

Legislative Council

Thursday, 1st September, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

CATTLE.

Philippines Market and Effect on Broome Meat Works.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Who is responsible for the issuing of permits for the shipment of cattle on the hoof to the Philippines?

(2) How many permits have been issued to growers in Western Australia?

(3) Is it a fact that owing to shipments of cattle to Manila, Broome Meat Works this year will kill only between 4,000 and 5,000 cattle?

(4) Can the Government give any information as to the future prospects of the Manila market?

(5) If the Manila market is not assured for the future, is the Government of the opinion that it is wise to issue further permits which could have the effect of closing up Broome Meat Works?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Commonwealth Department of Commerce and Agriculture.

(2) Permits are not issued to growers. Two permits were issued during 1954, and one during 1955.

(3) It is not known if the cattle to be exported would have otherwise passed through the Broome Freezing Works. It is understood this year's kill will be between 4,000 and 5,000 head.

is what one might call practical politics. I somehow feel that even if we had the three months, there would not be a measure here to cancel or substantially alter the commissioners' recommendations. To cancel them, I feel, would be a very poor reward for their arduous efforts and, I think, successful results.

The Minister for Justice: Members have already had the opportunity of objecting.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That is so, and I understand there were very few objections, and, having their objections heard and determined, I think, all in all, we will be doing a very good job if we let the electoral officer get to work in comfort on the printing of his rolls so that members will not be in the unfortunate position of not knowing who their electors are when the election comes within striking distance. I therefore support the second reading.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): Before moving that the House adjourn, I wish to indicate that the Government will ask members to sit after the tea suspension tomorrow unless the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment Bill has been dealt with before that time I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed

House adjourned at 9.7 p.m.

(4) The Australian Trade Commissioner in the Philippines is optimistic that the trade will continue.

(5) The State Government advised the Commonwealth Government against issuing permits for the export of cattle from those areas from which the Broome Meat Works normally draws its supplies.

EMPLOYMENT OF NATIVES.

Reimbursement of Expenses to Permit Holders.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Chief Secretary:

As the Minister, in answer to my previous questions, indicated that holders of permits to employ natives who had paid insurance premiums to the 30th June, 1955, under the Native Administration Act, had not been directly advised by letter or telegram that their protection lapsed with the proclamation of the Native Welfare Act on the 20th May, 1955, will he now ask the Government to accept a moral obligation and reimburse those permit holders who, through no fault of their own, have been called upon to meet expenses which they had reason to expect would have been met by the department?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No; but if any specific case involving hardship is represented to the department, it will receive due consideration.

COUNTRY CENTRES.

Distance from City.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Chief Secretary:

How many miles (as the crow flies) are there between the Perth Town Hall (or other point from where the distance is taken in the city) and the following towns—

- (a) Gingin;
- (b) York;
- (c) Pinjarra;
- (d) Wundowie;
- (e) Mandurah?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Airline distances from the G.P.O. Perth are as follows:—

	Miles.
To Gingin post office	41.9
To York post office	53.4
To Pinjarra post office	46.5
To Wundowie (centre of townsite)	33.5
To Mandurah post office	40.7

RENTS AND TENANCIES BILL.

(a) Consideration by Legislative Council.

Hon. A. F. GIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is it correct that another place will stand adjourned next week?

(2) Is it his intention to have this House sitting during the course of next week for the purpose of considering a Bill to amend the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is in the affirmative and another place will not be sitting next week what purpose is it hoped to achieve if the Bill is received here and passed through all stages, either on the first, second or third day of sitting, since another place will not be there to receive it when it is returned?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) As far as I know, yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) This is much more difficult to answer. It is problematical whether consideration of the Bill will have been concluded by the end of next week. I would be well satisfied if it were passed through all stages by the last day of the sittings next week.

(b) Finalisation of Discussion and Adjournment of House.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

In the event of this side of the House giving its assurance that on the Tuesday following next week members will be prepared to sit early and continue late to finalise any discussion on the Rents and Tenancies Bill, would he give consideration to that undertaking with a view to agreeing not to sit next week?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

All queries will receive due consideration, and I will let the hon. member know later about that matter.

(c) Urgency.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Does the Government feel that the consideration of the Bill to amend the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act is a matter of urgency?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

To the extent that certain portions of it expired on the 31st August, the answer is that the Government does consider it urgent that consideration of the Bill be completed as soon as possible.

