milk taken to those plants or have a sum deducted on his behalf.

If he can land it at a country treatment plant, the price to him is 3s. 0½d., but if he has to cart his milk from Coolup, as is being done, there is deducted from that 3s. 4½d. per gallon an amount of 6½d. Handling costs have definitely risen to 1s. 11½d., a rise of 10½d. on the prewar figure. Although the wholesale price of bottled milk, or milk sold in other containers, is 5s. 8d. a gallon, if it is sold in one-third pint bottles, the cost is 8s. a gallon. People engaged in the whole-milk industry are finding considerable difficulty in getting t.b. free stock. As members are aware, some 7,000 odd beasts

have been found to be reactors and have been slaughtered; the only cattle that have to be tested are those supplying milk to the Milk Board. If a man goes out in the country to buy replacements for his stock he has to take a chance on whether the beasts are reactors.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why do they not test the lot?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I could not say.

Hon. G. Fraser: It seems rather peculiar.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I now turn to the question of agriculture on a broader scale. There seems to be something wrong with the general setup of our primary industries today; there must be something wrong because so many of our people are leaving the country areas. We hear it said that one of the causes is the lack of materials vital to agriculture; other reasons are the lack of housing, the scarcity of labour and heavy taxation.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I think taxation is the main reason.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: There are a hundred and one other matters that I could mention.

The Minister for Agriculture: If they are so badly off, they do not pay taxation.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Quite a lot of them do not pay it.

The Minister for Agriculture: Consequently it cannot be taxation.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I visited one of the areas where some 70 people are engaged in the dairying industry and not more than 26 farmers in that district pay taxation and taxation is assessed on a low income. Whatever we do to relieve these troubles, will only be a palliative; there is something fundamentally wrong with primary production in both Western Australia and the Commonwealth as a whole, and there is a constant danger of a decline in production. Men who are well versed in the subject have stated that within a few years Australia will be unable to produce sufficient foodstuffs for her own use.

The Minister for Agriculture: I would not say she will be unable to.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: We will be unable to produce sufficient for our own use.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: And shortly.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: What is the cause of all these troubles? I do not think any one of us is capable of answering that. Some say it is the drift to the city because of the lack of amenities in our country areas. That may be true, but we cannot get away from the fact that the people remaining in the country areas are in a much older age group now than

was the case some 20 odd years ago. Our young people are not working in the country.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Perhaps there are too many amenities in the city and not enough in the country areas. Consequently our young people are drawn into the city.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The other day the Minister for Migration stated that although our population had increased by 1,500,000 we had lost 40,000 land workers. A spokesman for the Bureau of Agriculture and Economics stated that while food production has increased by one per cent., our population has increased by three per cent.

It appears to me that our primary industries are definitely sick; they want some sort of medicine. I believe that a searching inquiry—a Royal Commission or something of that nature should be availed of—should be made into the question of what is wrong with primary production in Australia. We all know that we have Royal Commissions to inquire into far less important matters. For instance, in New South Wales a Royal Commission is inquiring into the liquor trade and in Queensland a Royal Commission is dealing with the question "will licensed betting shops stamp out illegal betting."

Hon. G. Bennetts: We had one here too.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I have always said, and I think everyone will agree, that primary production is the basis of Australian economy. Surely we should be able to find the cause of this sickness in our primary industries.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: His Excellency, in his Speech on the opening day of the session, stated that we had mined a record quantity of coal, but if we analyse the figures we find that 480,145 tons came from the deep mines and 368,330 tons were produced from the open cuts. In 1939 deep mines were producing 557,000 tons and, with the exception of 1945, our deep mines have never produced a lower tonnage than they did last year. We all agree that open cut mines should be used only in an emergency and as a State Coal Mining Engineer was appointed some years ago, surely some better results could be achieved. Hundreds of people throughout the South-West are extremely disappointed at the decreasing quantity of coal mined in our deep mines.

I now wish to discuss the recent stoppage of work. We all owe, and the Government in particular, a debt of gratitude to those transport hauliers and workers who saved the economy of this State. They are the people who kept us supplied with timber and other essential

commodities and without those people the Government would have been forced to give in some time ago.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And they did well out of it too.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Those people are the representatives of free enterprise and we should show them that we realise how much we are in their debt. As soon as the railways are running again, are those people to be pushed aside as they have been in the past? Unfortunately, I have not had time to read this morning's paper, but I have been told that there is an excellent leading article on the subject. However, we could learn several lessons from the strike and overhaul our railway system.

