

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 9th December, 1953.

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QUESTIONS.

EDUCATION.

(a) As to Course in Oil Technology.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Education:

As the discovery of oil in Western Australia presupposes the establishment of a new industry, will he give consideration to—

- (1) Establishing a technical education course in oil technology?
- (2) Approaching interests concerned in oil production, transport, refining and distribution to provide—
 - (a) instructors;
 - (b) equipment;
 - (c) finance?
- (3) Enlarging the Leederville Technical High School to provide for this course?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Consideration will be given to establishing a course in oil technology.

(2) This suggestion will be given consideration.

(3) The location of the course, if established, is unlikely to be at Leederville.

(b) As to Plans for North Cottesloe School.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

What plans, if any, are intended for the North Cottesloe school in Eric-st.?

The MINISTER replied:

It is intended to erect a Bristol pre-fabricated unit of two classrooms early in 1954.

(c) As to Renovations, Cottesloe School.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Are any renovations or improvements likely to be undertaken at the Cottesloe school for the year 1954?

(2) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is not proposed to make any additions to this school during 1954, but the building is listed for external renovation during the latter part of that year.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(d) As to Additional Accommodation, Mosman Park School.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) In view of the urgent requirements in the matter of additional classroom accommodation at the Mosman Park school, can he, as yet, state what alterations, plans or buildings are contemplated for this school for next year?

(2) When is effective action regarding this matter likely to commence?

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

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A Bristol prefabricated unit of two classrooms has been allocated to this school.

(2) During the first three months of 1954.

(e) *As to Proposed New High School, Midland Junction.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is he able to give an approximate date for the commencing of the first section of the proposed new high school at Midland Junction?

(2) What classes is it proposed to cater for in the new section?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is hoped to commence the earth works for the new high school at Midland Junction towards the end of this financial year and the building of the first section towards the latter end of 1954.

(2) Not yet decided.

TRAFFIC.

As to Hazard from Towed Trailers and Caravans.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Is he aware that numerous cars, not fitted with exterior rear vision mirrors, are used for the towing of trailers, including caravans?

(2) Does the attachment of a caravan prevent rear vision and increase traffic hazards in these circumstances?

(3) Will he take steps to ensure that the public are aware of this danger before the forthcoming holiday season?

(4) If not already covered by regulations will he have the necessary regulations gazetted?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is known that some cars not fitted with exterior rear vision mirrors are used for the towing of caravans and trailers. Police action is taken where breaches of Traffic Regulation 47 (b) are detected.

(2) The attachment of a caravan to a car not fitted with an exterior rear-vision mirror does increase traffic hazards, as the driver's rear vision is usually obstructed in such cases.

(3) Steps can be taken through medium of the Press to make the public aware of this danger before the Christmas holiday season.

(4) This matter is already covered by Traffic Regulation 47 (b).

NORTH-WEST.

As to Request for Income Tax Exemption.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Premier:

(1) Has any reply been received from the Prime Minister regarding exemption of the areas north of the 26th parallel from income taxation, as asked for by resolution of this House this session?

(2) If so, will he lay the reply on the Table of the House?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) Only an acknowledgment of the letter sent by me to the Prime Minister in this matter on the 22nd October last, and an assurance that the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly is receiving consideration.

LANDS.

As to Reservations against Selection.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he prepared to review with the object of changing in bona fide cases, the decision of the Land Settlement Board to refuse to make areas of land available for applicants out of the vast areas of land reserved against selection, particularly in the Stirling electorate?

(2) In particular, where it can be established that development would take place without government financial assistance, is he prepared to take such action in favour of—

(a) sons of existing settlers, especially those too young to have seen active service;

(b) ex-service personnel who have not applied for, and do not desire, assistance under government settlement schemes;

(c) persons with farming experience who have no land elsewhere?

(3) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, providing the land is not in a project area already approved by the Commonwealth and being developed by the State, or a project already submitted to the Commonwealth.

(2) (a), (b) and (c) Yes, subject to the above.

(3) To grant land to applicants in a project area would seriously interfere with the development of the area under the State-Commonwealth plans.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Applications for Rental Homes, Cranbrook.*

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) With reference to his recent statement in reply to a question that a rental home at Cranbrook was allotted to an applicant not entirely suitable because of dearth of applicants, is it not a fact that, in addition to the four applicants referred

to in a recent letter from the secretary, Housing Commission, to the secretary of the Cranbrook Road Board, there were at least two other and very suitable applicants for the home?

(2) Has the practice been discontinued of seeking advice from the local authority as to the merits of various applications for such homes?

(3) If so, will he be good enough to see that such practice is reinstated,

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Of the four applicants referred to, two were no longer interested and one was well housed. One other application from a two-unit family was received after the inspector had left for Cranbrook and other districts, and here again the applicant was housed but expressed concern because the house privately rented by him was to be sold in April, 1954.

(2) Yes.

(3) It is not proposed to reinstate the practice, since the same uniform policy of carrying out inspections prior to allocation will be followed—both in the metropolitan area and in country districts.

(b) *As to Attention to Trees and Lawns, Hamersley Estate.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What was the date when lawns and trees of S.H.C. flats and houses in Hamersley Estate, North Midland, were last given attention?

(2) What was the nature of the attention given?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) It has not been possible to proceed with improvements to this area to the same extent as in others, because the area has been disturbed by sewerage and drainage works, and following this, filling and levelling have been necessary. Further levelling was effected by delivery and spreading of sand late in June this year. It is hoped to effect further improvements as soon as soil conditions will permit.

ROADS.

