

realise the benefits we would enjoy throughout the State because this is a large sum of money to be going out of Western Australia each year; and in this instance it is not going to the Eastern States, but overseas to companies in America and Holland.

I feel, therefore, that steps should be taken to ascertain why it is necessary to have this rapid increase in the cost of fuel, because unfortunately, Australia being a large country with few people, and with great distances between centres, we are dependent upon transport more than any other country in the world, and the time is rapidly approaching when we can be held to ransom by overseas oil interests at any time they wish to wield the sword of Damocles. I leave that thought with the Government, and I hope that by the next time we are afforded the opportunity of debating on general subjects, we will have more information about the matters I have touched on tonight.

On motion by Mr. Sewell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.43 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1956.

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QUESTIONS.

MARSHALLING YARDS.

Location and Land Resumptions.

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

(1) Has the Government decided the exact position of the marshalling yards and the area of land required for the yards in the Welshpool-South Belmont area?

(2) If so, is the Government prepared to make known particulars of any intended resumption?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The design and location plan are being prepared.

(2) The Government will advise all land-owners affected as soon as possible after a plan of the area involved is completed.

KALGOORLIE EXPRESS.

Morning Tea for Second-Class Passengers.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has the service of morning tea to second-class passengers on the Kalgoorlie express ceased?

(2) If so, what are the reasons?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) There are no facilities in second-class coaches for making morning tea, and these would be difficult to provide. A temporary arrangement was given a trial by taking on a large container of tea at the nearest refreshment room en route. By this method it was necessary for the tea to be kept for some time before being served to passengers. The tea thus served was found to be most unsatisfactory, and the service was therefore discontinued.

BRIDGETOWN SCHOOL.

Installation of Septic System.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What representations have been made by the Bridgetown Road Board to the Education Department for the installation of a septic system at the old Bridgetown State school?

(2) Has the department agreed to meet the wishes of the board? If not, why not?

(3) Is he aware that the Bridgetown Road Board has insisted on the installation of septic systems throughout the Bridgetown townsite by private individuals and businesses?

(4) Is he aware that because of the poor supply of water and ablution points at the lavatories and the general conditions of overcrowding, the local health officer has reported most adversely on conditions of hygiene at the school?

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

(5) What steps are being taken to rectify this?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Correspondence has been received from the Bridgetown Road Board requesting the installation of septic tanks at the old school at Bridgetown.

(2) The shortage of loan funds precludes works of this nature taking priority over classrooms.

(3) No.

(4) Yes.

(5) An item for the erection of three additional classrooms at the new school has been included in the department's building programme for this financial year. Such additions are subject to finance being available.

CARLISLE AND LATHLAIN PARK SCHOOLS.

Overcrowded Conditions and Boundaries.

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) In view of the overcrowded condition of the Carlisle State school will he advise—

(a) Is it intended to transfer pupils to the recently erected State school at Lathlain Park?

(b) If the answer to (a) is "Yes," is it intended to extend the accommodation at the Lathlain Park State school?

(2) What are the street boundaries which control the pupils attending the Lathlain Park school?

(3) Will such boundaries be extended if it is decided to transfer pupils from the Carlisle State school in order that children in close proximity to the Lathlain Park school may attend same?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. Four additional rooms.

(2) Roberts-st., Kooyong-rd., Campbell-st., Orrong-rd., Cornwall-st., Gallipoli-st., Enfield-st. and Rutland Parade to link up with Roberts-st.

(3) Extension of this boundary is at present under consideration.

NORTHAMPTON POLICE STATION.

Repairs and Additions.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware of the necessity for urgent repairs and additions to the Northampton police station?

(2) If so, will he advise when these repairs and additions are likely to be effected?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) I cannot indicate any date, but the matter is being referred to the Public Works Department.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENROLMENTS.

Payment for Work of Electoral Officers.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) In connection with the enrolment campaign carried out by members of the Electoral Office staff for Legislative Council enrolments, will he inform the House the amount of money paid to such officers for—

(a) work done in this connection for the general election held on the 7th April, 1956;

(b) work done in this connection for the by-election held on the 9th June, 1956?

(2) On exactly what basis were these officers paid for their work, which it is understood was carried out after normal office hours?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) £217 8s. 10d.; (b) £162 9s. 9d.

(2) Overtime rates as prescribed under Public Service regulations.

WATER SUPPLIES.

Provision for Northampton.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Has any provision been made in this year's Estimates for the Northampton water supply?

(2) If not, why not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Provision has been made in the draft Loan Estimates.

(2) See No. (1).

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

Application to Future Legislation.

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

Will he inform the House whether there is any intention of introducing any other legislation after the rents and tenancies measure has been dealt with, on a similar basis of suspending Standing Orders, before the resumption of the Address-in-reply?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Not to my knowledge. I take it the hon. member means the suspension of Standing Orders now proposed?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not mean that. The suspension of Standing Orders referred to in notice of motion No. 1 is, I take it, specifically for the purpose of considering the rents and tenancies legislation. I wanted to know whether the

Government intended to ask for another suspension of Standing Orders, to consider any other legislation, before proceeding with the Address-in-reply debate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Again, not to my knowledge.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT CONTINUANCE.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Continuance Bill to be taken on receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, and to have precedence each day before the resumption of the debate on the Address-in-reply, and to be passed through all stages at any one sitting.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [4.41]: I wish to preface my remarks with a brief reference to two late members of this House. I did not avail myself of this opportunity earlier because I intended to mention the matter on this occasion. First of all, may I say how much we sincerely miss that happy member—I have heard him described as the "merry" member of this House—the late Hon. Don Barker. He was a man who gave vent to his feelings and thoughts with considerable vigour, and he was capable of saying things—hard things at times—in an extremely pleasant way.

