

uniform taxation until such time as a better system is evolved for this State. While ultimate industrial expansion seems assured in Western Australia, its economic destiny is governed by our legislative efforts, seeing that our economic destiny has its influence on the welfare of the community. Each and every one of us go towards making up that community. History and statistics will show that industrial expansion alone does not raise the standard of living of the community. Far from it! The position is usually the reverse. In big industrialised cities, poverty and riches go hand in hand. While the economic destiny of one section is strengthened, it is usually at the expense of other sections, which is something that has to be avoided in Western Australia.

Admittedly, there will always be discrepancies in the financial circumstances of individuals, but any extremism in that regard has to be avoided. So today I feel proud to be a supporter of a Government which has for its purpose the welfare of the people. I am proud that it is bringing down legislation in support of that principle, introducing legislation for the continuance of price-control, which is an important factor in arresting abnormal fluctuation, and legislation to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act, the Workers' Compensation Act, the Factories and Shops Act and other industrial enactments. All these measures are necessary to promote industrial harmony, and without industrial harmony we cannot have economic security. Therefore, I shall be very pleased to make available to the Government the knowledge I may be able to add to that of other members who will speak during the debates on those subjects.

Mr. HEAL (West Perth): I formally second the motion.

On motion by **Hon. D. Brand**, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 11th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.14 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 11th August, 1953.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "B", 1952.

The PRESIDENT: 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, 1952. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That Hon. W. R. Hall be elected Chairman of Committees.

QUESTIONS.

S.P. BETTING.

As to Fines for Offences.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What was the total amount of money received by way of fines from starting price bookmakers for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1953?

(2) What was the amount received for similar offences for the same period from the police courts of—

- (a) Perth;
- (b) Fremantle;
- (c) Midland Junction?

(3) What amounts were received from the following towns—

- (a) Albany;
- (b) Bunbury;
- (c) Geraldton;
- (d) Collie;
- (e) Kalgoorlie;
- (f) Boulder?

(4) What was the total amount received from within the following areas:—

- (a) Mt. Barker to York;
- (b) Northam to Coolgardie;
- (c) Brunswick Junction to Pinjarra;
- (d) Mullewa-Mingenew to Goomalling-Gingin?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

It will be necessary to collate the information requested and the clerks of courts in the centres mentioned have been requested to furnish details. The information will be supplied to hon. member as soon as it is available.

TRAM AND BUS SERVICES.

As to Fares and Week-end Surcharge.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What has been the effect of the Government's action in reducing the week-end penny surcharge on Government bus and tram fares?

(2) Has this contributed towards the increasing losses on Government buses and trams as revealed in the Press?

(3) Alternatively, has there been a compensating gain on week-end traffic in extra earnings or passenger journeys?

(4) If so, to what extent?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Reduction in the cost of week-end travel to tram and bus travellers and loss of revenue to the Government.

(2) Yes. It was never anticipated that the amount of increased patronage received as the result of the abolition of the week-end surcharge would compensate for the loss of revenue. The imposition of a penalty on week-end travellers is considered to be bad in policy. If the penalty rates incurred on wages are to be recouped, it should be done by an overall charge during the week and not confined to week-end travellers.

(3) The number of week-end passenger journeys has not increased, but this could be attributed to the exceptionally rainy week-ends which have been experienced over the last three months.

(4) Answered by No. 3.

RAILWAYS.

As to Extra Suburban Services, Cost and Revenue.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) How many extra trains have been restored to the suburban rail services since the Government took office?

(2) Has this increased number of trains resulted in extra patronage, and if so, to what extent?

(3) What is the extra cost of running the increased services?

(4) Is it estimated that the extra revenue (if any) has offset the extra running costs?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 360 weekly.

(2) Yes, an average of 12½ per cent.

(3) On present costs, £2,155 per week.

(4) No, but the position should improve after the winter months with further improvement with the introduction of the diesel railcars later this financial year.

TRAFFIC ACT.

As to Reprinting Regulations.

Hon. H. K. WATSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware—

(a) that a print of the current traffic regulations is unobtainable at the Government Printing Office;

(b) that members of the legal profession and the general public are unable conveniently to procure anywhere a copy of the traffic regulations as now current?

