

# Legislative Council

Wednesday, 10th July, 1957.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### PRISONS DEPARTMENT.

#### (a) Dismissal of an Employee.

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

(1) Is it a fact that a man named Thorne, who has been employed by the Prisons Department at Fremantle for the past 32 years, has had his employment terminated, to take effect as from the 11th July, 1957?

(2) Was his dismissal caused by inefficiency or misconduct?

(3) If not, what was the reason for his dismissal?

(4) Will the Minister give instructions to the effect that his dismissal be delayed until further inquiries have been made?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes; it is a fact that this man, named Thorne, who has been employed by the Prisons Department for 32 years, will cease his duties as from tomorrow.

(2) and (3) I do not know whether one could put the reason for his dismissal under the heading of inefficiency or under any other heading; but he is being dismissed because he refused to abide by a

clause in the agreement which has been made between the Gaol Officers' Union and the Government, and which gives preference to unionists. I do not know in what year the union was formed, but it was many years ago; and this man has been a member of it since its inception up until about April of this year.

For the last 29 years he has been a member of some religious organisation. After all these years he hands in his resignation to the union, giving the reason that it is against his religious belief. I repeat that for the last 29 years he has been a member of the same religious sect and also a member of the industrial union. We were faced with this problem: The fact of this individual becoming a non-unionist does not dovetail with the preference-to-unionists clause contained in the agreement between the Government and that union. There was also the likelihood of industrial upset in a place where no one wants to see that happening—that is, a gaol. Although virtually given notice by us, this person has really sacked himself because he is not prepared to abide by the agreement which has been arrived at between the Government and the union.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Has he joined the Democratic Labour Party?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am sorry that interjection was made because this is too serious a matter to joke about. I want to tell the House exactly what occurred. When a report was made to the Comptroller General, he instructed the officer in charge to interview the person concerned to persuade him to act as he had done in the last 32 years. On his refusal to do so, the Comptroller General saw the individual himself and discussed the matter with him, but the latter was absolutely adamant in his stand.

The matter was referred to me as Chief Secretary, and I referred it to the Department of Labour to find out the exact position, after having ascertained myself that every endeavour had been made by the Comptroller General and those in charge of the prison to see the individual and discuss the matter with him. The position as put to me was that the agreement between the Government and the union had been broken by this individual, and we had no alternative but to issue a four weeks' notice of dismissal.

The age of that man is 62 years. No one regrets the incident more than I do. I think any fair-minded person will agree that there is no logic in any shape or form in the action taken by him. He has been a member of this religious sect for 29 years and for a greater part of that time he was also a member of the union. To say at this stage that he is against remaining in the union because of his religious belief will cause unrest.

The industrial agreement between the parties concerned was not entered into in recent times. As far as I could discover it had been signed by the late John Drew in 1935, and possibly the same thing had been done many years before that time. It has been signed by every Chief Secretary when it came up for review. In 1947 it was signed by the Attorney General, Mr. Abbott, and in 1950 by Mr. Doney, and by every Labour Minister since. The clause granting preference to unionists in the prison staff has operated down the years.

So we have the position of an individual member of the union upsetting the position between the employer and the worker. When such a thing occurs, and when the individual concerned will not listen to commonsense advice, there is nothing left but to serve him with a notice of dismissal.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Does he forfeit his pension or superannuation rights?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He has been safeguarded in that respect. After tomorrow he will start on three months' long-service leave. We have reserved to him any benefits to which he is entitled. I have given a full resume of the events as they occurred.

(4) No. His service finishes tomorrow. Every inquiry has been made into the matter and nothing would be gained by any further delay.

*(b) Legality of Dismissal.*

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

(1) Did I understand him to advise the House that it was either inefficiency or misconduct not to be a member of a trade union, or, in this case, the particular union?

(2) Is this compulsory unionism without legislation?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) I did not know which heading this came under, so I did not put it under either heading. I would refer the hon. member to the reply I have given. I do not know if that action could be called inefficiency or misconduct. I have given the circumstances, but I did not say under which of the two headings they came.