I well remember the first speech he made in this House, when he likened to an egg the electorate that he had been elected to represent. He went on to weave a story about the northern part of this State, basing his remarks on the theory that it was an egg and likening the different sections of that part of the State to the shell, the yolk, and so on. It was one of the most original speeches ever made in this House; and, for the first time, I heard every member, to a man, applaud this wonderful contribution to the Address-in-reply by a new member. Mr. Barker served his district well—none can deny that—and any member who follows in his footsteps is going to have a very difficult job to equal the fine reputation that Mr. Barker made for himself.

The late Hon. Harry Hearn was somewhat closer to me as a friend and as a member of this House. I knew him extremely well. As has been shown by the expressions already voiced by members, in his passing, this House has lost a very

sterling member. He was always conscious of the dignity of the House and he preserved it jealously. I can assure those he represented, that he was a most conscientious member; and at the same time he was always prepared—to the surprise of many members—to voice his thoughts and to give great support to a section of the community to which some people were prone to think he was antagonistic. The late Mr. Hearn had a profound knowledge of industrial and labour problems. He reviewed them, studied them, and debated them freely and impartially. There is no doubt that we will feel the loss of both these late members very keenly.

I join with other speakers in welcoming the new members to this House, and I offer them the same assistance that was offered to me when I was first elected. In applying themselves to their duties and to the work of their districts, I can assure them, from my own experience, that they can look forward to a most satisfying job, and any man who is doing a job that he likes is a very lucky man.

Because the members of this House have a little more time at their disposal than most people, they can avail themselves of the opportunity to do a considerable amount of research and study on the many and varied problems that are placed before them here, and they can voice, for the benefit of others, the knowledge that they have gained. Only recently, members representing one section of this State were highly delighted at the information that was published in the local Press on the possible future development of at least one part of our State by private enterprise, and the proposed expenditure of a large amount of capital from overseas.

The possibility of overseas money being introduced to develop a part of our agricultural districts—a new area of practically virgin country—is a very encouraging sign to a State which in the past has had a most difficult row to hoe. There are few sections of this State that have not been opened up and developed with a great deal of sweat, blood, heartbreak, and disappointment. Areas that are comparatively wealthy and prosperous today have reached that stage only because of the prodigious amount of work that has been put into them by past generations. None of them were brought to their present state of development without hard and unrewarding work, which has been performed on them over the years.

For a long time, some parts of this State were looked upon as being virtually worthless. With the limited knowledge that was available at the time, efforts were made to develop them, but they were finally wiped off as being worthless sandplain country. Huge sections of the northern sandplain coastal belt, however, did have the virtue of a reasonable rainfall. Those people who were compelled to take up properties in those areas at a time when

they were considered to be poor tracts of land were sympathised with by those who had taken up better land. However, results proved that the settlers on the sandplain country were the most fortunate.

A man who in those days was able to take up a piece of so-called sandplain and develop it is today looked upon as a fortunate farmer. This applies in particular to those who have settled in the south-eastern section of this State, which in the past has been plugged by the members in this House who represent it, and also by representative members in another place. Many committees have been appointed to enter the district to make a study of its general conditions, and also to make soil surveys; and there are numerous reports of those tests and examinations available for perusal.

Many years ago Sir Charles Latham was a member of one of those committees. Yet, despite the great amount of work that was carried out, nothing was done as a result. It was left to individuals to risk their own personal capital in trying to make a living from those barren sand areas. Not one of them succeeded until the then Minister for Agriculture, prevailed upon by three members from this House and one member from another place—they never let up on him—visited certain isolated spots in this area. As a result we were able to show him development that had occurred accidentally.

The story is that during the war years a long rolling strip of country was cleared to form an emergency airstrip. The soil was so light—in fact it was silt—that planes could not land upon it with safety. In an endeavour to bind the soil, about seven types of fodder seed were planted, together with superphosphate which, at that time, was very difficult to obtain. From then on it was left to run wild. By the end of the war the growth in that area was so fantastic that it interfered with the landing of light planes. No other treatment of superphosphate or other fertiliser had been given. The area had been mowed. Sheep were put on it to graze, but they hardly shifted more than a quarter of a mile from where they were first established. They could not eat their way out.

That was the position when the late Hon. Garnett Wood inspected the area. He was astonished. For the first time in his life he saw seven different fodder grasses growing within an area half the size of this Chamber. There was lucerne, Wimmera rye grass, Kentucky blue grass, veldt grass, and subterranean clover of two sorts. That was sufficient to convince the Minister that we had something. We took him to other places, to farms established by local people who had started to make an impression.

Within 12 months, Mr. Wood told the members concerned that he had prevailed on his Cabinet to make funds available to

establish a research station. This was to be a part-time venture associated with the Salmon Gums station. We were delighted with the decision. However, within two years that became a fully established station, and today it is completely staffed. The results of the experimental work being undertaken there are becoming known all over the Commonwealth, because people are asking for the information.