MOTION—TRAFFIC ACT.

To Disallow Stop Sign Subregulation.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [4.45]: I move—

That new Subregulation (1) of regulation No. 191 made under the Traffic Act, 1919-1954, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 9th August, 1955, and laid on the Table of the House on the 16th August, 1955, be, and is hereby disallowed.

I submit this motion because I believe that the drafting of the regulation is not satisfactory, and drivers of vehicles are far from clear as to what is intended by it. One has only to travel around the city and observe the action taken by drivers when approaching stop signs to see that they do not comprehend what is intended under the regulation. The intention, as advised by the Traffic Department, is that when a vehicle or animal approaches a stop sign, it must be stopped and the driver must ensure that the approaches from the right-hand side are clear of any other vehicle or animal before proceeding.

A number of drivers are interpreting this to mean that if they are at an intersection or junction, where the intersecting road or the road running into the junction has a stop sign, they have the right of way, even if they have a driver on their left who has pulled up at a stop sign. That impression has been created because of the manner in which the regulation is framed. I will read the regulation to the House. It is as follows:—

Where, pursuant to Regulation 297 a sign with the word "STOP" is marked erected or placed on a road at the approach to an intersection or a junction, a person shall not drive a vehicle or an animal into the intersection or junction without first stopping the vehicle or animal and ensuring that the intersection or junction, as the case may be, and the approach thereto from his right-hand side is sufficiently clear of traffic to allow him to drive with safety into the intersection or junction.

In other words, taking this regulation as it has been printed, a man approaches a stop sign and stops the vehicle or animal he is driving. He then looks to his left and his right to ensure that the road is clear. Then he makes sure that on his right the road is clear and he proceeds. At the same time, a vehicle comes from his left, and a collision occurs. If it came to a legal argument, the person approaching from his left, under the present regulation, would not be held to be the responsible party; the responsible party would be the person who proceeded from the stop sign after stopping.

The Chief Secretary: You are not prepared to anticipate what a legal decision would be?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am.

The Chief Secretary: Then you are more game than I am.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am, because I know how magistrates treat technical breaches such as these. If there ever were a case like the one I have related, a magistrate would have one only judgment to give, and that would be to hold the man who left the stop sign responsible. Had the Chief Secretary studied the regulation closely, he would realise that to be so. If one word had been added and one had been

deleted, the intention would have been properly conveyed. I will read to members what I think should be the wording—

Where pursuant to Regulation 297 a sign with the word "Stop" is marked, erected or placed on a road at the approach to an intersection or a junction a person shall not drive a vehicle or an animal into the intersection or junction without first stopping the vehicle or animal and ensuring that at the intersection or junction as the case may be, the approach thereto from his right hand side is sufficiently clear of traffic to allow him to drive with safety into the intersection or junction.

In other words, the regulation would adhere to the rule of a motorist giving way to the man on the right.

Regulations—particularly during the past twelve months—have been altered and added to quite considerably, and motorists are becoming confused as to the meaning of a lot of them. It was provided, for instance, that on a major road, a driver had the right of way and anybody approaching such a road gave way. Then there were normal roads where the motorist gave way to the man on his right. Now there are no major roads, and everywhere the motorist has to give way to the man on his right. When a driver is proceeding along a road and is confronted by a stop sign, he should conform to the usual rule of giving way to those on his right.

I could take the Chief Secretary to the intersection of Loftus-st. and Scarborough Beach-rd. and show him what happens there. The traffic is fairly heavy along Scarborough Beach-rd. If one proceeds along Loftus-st. he encounters a stop sign at the junction of the two thoroughfares. If he stops at the sign, traffic from both sides continues to pass. The man on his left entirely ignores him because he is at a stop sign. It does not matter if he is 100 yards from the road, he will travel past at 35 to 40 miles an hour.

The Minister for the North-West: What is the limit?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: He ignores the rule which requires him to give way to the motorist on his right. This regulation is responsible for that state of affairs, on account of the way it is drafted. It does not clearly set out that even though a motorist is at a stop sign the driver on whose right he is stationed has to give way to him. That could result in serious accidents, simply because the regulation is interpreted by some people in one way, and by others in another way.