As to Guildford-rd. Rehabilitation.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

In answer to a question asked by me on the 13th August, as to when it was anticipated that the rehabilitation of Guildford-rd. would be resumed, he replied, "in the coming summer." As summer has now officially commenced, will he inform the House—

(a) when it is intended to recommence this work;

(b) whether it is intended to give priority to that section of the road from the Mt. Lawley subway to Garratt-rd.;

(c) what is the programme for this undertaking?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) Early in the New Year.

(b) Part of the section between Mt. Lawley Subway and Garratt-rd. will be given early priority.

(c) The programme of work will be dependent on legislation now before the House, namely, the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, which seeks to include Guildford-rd. as a road on which traffic fees may be expended by the Minister:

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Minister's Reply re Freights on Shooks.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) In view of the answer to the question on permitting growers to cart shooks without permit, given on Thursday, the 3rd December, when he stated that this was already possible where shooks represent back-loading, what commodities can he instance as likely to provide growers with forward loading to Pemberton?

(2) Does he consider that this concession is of any practical value to the industry generally?

(3) In his answers to Nos. (8) and (9) of the questions referred to, did he base his calculation on the increased cost of freight on shooks only, or did he include the increased freight on the fruit or vegetables being railed to market?

(4) Can he tell the House why, after the 35 per cent. increase in freight on shooks was imposed on the 1st October, a further increase of approximately 100 per cent. was put on this commodity by way of alteration of classification on the 1st November?

(5) Is he aware that the imposing of a freight minimum of five tons has the effect of a further freight increase in the case of some small growers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The items of forward loading to qualify for back-loading are set out in the Transport Act. It is not suggested, however, that shooks can be obtained only at Pemberton.

(2) The exemptions in the Act are a concession to the primary producer.

(3) The increased cost of freight on shooks only.

(4) Freight on shooks had for years been subsidised by Treasury and continuation of this special assistance was not considered warranted.

(5) Yes.

(b) As to Overtures for Purchase of Midland Line.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has the Midland Railway Company in recent months made overtures to the Government to purchase its interest in the Midland line?

(2) What, if any, was the nature of the company's proposition?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) Discussions have taken place between the Government and the company concerning the possibility of making an approach to the Commonwealth Grants Commission for the purpose of obtaining the same consideration covering the company's railway system as the Government receives for its own.

(c) As to Cancelling Increased Freight on Shooks.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Are the following freight charges at the respective dates hereunder mentioned, correct in respect of shooks carried by rail from Pemberton to Mt. Barker (approximately 292 miles)—

Prior to 1st October, 1953—28s. 4½d. per ton, equivalent to 2s. 4.37d. per dozen dumps;

October, 1953—40s. 5½d. per ton, equivalent to 3s. 4.44d. per dozen dumps.

As from 1st November, 1953—80s. 11d. per ton, equivalent to 6s. 8.92d. per dozen dumps?

(2) If so, does he regard this discrimination against the fruit growing industry as fair and if so, how does he justify an increase of between 150 per cent. and 200 per cent. in this case as against other increases of up to 35 per cent.?

(3) Will he take steps to cancel the latest increase, and if not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The correct freight rates per dozen dump cases weighing 1 cwt. 3 qr. are—

Prior to 1st October, 1953—29s. 11d. per ton or 2s. 7.4d. per dozen dumps.

October, 1953—40s. 5d. per ton or 3s. 6.4d. per dozen dumps.

As from 1st November, 1953—80s. 11d. per ton or 7s. 0.9d. per dozen dumps.

(2) Freight on shooks had for years been subsidised by Treasury and continuation of this special assistance was not considered warranted.

(3) The matter is being reviewed.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Use of Fluorine at Norseman.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

Is chemical fluorine being added to the Norseman water supply?

The MINISTER replied:
No.

(b) As to Reservoirs and Pumping Stations, Wellington Dam-Narrogin.

Hon. V. DONEY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Has the work on all projected service reservoirs and pumping stations between Narrogin and Wellington Dam yet been finalised?

(2) If not, what is the position?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No. 1 Pumping Station at Wellington Dam is complete. No. 2 Pumping Station, 28 miles beyond Wellington Dam, is complete except for minor adjustments and the provision of electric power. All service reservoirs are complete. Pumping plant and associated pipe work at Bottle Creek Reservoir, Narrogin, yet to be installed.

(c) As to Laying of Mains, Wellington Dam-Narrogin.

Hon. V. DONEY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What is the total milage of main laid to date between Wellington Dam and Narrogin?

(2) Is the laying of the main still continuing?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is in the negative, what is the date on which the laying of the main is to recommence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Forty-two miles 46 chains.

(2) Yes.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

PARLIAMENTARY ALLOWANCES.

As to Increases.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Premier:

(1) Has a case for additional payments to members of the State Parliament been submitted to a committee or tribunal for adjudication?

(2) If so, who comprised that committee?

(3) What increased payment, if any, was recommended?

(4) Apart from basic wage adjustments, what increases have taken place in members' allowances since 1947?

(5) Including basic wage adjustments, what is the percentage increase in the amounts now being paid to members compared with those being paid in 1947?

(6) What has been the percentage increase in the basic wage since March, 1947?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Chief Justice, Sir John Dwyer; the President of the Arbitration Court, Mr. Justice Jackson, and the Public Service Commissioner, Mr. S. A. Taylor.

(3) North-West members, £135 p.a.; all other members, £85 p.a.; Premier, £250 p.a.; Ministers, £150 p.a.; Speaker, Legislative Assembly, £100 p.a.; President, Legislative Council, £100 p.a.; Chairman of Committees, Legislative Assembly, £50 p.a.; Chairman of Committees, Legislative Council, £50 p.a. Increases were also recommended ranging up to £350 for officers and others in the employ of the State whose salaries are fixed by statute or are decided by Executive Council.