Last week I was astonished to see an article, alleged to be the report of a statement by a member in another place, following some advice given by the Premier, on the interest expressed by an American organisation which is considering taking up a considerable amount of country in this district. The statement has turned that portion of the State upside down, and my telephone rang continually over the week-end.

Representatives of local organisations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Progress Association and members of the road board were very perturbed at what appeared to be a statement based on lack of knowledge of what was going on in the district. We were somewhat taken to task for apparently not giving the publicity that was necessary to let members of those bodies know what was taking place there. I was rather incensed by that, because the name of Esperance generally brings forward some jocular remarks in this House, though I must admit they are friendly.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It is a hardy annual.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is so. But to members of the South-East Province it is not a joke, and not a hardy annual. We believe that we have something good and sound to offer this State.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Tell us about the American offer.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That offer is a very tenuous thing. We know the company is interested. We know that the information so far submitted to it is mostly of a private nature. But it has been interested enough to write and ask for a definite and complete report from the Commonwealth Government, and this is being made available. If the company is interested enough to come to this State and spend money in millions, I say, "Let us throw the gate wide open to it." Let us not worry about any fear that the Commonwealth Government will not make any money available. That is of secondary importance. What is important is that private enterprise and private finance will be pouring into this country.

I am quite sure that if the company decides to take up 1,000,000 acres and develop it, it will do so only after being assured of what the result will be. This project is the American version of what the A.M.P. has done in the 90-mile desert in South Australia, but on a bigger scale.

If it will open up that section of the State then I, as one of its parliamentary representatives in this part of the Commonwealth, will do everything to assist the company in any way I can in that development.

Hon. L. C. Diver: What period are you giving them?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Any time the company likes, because I know the way those people work. In the past we have seen examples of their work. Time is something which they use up very quickly.

The Minister for Railways: Where have you seen an example of their work?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: At Kwinana.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And also during the war.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The war period was a good indication of how the Americans went about doing their work.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And how quickly they accomplished any task.

The Minister for Railways: This company has not been here before.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Representatives have been here, in fact, but incognito.

The Minister for Railways: It has not done anything to develop the State.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It has not done anything as yet, but we know that it is interested. I would digress a little from what I started to speak on—the statement that resulted from the Premier's advice on the interest of this concern. That statement was made by a member in another place.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Has the Minister been down to make an inspection of this area?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not believe he has; and that is why I offer the invitation to him, or to any other member, to go down on the field day and to see for himself.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Perhaps the Minister would put on a reso trip and invite the members down.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: This has been said in the past about me: "What does he know about this matter? He is not a farmer, and therefore he cannot speak from experience or knowledge." That may be true. But the very fact that I have been impressed with what I have seen would indicate under ordinary circumstances that we have something to offer, because I have seen other farming districts. I know of a farm taken up in 1952 from virgin bush. I saw the settler with a steel-wheeled tractor dragging a railway iron behind, to work up the land. I have taken photographs of this process.

The settler can be seen dodging the trees to get around them. That was the only treatment given to the land other than sowing and fertilising.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did he not burn off first?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: He did not burn off. In the second year he took off £3,000 worth of clover seed. Today's prices for clover seed would not realise that sum. I also know Button's property. He worked with a steel-wheeled tractor. As he could not replace it, the Minister got a new tractor for him after he had agreed to co-operate with the Department of Agriculture on various experimental projects. I saw that person's property being developed in a period of six years, until today it is worth a great deal.

Three years ago, just before my defeat at the poll, I saw an Eastern States farmer leaning on the bonnet of my car and offering that man his own price for the property. The figure mentioned was between £35,000 and £37,000. When that sort of thing could happen at a difficult time, when fertiliser was literally unavailable, there must be something in the district. We want people to go and see the place for themselves.

In the last allocations of property to 40 applicants some seven months ago, 35 of the applicants came from the Eastern States. Our own farmers in this State have the land right at their doorstep, and are not aware of what is going on. Farmers in the Eastern States who developed properties as young men are now hemmed in by neighbours. They have sons that they want to put on the land, but there is no room for them.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Then why chase the Americans?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Because the land we have there needs American enterprise to develop it, especially when the time factor is important.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Do you mean Americans or American capital?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not care which. If American capital is used to develop that country, it will lead to the provision of roads and schools and the establishment of other incidentals that automatically follow. It is not a long shot to say that we can visualise well within our lifetime the establishment of freezing works there, because it is a fat-lamb district. I know that pigs do exceptionally well down there also, and it is a young-cattle region.

I am inviting members tonight to see the screening of just a small number of shots that I have taken of the district to show what can be done. These were taken as early as 1954 and 1955, and considerable development has taken place since then. When we mention Esperance, we do so

seriously and without any humour. We mention it because we have an abiding faith in its future, but we have difficulty in making others see the matter in the same light. They ask us, "What about Albany?" Well, members for that district are entitled to hammer for Albany as much as they like. But we want a fair go for Esperance.