(2) I have already stated that the preference clause was agreed to between the employer and employees. Whether that could be said to be under an Act of Parliament I do not know. I would say that an Act of Parliament authorises these agreements to be entered into.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

### *Date of Introduction.*

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Can he indicate when the Local Government Bill is likely to be introduced in this House?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

I suggest that the hon. member hold a conference on the matter with his colleagues in another place. Immediately the Address-in-reply is over the Local Government Bill will be restored to the notice paper of that House. It will then be ready for the third reading, but how long it will remain in that place will depend on the course of action taken by the hon. member's colleagues.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

### *Cost.*

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

In view of the reply given yesterday concerning the cost of maintenance of the Legislative Council, and having worked out that the figure amounts to ¼d. per head of population for every three days, does the Chief Secretary think the amount of ¼d. per head for every three days is too much for the maintenance of the Legislative Council?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

I would say, yes.

## PETROL.

### *Price at Esperance and on Goldfields.*

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that standard grade petrol at Esperance is 5s. per gallon, and super grade 5s. 3d.?

(2) Can he inform the House whether bulk systems are to be installed to provide cheaper petrol for Esperance, and the Goldfields areas?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, the charges are as stated.

(2) I am advised that negotiations are in progress for the provision of bulk petrol supplies at Esperance. The facilities will reduce the price to consumers at Esperance and adjacent districts.

## WATER SUPPLIES.

### *Tabling of Files of Newburn Scheme.*

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

Will the Minister for Water Supplies lay upon the Table of the House the files in connection with the proposed Newburn water reticulation scheme?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Yes, for one week.

**TRANSPORT.***Exemption of Goods in Wiluna Area.*

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Railways:

In a letter written to me, dated the 28th June, 1957, the Minister for Transport said:—

An exemption is being prepared for publication in the "Government Gazette." This will provide exemption in regard to the transport of all classes of goods between Meekatharra and places within a radius of eighty (80) miles of Wiluna, and vice versa.

Will the Minister for Transport explain the reason for the limitation from Wiluna?

The MINISTER replied:

A radius of 80 miles from Wiluna is considered sufficient to cover all the territory affected by the Meekatharra-Wiluna railway. Areas further north and east of Wiluna are already exempt as regards transport to or from the nearest railway station or town for the purpose of conveying station produce or requirements.

**NATIVE WELFARE.***Government Acquisition of Beechboro Land.*

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

(1) What led up to the acquisition by the Government of the 20 acres of land at Beechboro, upon which it is proposed to establish a native reserve?

(2) Why was the Beechboro area chosen for such a reserve?

(3) What price was paid for the land?

(4) Does the Government not know that the land in question is very low-lying, and that 10 acres or thereabouts is swamp land, and most unsuitable for the purpose for which it is proposed?

(5) Does the Government know that the people of the Beechboro district are strongly protesting against the establishment of this reserve?

(6) Will the Government stay its hand in this matter in view of the tabling of a petition in this House yesterday, such petition being from the Beechboro residents requesting the Government to reconsider its intention to establish this reserve?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

I must ask that this question be postponed. The Minister for Native Welfare is away, and he has taken a very personal interest in this matter.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You're telling me!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would like to have the answer from him, because then it will be a full one.

**LEASEHOLD LAND.***Responsibilities and Rights of Leaseholders.*

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is there any obligation on a holder of a lease for grazing or other purposes, who lays poison baits, to notify the public, or warn them in any way?

(2) Is it an offence against any Act, for a person to take a dog, on or off a leash, on leasehold property?

(3) Does a leaseholder of land have the right to refuse entry, passage, or occupation of that land irrespective of the value of the land, (in vast areas for very low fees, or small holdings at much higher fees)?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Regulation 102 (1) made under the Vermin Act states that whenever poison is laid by owners and occupiers of holdings, or persons acting with the authority of owners and occupiers, for the purpose of destroying dingoes, a notice shall be put up and displayed on any roads or vacant land where the poison is laid by the persons laying such poison.