(4) September, 1950—£40.

(5) From March, 1947—93.09 per cent.

(6) 130.2 per cent.

POLICE.

As to Supervision of River.

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Police:

(1) When was the police launch Cygnet withdrawn from service?

(2) As the police performed an excellent service on the river during the past with this launch, is it the intention of the Government to replace it with a modern vessel?

(3) If so, when?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) On the 30th March, 1951.

(2) An immediate replacement was requested by the Police Department, and plans and specifications for a modern launch to serve all purposes, both in the river and outside the harbour, were prepared, but owing to the financial situation funds were not available and the matter was deferred.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

SWAN RIVER.

As to Pollution in Bassendean-Guildford Area.

Mr. BRADY (without notice) asked the Minister for Education:

In view of Dr. Henzell's report as Commissioner of Public Health to the Education Department relative to the unsuitability of the swimming-pools in the Bassendean-Guildford areas, due to pollution, will he make a full-time officer available to consider and report to the Government on the position arising from Dr. Henzell's report, with a view to advising the Government of—

(a) the chief cause of the pollution and its origin as far as can be ascertained;

(b) if a period of time of relative safety for swimming for children can be set out;

(c) if certain well-known government and private establishments are partly responsible for the present position?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member thoughtfully supplied me with a copy of his questions just before the commencement of business. The Government has already appointed an officer to keep the river under observation and have the necessary steps taken to clean up any obvious sources of pollution. Further, consideration is being given to a plan aimed at great improvement in the conditions of the river and its ultimate cleansing so that it will be possible for swimming classes to be held in any part of it.

MEMBER FOR SOUTH FREMANTLE.

As to A.L.P. Executive's Action.

Mr. ACKLAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Can he state whether the report in "The West Australian" today under the heading of "A.L.P. Warns and Pardons Lawrence" correctly sets out the decisions of the executive regarding the member for South Fremantle?

(2) If so, in view of the warning that any future vote by the member against the Government could result in the expulsion of the member from the party, will he take steps to secure a legal opinion as to whether such action, if taken, would contravene any of the provisions of Section 8 of Parliamentary Privileges Act, or Section 61 of the Criminal Code?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) I have no official information covering the report in "The West Australian" newspaper. In any event, the decision of the State executive, whatever it may have been, would have reference only to items that are clearly written into the policy of the Labour Party.

(2) With regard to the latter portion of the question I think there are much more important matters which might be referred by the Government to the law authorities.

FLOURMILLING.

As to Working Short Shifts.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he read the report in today's issue of "The West Australian" headed "Flour Slump Will Go On," and the statement that three flourmills had closed down and others were working short shifts?

(2) In view of the serious effect that the shortage of bran and pollard could have on the dairying and poultry industries, would he indicate whether any action has been taken by the Government to overcome the difficulty?

(3) If so, what action will be taken?

The MINISTER replied:

I have read the report. Naturally it is one calculated to give rise to a good deal of concern. I understand from the report that quite a number of our export markets have fallen off and that some have totally disappeared by reason of the fact that the markets that formerly belonged to this State are now exporting markets for flour in their own rights and naturally are reluctant to form any trade agreement with Western Australia in that regard.

But in view of the fact that this Government had nothing to do with such an unfortunate position as that developing, I find it difficult at this stage, without further investigation, to say definitely what the Government can do in this regard. At the moment it does not seem to me possible for the Government to do very much, but I have asked for a full report to be made and if, following on receipt of that report, it is found possible for the Government to do anything to relieve the situation, it will most certainly be done.

INDUSTRIAL.

As to Stoppage by Waterside Workers.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the waterside workers at Fremantle have engaged in an illegal strike?

(2) Does he realise that that strike constitutes a serious economic loss to Western Australia?

(3) Does he realise that it means a loss of approximately £1,000 to each ship which has to remain for that day within the harbour without being worked?

(4) Will he seek the advice of the Solicitor General as to what action can be taken by the State against the executive—residing within Western Australia—of the Waterside Workers' Federation?

(5) If the advice of the Solicitor General is that action may be taken, is the Premier prepared to take it?

The PREMIER replied:

Nos. (1), (2) and (3) Yes.

Nos. (4) and (5) If I have understood the questions correctly, this seems to be a matter for the Menzies Commonwealth Government.

BILL—PARLIAMENTARY SUPERANNUATION ACT AMENDMENT.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.55] in moving the second reading said: Members of both Houses of Parliament are aware of the steps leading up to the introduction of this Bill. The Parliamentary Superannuation Fund is one in which all members of Parliament are concerned. Some weeks ago the trustees of the fund directed their attention to the matter of putting up recommendations for the consideration of members, for the purpose of making some important alterations to the fund.

At a meeting of members it was decided that the recommendations of the trustees be submitted to a committee. That committee arrived at certain conclusions and placed them before the administrative officer of the fund and asked him to comment on them. Before any finality could be reached between the committee and the officer concerned, time had run on and the end of the session was so close as to make it impracticable for the matter to be proceeded with further during the present calendar year.

That situation was reported to another meeting of members of both Houses and at that meeting it was agreed that no attempt should be made during the present session to alter the set-up of the superannuation fund in any radical way, but that members should content themselves by recommending to the Government that it bring down a Bill to provide for some increases in some of the existing pension rates.]

This measure follows that recommendation. Under it there will be an increase from £5 per week to £6 per week for pensioners who were members for a period of more than 14 years but who contributed to the fund for less than 14 years and for more than seven years. That pension rate operates, as members know, for a period of 10 years. Under the existing Act the pension, for the succeeding period of 10 years, is reduced to £2 10s. per week and under this measure that figure will be increased to £3 per week.