We know that Ravensthorpe is being developed. It is a farming district which is also coming into its own as a mining area. To us it is rather irksome to see development going west on a longer road when we believe that if some money were spent—though we know that money is hard to get—on a reasonable road from Ravensthorpe for a distance of 100 miles, to Esperance, a first-class port with a good record, the district we have in mind could be considerably developed. We believe that we are justified in saying that the Government should ensure that the development of Ravensthorpe goes hand in hand with the development and opening up of the country between Ravensthorpe and Esperance, particularly when there is a considerable amount of factual evidence as to what that country can contribute to the prosperity of the State.

The intake of new settlers is prodigious, and the amount of activity involved in the acquisition of land is becoming something of a problem. The local road board secretary cannot handle the increasing responsibilities. At present the work has to be shared between him and the police officers. There are now two constables; whereas, for many years, there was only one. It is high time the Government gave serious consideration to promoting Esperance to the standard of a town with its own clerk of court able to look after the 101 Governmental activities that have to be undertaken in that area.

At Esperance the police constables have to attend to gun-licensing, electoral matters, land matters, the registration of births, deaths and marriages, and other similar activities that take place in a district growing as fast as this one.

The Minister for Railways: Are there many court cases?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: There are a few. But most of them are heard in Norseman. I am not thinking so much of the actual court work as of the incidentals associated with the duties of a clerk of court. In a district which is growing as fast as the Esperance district, the amount of court work must automatically increase; and I believe there is justification for the Minister to make representations to the Crown Law Department for consideration to be given to this town. Smaller places could be mentioned the prosperity of which has declined to some extent, but which still have their clerks of court. That is probably not justified in such places, but there is justification for the appointment of a clerk of court at Esperance.

There is considerable development taking place at Gibson's Soak, and I would ask the Minister to give consideration to the provision of full post office facilities there. At present there is only a small hotel, and half-baked facilities are made available through the goodwill of the people concerned. But telephone and post office services are badly needed.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is a Commonwealth responsibility.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes; but the Minister could do a lot to help us to obtain those facilities.

The Minister for Railways: We have been trying for years to get a post office for Shark Bay, but without success.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I suppose there are difficulties of which we know nothing and which preclude the granting of our requests. But if we could learn what they are, we could pass the information on to the people most concerned. When people form themselves into a voluntary association to assist in the progress of their district, they do so because they are interested in that district and want to see it prosper; and we desire to encourage them if they have a justifiable claim.

Having said my piece about the hardy annual—Esperance—I desire to say something about another area that is buoyant and one about which we are very happy. This area has once again come to the aid of the State during a time when it is suffering something of a recession. I do not like that word, but we must face facts. There is a recession, small and temporary though it may be. It is a strange thing that when such circumstances fall upon us, the mining districts seem to turn up trumps.

That is exactly what has happened at Southern Cross, through the efforts of one company in particular. The district has for many years been one of those half-dead, ghost towns which once enjoyed great prosperity. I am referring to Bullfinch. Everyone knows the full story of that centre and what it has meant to this State. The activities of the Western Mining corporation extend through the line of lode in a channel of auriferous country that runs pretty well north and south and right through Southern Cross to Edwards' Find, Marvel Loch, and Nevoria.

In the last two years, the activities of the company have led to the opening up of three mines in the vicinity of Southern Cross. One is called the Three Boys; another, the Goat; and the third, Fraser's. All those mines are being worked. In the Southern Cross township itself 40 houses are to be built, of which about 15 have already been constructed. This work has been done in a very sensible way. Vacant areas have been built upon rather than

a section being chosen for the establishment of a suburb. The town is taking on an air of prosperity and solidarity which is evident in the attitude of the people of the town.

Further out, south of Southern Cross, is a little mine known as Nevoria, which is close to a small town called Marvel Loch. For many years the number of residents has been in the vicinity of 60 to 70. The company has taken over Nevoria and hopes to have the mine in full production by the end of the year. At least all surface development will have been completed by then. The company's difficulty lies in the fact that its schedule has been retarded for three weeks because of the condition of the road.

To those who know it, mining today conjures up monstrous diesel trucks carrying loads of 30 tons and more. When traffic like that travels over a road built for many years and graded and regraded, it just simply cuts the road to pieces; and that is what has happened in this district. The people established in the area are greatly concerned about it. The answer to a question which I asked in the House quite recently on this matter was somewhat encouraging, inasmuch as it indicated that the Minister has made available extra funds to be spent on this road. At least it is considerably more than was envisaged in the early stages; but it is not all that we want, because the traffic on that road will be something that will have to be seen to be believed.

We do not want to be unfair to other districts that are seeking roads of a similar standard to the one we desire; but it must be pointed out that the development of this area will mean the employment of many people. If this mine goes ahead, I should think that probably anything from 100 to 200 men will be employed, and that will mean a big thing to a State which already has about one-quarter of the Commonwealth's unemployed. I will have more to say about that in a few moments.

Another point is that the condition of the road in the district of which I am speaking has had a very serious effect on the school bus which at present serves the mining settlement and Marvel Loch. We have a school at Marvel Loch which can accommodate double the number of children at present being taught there. Unfortunately, the present route of the bus is longer than it need be, and all the children that are available for schooling are not picked up. There is another mine on the extreme edge of the run at Edwards Find, where there are four children. Last year a bus ran to that mine to pick up one child, but this year the department refused to make the journey to pick up four children.

If the route were changed slightly, it would mean that seven more children could be picked up—and not all from the one

place—with an actual saving of running time. I have corresponded with the department and submitted this proposition to it, and I hope consideration will be given to the matter because Edwards Find could be another Nevoria if we could get people to go there; and people that go to such places are married folk with their families.