Regulation 31 (2) (e) of the Pesticides Regulations under the Health Act states that a person shall notify the occupier of every adjacent property of his intention to lay baits and the period and location of baiting when sodium fluoroacetate, otherwise known as "1080," is used.

(2) No, except as provided in the Dog Act, Section 25, and by-laws made by local authorities.

(3) (i) Conditional Purchase Leases:

The holder of a conditional purchase lease has the exclusive use of the area held and has the right to refuse entry, passage, or occupation of the land to the general public. Where, in any such lease, the marketable indigenous timber is reserved to the Crown, the Crown has full liberty to enter, obtain and remove any of such timber. For that purpose or for the purpose of extracting any such timber from any other land in the locality, the Crown has full liberty to pass and re-pass over the land, with or without workmen, to take water, to lay down and construct pipelines for conveying water, to make roads and ways, and construct and maintain timber tramways on the land.

Where a conditional purchase lease is issued subject to mining conditions, any holder of a miner's right has the right to enter on the land for prospecting purposes.

(ii) Special Leases:

The holder of a special lease granted for grazing or any other purpose has the exclusive use of the land for the purpose

granted, and could refuse entry, passage or occupation of the land to the general public unless otherwise provided in the lease.

(iii) Pastoral Leases:

The holder of a pastoral lease has the exclusive use of the land for pastoral purposes, but the right is reserved to the Minister—

- (a) To lay out, declare open, and make roads through any land held under pastoral lease.
- (b) To take away any indigenous produce, rock, soil or other material for public purposes.
- (c) To issue licences to any persons to quarry, dig for, and cart away any rock, soil or other material.

Any person has the right to pass over any land held under pastoral lease conditions which may be unenclosed, or enclosed, but otherwise unimproved, with or without horses, stock, or vehicles, on all necessary occasions.

**CHASE SYNDICATE.**

*Advances by Rural & Industries Bank.*

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

What amount of money has been made available by the Rural & Industries Bank to the Chase Syndicate?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

This question relates to the affairs of a private customer of the bank. With that customer's consent, the question is answered—Nil.

**DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES.**

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That in accordance with Standing Order No. 31a Hon. E. M. Davies, Hon. L. A. Logan and Hon. A. F. Griffith be elected to act as Deputy Chairmen of Committees during the current session.

**COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.**

*Library.*

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That in accordance with Standing Order No. 34, the following members be elected to serve on the Library Committee during the present session, viz.:—Hon. F. R. H. Lavery and Hon. J. G. Hislop.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Mr. Lavery is the only member of the committee present, and I understand that he has been a member of the committee previously. I was wondering whether he would give us some information as to

how often this committee meets. Has it met during the past year, or did it meet during the previous year or the year before that? What are its duties, and how frequently does he think it should meet in order to bring the library up to date?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: It gives me great pleasure to answer the hon. member, because, during the last session of Parliament, a meeting was held at which you, Mr. President, were present; and certain decisions were made in regard to stocking the library with new literature. A fair quantity of new literature was provided by book-selling firms of the city for members of the committee to look over with a view to deciding which to purchase. While I have not the actual figures, I think I can say that a fair sum was spent and a report will come up later as to what was actually expended on new books.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Does the committee ever report to the House?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: At the moment I would say, no.

The PRESIDENT: I would point out that the committee has met several times and has received notice even today that the librarian has placed new books on the Speaker's table for the Library Committee to peruse before it decides on what purchases to make.

Question put and passed.

On motions by the Chief Secretary, the remaining committees were appointed as follows:—

Standing Orders.—Hon. E. M. Davies, Hon. L. A. Logan and Hon. H. K. Watson.

House.—Hon. W. R. Hall, Hon. E. M. Heenan, Hon. A. R. Jones and Hon. J. Murray.

Printing.—Hon. G. Bennetts and Hon. J. McI. Thomson.