Pensioners under the scheme who were members of Parliament and contributors for a period exceeding 14 years now receive £6 a week, which will be increased to £7 a week for the first ten years and for the succeeding ten-year period, where the present pension is £3 a week, there will be an increase of 10s. per week, bringing the amount up to £3 10s. a week. Those are the proposals contained in the Bill.

Widows, who are in receipt of pensions under the scheme, will come in for an automatic increase if they are within any of the groups I mentioned, because their pensions are set up on a percentage rate of what the husband was drawing at his death, and also on the percentage rate in the second following period. I think

it advisable to give the House some figures in respect of the Parliamentary Superannuation Fund. To the 1st July this year, the total amount paid into the fund by members was £23,956. The total amount paid out to the same date was £11,756. It will be seen, therefore, that the contributions of members have, to date, been more than sufficient to meet the outgoings; in fact, the contributions are practically double the payments made from the fund. In addition to the £23,956 contributed by members, the Government has contributed £8,320.

It will be seen that the State has not yet been called upon to pay anything out in pensions, although the State has contributed to the fund. That money could be regarded as being part of the substantial credit now existing. As members generally will be aware, it is intended, prior to the next session of Parliament, to go much more closely into the existing set-up to see whether it would be reasonable to make major alterations along a number of lines that have been suggested, and doubtless during the next session a comprehensive amending Bill will be introduced. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—PENSIONS SUPPLEMENTATION.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [5.5] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is more comprehensive than the last one I introduced. The superannuation or pensions Act now operating in this State for ex-employees of the Government number three. The first is that which applies to what are known as the 1871 pensioners. The second was passed in 1938 and is known as the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act. That Act covers a considerable number of Government employees in this State, including both those on the salaried staff and those in receipt of wages. The third Act was passed in 1948 to grant pensions to wages men, I think in every instance, who morally could be considered to have been covered by the 1871 Act, but who were excluded legally from the advantage of participating in the superannuation benefits conferred by that Act.

This Bill is a measure quite separate and apart from the Acts I have mentioned and therefore, if passed by Parliament, will become a separate Act. The purpose of this legislation is to supplement various groups of pensioners who receive pensions under the three Acts to which I have referred. The Bill will not grant increases in pensions to everybody receiving benefits under the existing statutes. The increases will apply only to those people who are now in receipt of pension benefits to a figure which does not reach £500. Any person who at present is in receipt of a pension of £500 or over will not benefit from the Bill now being introduced.

It is probably well known that pensions paid under the 1871 Pensions Act and the 1948 Government employees' pensions Act are those to which the pensioners concerned made no contributions during the period they were in the employ of the Government. People who come under the benefits of the 1938 Act were, of course, contributors, although quite a number of them did not contribute very much to the scheme after it came into operation before they were due for retirement, and they retired upon a basis which, from the point of view of their own investment in the fund, was a good basis.

I have a note of some importance on the 1871 Act to the effect that only three officers remain in the employ of the Government to whom the provisions of that Act are certain to apply. They are Mr. J. P. Kirwan of the Lands Department, Mr. Charles Evans and Mr. J. Moore, both of whom are on the teaching staff of the Education Department. There is a fourth employee of the Government whose claim has yet to be considered and decided, and that officer is the general manager of the State Saw Mills, Mr. Gomme. At this stage, there seems to be some doubt whether he will be able to prove his claim.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He will be unlucky if he cannot; I know the circumstances.

THE PREMIER: I have no knowledge of the circumstances of his situation. Most members will know that there has been an increase in pensions under the three Acts since they were first introduced. Under the 1871 Act there was granted, in 1947, an increase of 25 per cent. on pensions of £288 per annum and less. Pensions between £288 and £360 per annum were increased to £360 per annum. Again, in 1951, the pensions in question, up to £260 per annum, were increased by 20 per cent. and pensions between £260 and £650 per annum were increased by £1 per week. Pensions between £650 and £702 per annum were increased to £702.

Increases granted in relation to the 1948 Act, after the passing of that Act, were granted in 1951. In that year pensions were increased by 20 per cent. In practically every case the increase was from

£130 to £156. In 1947 increases were granted under the 1938 Act. The unit scale was increased from 12 to 20 units on a maximum salary or wage exceeding £1,040 per annum. The unit value of all units was increased from £26 per annum to £32 10s. per annum on which the State's share became £19 10s. in lieu of 13s. per annum. In 1951 the unit scale was increased from 20 to 26 units on a maximum salary or wage exceeding £1,664 per annum. The unit value of the first eight units of pension was increased from £32 10s. to £39 per annum on which the State's share became £26 per annum. The value of each unit over eight remained at 32s. 10d. per annum on which the State's share was £19 10s. per annum.

The total number of free pensioners as at the 1st July this year under both the 1871 and the 1948 Acts was 574. The annual cost of the pensions under that heading was £191,500. The whole of that cost, as I mentioned previously, was met by the State. The total number of pensioners under the 1938 Act at the same date was 3,639 and the total annual cost was £530,600, of which only £54,400 was met from the fund, the balance of £476,200 was met by the State. A grand total of all pensions at the date to which I have referred was £722,100 per annum. The fund met £54,500 of that amount and the State £667,770. The charge is naturally a very heavy one on the resources of the State.

It is expected that the commitment of free pensions will lessen; on the other hand, the cost of contributory pensions will increase because of the increase in the number of contributors reaching the retiring age from year to year. It is estimated that the pension costs to the State will continue to increase at the rate of about £15,000 annually until it flattens out at approximately £800,000 per annum. It will be realised by members that this is a very substantial cost on the State. However, this is an obligation that Parliament has established and therefore there can be no quarrel about it.