Bus routes and water supplies may seem only small matters, but they are important to the districts concerned. On the other side of the main Goldfields line are the settlements of North Walgoolan, North Bodallin, etc. and south of the line people still have to rely on the carting of water by road from dams. It is many years since that area was developed, and we are justified in claiming that the people there are entitled to water supplies. However, it is difficult to get them. But those who represent the district must keep bringing its problems before this House and before the Government. After all, we are the voices of the people and they put us here to speak for them; and if we do not do so, they are justified in taking us to task.

When I just mention Bodallin, Moorine Rock and all the places north and south of the line, and do not deal with them at length, it is not because I consider them unimportant, for they are not. Other members have spoken about them, and have brought their difficulties before the House and acquainted members with what we feel should be the attitude of the Government when funds are available for expenditure on water supplies.

We have just learned, to our dismay, that a town which I mentioned a few moments ago—Bullfinch—is to be bitterly disappointed about the application it has before the Government for water to be provided for a swimming pool. We know that both this Government and the previous Government were favourably disposed towards the establishment of swimming pools in country areas. In the past it has been merely a matter of the district concerned raising sufficient money to earn the Government's grant and the pool was built.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They should have got in before the elections.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I think I would be unfair if I agreed with that remark, because any Government would probably be compelled to have the same approach in this instance.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Government has a different approach to bus fares now from what it had before the elections.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am not talking of bus fares now; but I will discuss them later. In regard to the swimming pool, the men on the mine and in the town have agreed to a small percentage of their weekly pay being deducted as proceeds for the building of the pool. Already a considerable sum of money has been raised.

and the mine management has also allocated money for it; in fact, the whole district is behind the idea and the plans are well in hand. By the end of the year, the district could have sufficient money in hand to earn the Government's grant.

Another member for the district in this House has done a lot of work in regard to the project, and I do not think I would be justified in putting all the facts before members; but I mention these few things to give them an idea of what is happening. We have learned that the Goldfields water supply line will not carry the necessary burden that would be imposed upon it if the swimming pool were built. As I have said, we are bitterly disappointed about the whole thing.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Would not underground water be available, if it were not too saline?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: There is a good deal of water available in the district, but it is more than saline. It is heavily impregnated with salts and other solids, and whether it would be advisable to go ahead and fill the pool with salt water is a matter for the health officer of the district to discuss with the Government.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I think the water would be too saline for use in a swimming pool.

The Minister for Railways: Would it be worse than the ocean?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. It is heavily impregnated with salts, and in many cases poisonous minerals are evident in the water. However, I will leave it to the hon. member who is particularly interested in it to make available to the people concerned the answer he has received.

I would now like to discuss another town which has had an amazing growth in the last few years, a growth that I credit almost entirely to the local governing authority. I refer to the town of Merredin. A good, wise and sound local governing authority has contributed to the growth of Merredin in such a way that the residents of the town must be proud of their district. They have one of the finest clubs in the State—a genuine town club.

Anyone can go there and see men who have been shovelling coal at the railway yards all day brushing elbows and drinking with the doctors and business people of the town. Every man in the district is entitled to be and probably is a member of that club. Other towns have their clubs; but there is generally one club for one section of the town, and another for the other section. The club at Merredin is one of the most democratic I have seen, and it reflects the attitude of the whole of the people of the district.

Instead of planting gum trees along the sides of the streets, they have planted almond trees and fruit trees, and these are not abused by the youth of the district. They have one of the finest swimming pools in this State, and it was completed in two years; and they also have a kindergarten erected and supported entirely by local gifts and donations. The whole atmosphere of Merredin is one that any person could be proud of.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about the youth club?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes; they have one of the only clubs of that type. I could not mention all the activities in which the folk of Merredin are engaged; but it is a town of people who care and who do something about it. They are to be complimented on their attitude.

The Minister for Railways: They are people who help themselves.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is true that they are people who help themselves; but I call them people who care. The local authority encourages the establishment of small industries—and they are only small. One man bought thousands of second-hand pipes from one of the Government departments and started a little business in the making of front fences out of the pipes and cyclone wire. He has now extended that business and has a well-established little industry making all sorts of wire and tubular equipment for the farmers of the district as well as the people in the town. That is the sort of thing that makes it worth while to live in a town.

There are parts of my province which I could refer to as the older sections. But on the last occasion the boundaries were altered, we who represented the South-East Province found ourselves faced with a change in the interests of our constituents. In the past, half of our district has been represented by mining interests; to-day I think the South-East Province could be almost described as predominantly agricultural. Bruce Rock and its environs, and Narembeen and its surrounding districts are all in the South-East Province. The majority of the people in those areas have farming interests; but the members representing it have not been drawn from farming communities. Probably that is not a good thing, and I think the time will come when the members representing that province will come from the farming section of it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Do not put us out of power and put them in!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No. I am speaking without any thought of party politics. As the district is predominantly agricultural, I think it should have a representative from the farming interests. It is quite possible that a member of the

Labour Party—he might be a farmer—will stand for election as a member for the province. I found myself walking on to farms and assuming automatically that the people were anti-Labour. After a chat with one chap, he said, "You are on the wrong track old man. I am Labour", and I had to pull in my horns. So it is quite possible that a farming member of the Labour Party will nominate.