My idea in moving the motion is to have the meaning of the regulation made clear. Then there will be no danger, because people will know what they have to do. Fortunately the majority of drivers

are becoming more careful at intersections; but recently there was a very nasty accident at an intersection of Loftus-st., where there are two stop signs. I would not like to say who was responsible; but two people were killed, and this regulation may have had quite a lot to do with the accident.

The Chief Secretary: You do not know the circumstances, but you would attribute the accident to this regulation!

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It could be attributed to this regulation.

The Minister for the North-West: What amendment does the hon. member suggest?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I suggest that the word "at" be inserted before the words "the intersection" in line 7 of the regulation as printed and that the word "and" after the words "may be" in line 8 be deleted. That would give a correct interpretation of the regulation, which I trust will be disallowed by the House so that it can be redrafted and its meaning made clearer to the motoring public.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Spear-guns Control.
- 2, Main Roads Act Amendment.
- 3, University of Western Australia Act Amendment.
- 4, Electoral Districts Act Amendment.
Received from the Assembly.

MOTION—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT.

To Disallow Petrol Pumps By-laws.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. L. A. Logan:—

That amendments to Road Districts (Petrol Pumps) By-laws, 1934, made by the Department of Local Government under the Road Districts Act, 1919-1951, published in the "Government Gazette," on the 27th May, 1955, and laid on the Table of the House on the 9th August, 1955, be and are hereby disallowed.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [4.58]: Having listened to Mr. Logan when he moved his motion, and having heard his objections to these by-laws, I felt it incumbent upon me to obtain some figures in order to inform him, and those who might be thinking as he thinks, of the exact position in the metropolitan area with regard to the siting of service stations.

In answer to an interjection by me, the hon. member said that he did not know of any garage proprietors who had gone broke. He also said that it was the right of the companies to build service stations

wherever they wished, and a regulation should not preclude them from doing so. To a degree, I feel he is correct. A person attempting to go into business has certain rights. If he decides to invest a sum of money in a milk bar or a garage—I regard a garage as being different from a service station—he should have the right to do so. But when it comes to large and financially powerful organisations in the Commonwealth taking over the control and running of these service stations it is a different story.

I feel that the local authorities in the metropolitan area, which have the right to say that a service station can be built in a certain locality, should also have the right to say that one cannot be built in a certain area. The Fremantle City Council was one of the first that saw the error of so many service stations being built to the detriment of the livelihood of the proprietors of service stations who had carried on business for many years. Those people had invested their money in their business until it had grown to such proportions, as to enable them to get a reasonable profit from it. But from the time the one-brand service station came into being, a different story has prevailed.

Prior to the advent of the one-brand service station, anyone who decided to build a station would make arrangements with an oil company to supply pumps; he would be overwhelmed with advances from the representatives of the companies to use their pumps. When the one-brand stations came into being, although the contracts signed by these people were concerned with petrol and oil, it was not long before they found they were under the direct control of the company whose name appeared above their station. It is known that there has been a restriction of trade as a result. To illustrate my point, a person could be running a Caltex station and desire to carry Wakefield oils. He would soon find that the Wakefield oils would not be allowed on the station. I mention this merely as an illustration and not in a derogatory manner at all.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you think this regulation will stop that from operating?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That is another bit of power that is being wielded by these bigger organisations over the trade and commerce of the service station and garage proprietors of this State.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is not a direct answer to my question.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Following what Mr. Logan has said, I want to say that certain figures regarding petrol outlets, vehicle registrations, and the petrol actually retailed were quoted. These figures will stand up to any investigation. The hon. member took the year 1948 as a base. The overbuilding of service stations has been evident only since 1951. In answer

to an interjection, he said that the year 1948 was chosen because it was possibly the end of the rationing period.

Hon. L. A. Logan: No, I did not.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The end of the rationing period was not until the Menzies Government overthrew the Chifley Government on "a pound of butter and a gallon of petrol" on the 10th December, 1949. So the end of the rationing would not have come into operation until at least January, 1950. To quote the year 1948 is completely unfair, as the petrol trade was then under rationing; and, like many other industries, was just finding its feet after the war years.