(2) Will the Government see that steps are taken immediately to remedy this extraordinary position so that the general public and their legal advisers may readily ascertain their rights and duties under the regulations?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The regulations are being redrafted and consolidated with a view to reprinting as soon as possible.

PARLIAMENTARY SUPERANNUATION FUND.

Appointment of Trustees.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That pursuant to the provisions of the Parliamentary Superannuation Act, 1948-1951, the Legislative Council hereby appoints the President and Hon. Sir Charles Latham to be trustees of the Parliamentary Superannuation Fund.

MOTION—CONDOLENCE.

Late Hon. A. A. M. Coverley, M.L.A.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That this House place on record its sincere appreciation of the services to the State by the late Hon. Aubrey Augustus Michael Coverley as member for Kimberley in the Legislative Assembly and as a Minister of the Crown, and express deep sympathy with his widow and family in the irreparable loss they have sustained by his decease; and that the President be asked to convey the foregoing to his widow.

The late Mr. Coverley was elected member for Kimberley on the 5th April, 1924, and remained member for that area until his death on the 19th March, 1953—a matter of 29 years. During his period in Parliament, he was appointed Minister for the North-West in 1939, and Minister for Forests on the 9th December, 1943, and he held both portfolios until the resignation of the Wise Government on the 1st April, 1947.

The late Mr. Coverley was born in Bridgetown, so that he was a true Western Australian. He served for many years in the postal department and was a member of the armed forces in the 1914-18 war, serving in Gallipoli and Palestine. After he returned from the war he resumed his duties with the postal department and remained with that department until he entered Parliament in 1924. From that time onwards most members had some association with him.

I met the late hon. member prior to the time he entered Parliament and I learned to respect him. Bob Coverley was a most outspoken chap and he did not care whether his remarks offended the person to whom he was speaking; in other words, he was not a fellow who hedged in any shape or form. While he was a member of Parliament he rendered a great service to the people in his constituency and Bob Coverley will be missed by many people, particularly our native population, because throughout his life-time he did everything possible to improve the conditions of those people. On behalf of the House I desire to extend to his widow and family the sympathy that we all feel in the passing of a very worthy son of Western Australia.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland): On my own behalf, and on behalf of members of the L.C.L. in this Chamber, I would like to support the remarks of the Chief Secretary. I did not have the opportunity of coming into intimate contact with the late Mr. Coverley but I did have the privilege of meeting him on a number of occasions and I formed the impression that he was a most pleasant man to meet. Also, I know that he was held in high regard by members of another place. Any man who has occupied a high position as a Minister of the Crown, irrespective of his portfolio, has carried a heavy load of responsibility, and that imposes a severe strain on him. Mr. Coverley is probably another man who suffered because of this strain and as a result his health declined. I am sure that there are other members who have had a longer association with Mr. Coverley, and perhaps they would like to say something on their own account.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central): I wish to associate myself with the remarks made by the Chief Sec-

retary. I was a member of another place when the late Mr. Coverley entered Parliament in 1924, his election having followed upon the retirement of Mr. M. P. Durack. I agree with the Chief Secretary when he says that the late Mr. Coverley served his electorate well. It is a difficult district to serve, especially when one considers the enormous problems associated with the North and the large areas that have to be covered. However, the late Mr. Coverley did not neglect his northern constituency and because of that he was always returned either unopposed or with little opposition. He was a good soldier and a good sport and I have happy recollections of my own association with him in another place.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North): I would like to associate myself with the motion. I knew Mr. Coverley personally from the time I arrived in this country. He was held in high regard by every man, woman and child in the Kimberleys and was known personally to all of them, even the natives. They, too, held him in high esteem. His passing has been a great loss to the people of the Kimberleys and he will be a hard man to replace. The best tribute I can pay to Bob is to say, "He was a good clobber."

THE MINISTER FOR NORTH-WEST (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North): I, too, would like to associate myself with the motion because I was in close contact with the late Mr. Coverley over the past score or more years. He was a particular friend or, I should say, mate of mine; he was a true and staunch mate, if I may use the term, and was always there whenever he was required. He will be greatly missed, particularly in the Kimberleys, by workers, businessmen, pastoralists and people in all walks of life. Over the years I have spent some time touring through the Kimberleys and I have never heard one person condemn the late hon. member as a man. That is something of which his family in particular can be proud. He was one of the most highly respected personages in the Kimberley areas and it is with great regret that we, as members of this Parliament, are called upon to pass this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Before putting the motion I would like to add my tribute, along with those passed by other members, to the late Mr. Coverley. As has been pointed out, he was always a good member and carried a load of responsibility, even during the time when his health was not of the best. Our sympathy goes out to his widow and family and, therefore, I ask members to support the motion that has been moved.

