

proposes to increase the 12s. 6d. super-annuation pension by 50 per cent., being the same ratio as that for salaried officers, making a total pension of 18s. 9d. per week.

I may point out that the council considers that, although the contribution of wages employees for the pension of 12s. 6d. per week compares with the contribution of similar wages employees in the State Service for an equal benefit, the amount of 12s. 6d. per week as a pension does not provide any incentive for the council's wages employees to remain in the service of the council. Neither does the scheme provide the means whereby a wages employee may make an adequate contribution whilst working for a satisfactory pension on retirement and, therefore, the new unit scheme proposed, which will enable workmen to increase their contributions and their pension benefits up to a maximum of £3 per week, should greatly benefit our wages employees.

If this measure becomes law, the Perth City Council proposes to table regulations for the carrying out of the new scheme. I have a copy of the proposed regulations, and any member who wishes to peruse them may do so. I think I can confidently recommend the Bill to the House. I believe the Perth City Council has endeavoured to do its very best for those in its employ, and the proposed amendments to the Act will be valued by all sections of the Perth City Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.21 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 28th October, 1954.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Personal explanation, Mr. Bovell and South African water supply inquiries	2432
Questions : Chamberlain Industries, Ltd., as to indebtedness to Government	2433
Water supplies, (a) as to salt content of reservoirs	2433
(b) as to cartage to southern areas	2433
(c) as to improving water catchment, Boddington	2434
Tramway Department, as to number of employees and general manager's retirement	2434
Bread, as to poison content in wholemeal flour	2434
Land settlement, (a) as to opening of Tone River area for selection	2434
(b) as to availability of blocks	2435
(c) as to provision for sons of local settlers	2435
Education, as to completion of teacher's quarters, Chowrup	2435
King's Park, (a) as to Olympic swimming pool proposal	2435
(b) as to necessity for legislation	2435
Railways, (a) as to name of new station, etc.	2435
(b) as to standard gauge, Kalgoorlie-Fremantle	2436
(c) as to disappearance of telegraph poles, Kulikup	2436
Midland Junction Abattoir, (a) as to holding of inquiry	2436
(b) as to terms of inquiry	2436
Motor-vehicles, as to fitting two rear vision mirrors	2436
Electoral, as to redistribution of seats legislation	2437
Bills : Forests Act Amendment, 1r.	2437
Vermin Act Amendment, 1r.	2437
Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment, 3r.	2437
Health Act Amendment (No.2), Council's amendment	2437
Loan, £14,808,000, 2r., Com., report	2437
Married Women's Protection Act Amendment, 2r.	2449
Closer Settlement Act Amendment, 2r.	2450

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Bovell and South African Water Supply Inquiries.

Mr. BOVELL: I would like to make a statement. On the 14th July, 1954, as reported on page 465 of "Hansard," the member for Greenough asked the Premier if he would authorise me to make inquiries in Africa regarding water supplies in arid areas. On the 16th July I received a letter from the Premier giving me the necessary authority. For the information of the House, I would like to

read this letter which I received from the Secretary for Mines, Pretoria, Union of South Africa, dated the 17th September, 1954. It reads—

Dear Mr. Bovell,

I understand that you would like to obtain literature on the conservation of underground water supplies in South Africa, and also literature on irrigation generally in South Africa, and what is being done or planned for providing water in arid areas. Unfortunately there is no published literature available which would be of assistance to you but I have asked the Underground Water Section of the Geological Survey Division of my department to prepare a memorandum for you. This may take a little time and in case it is not ready before you leave on your return to Australia, I shall be glad if you can kindly let me have your address there so that it can be sent on to you.

Yours faithfully,

V. H. OSBORN,
Secretary for Mines.

I have given that gentleman my address and the necessary information will be conveyed to the authorities when it reaches me.

QUESTIONS.

CHAMBERLAIN INDUSTRIES LTD.

As to Indebtedness to Government.

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

With reference to No. (8) of questions asked by me on the 20th October last, will he now state by how much the indebtedness of Chamberlain Industries Pty. Ltd. to—

- (a) the Rural & Industries Bank; and
 - (b) the State Government
- has been increased since the 1st March, 1953?

The MINISTER replied:

At this stage it is not considered advisable that this information should be made public, but it will be made available to the hon. member at the Industrial Development Department at any time he chooses to make the inquiry.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Salt Content of Reservoirs.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) How many grains of salt per gallon are contained in the following water supplies—

- (a) Mundaring Reservoir;
- (b) Canning Reservoir;
- (c) Wellington Dam?

(2) Does the salt content vary at different seasons of the year, and if so, what are the variations?

(3) Has the salt content of any of these supplies increased during recent years, and if so, what increase has taken place in each case?

(4) Is it regarded as likely that the salt content of any of these supplies will increase in the future, and if so, in which cases is this considered likely?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Mundaring Reservoir: 21 grains per gallon on 29/4/54.

(b) Canning Reservoir: 15 grains per gallon on 4/10/54.

(c) Wellington Dam: 20 grains per gallon on 10/9/54.

(2) The salt content varies throughout the year and from year to year. It falls with the inflow of the winter rains and after the rains have stopped it increases gradually during the summer as the result of the evaporation from the water surface.

Maximum and minimum salinity recorded:—

Mundaring Reservoir—

Maximum—36 grains per gallon—May, 1920.

Minimum—4 grains per gallon—August, 1945.

Canning Reservoir—

Maximum—20 grains per gallon—November, 1938.

Minimum—7 grains per gallon—September, 1946.

Wellington Dam—

Maximum—37 grains per gallon—April, 1954.