On a comparison of the two periods it was mentioned that petrol retailing had increased by 105 per cent. since 1948. If an industry did not increase by 105 per cent. from 1948 to 1955 there would be something wrong with it, because everything else has gone up by 100 per cent. The oil industry, on its own admission, sold 505,000,000 gallons of petrol to resellers in 1954 as against 263,000,000 gallons in 1948, an increase of 92 per cent. Yet it argues, and reasonably so, that the price of petrol today, even allowing for this increase, has to be higher than it was in 1948. Remember, there has been no alteration to date of the number of companies marketing in Australia.

Again, the oil companies say that there has been only a 24 per cent. increase in petrol outlets; yet when it is considered that the main problems associated with new petrol stations concern the metropolitan area, it is evident that the whole subject must be considered as a problem affecting the metropolitan road boards and councils, in the main, and the larger country towns. In this regard, petrol outlets in the metropolitan area—that is, Perth—have risen since 1951 from 214 selling points to 417. Petrol sales by resellers up to June, 1954—the latest date for which figures are available—have increased from 17,333,496 gallons in 1951—the figures for 1951 were supplied by the managers of the oil companies as their sales through metropolitan outlets—to 22,333,343 gallons in 1954. The figures for the expired portion of 1955 are not yet known.

The increase on the figures I have quoted is 28.8 per cent., while the petrol retailing points in the metropolitan area have increased by 95 per cent. I make that point very clear. The oil industry, on its own admission through publicity pamphlets, stated that in 1954 there were 13,584 reselling sites selling 505,000,000 gallons in Australia. This gives us a monthly throughput for each reseller of only 3,098 gallons per month.

It is known by members that for a considerable time I was employed on the delivery of petrol in this State, and I can say that any garage that is down to a

3,000 gallon throughput would need a very good workshop or other business so that it could make a living. At the present time a reasonable throughput would be not less than 8,000 gallons a month, whereas the average throughout the Commonwealth is 3,098 gallons. The oil companies must agree that this throughput is insufficient for a service station. I would go further and say, referring to the year 1948, that the oil industry very cleverly clouded the issue; that is that the real problem of the overbuilding of service stations has arisen since 1951 when a tied-house system was introduced by the industry, and when the oil companies first took over as retailers as well as wholesalers. That is another retrograde step. They want it coming and they want it going.

It is obvious that the problem is not one affecting most country centres where petrol is of little consequence to the garage operators because there is so much direct competition from the oil companies selling in drums. Again referring to the metropolitan area, new petrol outlets mushroomed from August of 1951 to June, 1955, by 95 per cent., while motor-vehicle registrations in that period increased by only 44.5 per cent. This is something that the oil companies do not tell us. During this period the decrease in the average number of vehicles calling at each service station has been 68. In 1951 there was a service station for every 284 motor vehicles as against one for every 216 this year.

These figures again refer to the metropolitan area, where the problem is far more pronounced, and where the aforementioned by-laws have been mainly adopted. Summarising, I ask: Is it reasonable that service stations should be losing gallonage since the introduction of one-brand marketing only because the oil companies desire to market their products on a single-brand system? At a time like this the service stations should be increasing their gallonage.

Undoubtedly an examination of the figures continually quoted by the oil industry and bearing on the period 1948-54 shows that a true comparison must be made on two important points—

- (1) What has happened since the overbuilding actually started in 1951; and
- (2) the problem of overbuilding faced the public and the service station proprietor only in the metropolitan areas.

The inclusion of pumps in front of stores, butchers' shops, co-operatives, and so on, in small country towns, is of little consequence for it is not in these centres that the oil industry is spending millions of pounds in building modern so-called super stations.

Frankly, if private enterprise were permitted to take its course, many of the stations built and being built would not be erected, because the law of supply and demand would not warrant them.

Further, to answer the remark made by the hon. member in reply to my interjection, namely, that he knew of no service station proprietor who had gone broke—I have a list here of all the service stations in the metropolitan area, which I will lay on the Table of the House for the information of members.

As is known, the oil companies have formed an association between themselves as also have the garage proprietors. The Garage Proprietors Association place the service stations in various zones. For example, in the Canning zone there are the Armadale garage; Mathmotors, Armadale; Miricorp No. 2; Kenwick service station; Maddington garage; Queen's Park service station; Joyce Bros. and Riverton garage. Several of those garages have changed hands many times. Of the eight mentioned, five have changed hands twice and three have changed hands on three occasions. The figures I am quoting are for the 12 months ended the 31st August.