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.**

*Third Day—Conclusion.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (North) [5.0]: I think, Mr. President, that I find myself in the same position as perhaps 20 other members of this Chamber, in being reluctant to speak too early in the debate. However, I intend to make a partial review of the circumstances obtaining in what might be described as the empty half of Australia. I refer to that half which geographically is mainly north of the 26th parallel and in which reside to-day—taking a line from Cape York Peninsula to the corner of Queensland, New South Wales, and the Northern Territory, and thence across approximately to a line south of Carnarvon—fewer than 60,000 people. It is an area of great resources

and great potential resources; not a land without hope, but a land of great prospects. In the course of my somewhat perfunctory remarks, having decided only a few moments ago that I should speak this afternoon, I intend to draw attention to the great assets of Australia which exist within that region.

If we start from the western edge of Queensland from the town—almost a city—of Mt. Isa, on the desert edge, surrounded by sparsely populated areas where residents are engaged in a pastoral life, we find that within the precincts of that town there is one of the great copper deposits of the world—a deposit the extent of which exceeds that of the great Rhodesian deposit; and, adjacent to that, there is the now famous Mary Kathleen uranium deposit. There we have an excellent starting point from which to illustrate what I meant by my first sentence.

Let us move towards the south-western corner of Queensland and travel even as far as Broken Hill, and we still find within the empty half of Australia not more than 100,000 people. Extending westwards from Broken Hill we take in such wonderful assets of this nation as the Wittenoom Gorge asbestos deposit, a deposit such that on prewar values—not today's values—it had a cash valuation in excess of the total amount of gold produced in the history of Western Australia, and that is approaching £400,000,000. Within that region also we find the Yampi Sound iron-ore deposit.

In the Northern Territory we have the Rum Jungle uranium deposit and the Alligator River uranium deposit and, particularly, the El Shirana company's lease from which, in two shipments this year, over 2,000,000 dollars have been received into Australia. The figures of revenue from Rum Jungle are confidential and therefore not available; but, having mentioned that place, I think it is important to relate that that work started during the time while I resided in the Northern Territory, when British capital was first approached to finance its development but was not attracted by the prospects, following which American interests came in and found millions of dollars, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, with which to finance the development of the Rum Jungle uranium field. Within that area also we have one of the richest goldmines for its size in Australia, the Australian Development Company's mine at Tennant Creek.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is a very old goldmining area.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Today, month after month, it is crushing stone of a value in excess of two ounces of gold to the ton. In that part of the country we have also the tin deposits at Maranboy, the greatest in Australia, unworked; and we find in

this year 1957 that pioneering and prospecting are still continuing and have resulted in the discovery of the wonderful deposit of bauxite in the Cape York Peninsula area. That is one of the greatest discoveries of this age and will be a source of supply of aluminium better than any other in the Southern Hemisphere. That was discovered this year, but during the war there was the discovery on the edge of the Northern Territory on the Gulf of Carpentaria of another bauxite deposit.

We must not overlook the prospect of oil being found somewhere within this vast continent, and somewhere within the region to which I have referred, because it would be an extraordinary geological happening if an area of 3,000,000 square miles of country of the age of Australia were to be the only area of that size and age in the world in which oil was not discovered.

One could continue and refer to the less important minerals and materials being actively developed in that area; and, indeed, Federal members of Parliament have extensive interests in manganese in the northern part of Australia and are showing a pioneering spirit in making roads to the deposits. With an export licence operating to enable them to export the products, I understand they are doing very well.

It could be said that within 250 miles of the town of Port Hedland there exists in the Pilbara area one of the greatest opportunities in the world today in mineral prospecting. The pastoral wealth of that region is, of course, well known; but that side of development there has been painfully slow. It was in 1876, for example, that Warburton crossed from the overland telegraph line to the Oakover River and the De Grey, and there has not been one pastoral lease taken up eastwards of the point where he touched civilisation at the head of the Oakover in 1876.

I will refer now to the Kimberleys and the famous treks of cattle overland by the MacDonalds and Duracks, from 1884 to 1886. Very little of the country which is away from the main resources provided by nature has been adequately developed since that time.