Question passed; members standing.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Second Day.*

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [5.0]: May I offer my congratulations to the Chief Secretary for his appointment to the office he now holds? He is, of course, not new to politics by any stretch of imagination. He has served in this House for very many years and I am perfectly satisfied that in his new post, representing the party he does, he will render good service to that party and that this House will be very pleased with his association here. He has always shown a friendly feeling towards members who have views opposite to his own and, with the added responsibility he now carries, I feel sure the pleasure of this House will not be disturbed by any action he might take.

I also want to offer my congratulations to Hon. H. C. Strickland who has also been appointed to ministerial status. Mr. Strickland is very fortunate; he has not been very long in this House and he must be an outstanding man in the opinion of his party for its members to have promoted him to the responsible position he now holds. Those who had the responsibility of electing him were convinced, I daresay, that his knowledge of the North would help materially and, no doubt, the North will have very good representation. I also hope that this will apply to the rest of the State as well. I feel sure we will be very happy indeed under their control and I offer both Ministers my congratulations.

To my friend Mr. Griffith, who is a newcomer in this House, I also want to offer my congratulations. It is not very often that a member is defeated in another place and immediately says, "All right, there is another vacancy," then applies himself to the task as he has done and gets elected to this House. One outstanding matter which came to my notice regarding the election of Mr. Griffith was the high esteem in which he was held by the electors of the district he represented. They showed distinctly by the number of votes they cast in his favour that he had served them well. I hope that when he seeks re-election, he will also find that the province he now represents will have the same confidence in him as did the electors of Canning when he first contested that electorate.

I can assure the hon. member that this House is different from another place. I have had experience there myself. The hon. member will find that the work here is not so hard as it is in another place, and that it is not so difficult to convince the Ministers here as it is down there! I am speaking personally; I am very easily led astray by members, but I feel sure the hon. member will find that the Chief Secretary and the Minister for the North-West will give him all

the assistance they can, as will all the other members in this House, and that he will be able to do a great deal more for the province he now represents than he was for his electorate of Canning. I welcome him to this House and although some of us are much older than he is, I feel sure he will get all the assistance he requires.

Then again I would like to join the Government in paying tribute to those men who have gone to their eternal rest since we last met. I refer to Sir Hal Colebatch, Mr. Kitson, and Mr. Sydney Stubbs. All were at one time members of this House. Mr. Stubbs started in this Chamber before he went into another place where he served for quite a long period. These men gave a great many years of their lives in the interests of their electors and the welfare of this State. I think we can recall to memory many of the great things that were achieved while they were in the official positions they held and the contributions they made will no doubt leave their mark on the history of Australia.

Like other members, I am also very delighted indeed that we are to have a visit next year from the reigning Monarch. It will be one of the outstanding events in the history of Australia. It will be the first time it has been done, and I feel sure we will all join with the Government in seeing that Her Majesty, while she is here, will have some opportunity of getting to know the Australian people and of seeing our country as it is. At the same time I hope we will fully realise that she is a very young woman with family responsibilities as well as the responsibilities of her Dominions, and I hope we will not make her task too hard while she is here. I find we are inclined to bring distinguished visitors into the country and then harass them by wanting them to see this, that and the other. I trust we will be moderate in that direction so that Her Majesty will leave Australia with happy memories and with no sense of fatigue arising from the demands made upon her.

I do not often compliment members of the Opposition because I think they are well able to look after themselves. But, after having read the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, I would like to compliment the Government, because I feel it constituted a commendation of the actions of the past Government. I think it was splendid. From the beginning to the end of that speech the past Government was commended and even if some of its own supporters have failed to do so, the present Government has, in effect, said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Of course, we do not expect the present Government to have carried out an overwhelming number of achievements, because it has only been in office for a very

little while. During that period the Premier has been away on an important mission to the Old Country, namely, to attend the Coronation ceremony; and the remaining Ministers have been overworked.