In the southern zone, which includes Carlisle and the Victoria Park area, seven service stations have changed hands twice; two a third time; and one, because a new proprietor cannot be secured, is now being run by the Caltex Oil Co. That is the Caltex service station in Shepperton-rd.

In the Mt. Lawley zone, six service stations have changed hands twice; three a third time; and one a fourth time; all in 12 months. In the Claremont zone the Caltex service station in Stirling Highway is now occupied by a fourth tenant and the following are all occupied by second tenants:—Highway Motors, Stirling Highway; Sea View garage, Stirling Highway; Gascoignes garage, Stirling Highway; Ampol service station in Stirling Highway at Mosman Park; and the Windsor garage, Nedlands.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Are they all making a capital increase when they sell?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Under their contracts with the oil companies, they have no goodwill when they sell. With a company-owned station, the lessee agrees to pay a rental and an amount for goodwill of a minimum of £5 per month, which is based on the gallonage sold. If the gallonage is increased to more than a certain figure the goodwill is increased.

The position is somewhat similar to the set-up provided by "The West Australian" newspaper. If I were running a garage and I wished to sell my lease to someone else, I could do so only according to the terms of the contract I had with the oil company which owned that service station. It would have the full say as to whom I would sell it to. I have been given to understand that the reason these

service stations have changed hands on so many occasions is that, in the great majority of cases, the lessees have lost their money and have been forced to quit the business. There are some, of course, who have made a reasonable sum and who got out while the going was good, because they saw the writing on the wall.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: How many went through the bankruptcy court?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: As I told the hon. member the other evening, he has access to the bankruptcy court and the time to go there; but apparently he has not done so, because he has not the information at his disposal. In the Perth city zone there is the Luxor service station in Stirling-st. When I was delivering petrol, that was one of the garages I used to serve; and in those days it was known as the key petrol station of the metropolitan area. That service station has changed hands three times in the past 12 months. It must be remembered, of course, that all the service stations in the city zone are leading garages. However, eight of them have changed hands twice, and three of them a third time.

In the Fremantle zone, which embraces 11 service stations, 10 have changed hands twice, and one of them a third time; and, in the Wembley zone, five garages have changed hands twice, and one a third time. On these figures there is a total number of 77 service stations that have changed hands, and I would like members to note that 45 of them are company-owned. In other words, 58.4 per cent. of the service stations that have changed hands are company-owned. These changes have all taken place over the period of 12 months.

Hon. L. Craig: It is no different with houses. Most of the homes built by the Government over the past few years are now owned, not by the original tenant, but by someone else.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The position of the tenants of service stations is very grim. As under the American system, the large companies in Western Australia and in other States of the Commonwealth have spent an enormous sum of money on the building of these service stations. Mr. Craig was perhaps quite correct when he said that, looking to future business, these oil companies have secured land which, in 10 or 15 years' time, would be unprocurable. They cannot be blamed for that.

Nor can we blame a by-law which gives road boards and municipalities the right to say where these oil companies shall build their service stations. We do not want to see in this State of ours a great number of buildings which are erected purely and simply for a specific purpose, and some of which, in the future, will become white elephants and will be of no use to the community as a whole.

In answer to another interjection made last night in regard to service stations situated on railway property, I would like to tell Mr. Baxter that Mr. Ross Hutchinson M.L.A. and I, on behalf of Gascoigne's garage, in Stirling Highway Claremont, went to the railway authorities who allocate these tracts of land, in an endeavour to get a piece of ground on the corner of Stirling Highway and Victoria-st., directly opposite to the service station we were representing. I would mention, by the way, that this garage is owned by the proprietor.

The object of trying to secure this piece of ground for the building of a service station was to save motorists crossing the highway to enter the premises which are now occupied by Gascoigne's Garage. The request we made was refused. We took the matter to the Minister, and he supported the Railway Department by saying that the next garage along Stirling Highway—Le Lievre's service station—south of Victoria-st., was less than a quarter of a mile away. As a result of the interjection made last night by the hon. member I ascertained that that is still the policy of the Railway Department. It will not grant a piece of land on its own property within a quarter of a mile of another station.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It has done so at Guildford, and you know that yourself.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I have not been to Guildford. I have given some facts to the House, which it probably did not have before, and the reasons the petrol resellers in this State are so concerned about the octopus-type grab that has been made by the oil companies. I oppose the motion.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Tenth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. F. WILLESEE (North) [5.26]: With other members, I offer my congratulations to you, Sir, on the new appointments that have been added to this Chamber. There is little I can add to what has already been said by previous speakers. However, there is no doubt that the improvements are striking and effective, and will prove of great comfort to members.