The Minister for Railways: Would you not agree with him?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Was he an old chap?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No; he was very young.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Then he has time to learn.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: We are finding that it is a most interesting section of our province, and we can do a lot of work in it. We also find that we now have activities different from those we had in our old area. Instead of being able to visit people in a town—maybe 100 in a day—we find that we are travelling quite a few miles, and we see only a few people in the time that it took us to talk to 100.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They will make you work.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I would say that not only I, but also my colleagues who represent that district, are not a bit afraid of the work that is ahead of us.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I am not suggesting that you are.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: This district is also faced with the same bogey that has confronted our other country towns throughout the years—lack of water. In Bruce Rock there is a plan for a septic scheme to be inaugurated, when the water is available. That town, which has been in existence for many years, has a State hotel. It is the only hotel in the town; yet it is a big prosperous centre. This hotel is so far behind the modern conception of a decent hotel that the people were compelled to build a club—an excellent and modern club it is, too. The State hotel would be a disgrace to any town, and I say that advisedly.

Let me be as earthy as I can be and remind members that that hotel—I do not know the number of bedrooms it has—has ablution facilities for men which consist of two small separate rooms with one hand wash-basin and no shower recess. The lavatory consists of an outside single pedestal for both men and women. That must be so, because there is no sign on the door to indicate what it is. It is a shame and a disgrace. The manager of the hotel is doing a good job with the facilities at his command. But no matter what he does, or the amount of work he and his good lady put into the hotel, they cannot make it a decent place.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: How long is it since the Licensing Court saw it?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They have no authority.

The Chief Secretary: Will you buy it from us?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I have never been the licensee of a hotel and so it would be foolish for me to buy it. But the fact that in a town of this size the people of the district had to establish their own club, is sufficient indication of what it is like.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Is it not a fact that the people wanted to buy the hotel?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I believe that idea was investigated; but from the figures supplied at the time, they found it was utterly impossible for them to contemplate. If all the State hotels were under the same controls as the privately-owned hotels, the hotel at Bruce Rock, irrespective of its value as a paying proposition, would be compelled to have reasonable facilities and be put into a reasonable condition. It is a crying shame that a town of that size should have such a building as its show place and show window—and that is what a hotel must be considered to be.

It is time the Licensing Act was overhauled; and when that overhaul does take place, I think that serious consideration should be given to bringing State hotels under the control of the Licensing Court. In my opinion the State hotels should set the standard for all other hotels, and not be dragging 20 years behind.

The Chief Secretary: I will give you a couple of them and you can try yourself out.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I know my limitations, and I know that I could not run a hotel of any standard. If I owned a hotel I would have to lease it. But if I could own a hotel under the same circumstances and controls as apply to the State hotels today, I would give it a go.

The Chief Secretary: I will give you two tomorrow, if you like.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Bruce Rock would not be one of them.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If I could run a State hotel under the same controls, and with the same regulations applying to them as apply now, even I would give it a go. But I am afraid I would sink heavily if I were told by the Licensing Court, which I would be, that I had to spend £15,000 or £20,000 to build new facilities.

In close proximity to this old and well-established town there is another—namely, Naremburn—which extends farther into the drier areas. This town also has similar problems of water shortage and

the difficulties associated with it. It is a remarkable thing that some people appear to think that if water were taken by conduit to those districts the farmers so served would immediately let their dams dry up and no longer try to maintain surface supplies. People who think that, have their heads in the sand. Today the farmers are not the people who are generally depicted in cartoons as dull-looking individuals with straws hanging out of their mouths. Farming is a businesslike proposition, and the farmer has to be a smart businessman. I can assure members that in our trip through that district we did not see one straw-chewing farmer during the whole of the circuit we made.

These people want the conduit run into their district to supplement their surface supplies. It is their intention to keep their surface supplies going as far as possible; but when their dams are dry, they like to have the feeling of security that comes from knowing that there is a standby within reasonable distance of their properties from which water can be obtained. Today, however, they have not got it. The spider-web of water lines is extending, but it is extending very slowly. In a town like Narembeen, we have the water right on the doorstep. The town is reticulated with a pipe system some 20 or 30 years old. The pipes are corroded and will not take the pressure of the new supply. Accordingly they cannot use the water that is on their very doorstep. Money must be made available to rectify this position. I know the answer is likely to be, "It will be done when funds are available." If that is so; then, when funds are available, we will repeat our story.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Cheer up! We have carted water for 46 years.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If the hon. member is one of those who is fighting for his district in an endeavour to stop the carting of water, he will have me right on his band-wagon. I have seen the districts about which the hon. member is talking, and the difficulties they face because of the lack of water. We on the Goldfields are more fortunate, because, from as far back as I can remember, we have only had to go to the back door and turn on a tap to get a supply of water. I know what a boon that is, and what a boon it would be to a man who has sheep in his paddock and who has to spend half the daylight hours carting water to them.

Hon. L. C. Diver: I think it is within sight.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I hope the hon. member is right. The same story can be told of other towns like Kwoylin and Shackleton. They are new to us at the moment; but they will not be new for long, because we are going to find out what problems they have, and we will continue to bring them to this House until they are hardy annuals.