However, in view of the very large financial burden upon the State in connection with pensions I think it would be generally agreed that there might be no justification, at the present time at any rate, for the granting of increases in pensions to pensioners who are now receiving £500 a year or more in pension payment from the Government. On the other hand, I think we should concentrate at this stage on what we are able to do financially to assist those pensioners on the lower pension rates.

Members will know that many of our lower-rated pensioners were unable to receive the full benefit of the Commonwealth Social Service Pensions scheme because of the limitations imposed by the means test. The recent extension from £78 to

£104 per annum in relation to the means test will permit some of those pensioners to receive more from the Commonwealth, but the total income of a great number will still be below the permissible income of £11 per week for a married couple and £5 10s. weekly for a single person. The Bill has been designed mainly to help those people.

Under the existing Acts we have to continue to pay pensions at the rates authorised by those Acts even though we know that in some cases part of the amount we are paying causes a corresponding reduction in the pension which the Commonwealth has to pay or would otherwise pay. It would be silly to go on supplementing pensions in that manner and so add to the cost to the State without providing any benefit whatever to the pensioners concerned. It is believed that increases in pensions are needed mostly by those pensioners whose total income is less than £500 per annum, and most of all by widows and those whose income, except for social service pensions, is less than £312 per annum. There are 3,593 pensioners who receive a pension of £312 per annum and less. There are 338 who receive a pension of over £312 per annum but less than £500 per annum, and there are 102 only who receive more than £500 per annum.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is the number not exceeding £156?

The PREMIER: They come under the £312 and less, and the number I have mentioned is 3,593.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: They are to receive an extra 10s. a week?

The PREMIER: I will reach that stage of the Bill later on. There are 3,149 who receive £156 and less per annum and 444 who receive between £156 and £312 per annum. There will be 338 receiving between £312 and £500 per annum, and 102 receiving over £500 per annum. In percentages, 78 per cent. receive £156 and less; 11 per cent. receive between £156 and £312; 8½ per cent. between £312 and £500; and 2½ per cent. over £500. Although 78 per cent. of the number are in the lowest grouping, they receive only 57 per cent. of the amount paid out, and the 2½ per cent. of the total number who get more than £500 per annum account for over 9 per cent. of the total outgoing. The reason for this disparity is mainly to be found in the 1871 Act group of 88 pensioners who receive more than £500 per annum and whose average free pension rate from the State is £665 per annum.

I come now to a brief explanation of what the Bill proposes to do. Subject to pensioners being able to accept the amount without a consequential reduction of any social service benefit they may be receiving

from the Commonwealth, it is proposed to supplement normal pension payments in the following manner:—

1871 Act pensions:

An increase of 10s. per week on all pensions up to £156 per annum.

An increase of one-sixth—which is 10s.—to a maximum of £1 per week, on all pensions exceeding £156 per annum, but not exceeding £312 per annum.

An increase of £1 per week on pensions exceeding £312 per annum, but not exceeding £448 per annum.

Then there is an adjustment to bring all pensions that exceed £448 per annum, but not exceeding £500 per annum, up to £500 per annum.

1848 Act pensions:

An increase of 10s. per week on all pensions. The maximum pension under this Act is £156 per annum.

1938 Act contributory pensions:

It is proposed firstly to increase by 10s. a week all pensions of eight units and less—that is, pensions up to £312 per annum in the case of retired contributors, and £156 per annum in the case of widows.

In the second instance, it is proposed to increase by 5s. per week pensions above eight units and not exceeding 12 units—that is, pensions exceeding £312 per annum and not exceeding £442 per annum in the case of retired contributors; and £156 and £221 in the case of widows.

It might appear that pensions under the 1871 Act are going to be preferentially treated because the supplementation in their case may be up to £1 per week in comparison with 10s. weekly to 1948 Act pensioners and contributory scheme pensioners. But it must be remembered that pensions under the 1871 Act do not confer any benefits for the widow of a deceased pensioner. Under the 1938 Act a pension at half rate is payable to the widow. Also, 1871 Act pensioners are, in general, more advanced in age and few, if any, of them would be able to earn any additional income. The 1948 Act amount of 10s. is the same as for the same pension group under the 1938 Act.

The estimated gross annual cost of the supplementation under all heads is slightly more than £108,000 and that will be distributable to a total of 3,931 pensioners in the following manner:—Under the 1871 Act, the total increases will amount to £15,563, which will be paid to 330 pensioners. Under the 1948 Act, the total increase will be £4,056 per annum, and it will be paid to 156 pensioners. Under the 1938 Act, £88,465 will be paid by way

of increase and will be shared by 3,445 pensioners. The grand total will be £108,084 per annum, distributed to 3,931 pensioners.

However, the total of £108,000 is the gross amount which could be distributed under the provisions of the Bill. The actual total payment on an annual basis will probably be less, as a number of pensioners will not be able to accept the full amount applicable to their present pension rate without suffering a reduction of Commonwealth social service pensions. As I said earlier, it would in such cases be silly of the State to pay out additional money to pensioners if the only result was to relieve the Commonwealth social services scheme of payments which it would otherwise be making or, in the event of new pensioners, would have to make.

To assist in obtaining a proper assessment of what each pensioner will be able to receive without reducing Commonwealth social service payments to a particular pensioner, it is proposed to invite pensioners to submit claim forms to the Superannuation Board. Those forms will be sent out with the next pension cheques after the passing of this Bill, and steps have been taken to ensure that no delay will occur in assessing the amount of increase which each pensioner will be entitled to receive as soon as the necessary information has been made available to the board.