I also express regret at the absence from this Chamber of the late Messrs. Boylen and Henning. Although I did not speak to the condolence motion that was moved in this House—I left such remarks to those members who knew those two gentlemen better than I did—I do express regret at their passing, and I know that we will feel their loss more and more. Their places will be filled in due course; but their loss will be felt for many years to come.

A great deal of publicity has been given to the increase, in various forms, of wages, and also to the fact that old-age pensioners have been requesting and more or less begging, the Commonwealth Treasurer to provide for an increase in their pensions in any Budget he submits. I am wondering whether it would not be possible to assess the computation of the old-age pension on the basic wage, so that it would be free from political interpretation of what the amount should be. If that were done it would enable the aged people of our community to have a full knowledge of what they could expect.

It would not be beyond the realm of possibility, I imagine, for the Federal Treasurer to grant to old-age pensioners an amount that is equal to half the basic wage, with the right to earn additional income to the limit of the basic wage. It seems to me that a man who has been in employment for a period of years, and has attuned himself to one way of life, must feel completely out of place in the community when, overnight, he is discarded, and is told that for the remaining years of his life, he must live on what is merely a pittance. He is, of course, forced to dissociate himself from his former colleagues and get used to a new way of life. While it has not been done over the years, it is too late to make some statutory declaration on the basic wage so that we can budget, as it were, for a definite standard of living under the pension scheme to provide for those who turn 65 years of age.

For many years the local authorities have fought against the principle of non-payment of rates on houses owned by the State and Commonwealth Governments. Some measure of success has been attained by those authorities in that some departments, such as the Department of Civil Aviation, have admitted their liability to pay rates on properties within the districts of road boards and municipalities.

Civil servants who occupy such properties find that they are in most cases debarred from enrolment as ratepayers. Under the Act there is a difficulty, and a ruling has been given by the Director of Civil Aviation that in his opinion these civil servants are not entitled to the privileges of ratepayers, even though they may be classed as ratepayers under the Act.

That ruling is most unfair to those concerned, particularly those in my electorate. They have brought fresh blood to municipal problems, and I feel sure they would lend great strength to road boards and municipalities if they had the opportunity of taking part in the discussions of problems affecting them. I hope to see the Act amended so that the people I referred to will be granted the right, which they fully deserve, to meet on equal terms with other ratepayers. It seems most un-

fair that they should be debarred from the privileges of ratepayers because they are civil servants.

Regarding the recommendations for the development of the North-West which are being considered by the Commonwealth Government, it is ultra vires for me to comment on them at this stage, because they have been submitted on such a wide basis. It is not possible at the moment for me to add to those recommendations; nor will anything be gained by discussing them at great length. The recommendations affect the blue asbestos industry at Wittenoom Gorge, an industry which has spent over £1,000,000 in establishing itself, and which has a payable output for the next 35 to 40 years; and it should be given priority in the recommendations for the development of the North-West. It is hoped that the Federal Government will keep in mind that industry and will give the recommendations made concerning it No. 1 priority.

Taxation concessions for people residing in the North have been frequently urged, from the day of the formation of the Northern Rehabilitation Committee, a non-political body. I hope that some beneficial result will be achieved by a final approach to the Commonwealth on this matter.

I was somewhat disappointed to learn that the bituminisation of the Geraldton-Carnarvon road was based on an estimated expenditure of £1,250,000. Assuming that the Commonwealth Government agrees to meet this expenditure on a £ for £ basis with the State Government, there is still the problematical completion period of five years. I submit in my humble way that if we were reimbursed the full amount of road tax due to the North as levied by the Federal Government, we would be able to build the road in bitumen and finish it within five years. If we are to get £1,250,000 on a 50-50 basis, and we can complete the road in five years, it will at least be something achieved. I certainly hope that in this House I shall not have to continue to urge the construction of this road for the next five years.

I was greatly interested to hear Mr. Murray refer to a man who had given much thought to a problem, and when he overcame it, found that he had been completely overlooked and that thanks that were due to him were not tendered. When he spoke, I could not help but think of the need for building a post office at Shark Bay. The Minister for the North-West took that matter up long before I was a member of this House. He enlisted the aid of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate to achieve this objective, and I have followed much the same course since. But always the reply to any representation has been in the negative.