When we consider the growth of Australia's population and the commensurate growth of rural industries—particularly in regard to beef production—it is not idle to assume that within the next quarter century, unless something substantial is done to step up beef production, in particular, there will be very little available for export. In that northern part of Australia the opportunities in fishing are enormous and nations other than ours are perhaps more conscious of that fact than we are.

The Commonwealth Government insisted that certain licences be issued to the Japanese to work the extra-territorial waters in areas where our right to issue licences or control those waters is being challenged in the international court. The fact remains, however, that the Japanese are lifting vast quantities of pearl-shell from that region; shell which could be worked from Australia's shores, and which would bring this country an enormous return that now goes to Japan. At present not even a corner of the shell is knocked off on Australian soil.

With relation to fishing, it is almost trite to say that those waters teem with fish; and that there, in a fishing industry in the northern waters, Australia has a resource that other nations are anxious to develop.

In this age and in the light of today's knowledge, it would be a very foolish man who would say, in regard to agriculture, that any land—whether in a temperate or tropical climate—if it has a certain rainfall, is unsuited to some form of agriculture; and so it is with the coastal fringe of north Australia. That fringe of country is populated in certain parts by tens of thousands of buffaloes; and from those herds our only marketable product is a few thousand hides every few years, although it is known that 40,000 or 50,000 head of buffalo exist on the plains of the Northern Territory rivers adjacent to Darwin.

I repeat that nothing is marketed except the hides; and I did hope and still hope for a determined policy of replacing the buffalo with some other beast marketable inside its hide, in an endeavour to utilise that country to better advantage and assist in peopling its vast empty spaces.

The north of this continent is not an easy place in which to live, and it would be indeed a foolish person who would claim that the North had climatic advantages. I do not refer merely to the difficulties associated with the heavy rainfall and humidity in areas where at times torrential rains fall, but rather to the pests and insect life of that country. Having lived in those areas for many years I believe the greatest difficulty our womenfolk residing in such places meet arises from the mosquitoes and sandflies and the incessant scratching that is necessary when people are susceptible to their bites.

I think it was in 1699 that Dampier went up our western coast and touched the Northern Territory. It was then that he wrote that this was a country so afflicted with sandflies and mosquitoes that it was doubtful whether anyone excepting a college of monks—who could overcome the disabilities because of their

religious zeal—could ever hope to live in it. That not unfairly describes some of the coastal regions in some of which valiant attempts have been made during the last 70 years to establish townships. So it is useless for anyone to assume that there are no difficulties in connection with the establishment of permanent populations within that region.

What I am particularly concerned about is the necessity and ability to awaken a sufficient interest within our nation, or a consciousness within the minds of those who live in more pleasant places, of the dangers which continue to develop by the discoveries of greater wealth, and the better use of that country as conceived in the minds of the not-so-fortunate people of the world.

In his recent address to the Australian School of Political Science our present Governor-General struck a very important note in his opening remarks. This is what His Excellency said in conclusion—

There is some discussion on whether resources and money spent in developing the Northern Territory would not be more remuneratively employed in the south. I could not answer this but I would ask you for a moment to look at the problem through Asian eyes. If those 1,200,000,000 pairs of eyes looking hungrily for land see to the south of them a million square miles occupied by only 100,000 Australians, sooner or later they may not be content with looking. Apart from the economic side of the problem of development there is somewhere in the future the compelling one of national existence.

If one studies a map of Australia and the relationship of all of Australia's capital cities to the point of entry by most overseas air routes—namely, Darwin—one sees how dangerous the situation could be in wartime. It is surely sufficiently dangerous in peacetime. When we realise that Singapore is almost as close to Darwin as is Sydney, and that one can board a plane at Darwin on any night and be in Sydney at 7 o'clock next morning, it is very obvious that with the teeming millions on our doorstep only half that distance away a very serious and provocative attitude of mind is necessary in all Australians.

I doubt very much whether the 99.5 per cent. of Australians who do not live in that region have any idea of the consequences of continued neglect of it; and the consequences could be absolutely desperate in the future planning of the developed and more opulent and more pleasant regions within this Commonwealth. Now is the time when a national stocktaking is necessary as to how best we may introduce a population into that

area and induce it to remain there permanently. It will continue to dwindle unless some governmental activity is promoted.