The Government will, I feel sure, appreciate the difficulty in obtaining money; Ministers will find it is not easy to get. In fact, I hope that members on both sides of the House will realise the difficulty involved in obtaining sufficient finance. When we secure that money, I hope we will see that it is carefully spent. I propose to give some figures which to me are very illuminating. I came across them while trying to find something to talk about. I would not like to have stood up and merely commended the last Government for what it did; there is no necessity to do that, because it is already contained in the Governor's Speech. It would have been a waste of time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It had a good banking account when it came into office.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is nice to know the former Government had a good banking account. The hon. member will be able to tell the Government that it started off with a very good bank balance. I think Mr. Bennetts is a little new in his ideas in that respect. He has been here a considerable time but he surely does not believe that there is an abundance of money in the Treasury just before the end of the year.

On looking through the Governor's Speech I am a little concerned that there is not a great deal of mention as to the proposals of the Government for the development of the country districts—areas away from the metropolis and the provincial towns. The population is growing very rapidly in these areas—I mean in the metropolitan area and the towns—and we have now more people in the City of Perth than we have outside it. We are, of course, anxious to encourage—and we should be anxious to encourage—industrial concerns. But we also have to remember that we have to feed the city and town folk. They cannot be fed without the help of the people in the country districts. I refer to those engaged in developing the pastoral holdings, the agricultural areas and the dairying districts.

So, irrespective of what the Labour Party's views are, in striving to improve the industrial concerns, it will have to be very careful to attract people to the country and more particularly to try to keep there those who are already in the rural districts. We offer inducements for people to come to the metropolitan area, but it will be a very sad day if we cannot feed ourselves. Last year and the year before we had to import butter from the Eastern States. We have areas suitable here for the expansion of the dairying industry, and no such importations should have been necessary. The other day I read of

a proposal for the establishment of a thousand dairy farms. I am not going to object to that.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There is plenty of room in the Esperance district.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: There are a number of substandard farms that should be brought to the required standard. That is what I am concerned about. The reply will probably be, "You were Minister for Agriculture for a year. Why did you not do something about it?" Well, I think now that Labour members have accepted ministerial responsibility, they will find that a year goes by very rapidly, and it is amazing how slow is the machinery of politics. More often than not, after going ahead with some idea one finds that the financial position does not permit of its completion. I do hope that something will be done for these people on substandard farms.

I have engaged in dairying, and I know it is exacting work. But it is not hard work. Clearing land involves much harder work than does dairying. Although one has to work long hours in the dairying industry, there is money in it. I do not want to see the young children of dairy farmers get up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning in order to milk the cows. There is no necessity for it. We have machines for that purpose. Most of the work is now done by mechanical means and dairying is an easier proposition than it was in the old days. But we have land in the South-West. We have quite a number of substandard farms. We have improved a considerable proportion of them, but it looks as though the Government has to do everything. We will not build up a very virile community if folk are permitted to run to the Government for everything. I hope that these people will be encouraged to do a great deal for themselves, realising that they have a valuable asset.

While I was in the South-West not long ago, I made inquiries about land values and I am ashamed to think that such high prices are being asked for some of the farms down that way. There are properties that have changed from dairying to horse-breeding at a very high rate. I asked people in the district what they thought the values of some of the substandard farms would be, and they were far in excess of their earning capacity today. It will not be easy to transfer some of those properties to other people because would-be purchasers will need to have behind them a substantial sum of money to enable them to acquire the land.

There is another matter mentioned in the Governor's Speech concerning which I would like to issue a warning to the Government. I refer to the assistance being given to prospectors. In the main, the prospector of today is totally different from the prospector of the past. There are a few of the old chaps still left on the Goldfields—I see them myself from

time to time—who have a great confidence in their ability to locate gold if they only have a little help. That is the sort of spirit that has been responsible for winning gold for us. But there is a new type of prospector on the fields, who, I am told, is receiving assistance from the Government and at the same time working for other people.

These prospectors are now being offered from £4 10s. to £5 10s. per week. I have no objection to that so long as the men are genuine prospectors, but I consider there should be some supervision in order to ensure that we receive some value for the money expended. I do not mean to say that we should stand up and declare that they have to find a goldmine or a silvermine or some other kind of mine, because after all it is a question of luck. But I do want to see them go out into districts where there is a prospect of finding minerals and devote their time to prospecting those areas.