I have pursued this matter to a great extent, and I cannot understand why a post office cannot be built in that township when post offices are being built in other centres. I discovered there was a very secret formula associated with the building of post offices by the department, and that it was difficult to find the person handling the formula so as to get a concrete answer. I do not know who controls this formula; it is a well-kept secret. The only thing left to do is to keep on trying until we get to the bottom of that secret. Somewhere within the bounds of red tape the destinies of post offices are controlled. I have yet to be convinced that the little township of Shark Bay does not warrant a post office. It would not only be of great benefit to the people who live in the township, but also to the tourists who now flock to that centre as a result of the establishment of an air service within the last 12 months.

Six months before this service was inaugurated, one person was prepared to bet me £50 to nothing that no plane service would ever be given to Shark Bay. The post office looks as remote now, as did the air service then. By a concerted effort it is possible to bring the mysterious formula out into the open and the subject of a post office at Shark Bay can be discussed on its merits. When ultimately the post office is opened I will look forward to the opportunity of sending a telegram to my family in these terms: "I am leaving by plane and will be home tonight." There seems to be nothing else but obstinacy in the departmental bar to progress. We have succeeded in overcoming one obstacle at Shark Bay by getting a plane service, and we shall overcome the other in course of time.

During last session I spoke on the subject of clay banks across the Gascoyne River. Much has been said about these and I do not intend to enlarge on the points raised. The position is that the proposed clay banks are as urgently needed now as they were then. In the last 12 months the banana-growers were extremely lucky in getting water from a river which, in the normal course of events, would not have supplied it. This alleviated the difficulty for a while, and the growers were able to carry on in the last 12 months.

Considerable exploration work has been done by the departmental geologists to determine whether the proposed scheme would be possible, and whether the clay banks would be a safeguard against the lack of water. After an expenditure of about £8,000, a doubt still remains as to whether the scheme would be entirely satisfactory. There is no absolute certainty that it would be successful. The time has come when no further money can be spent for lateral exploration, and a decision must be made as to whether the project should be continued. I would like to see the banks laid, in the first instance, where they could not do any possible harm to

growers below the proposed site. I think there would be considerable advantage if bird's-mouth sheeting, with a light pile stabilising frame, were put down, rather than the clay banks as suggested, because with a watertable halfway through the sands it would be possible to drive the sheeting into clay. It is possible to drive tongue and groove sheeting very tightly to make it waterproof, so that water would not percolate out of the sand through it.

The boring process can be handled when there is a certain amount of water in the lower portions of the sands and when water is not needed urgently by the growers. That having been done, readings could be taken to see if there is any rise in the water level, because the supposedly underground river should meet the embankment. Readings could be taken to ascertain whether there would be fluctuations when the water was drawn and pumped, at the point where the first bank was put in. This is a matter for the experts.

If it is possible to work along the lines I have suggested, then the sooner it is done the better, because under existing conditions the growers cannot always expect to be lucky enough to get water from the river. If it were decided to wait until such time as the river was depleted of underground water before laying the clay banks, or if the clay banks were put down in the wrong place, the banana-growers would be deprived of the many advantages which they derive from the river at present as, and when, it does run.

With regard to the banana industry, marketing is still a major problem. Apart from the inadequate supply of water, prices during the months of January, February and March of this year were below the cost of production. The growers have endeavoured to grapple with the problem from the angle of transport charges, which are very high, and this has resulted in a decision to call for tenders for the transport of the fruit from Carnarvon to the market. The Transport Co-ordination Act has been used in an endeavour to ensure that the fruit is transported by railway, and growers feel that the Act is detrimental to the progress of the industry and of no benefit to the North-West. Cabinet has now agreed to the calling of tenders for through transport each way. If this were arranged, there would be a much more expeditious delivery of the fruit to the market, and it would arrive in better condition.