In the cattle industry itself the greatest menace that faces it is the inability to obtain labour to man the industry. There are no jackeroos nowadays; there are no trained horsemen and stockmen going to the Kimberleys and to our cattle country in the north; and when the present generation dies, the position will rapidly become very serious.

A great deal of the fault is attributable to the policy and the attitude of large landholders of the past. Within my time of residence in the north married men were not wanted. That was the policy. It was a place for single men; a place for men who were prepared to rough it, even to the extent of their camp being under a baobab tree. Conditions are not wholly dissimilar to that today. This is making the labour situation in the industries of the north very difficult indeed.

Let us take, for example, the Wyndham Meat Works, which is a monument to State enterprise in keeping the country open. This industry is threatened unless the labour position is solved in relation to the cattle industry from the branding yard to the drover's camp. Far too much reliance has been placed in the past on aboriginal labour, and the use of single whites. Now we have many more wonderful women in that country, it is almost too late—it is certainly very late—to attempt to rectify that serious situation.

I have spoken of the Wyndham Meat Works as being a monument to State enterprise. Those works kept the cattle industry of the Kimberleys going, when cattle could only be bought at £4 a head, and when successive governments had to face a situation of colossal losses. Today, of course, the story is much different; but with impending replacements of such magnitude, the position is enough to worry any Treasurer attempting to handle it.

From the point that now is the time for stocktaking I will pass to the need for a very early assessment of the future requirements of that region in relation to public works. Very many of the facilities provided by the governments in that part of this empty continent are assets such as jetties and public institutions built in the early part of this century. Although the Minister for Works develops an ambitious programme which he hopes to see through if funds are available, it must be to him, as it is to those of us who represent that part of Australia in this Parliament, a source of great worry that progress cannot be more rapid and more substantial.

I would ask what is to happen during the next decade in relation to jetties such as that at Carnarvon, which is nearly 50 years old. There are the jetty at Broome and the requirements of overseas shipping at Wyndham to be considered. What is to happen with regard to the inducements to which I have referred as being necessary to attract population unless the Minister for Works is able to give effect to his ideas of an ambitious programme of more hospitals? A new hospital at Derby is urgently needed. The hospital there was built to cater for five beds; but today, the demand at times approaches 30.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Is it only five today?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It was originally built for five beds with verandahs louvred in. The maternity ward is right alongside the beds in which the seriously ill and difficult cases have to be accommodated. It is a very difficult situation indeed.

In relation to public works, I suggest that it is imperative that something be done outside the resources of the State in regard to loan funds in order to meet a very urgent situation. It has been said recently in North Australia by the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party in the Federal House, Mr. Calwell, that the Federal Government should spend £60,000,000 a year in the Northern Territory immediately to give stimulus to population development and an incentive to a greater population.

I would say that if that sum could be applied to the entire north of Australia on a planned programme we would not merely have the country occupied by people willing to live there; we would not only have better circumstances and conditions for the women; but we would also have the opportunity for greater production and for an occupation by people interested in the development of mining; because, after all, the greatest pioneering industry is still the mining industry. Wherever men are congregated in isolated places we will always find the prospector of the week-end—even though he may be virtually an amateur anxious to look for some mineral. Fortunately the history of Australia is such that these people have found much.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They would not be hampered by references to union rules.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think this is something into which political spleen and strongly-held political ideals need not enter at this stage. However it may be brought about, whether by allocation from a buoyant budget—and I refer to the Commonwealth Budget—or by special moneys made available to develop the north of Australia, I am sure it would be money well spent on an urgent need. It would be well spent and practically spent to meet the circumstances and living conditions of people who exist under considerable difficulty.