Recently I was on the Goldfields and saw some of the old chaps still plugging away and feeling quite confident that they would strike something. Some of them do so. I would refer to the Camel Paddock out from Coolgardie as an indication of what might be found. But if we are going to provide £5 10s. a week to help prospectors, there must be some supervision to ensure that at least a good portion of their time is spent on prospecting.

I have been looking at some figures concerning the indebtedness of this State and I am very concerned at the way in which it is growing. I had a theory when I entered Parliament some years ago that we could go on borrowing money and all we had to do to enable us to carry our financial responsibilities was to build up our population. I now propose to submit figures to show that the more people we have, the heavier becomes the debt they have to shoulder and the greater the liabilities they are required to carry.

If members have time, I commend to them a perusal of a document issued by the Government Statistician called "Statistical Review." This gives an indication of the progress in Western Australia from 1829 to 1952. I want to show, by quoting from that publication, what has happened in the last seven years with regard to our population, which increased during that period by 123,795, a 25 per cent. increase since 1945. In that year the figure was 490,088. When this return for the year 1951-52 was issued, the population had grown to 614,483. During that period the arrivals numbered 490,878. They included returned soldiers, sailors and airmen and migrants. The number of departures during the period was 428,612, almost equal to the population of seven years ago.

It will be seen that there is a terrific movement of population to and from the State. The increase by immigration from

1945 to 1952 was 62,266. I want to point out how the population moves in this State and how slowly it grows in reality, and the number of people that come and go from one State to another and over-sea. I took out the figures to discover what the financial position was. It is indicated that from 1945 to 1952 our revenue increased by £20,592,938 and our loan indebtedness by £42,393,881. I want the House to remember those figures. They and the increase of population which has taken place during the period, have proved erroneous the idea we had that by building up our population we would ensure that our indebtedness would remain more or less static and would be spread over the community on a population basis so that it would be easier for all of us.

The approximate net indebtedness of our population during that period of seven years increased by £33 per head. When I look back to the depression period and remember that our total expenditure then was £9,000,000, I wonder what is happening to all the money we receive today. Are we getting value for it? Are we not doing something to depreciate our currency? Although this House has no responsibility for finance, members have an obligation to the people they represent, who have to find the money to meet the indebtedness we incur. I am not sure that it would not be a very wise thing—and I ask the Government to give consideration to the matter and wish that the Chief Secretary would listen to me—to set up a public accounts committee such as those in existence in the Commonwealth Parliament and in other States.

I know that Ministers have an extremely busy time. There may be an odd one like the Minister for the North-West who has not much to do, but I think that he will be landed with a little more responsibility shortly. He may have some spare time on his hands at the moment, but the Chief Secretary has none and neither have the other Ministers of the Crown. The Minister for the North-West is the junior member of the Ministry and the Government has treated him kindly for a start. But it will throw added responsibility on to him, and he will find that he has a fairly full-time job if he takes on some of the portfolios which I understand may be allotted to him.

In the circumstances, it is impossible for Ministers to give sufficient consideration to the finances of this State. I know it will be asked, "What are the officers doing?" That is what I want to know. There is, of course, the Auditor General and he has a staff; but it is not his responsibility to see that we obtain value for our money. His task is to see that the funds are used in the way authorised by Parliament and to ensure that there are no defalcations. He is an officer of Parliament and is supposed to see that our in-

structions regarding finance are carried out. I suggest to the Government—though I do not know whether any other member here will endorse the proposal—that it would be very helpful if there were some body appointed to dive into some of these matters and inquire into complaints of how money and materials are being wasted in order to see whether something cannot be done to ensure that we obtain greater value for the indebtedness we are incurring. I hope other members will express their views either for or against that idea. If they do, we may be able to persuade the Government to do something.

At one time there was a proposal in another place that a public works committee should be appointed, but it was defeated. Such a committee might have been very helpful. The idea was that when expenditure in excess of a certain amount was planned, the proposal should be submitted to the committee for examination. This proposal of mine is not political. The committee would consist of representatives of all political parties and would be helpful not only to the present Government, but to succeeding Governments.