I was greatly interested in the experiments being carried on at the Roebuck Plains Station near Broome, under the direction of Mr. Grant Smith, adviser of the Department of Agriculture. Two lots of 25 head of station cattle are being grazed in alternate paddocks monthly. It is well known that the feed on the property is not 100 per cent, and

in an endeavour to determine the soil deficiencies, one lot of cattle is being given selected minerals in the drinking water. These minerals are intended to compensate for soil and plant deficiencies. A weighbridge has been erected and a monthly check is made so that comparisons may be drawn as the experiment proceeds. The object is to build up a bigger and better class of beast for earlier marketing. This is a very progressive experiment and is well worth attempting, because something must be done along those lines if we are going to ensure the progress of the industry.

I was surprised to find on the same property that experiments have been undertaken in artificial insemination, and it is interesting to know that some success has already been recorded in this direction. I consider that experiments such as these are of the utmost value to the cattle industry, and, if successful, will open up a vast field for improvement in stock husbandry in the Kimberleys.

Earlier in the year, I accompanied the member for Kimberley on a visit to Cockatoo Island, Yampi Sound, where a request was made that the children should be afforded an opportunity to make a trip to Darwin as a means of helping them to broaden their knowledge. They had been deprived of a trip to the mainland in the previous year because it was considered to be in the interests of the children to keep them away from the summer school being conducted by the Education Department on account of the prevalence of trachoma. The approach through the progress association was that if arrangements could be made for the children to have a trip to Darwin, it would compensate for what they had lost last year.

We contacted the State Shipping Service through the Minister and the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Mr. Wise, who was most enthusiastic about the proposal and offered his full co-operation. To our amazement, the proposal was not supported by the Education Department, on the ground that if this concession were granted to the children at Cockatoo Island, it might be regarded as a precedent in the metropolitan area. To me it does not seem to be consistent with the great enterprises that can provide a million for this scheme and a quarter-of-a-million for another scheme to be refused a request involving the expenditure of £175 to give these children, who are already living in the North, something by way of compensation for what they missed in a previous year through no fault of their own.

While talking on the question of creating precedents, I may mention that I was approached by a man who was prepared to install an expensive freezing plant in his retail shop in one of the most remote townships in the North. The cost of the plant was £4,500, of which £500 represented

sales tax. In the hope of obtaining relief from the sales tax, Senator Willesee and I approached the Taxation Department here, but could get no satisfaction. This was a case meriting special consideration, and so we put up a personal plea to the Federal Treasurer asking for assistance on the ground of hardship. From him we received a reply that he could not do anything as it might create a precedent.

Well, the McDonalds, Quiltys and Duracks did not consider precedent when they settled in the Kimberleys, and their sons are still there. In fact, if we stood on precedent, there would be no one in the North, and if we as representatives of the people cannot receive greater consideration after putting up a case than to be told it would create a precedent, I fear we are lagging behind our conception of a democratic form of government.

The arc light of publicity needs to be turned on the North, particularly as regards future development, and there is a great field in that part of the State to help those who are already there. If we do not look after those who already live there, we shall certainly not be able to put up a very strong case to induce others to go North.

I have always felt that the briefest and most effective definition of democracy was government of the people, elected by the people, for the benefit of the people. The elected personnel in any area has a direct responsibility to the people to present their views and requirements, and this should be paramount, whatever direction may be indicated. If such representation is to be continually overridden and at times completely ignored, there must follow hardship and loss of confidence by people in democratic government.

The function of government must be to govern for the advantage and advancement of the people, and I am beginning to wonder whether democracy, in an endeavour to facilitate the function of government, has not formed instruments of government which, as time goes on, are usurping the powers of government. The first essential of good government—and this is a cardinal rule—is that it must be a government for the people, and this treasured right must never be subordinated to any alienated control.

Consequently, I hope that the remarks I have offered will not be regarded lightly; and if, 12 months hence, I still have the privilege of being here and participating in the Address-in-reply debate, I trust that some measure of progress will have been made, particularly in the direction of treating North-West minor problems on their merits and with a true perspective as regards the background of such problems.

On motion by Hon. H. L. Roche, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.57 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 1st September, 1955.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

"CHAMPION" TRACTORS.

(a) Component Parts.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) With reference to the latest tractor (45 h.p. diesel "Champion") produced by Chamberlain Industries Pty. Ltd., what components of this tractor are being imported into Western Australia.

(a) from overseas;

(b) from Eastern States?

(2) What is the approximate cost delivered to the works at Welshpool of each of the items imported?

(3) How many of the imported component parts have been ordered to date?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Engine, bearings and some minor items not procurable in Australia are imported from overseas.