We could cut out a lot of non-essential services—I do not mean pull up our lines—and get rid of a number of surplus workers. Those people are costing the State a large sum of money. As yet we do not know what the cost of the strike will be, but I guarantee that in a short time we shall hear a good deal of criticism about the Government's housing policy; that criticism will, in the main, come from those who have been instrumental in prolonging the strike. The money that it has cost the Government could have been utilised for a much better purpose—for instance, housing.

The State Electricity Commission has adopted a most peculiar procedure in some of our country districts, and I believe in the city too. But I refer particularly to Bunbury. The Commission has purchased houses for its employees in the residential area of that town and it is charging each tenant a rental of £2 2s. a week.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is making a profit out of it.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: But the Commission has not, and will not, pay rates, even though the road board rates are not very large. I realise that Section 72 of the State Electricity Commission Act states—

No rates, tax, or assessment shall be made, charged or levied on any works or undertakings or on any land acquired by and vested in the Commission for any of the purposes of this Act.

While I agree that the State Electricity Commission has full authority, I do not believe it was ever the intention that it should house its employees and not pay road board rates. I believe there are over 100 houses so affected. If that is used as a precedent, why should not all other Government departments do the same?

How will the State Electricity Commission be able to refuse to give free light to its employees? How will the Public Works Department be able to refuse free water? And so it will go on. Let the

Commission use a little bit of sense and realise that a local governing body has a difficult job to perform. Those bodies need money just as much as the Government and if this sort of practice goes on, nobody knows where it will finish. I have been told that if the Commission did not give some small concessions to its employees, they would not work in the country areas. But these employees are not in the lower income group; they are all skilled men.

I was very interested to listen to Mr. Barker's plea for increased development in the North-West. I hope he will also support me in my plea for planned development. The hon. member wondered if any member of this House had ever been in a shearing shed. Many years ago I was a shearer for a couple of seasons in the North, and I agree with the hon. member that a shearer does very hard work. But do not let us forget that he is paid by results; in other words, he receives incentive pay and if that system could be made applicable to all our workers, there would be a terrific increase in production in our secondary industries. I believe that the Australian worker is as good as any worker anywhere in the world.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I will agree with you there every time.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: If he is allowed to work and is given the incentive he will prove his worth. Consequently we should do nothing to discourage a good man. In America the production per man is 12 times greater than it is in some other countries of the world—that does not include Australia alone. But we must realise that good relations between employers and employees are essential for increased production, and a number of important people in the British Isles are now beginning to realise that fact and the importance of incentive. I see no reason why, with hard work, we should not increase the purchasing power of our money and obtain a standard of living equal to that existing in America.

During the debate quite recently, Mr. Fraser suggested that we look at the Arbitration Act. I looked at that measure because one point that struck me very early was the manner in which certain members of the House defined the term "worker." I have often thought there is more scope for the meaning of that word than that generally given to it. I noticed the definition contained in the Arbitration Act and also looked up Webster's Dictionary. I found there that "worker" is described as "one that works; a maker and a creator." So the term can apply to other than those skilled or unskilled workers who offer their services for reward. It can also apply equally well to the farmer.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: He is the best worker.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Just a moment! I am not chipping at the hon. member!

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I merely said farmers were the best workers.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The term can apply to the farmer because farming is definitely a creative vocation; in fact, I believe the farmer today is being called upon to be the economic saviour of Australia.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is why he ought to be in the Labour movement instead of in the other.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I will conclude by saying that from the standpoint of exports and imports, Western Australia is still the greatest primary producing State in the Commonwealth. This State has just finished the financial year with a surplus of exports over imports of £15,500,000. The farmer alone, however, is not entirely responsible for that. I must, certainly, give the goldminer his due share of credit. But we must not forget that that £15,500,000 surplus was produced in the main by a small percentage of the working population. A year or two ago the percentage was 18 per cent. and now it is down below 15 per cent. Unless we consolidate our agricultural position and unless we plan for the future, I do not think that in 20 or 25 years time we shall have any money to spend oversea. It is not too late for the Governments to realise the position and institute a central planning authority.

On motion by Hon. G. Bennetts, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.34 p.m.