The Chief Secretary: When you do, bring some dough with you, will you?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: On the matter of dough, let me say that as a State we cannot complain about the amount of money we have received. I think I am right in saying that over the last few years—and with each succeeding year—a record grant of money has been made available to this State. I venture to say that this year will prove to be another record year. That is why I feel there is some justification for those who say that the statement so often made by various people that we have been treated in a niggardly fashion is unjustified. It is completely unjustified, particularly when we consider the way some of that money was spent last year.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Mis-spent.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Mis-spent last year. I can well understand why the people that have to collect that money this year are looking a second time before they consider increasing it.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: On what was it mis-spent?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Let us look at the position. I recall the time last year when money was spent by the Electoral Department. Indeed, a question was asked tonight as to how much was spent on certain elections.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Is that all you have to tell us?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That money was spent when officers of the Electoral Department were sent out to certain areas to do certain work. It had never been done before. I am not sufficiently a legal eagle to be able to say whether it was right or not.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: It was not morally right.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Let me put it this way: It was close to the knuckle. I venture to say that prior to the election, when people were going around the State trying to purchase the Treasury bench again, promises were made of astonishing amounts of money to any or all organisations that cared to lodge applications.

The Chief Secretary: Tell us some of them.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The Surf Life Saving Association was promised money, although it was told in the same breath, "We have not got it, but we will get it."

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do you object?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I think the life-saving clubs are amongst the most worth-while causes that can be supported.

The Chief Secretary: You cannot take a trick.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I object to money being offered to these people prior to an election; to be paid not this year, but next year.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: A deferred payment.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is usual for an outgoing Government to promise many things. But it is not right to let contracts on deferred payments, committing an incoming Government and making it obligatory for that Government to honour those promises of astonishing amounts of money. Foundation stones were laid by the possibly outgoing Government, the members of which knew full well that the money was not available for the buildings, and that any incoming Government would have to honour those promises.

The Chief Secretary: Is that something new?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is, to my knowledge. It is new, and again I say it is close to the knuckle.

The Chief Secretary: Rip van Winkle is not dead yet!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If there had been a change of Government after the last election, the incoming Government would have had to implement the policy of the previous Government for the disbursement of a huge slice of its finance even though it may have had no sympathy with the proposal or not agreed with it.

The Chief Secretary: You should not go too far, or you may get something that you or your fellow members will not like.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: That sounds like a threat.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am prepared to take anything that my party may not like. I have not gone back on a principle yet, and I do not propose to start now.

The Chief Secretary: Do you know anything about Rugby cement?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No; but I am quite prepared to receive any information that the Chief Secretary might care to supply concerning Rugby cement. I am only talking about matters that have come to my notice. I mentioned in particular the schools and hospitals promised and started without funds last year, prior to the election. I mentioned moneys made available to the mining industry and a last-minute rush visit to the mining districts just prior to the elections. These things are still fresh in my mind; and without wanting to be nasty about them—it is not in my nature—I still feel, as I said before, that they were close to the knuckle.

The Chief Secretary: I can tell you some that are right into the bone.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I would now like to touch on something of a wider nature; something not quite so parochial.

I refer to the fear in the minds of some people—and I think it is fear that is well founded—of the possibility of our having to bear again an increase in freights. When I mention freights I am, of course, speaking as a country member, because it is on country people that the sword falls heaviest. Residents in the country districts seem of necessity to have to bear the burden of increased freights, in addition to the other disadvantages that already exist in those areas. We know that last year our railways suffered a loss of roughly £3,000,000. We also know that the Grants Commission will have something to say about that.

I feel, however, that it will be a dreadful thing if the country areas have to bear a greater portion of the charge that must be made to try to repair the present loss incurred by the State railways. Over half the loss is brought about not by freights but by fares in the metropolitan area and near metropolitan area. I will support whole-heartedly any increase in fares in the metropolitan area, and I do not think it is necessary for me to justify myself in doing so. I do not think I am unfair in my attitude, because I was a member of a committee that inquired into fares and freights some years ago. To our astonishment, we found that in some cases fares in the metropolitan area were less at the time than they were 15 or 20 years previously.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Absolutely or relatively?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If fares in the metropolitan area were cheaper than they were 20 years previously, the same should have been the case with freights.

The Chief Secretary: Where could you travel for a smaller fare today than you could 20 years ago?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Between several stations on the Perth-Fremantle run. At the moment, I cannot remember the exact names of the stations or the amounts, but I have the figures at home and I could get them out if the Minister wished. We were staggered to find that was the case. I warn the Government that if there is ultimately a move to increase freights in the country areas I will oppose it completely.

The Chief Secretary: You are a great economist! You will do so irrespective of increased costs.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not profess to be an economist at all; not even a reasonable one. I find it most difficult to understand figures. But I do not find it difficult to understand that because of an increase in freights I will have to pay an increased amount for my pound of butter, or my loaf of bread, brought about entirely by increased freights.

We are faced with the possibility of a Bill to control prices. Will the provisions of that Bill include the control of

fares and freights? In the past the department was not a department to keep prices down but to approve of rises? That is all the Prices Commission did in the days when it controlled and approved rises in prices, and that is what we fear could happen again. Controls have never been the answer to the problem. Evidence shows that where price control has been implemented, prices have not kept level but have increased. This was evident during the years we were under price control.