There are not many ways in which such development can take place, in connection with the availability of money; but it is well known to all of us who follow Commonwealth financing of works that the Commonwealth has found it possible to spend between £200,000,000 and £300,000,000 this year on public works from its revenues, leaving to the States the onus of responsibility of borrowing every shilling which they spend—indeed, borrowing from the Commonwealth and paying 5 per cent. for the pleasure.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: How much of our disabilities grant is spent in the North?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: A lot of our disabilities grant goes to the North. It is more than a mere platitude to say that, irrespective of the political flavour of any Australian or any Australian Government, moneys would be well and wisely spent from buoyant Commonwealth revenues as an investment from this nation to enable a programme to be carried out. If a mere £2,500,000 of the £1,200,000,000 actually collected now by the Commonwealth Government were earmarked for an attractive developmental programme in our North-West, this programme would firstly develop, and secondly protect the nation.

The second possibility may be in inducing finance to follow the suggestions made by the Northern Rehabilitation Committee in regard to taxation. I am sure all of us present deplore the fact that the Commonwealth Government has still given no satisfactory answer to the delegation from the Parliament of Western Australia in connection with the disabilities of the North-West, and suggestions made to overcome them.

The taxation proposals of the Northern Rehabilitation Committee have been vigorously dealt with and extensively publicised throughout Australia. They are, in essence, that the whole of the North should be tax-free, with the proviso that those whose incomes are large—and some indeed are large—should have the right to retain 60 per cent. of their income and to reinvest in development of their industry the other 40 per cent. Therefore, private enterprise, in the case of a station probably earning £100,000 per year, would reinvest £40,000 in the pastoral industry from the profits. Other people on lesser incomes—such as tradesmen, artisans, and men who serve the people through such businesses as garages, and engineers—should be tax-free.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: What form would that reinvestment take?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The committee has given those details wide publicity. It might be development, subdivision, or the provision of water, because, as the hon. member will know, there are some interests in these areas with over 1,000,000 acres and many with between 250,000 acres and

600,000 acres. Even in this year of 1957 we know that on some properties very few watering points exist away from permanent rivers and places where nature has provided the water.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Shame!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is a fact. In recent years the larger companies have returned very great incomes. One property on the Fitzroy River, which I will not name, will return £100,000 this year from its wool clip. That is what it will be, if wool stays at £100 per bale.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Most of the money from the Federal Treasury goes into the Snowy River scheme.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There are such properties as Nookenhah, with 1,000 bales of a special line of wool; and Liveringa, which I suppose this year will exceed 1,000 bales. One could speak of many others held by large companies which are not very altruistic, either in an industrial or a national sense. There is one company with such a subdivision of interests that it holds much more than the permissible area of 1,000,000 acres. What is it contributing in a national sense to the development of population of that territory? Not very much.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Yet you would make it tax-free!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have not said that. But I do say that the hip pocket is a very sensitive one; and, if the pressure upon it is eased, so is the peace of mind of a lot of people. If pressure is exerted upon it, people can be readily made to jump. If there can be an easement on the hip pocket, it will attract the people who will be prepared to take their families to live in the North, in spite of the difficulties and the high cost of living. Could we but give an inducement by Government spending, and an incentive by an easement of personal liabilities, we would do much for this very empty country which, as I mentioned earlier, is a country of prospect and hope.

Perhaps the third means of inducing capital to go to such a place would be to give very liberal concessions to capital from outside Western Australia. There are many people in the Eastern States of Australia with large capital who would be prepared to invest in this State, provided they could see security of tenure and a reasonable prospect of profit. Indeed, some have been so venturesome as to buy large pastoral interests in North Australia without having seen them.

We can recall the Steinberg proposal, a plan to induce a Jewish settlement in Northern Australia in the Ord River region. This plan was developed in 1938 or 1939. I had the responsibility of handling the presentation of Steinberg's



case to Cabinet. Had those proposals proceeded, the Jewish interests of the world were prepared to give all sorts of undertakings that those people would remain as permanent residents for a long term of years; that they would develop pastorally and agriculturally the valley of the Ord; that they would keep, within Australia, the capital and the earnings of that capital to encourage others to come here.