It has not been practicable to make an authoritative estimate of the reduction which will have to be made because of the limitations imposed by the Commonwealth means test, but it is possible that it will equal one-quarter of the gross figure of £108,000 that I have given as the distributable sum. If that occurs, the net annual cost of supplementation will be £81,000. The additional annual commitment, including increases to be granted by this Bill, will be £803,000 per annum, on which the charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund will be approximately £749,000. In the circumstances, I think the proposed increases are reasonable. No doubt there will be criticism from some directions.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There is no doubt about that.

The PREMIER: No doubt at all. Naturally people who are on pensions and are having a battle will feel that they should receive more than is proposed. I expect that if greater amounts were proposed, there would still be complaints that they were not sufficient. However, the amounts proposed for the different pension groups will be of some assistance to the pensioners, and will help to ease the battle they are carrying on to live an existence which might be considered reasonable, or nearly reasonable, in this community. The proposed increases will operate from the 31st October of this year which is the most suitable day we can choose nearest

to the date on which the increase in Commonwealth social service pensions commenced. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

**BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES
(PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD)
ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Minister for Education and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [5.33] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is designed to give effect to the desire of the Fire Brigades Board, the Fire Brigades Employees' Union and the Fire Brigades Officers' Association for the provision of a promotions appeal board for permanently employed firemen. Discussion in connection with this matter has been going on since 1951 between the Fire Brigades Board and the two unions concerned. All parties agree to the proposal here, and it is considered that the best way of giving effect to their wishes is to make provision for them to come under the parent Act. Therefore the permanently employed firemen will, if the Bill is passed, be brought within the orbit of the Public Service Appeal Board Act.

Whilst this was going on, opportunity was taken to seek an amendment of the Act to meet a request of the School Teachers Union, which claimed that it had not been consulted on the amendment to the Public Service Appeal Board Act, last year, and it really was opposed to it. Officials of the union explained to me that it was with some surprise that they had noticed that the amendment had been agreed to, because they had not had an opportunity to express their opinion on it.

A number of approaches have been made to me this year for the purpose of amending the Act in order to alter the definition of seniority, as the teachers disagreed with it, but I was unable to agree to the several proposals which the union submitted. Finally, but a very short time ago, the union asked that the provision be deleted from the Act so that the union would be placed in the same position as it was in before the amendment was made.

In view of the fact that it is intended to have a reclassification and a regrading in the department, and that the teachers would be obliged to lodge their appeals under the Act as it stands, they requested

that some alteration should be made so that seniority could be based upon service and not upon salary. They desire that the practice, under which the court acted upon the regulations, which operated before the more recent amendment was passed, shall continue. The regulation dealing with this matter is No. 35, which sets out—

In calculating seniority, the whole of the teacher's service under the department shall be taken into consideration.

Marks for service shall be awarded as under:—

Each year as a monitor	½
Each year as a student in college	¼
Each year as head teacher or assistant	½

The teachers desire that that shall be the basis of calculation for seniority, rather than the amount of salary being received. In order that this shall be so, the Government has agreed to ask Parliament to delete from the Act the most recent amendment made to it. The second part of the Bill deals with this aspect, and it is confined to a straight-out deletion from the definition of that part which refers specifically to teachers. If this provision is agreed to, the teachers will be covered by the general definition of "civil servants." I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. F. Watts, debate adjourned.

**BILL—PUBLIC WORKS ACT
AMENDMENT.**

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**BILL—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
REIMBURSEMENT OF
EXPENSES.**

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [5.39] in moving the second reading said: The Bill proposes to authorise the reimbursement of expenses to members of both Houses of Parliament. The information I gave this afternoon, by way of answers to questions asked by the member for Mt. Marshall indicated that there had been an inquiry recently into the question of members' salaries, or allowances as they are legally known. The recommendations which the Government received as a result of the inquiry by that committee were such that members of the

Government considered they were not appropriate to the needs of the situation. Those who were able this afternoon clearly to grasp the significance of the committee's recommendations would know that for the private member of Parliament, except those in the North-West, the increase in allowances recommended was £85 per annum. The increase recommended for Ministers, in addition to the £85 per annum, was £150, making a total of £235, and for the Premier, £250, making a total of £335.

Increases were also recommended for the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to the extent of £100 per annum and an increase of £50 for the Chairman of Committees in both Houses. The other recommended increase was in the allowance for country members and in that case, in respect of members of the North-West Legislative Assembly seats, and the North Province seats, the amount was £50 per annum.

Members of Cabinet, having had years of experience as private members—and two of them at least as Ministers—considered that the recommendations of the committee did not face up to the situation in which members of Parliament find themselves in a manner which was reasonable in view of all the circumstances. For instance, Ministers are entitled to claim expenses in regard to travelling, hotel expenses when it is necessary for them to travel and live in hotels, and expenses which they properly incur in carrying out their many duties and responsibilities from year to year.

I have a keen recollection of the years during which I was a private member of Parliament. As all members know, I was dependent entirely upon my parliamentary income and I devoted the whole of my time to parliamentary work. During my first period as a private member I was able, because of the very much lower cost of living in those days, to get along, although one had to exercise a considerable amount of care to do that. From 1936 to 1947 I was a Minister and consequentially was entitled to claim expenses in the same way as Ministers normally are allowed, and generally do.

Of course, I received an additional salary as a Minister; but when I became a private member again, following the defeat of the Wise Government in 1947, my experience was that a private member could not get along and do his job as well as he should be able to do it for his people on his parliamentary allowance. May be that was due to a large extent to the very great increase in costs. We need not argue the reasons; all we have to do is look the fact of the situation in the face, and the fact was that one could not possibly carry out one's parliamentary duties in a satisfactory way on the salary available as a private member.