Besides the indebtedness of £33 per head for the seven-year period, we have to consider the liability we are carrying as our share of the Commonwealth expenditure. That is fairly heavy. When we think of how the people are being loaded up with debt and the consequent charge against industry, we must realise that it is about time we gave serious consideration to the matter and tried to see where we are going, how far we are going, and how long we are likely to be permitted to continue this way before there is a break. I do not think it is too late to take stock of our financial position in Western Australia. We can do it only from a State point of view, but if we gave the lead, the Commonwealth Government might follow.

The expenditure on our railways is pretty high. The gross receipts for 1952 were £9,163,532 and the working expenses were £10,601,917. I know we have a depreciated currency but the expenditure for 1952 represents almost the total indebtedness we incurred in putting down our railways in this State. There is some lack of control of the finances somewhere or other, and it is about time some organisation was set up to make a very thorough check. Our railways are exceedingly costly to run and I believe they could be conducted much more cheaply than at present.

I know not whether what was published in the Press was correct or not, but I read that a lot of rails ordered by the previous Government were lying in the yards at Midland Junction—I believe they are there still—and could not be used because they had been bought with money taken from a trust fund. I have seldom heard of anything more ridiculous than that,

and I hope the Chief Secretary will tell the House who authorised that statement to be published. Every Government that I have known since 1921 used trust funds when short of money, but repaid them. There is no doubt that the present Government will follow that course, as did its predecessor, but such funds have always been repaid at the due time. I hope the Chief Secretary will clear up the position with regard to that statement in the Press as I have seen nothing published to elucidate or contradict it.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: The information was given to the Press but was not published.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In that case the Press was not fair. It should not publish a statement such as that to which I have referred and then refuse the public an opportunity of knowing the facts. Probably the labour necessary is not available to lay the rails, or perhaps the money to pay for the labour is lacking, but I feel that the Railway Department could use for that purpose some of the money it has available. We read time after time of trucks being derailed and I believe that something must be radically wrong. Either the track is in bad condition or the rollingstock is faulty, but in view of the fact that so many new trucks have been put into use and new engines provided, I believe that it is necessary to lay new rails as quickly as possible. I notice in the Commissioner's report—I hope what I am saying will interest members, as we must find out how public money is being spent—

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is being wasted on over-administration.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I have heard, in this House, of how the number of railway employees has increased. If we put on 100 men to do a labouring job, still others have to be employed on the clerical side.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is not the labouring side on which money is being wasted.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: During last year, the tonnage of goods carried by the railways was almost a record—in spite of the strike which took place—as were the earnings. It is true that freights have been raised; but as against that, the number of passengers carried decreased by over a million, as compared with the previous year, so apparently from that angle our railways have become obsolete.

I have heard it said that if we wish to avoid losses on our railways we should pull them up, but which railways are we to pull up? If that course is followed, we will find that the lines to be pulled up will be those serving the people in the dairying, pastoral and agricultural industries who pioneered and developed the State. I am strongly opposed to the pulling up of any such railways. The farmers who went into the back areas from 1899

onwards did so on a promise from the Government that railways would be built to serve them, and that promise was honoured.

Are we now to breach that agreement and tear up those railways? It is said, "Many of the farmers who entered into that contract are now gone," but every man who went on the land under the conditions to which I have referred did so in the belief that the railways that were laid would remain to serve those who came after him. There is today no cheaper method of conveying goods than that provided by railway transport.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I am glad to see I have a supporter here.

Hon Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The proposal to tear up our railways is one of the worst I have heard put forward. It is true that our railway system has been neglected for a long period—much of the time while under the control of Labour Governments—and has fallen into a bad condition, so that considerable time will be taken in getting the service back to normal, but I would point out that many lines were laid cheaply, at a cost of only £1,300 or £1,500 per mile. Admittedly, the ballasting was poor and today the practice is to have much heavier ballasting, which, of course, reduces wear and tear. The 45lb. rails used in the agricultural areas are just about worn out but the huge amount of freight hauled over them has yielded a great return.

In his report the Commissioner says that last year the only payable section of the railway system was from Northam to Perth. Of course it was, because that section drains the freight from all the back country. I will fight by every means in my power against the suggestion that the Wiluna, Peak Hill and other lines should be torn up. We have incurred a liability in constructing those railways and it is now proposed that we should incur a further liability in tearing them up. If we do that, we shall have the double liability on which to pay interest, and the people of the areas concerned will be left without means of transport.