The Chief Secretary: No control will keep prices down.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It certainly will not reduce them. I can remember, too vividly, long lines of queues which were simply the result of price control; and, in addition, there was a shortage of products and blackmarketing resulted. Today, on the Premier's own statement, we have a surplus of men and materials, a state of affairs which has not existed for years. The fact at the back of the high price level at present is indicative that if goods are in sufficient quantity their price will fall. I will point out to the Minister how prices have dropped today. A house costing £6,000 to build 18 months ago can be built today for £700 less.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Who told you that?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not need to be told. I built a house myself not so long ago and I know.

Hon. L. C. Diver: The reduction is not due to a drop in the price of materials.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The reduction is in the contractor's price. A surplus of materials has resulted in a reduction of the cost of a home; and if contractors cut down their figures, it means competition, which is the lifeblood of a good effective economy. I do not say that materials have dropped in price, because I do not know; but there is very little chance of their rising. If an industry has a surplus today, it is not going to raise its prices. It will drop prices to get rid of its articles.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think there is a surplus because prices are so high?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If prices are high people will not buy until they do come down. They will wait until they find their own level. Prices will come down—it has been proven in the past and will be again—unless we are saddled with the restrictive action of price control.

I would now like to revert to the possible increase of freights. The Minister is a very astute debater and succeeds with his method of sidetracking an inferior debater, which causes me to be drawn aside from time to time. Nevertheless I will now get back to where I was before.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do not tempt him too much.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I want to express my concern about the effect that possible increases in freight will have on the mining industry, which at present is holding its own. Of all the industries that we have in this State, I think the goldmining industry is the one which has put up the most courageous fight against rising costs. It has had to meet increased wages; but we must forget the cost of labour because, without miners, we cannot keep the mines working. We must not begrudge high wages; but if freight is going to be increased, I venture to say that the two small projects that have been started at Nevoria and Bullfinch in the Yilgarn area will stop because they will not be able to meet the rising costs. We have already seen one prosperous mining town go down as a result of the last increase in freight.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Where was that?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Big Bell. That town had a further 18 months' life until the rise in freights put the mines out of business; and that can happen again. We are frightened of the effect an increase will have on the goldmining industry. This is an industry in which the highest level of good relations between employer and employee has been maintained. It leads this State in that type of relationship; and I think I am correct in saying that 90 per cent. of the small disputes and little upsets that occur between labour and industry are settled at round-table conferences attended by representatives of the men, the unions, and the mining industry itself. They are settled without ever being taken to court. Those associated with the industrial record on the Goldfields are proud of that record.

This industry has only been able to maintain its present prosperity by a small margin: the difference between what it costs to produce an ounce of gold and what is obtained for it. I think the margin is about 7s., and that is a mighty small margin. If a wheat farmer had in some way to cut down his overhead costs of production because he was going to receive the same price as he did in 1939 for his goods, it would be regarded as completely fantastic. Yet that is what the goldmining industry has done.

The Goldfields—that is, Kalgoorlie and Boulder—have taken on something of the atmosphere of an agricultural town. That may seem strange, but it is true: they are more solid than ever before. It is not a bubbling prosperity and the boom days have gone. The hostels and boarding houses that used to be filled with young single men are now empty, but the town itself has changed with the married people who have now settled there. This is very noticeable in the distribution of the daily papers, which is a means of judging the activities in a town.

There was a time when a newsagent would make 100 casual sales, with some 20 to 30 regular orders. This has now

completely changed. The same newsagent will sell 200 to 250 regular orders, while his casual sales amount only to some 20 or 30 papers. The light, bubbling element of the community has now gone. On a Friday afternoon it is difficult to find a parking area for cars, particularly in Burt and Hannan-sts. in Kalgoorlie, and Spicer-st. in Southern Cross. The position is the same on Saturday also.

The Minister for Railways: That is prosperity.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, a good solid prosperity; and let us hope it keeps that way. In a mining town, one never knows whether prosperity will fade overnight. I would mention one function which took place and was organised by a well-known body. It took the form of a community fair and was something similar to the Royal Show. The population on the Goldfields today is 26,000 or 27,000; yet the attendance at that function during the 24 hours it was open was 22,000 or 23,000. I believe something in the nature of £30,000 changed hands on the grounds that day. In addition, the whole of side-show alley was leased to travelling side-shows and there is no knowledge of the amount of money taken by those people.

That is an indication of what the district at the present time is prepared to support. The funds from that function were given entirely to charity. A similar function is going to be held again, and I think it will become an annual event. There was a time when it would have been a disaster to hold a function of that nature; but the people today regard it in the same way as they regard agricultural shows. They want to see what is going on in their district.

I do not want to continue for any great length as I will only be repeating what has been said by other members of this Chamber. However, I would like to say to the Minister that anything I have said about mining has been purely with the idea of bringing before him and his Cabinet the needs of my district in particular. It may be said that I should have spoken on matters affecting the whole State, but I do not agree.

The district I represent is a huge one and needs plenty of representation. I do not apologise for anything I have said or asked the Minister to give consideration to. We will keep on pressing our needs, and I sincerely ask members of this Chamber and the Minister, if they have not been to the area, to pay a visit to the Esperance Downs. I extend a warm invitation to them to attend the Esperance field day to see what has been accomplished in the new shelf in the larder of the West.

On motion by Hon. J. D. Teahan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1956.

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