Whatever merit there may have been in the proposal, it would appear that such schemes as the present Ord River proposal could have been a reality ere this. However, the situation today in that regard is that no one knows, so far as I am aware, the economics of the Ord River proposal. We do not know whether it is a prospect with a certain financial recompense, if £8,000,000 or £10,000,000 were invested in a dam or reticulation system. We know what it can produce; we know it can produce sugar.

It would be a very important thing for this State to know the economics of the Ord River proposals, especially if they showed that there was a promise and prospect of a return for capital investment in one of the unpopulated parts of Australia as the Snowy River scheme provided in the more populated parts. We all know that it is money collected from the States which is developing the Snowy River project.

I am one who believes that the wealth of Australia should be taxed wherever it is, in order that it might be used to develop the resources of this nation wherever they occur. There should be no State boundaries in such a proposal; this is a national matter. However, what have we had as an inducement in tax relaxation? The zone allowances, which were emphasised in the last Federal Budget, were an insult to the people who were led to believe they would receive much more.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Contemptuous.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They were contemptuous, to use the words of the member who has just interjected. The zone allowance prior to that was £108, and it was lifted to £180. In "B" district it was lifted from £20 to £30. That was the allowance for living in the regional zone "B."

The Minister for Railways: That is not a direct deduction.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No. It is giving nothing whatever.

The Minister for Railways: It means about 1s. per week.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the proposals of the Northern Rehabilitation Committee were agreed to in their entirety, they would not cost more than £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 per year, and this would be well worth a trial over a period. Let the

Federal Government be a little more enterprising instead of consistently saying "no" to any requests which come from the State for the development of our sparsely populated regions.

The lack of interest in the empty spaces, I fear, has a basis in the absence of the voting strength in those regions. If the empty North of Australia had four or five seats held by any party with the balance of power, I can imagine how much money might be spent there. If the people there, even though small in numbers, represented effective votes, it would be a vastly different story.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You are not hardly done by. You have more than enough on a per capita basis.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is representation, without any effect, speaking federally.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You are indulging in self-criticism.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am speaking very deliberately of the Commonwealth situation. Why, the member for the Northern Territory in the Federal House has not even a vote on matters that affect the Northern Territory!

Hon. H. K. Watson: I thought you were speaking generally.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I was speaking of the Commonwealth situation where the coffers are, and where alone the opportunity exists to obtain finance to achieve the sort of things I have in mind.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I thought you were including State Parliaments.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No. I take the opposite view. As Sir Charles Latham will remember, I kept the Assembly all night, on one occasion, fighting to retain four seats in the North-West when we were deprived of one by the redistribution of, I think, 1946. I believe in the representation of those empty spaces even though the electorates consist of only 1,000 people. If in the Commonwealth sphere we had the balance of power from that region, why, the Snowy River scheme would be secondary to the practical and profitable proposals which would emanate from engineers—mining and others—to develop the great opportunities and the great national assets that exist there.

I feel quite certain that if the defence authorities of Australia were the ones listened to by the Government, we would not only have, as now exists in Darwin, the best airstrip in the southern hemisphere at Darwin alone; but we would, at all vulnerable points of our North-West have preparations at least for the time being, although without the requisite accommodation for the services, for what may be inevitabilities.

Unless it is from a commencement of Government spending, and the stimulus therefrom, it is difficult to see how it may be done. When we remember that from an income-tax collection of nearly £600,000,000 this year the States have £160,000,000 reimbursed to them, it is quite easy to understand—is it not?—how such national matters must become matters of attention for all Australia; matters of attention for all taxpayers and matters of attention for all State Parliaments.

I hope we may live to see, very shortly, a little bit of unbuttoning of the Commonwealth purse, and a little bit of opportunity given to the States to develop the areas where they know the potential lies, in the interests, not merely of State by State, but of the future of this great Commonwealth.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

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

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 16th July.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.*

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## Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 10th July, 1957.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### TRANSPORT.

(a) *Rates of Travel for Pensioners.*

Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it a fact that a pensioner travelling from the country to Perth by railway bus has been, or would be, refused travel at half-fare?

(2) If so, why is there differentiation between country and suburban pensioners when they travel between their place of residence and the city?