It was that experience, together with the experience of other Ministers in the Cabinet, which caused us, when considering the recommendations embodied in this report, to search our minds for the purpose of trying to find whether there was not some more reasonable method which would ensure that the private member of Parliament would be able to receive an increase, no matter under what heading, in connection with his parliamentary work and duties which would enable him to carry out those duties without involving himself in loss or in any way depriving his dependants of that to which they were entitled.

Members of Cabinet, in their discussions on this matter, considered the angle that every person employed by the Government, whether he be a wages or a salaried man, is entitled to claim expenses when, as a result of the duties which the Government calls upon him to perform, he has to meet out-of-pocket expenses such as might be incurred in travelling, living away from home and in a number of other directions. Therefore members of Cabinet finally came to the conclusion that this was the basis upon which the problem should be approached; the basis that members of Parliament, who inevitably have to incur considerable out-of-pocket expenses from time to time, should be given some recompense for those unavoidable expenses.

If the principle is good enough to apply to the salaried employees of the Government, and if it is good enough to apply to the wages employees, surely it is a fair and reasonable principle to apply to members of Parliament. There is a difference and it is true that the Government, for instance, cannot direct the member for Netherlands or the member for Moore to go to the North-West to look at the oil field development. It cannot direct them to go anywhere to do work for the Government in the same way that the Government can direct a salaried officer or a wages employee.

Nevertheless, a member of Parliament representing a district has to travel not only within his own electorate but also over various parts of the State. In addition, if he desires to fit himself to be a more effective member of Parliament and to do better things for the State, it might be desirable that he travel at least in the other States of the Commonwealth. Is it a fair proposition for a member of Parliament who traverses his own district to serve the needs of his electors, who traverses the State to better inform his mind of the State's development and its future possibilities, or who travels interstate to learn lessons which can be applied to this State, to receive no recompense of any kind? If members ponder that question on the basis of merit—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do you think there would be much pondering about Clause 3?

The PREMIER: —they would come to the conclusion that members of Parliament are entitled to recompense for expenses incurred, which were unavoidable.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you think there should be any proof of expenditure?

The PREMIER: There are members of Parliament today, as there have been in the past, who would have informed their minds a lot more on the State's resources and on the State's possibilities of future development if they could have afforded to travel for those purposes. We all know the number of public undertakings in this State which have been commenced during the past few years. If members of Parliament had been able to visit the localities and investigate the circumstances, those undertakings might have progressed more rapidly and cheaply. Why should a member of Parliament be compelled, through financial considerations, to confine his interest to his electorate? Is that the type of member we would encourage in this State, a member who cannot move outside his own electorate because of financial limitations?

It may be said that not every member depends on his parliamentary income; it may be argued that many members in both Houses have other sources of income, some of which are far greater than their parliamentary salary. Those members are able to travel in the State and to other States. Therefore, the points I raised do not affect them. If the present position continues, there will be two classes of members; one, because of fortuitous circumstances, able to travel within the State, interstate and overseas, and the other restricted to their own electorates. The former have the opportunity of becoming better informed than the latter, no matter how long either may remain in Parliament.

The Government is justified in bringing forward this measure to ensure that all members of Parliament may be given not only the opportunity to become more effective and learn more at first hand about this State, but also to give them the means to use those opportunities. On behalf of the Government, I offer no apology to the House or to the public for trying to introduce a new principle into the statutes of this State. There is every justification for introducing this principle. If I were to qualify the statement, it would be to say that I am very surprised it was not introduced many years ago. In due course, some members of Parliament become Minister of the Crown. The more opportunities we can give to members to study and understand this State and other States, the better fitted will they be to accept ministerial responsibilities. When those members become Ministers, they would return to the State a thousandfold whatever amount might be expended by them under the proposed measure during the years they were private members.

The Bill lays down that members of Parliament who are Ministers of the Crown will not be eligible to draw the reimbursement expenses which are provided in the schedule to the Bill. The reason is that Ministers are entitled to draw expenses which they incur in pursuance of their duties. Another portion of the Bill stipulates that the Treasurer shall, on the application of a member for reimbursement at the maximum rate, or less, as the case may be, cause the reimbursement to be made to the member at the rate applied for by him in such manner and at such time or times as the Crown determines. If this Bill becomes law, some members because of their substantial income, apart from parliamentary salaries, will not desire to draw any of the expenses provided for.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you going to make members prove that they expended the money?

The PREMIER: I am coming to that. Because of affluent circumstances, a member may be able to meet whatever expenses he incurs in performing his duties, and he may not desire to apply for the expenses set out in the schedule. Then he would not receive the expenses at all. On the other hand, there may be some members who could, out of their income additional to their parliamentary allowance, finance part of their expenses in making themselves more effective as members and would not wish to draw the full amount. Some of them might feel satisfied and content in their minds if they drew 75, 50 or 33 per cent., whatever the proportion might be, and so provision is made in the Bill for discretion to be exercised by the member in that direction.

Hon. L. Thorn: You will find that most of them will claim 100 per cent.

The PREMIER: In Committee we propose to move an amendment. I shall explain it briefly now, but perhaps a fuller explanation will be required in Committee. The amendment that the Government has in mind to move is to the effect that where a member does not in a full calendar year apply for the expenses that would be due in that year, he shall forfeit his claim to the expenses that otherwise would have been available to him.