Hon. L. Craig: What about the running costs?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is said that we will push the transport on to the roads, but there is no cheaper method than rail haulage for the transport of goods.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The answer is to develop the country.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Mr. Craig referred to the cost of running the railways, but we know that the £ today is worth only about one-third of what was its value at the time when our railways were laid. Although the farmers will fight against increased rail freights,

I think they will realise that their goods can be transported more cheaply by rail than by road. Our overseas credits come from no source other than the products of primary industry. We could not import rails from England, Belgium or elsewhere if we did not export wool, wheat, oats, barley and whatever gold the Commonwealth Government allows us to export.

I hope members will give any legislation that may be introduced to authorise the pulling up of agricultural lines a hostile reception, as I am convinced that we should honour the undertaking that was given to the people on the land. Our endeavour should be to reduce the cost of running our railways and not to seek ways of increasing expenditure. I feel that there are too many people—departmental and otherwise—trotting about the country when they should be in their offices. Conferences are being held in Canberra, New Zealand and elsewhere on every possible pretext.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They even hold a two-hour conference over a train being derailed.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Instead of crying out that we want more money, we should examine the departmental position in order to see how we can save money. In that way this House could take a step in the right direction.

Then again, I notice that there is to be a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the question of the Austrian pre-fabricated houses. I hope that some day there will be provided in our archives a set of pigeon-holes in which to place the findings of Royal Commissions and a record of what was done to implement them. Since I entered this Chamber six or seven years ago, I have been amazed at the number of Royal Commissions appointed to inquire into all sorts of questions, yet few, if any, of the recommendations of those Commissions have been acted on.

In the case of the Austrian pre-fabs, we know that the timber was purchased overseas by the ordinary methods, but that it introduced into this State a wasp, the elimination of which cost many thousands of pounds. It is only a waste of public funds and the time of our departmental officers. We should not have Royal Commissions unless we have good reason to appoint them and, once appointed, we should act on their findings.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The Austrian builders themselves say we are wasting thousands of pounds in erecting them.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I admit that it is a type of building that I do not like, but that has nothing to do with me. I also notice that the Government intends to make progress with country sewerage extensions. There is no reason why it should not, but I remind the Government that its first responsibility is to ensure that water supplies are provided in those areas that do not enjoy such a privilege so that

the settlers may water their stock. I visited the north-eastern country a short time ago, and the people in that area are desperately short of adequate water supplies. They have been living there for 30 or 40 years and have no permanent source of water. The Government should concentrate on one section when providing water supplies and finish the job.

The present practice of working on one side and then on the other and leaving the centre devoid of water only means that it will be keeping two sections waiting six years instead of having one section finished in three. By completing one section, we would obviate a great deal of water haulage by rail. It is of no use the Government saying, "We are going to supply water for sewerage" when there is no water being provided for stock. I hope the Minister in this House will use his influence in Cabinet to ensure that the Government will realise that its first responsibility is to provide permanent water supplies, and so deal with first things first.

The Government now proposes to build a community hotel at Kwinana. I did not know that some members proposed to ask questions about this subject. For a long time we have had seven State hotels. We hear of people making fortunes out of such licensed premises, and yet our State hotels seem to make only a very small profit. I do not know why it is, because they have a monopoly. I do not think a single State hotel has any competition.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Not one.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, not one. Do not let us build any more State hotels. If a community hotel is desired at Kwinana, let the people there get together and find the necessary cash. That is the correct course to adopt. The people at Cunderdin have a community hotel, and they did not ask the Government to purchase it and hand it over to them.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It is a show place.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know whether it is or not, but it is not a Government function to provide hotels, so let us leave such undertakings alone. If a Bill is introduced for the provision of a hotel at Kwinana, I shall not support it. We should not mislead people into believing that we have plenty of money. Before long the Government will be contemplating erecting picture theatres, or something else. The function of Governments is to govern and ensure that those facilities are provided for the people which they cannot provide for themselves.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about the local governing bodies providing them, as is being done in Adelaide?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That has nothing to do with me. If the local ratepayers want to find the money, that is quite all right. They would give effect to the wish I have just expressed, namely,

that local people should erect their own hotel, but do not let us have any more State hotels. I remember a Labour man, who was Premier of this State for many years, saying to me, "No more State hotels, Latham, so long as my name is so-and-so. Somebody makes a profit, but it is not the Government." He was a wily and sensible chap, and he served his State well and particularly his own people.

The Minister for the North-West: Why did not your Government sell them?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I notice that some of the replies given by the Chief Secretary to the questions about week-end fares seemed to be very weak. He said that passengers travelling during the week-end should not pay anything extra. Would he support the same theory with regard to the people who are running public transport and who receive extra pay for working on Saturdays and Sundays? If they have to be paid overtime because we are making use of their services, we ought to pay extra for our transport.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: It is not a question of "we"; it is a question of those people who do not own cars and who find fares are excessive at the week-end.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are much cheaper than the expense of running a car.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That is why they have to use them.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If I want to save money, I do not use my car.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: But the hon. member can still afford a car; many people cannot.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know it is cheaper to travel by train or tram than by car.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Then why begrudge them cheaper fares?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know they are cheaper than the expense of running a car. Anyhow, I do not think it is a wise move. What would happen if these men objected to working on Saturdays and Sundays? I know I have worked on those days many a time in the past. I think we pamper our people far too much. If they want special services on special occasions, they should be required to pay for the privilege.

Some organisations have asked me to speak about the sexual offences that have been taking place, particularly of late. I know the question is not an easy one to deal with. We convict the people who commit such offences, gaol them, and then they are released. I am satisfied that they are not criminals as we know them, but are suffering from a mental disease. How to deal with the problem I know not. I am aware that many mothers whose children have been victims of this kind of offence do not report the matters to the police because they do not desire publicity, and they know also that there is no

answer to the problem, as yet. I do not know whether the Government has officials who are competent to find a solution, but I would like it to make some endeavour to have something done. Whether a surgical operation on an offender would be effective I do not know. The alternative is to segregate offenders by placing them in a farm colony for many years until they are too old to become a pest to the community.

Hon. A. R. Jones: How old would that be?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The hon. member may know, but I do not. Recently I was asked by a policeman in a town I was visiting to go to the lock-up with him because he had a prisoner there who wanted to see me. This man had been working in the district for a short time, and when he saw me he burst into tears. I wondered why he should be crying, but he said to me, "This is not the first time I have done this, but every time I take to the drink, I cannot stop myself if there are any children around."

Hon. G. Bennetts: The best thing for him is to cut out the booze.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We have not yet been able to provide a method by which we could tell a person to stop drinking, and he would do so. That might be the answer, but how are we to achieve it? I would like to hear Dr. Hislop speak on this subject, because I look to him to give us a lead in that respect. People often say, "It needs the attention of some of these high-falutin' professional men", for whom they have special names. Whether they are specialists who treat mental diseases, or are brain specialists, I do not know; but something should be done. Only recently there was the case of a naked man entering the nurses' quarters at the Princess Margaret Hospital. There is no doubt that there is something wrong with that man's mind, and yet he cannot be confined in an asylum because the doctor who examined him would not certify that he was insane. Therefore, I ask the Government to take steps to inquire into this problem as soon as possible. I admit that a man has to commit such an offence once before we can treat him, but we should not let him commit a similar offence a second and third time.

Many years ago, a great fuss was made about such a case that occurred at Midland Junction. The late Thomas Walker was Minister for Justice at the time, and it was not long after his conviction that the offender was released from gaol, following which he caused Mr. Walker to suffer a great deal of criticism, because the man went to Sydney, and committed a similar offence. At the time, the Press published a statement on the case, and it was that which probably brought it to my mind. The perpetrators of such a crime undoubtedly suffer from a disease

of some sort, but how it can be treated I do not know. Nevertheless, we should have some legislation to ensure that once a man has committed such an offence he should not be given an opportunity of committing a similar offence.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned previously, a great many of these cases do not come to light because the parents of the children concerned shrink from publicity. The Children's Protection Society came into existence to help children, and time and again it has done its best to achieve its objects whenever anything can be done, but I think it is the duty of the Government to take steps to find some remedy for the problem. In conclusion, I hope the relationship between those on this side of the House and those on the other will be just as amicable as it has been in the past.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.59 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 11th August, 1953.

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