In other words, members will not be permitted to accumulate the amounts over a period of years. If a member does not apply, say, in the year 1954, the expenses to which he would have been otherwise entitled would disappear automatically. A member could not remain in Parliament for three years without claiming expenses year by year, and at the end of that time, or at the end of five years or ten years, retire or be defeated and then claim back expenses over the period whatever it might be.

The schedule to the Bill sets out the amount that would be payable in respect of the different groups of electorates and provinces within the State. The amounts set out are the maximum that may be claimed in any one calendar year. Members on reading the schedule—I am sure none has yet read it—will see that for the Metropolitan, Suburban and West Provinces the maximum amount is £200 a year. That amount applies also to Assembly electorates in the metropolitan area.

For the North Province, generally referred to as the North-West, the maximum amount per year is £400, and for the Legislative Assembly districts in the North-West and also the Murchison district, the maximum is £400. For the North-East and South-East Provinces, both of which are on the goldfields, and for the Assembly electorates of Eyre, Mererdin-Yilgarn and Roe, the maximum per annum is £350. Members representing provinces and districts not mentioned in the groups to which I have referred will be entitled to a maximum amount of £300 in any one year.

I am sure that if the member for Mt. Lawley thinks carefully and perhaps at some length about the question he raised earlier, he will realise that it would hardly be a practicable proposition to operate this system by the use of vouchers. There are so many expenses that a member incurs in carrying out his parliamentary duties for which vouchers could not be obtained.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The member could set them out at least.

The PREMIER: He could set out the items under various headings.

Mr. J. Hegney: He would have to ask for a receipt at each garage where he bought petrol.

The PREMIER: Members of the Government feel that by setting down a reasonable maximum for each group of districts and provinces, and leaving to the members concerned the discretion of applying for the full amount or for some lesser sum, the situation will be met. It would be pertinent to ask how members of the Government arrived at the amounts set out in the schedule. Broadly, those figures were arrived at because they coincided with the amounts previously allowed and still allowed to members of the State Parliament by the Commonwealth Taxation Department.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: If we do not accept this, will the Commonwealth Taxation Department still allow it?

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will allow me to unfold my explanation of the measure, and wait until I sound a warning that I am almost finished, before asking questions, I will be pleased to

answer them. I repeat that the amounts set out in the schedule are broadly—not exactly—those allowed to members of the State Parliament by the Commonwealth Taxation Department as a deduction from their existing salaries in respect of the assessment of those salaries for taxation on the income basis.

As members know, the Taxation Department does not tax members today on their total parliamentary salaries. It says, "it costs the member for so-and-so so much to earn his salary and therefore we will tax him on £300 less than his full parliamentary salary." It was upon the basis of the taxation calculation in that regard that members of the Government arrived at the figures contained in the schedule.

Mr. J. Hegney: They give much more generous treatment to Federal members.

The PREMIER: I believe they do. The member for Mt. Lawley asked whether the proposed reimbursements of expenses shown in the schedule would be taxable. As I understand it, they will not be, but I would point out that if the Bill becomes law, members will then be taxable on their full parliamentary salaries instead of being taxable on, say, £950 or whatever the figure might be.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Even if we do not take this?

The PREMIER: If members do not take this, they will continue under the existing set-up with the Taxation Department, but if the Bill becomes law, this amount will be free from taxation, although the full parliamentary salary will become taxable. It will be seen clearly that the amount set out in these schedules will not be absolutely a net gain to members because those who take them will then be taxable on £200, £300 or £400 of their salaries on which they are not now taxable. Much more could be said in favour of the Bill and especially in favour of the principle which it proposes to include in the law of the State.

At this stage I am prepared to allow the Bill to be judged on what I have said in favour of it and upon what other members might say in favour of it as the second reading debate proceeds. I shall be very happy, when replying to the second reading debate, to answer any questions or explain any points that may be raised. I ask all members to judge the proposals upon their merits and upon the urgent and vital need that exists to enable members of Parliament, especially those who have no other source of income than their parliamentary salary, to travel Western Australia to see what has happened in this State over the years in the past; to study the development that has taken place.

They should be able to confer with people in various parts of the State; to look into the possibilities of the future

and generally to increase their practical knowledge very greatly over what it is today and over what it will ever be unless something is done to make it financially possible, and therefore physically possible, for members to whom I have specially referred to do the things they should be able to do because they are legislators.

They should be in a position to do this because they are public representatives and because of that, whether it be the development in Western Australia or matters in general, members of Parliament, who are not only members for their respective districts but members for the State of Western Australia as a whole, will be able to extend their knowledge.

Mr. Oldfield: One of the finest speeches I have ever heard.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Public Trustee Act Amendment.
- 2, Bank Holidays Act Amendment.
- 3, Returned Servicemen's Badges.
- 4, Declarations and Attestations Act Amendment.
- 5, Fertilisers Act Amendment.
- 6, Companies Act Amendment (No. 1).

BILL—TOWN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (METROPOLITAN REGION INTERIM DEVELOPMENT POWERS).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Reprinting of Acts Authorisation.
- 2, Marketing of Onions Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 10th December, 1953.

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

BILL—ROYAL POWERS.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—ASSISTANCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WIRING DWELLINGS FOR ELECTRICITY.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

As to Rescission of Third Reading Resolution.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.38]: I move—

That, in accordance with Standing Order No. 121, the resolution carried by the House on Thursday, the 26th November, 1953, on the third reading of the State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment Bill, be rescinded.

This is an unusual procedure and I would not like to see it repeated too often in the future. It has been adopted only because I consider that the present situation calls for something of this nature. As a Government we regard this as a very important matter. On the day the third reading of the Bill was put, I was busily engaged with the High Commissioner for Canada and his wife, and I only arrived here, at the House, when the bells were ringing.