Minimum—7 grains per gallon—September, 1945.

(3) Broadly speaking, no. See answers to Nos. (1) and (2).

(4) Yes; at Mundaring, and at Wellington Dam after the wall has been raised.

(b) As to Cartage to Southern Areas.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Has consideration been given to the probable need for the carriage of fresh water to those areas in the southern portion of the State where conditions bordering on drought conditions prevail?

(2) If so—

(a) has any estimate been made of the quantity of water that may be needed;

(b) has any decision been reached as to the conditions upon which water will be made available and the price payable by the applicant; and

(c) can he state from what source of supply the water can be best made available?

(3) If no decision has been reached on any of the points referred to in No. (2), will he take immediate steps to have such decisions made and inform the House at the earliest opportunity?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) The problem has many variable factors and does not depend for solution upon the factors mentioned in the question. Steps have been taken to ration available supplies in town storages to obviate, as far as possible, the need to cart water. The position is being closely watched and any emergency will be promptly dealt with according to the location of the area and the nearest alternative supply. One such emergency has occurred and is receiving attention.

(c) *As to Improving Water Catchment, Boddington.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Could he indicate when improvements to the water catchment area at Boddington will be carried out?

(2) Will this work be given a high priority?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes. The improvements to the Boddington water supply have been given a high priority and will be carried out when funds are available.

TRAMWAY DEPARTMENT.

As to Number of Employees and General Manager's Retirement.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the total number of persons employed by the Tramway Department?

(2) When is it anticipated that the present general manager will be retiring?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Nine hundred and three.

(2) When he reaches the retiring age in 1959.

BREAD.

As to Poison Content in Wholemeal Flour.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Was notice taken by the department of assertions by an Eastern States doctor in recent weeks to the effect that wholemeal flour and wholemeal bread contained a poison?

(2) If notice was taken, was it found necessary to interfere in any way with the fairly large distribution of this product in Western Australia?

(3) Is not wholemeal bread part of the meal known as the Oslo luncheon, which is served in schools?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No. The Public Health Department is of the opinion that no danger exists so far as the diet of the people of this State is concerned, and supports the views expressed by Professor Underwood in his article published in "The West Australian" of the 8th September, 1954.

(3) Yes.

LAND SETTLEMENT.

(a) *As to Opening of Tone River Area for Selection.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware that in May of this year representations were made to the Deputy Premier by the Upper Blackwood Road Board to have some land in the Tone River area made available for selection?

(2) Can he say what decision—if any—resulted from these representations?

(3) Can he say whether it is Government policy to encourage selection and settlement of this area by private individuals or not?

(4) Would any applications for land in the Tone River area be favourably considered?

(5) Can he indicate the general tenor of replies from his department to the Upper Blackwood Road Board respecting the latter's representations to have the Tone River area available for selection?

(6) Is any Government land settlement scheme envisaged for this area in the immediate future?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Upper Blackwood Road Board was advised that the Land Settlement Board was ready to proceed with development at Tone River and that the matter was in the hands of the Conservator of Forests, who is making a survey as to the timber position. Until released by the conservator, the land cannot be made available for war service land settlement or private settlement.

(3) The area has been approved for war service land settlement subject to release by the Forests Department.

(4) If, when negotiations with the department have been completed, it is found that the area available for release is insufficient to warrant development under the war service land settlement scheme, the released land will be made available for general selection.

(5) and (6) Answered by Nos. (2), (3) and (4).

(b) As to Availability of Blocks.

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

In relation to the Tone River area, can he indicate when he thinks negotiations with the Conservator of Forests will be completed and some decision made as to when this land will be made available for general selection or reserved for war service land settlement?

The MINISTER replied:

I cannot indicate with any accuracy when the consultations will be completed, but, from the point of view of the Lands Department, we feel that this matter should be attended to immediately. That is so because we have so much machinery tied up with land settlement projects and we want to be able to divert it at the right stage without losing time or having to disperse the administration in this regard. The matter will be proceeded with immediately.

(c) As to Provision for Sons of Local Settlers.

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Further to my previous questions in regard to the Tone River area, will consideration be given to allowing sons of local settlers to secure blocks in this area, seeing that if the whole area is reserved for soldier settlement it means that local people will be completely excluded from selecting blocks there?

The MINISTER replied:

I do not know the extent of the land in the Tone River area that will be earmarked for war service land settlement, if such is proved to be desirable; but in other areas we have done what the hon. member has suggested, and I think it is a good idea. I will put the matter forward in order to see if some assistance can be given to the sons of local farmers.

EDUCATION.*As to Completion of Teacher's Quarters, Chowerup.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Can he advise if the teacher's quarters to be erected at Chowerup will be ready for occupation at the commencement of the year 1955?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," will he say when these quarters will be available for occupation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The removal of the Mayanup school quarters to Chowerup cannot be undertaken until further loan moneys are made available.

KING'S PARK.*(a) As to Olympic Swimming Pool Proposal.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is it a fact that the King's Park Board has decided to allow an Olympic swimming pool to be constructed in King's Park?

(2) If not, will he state whether the board intends to allow this proposal to be carried out, or whether negotiations are proceeding in this direction?

(3) If so, does he not agree that this would be a retrograde step?

(4) Does not the very essence of beauty and delight in this wonderful reserve lie in the fact that it is an indigenous park wherein our native flora may be preserved for posterity?

(5) If the answer to No. (4) is substantially in the affirmative, should not any further encroachment be opposed?

(6) Will he give the House an assurance that an Olympic pool will not be built in King's Park?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member informed me of his questions in sufficient time for me to consider them. The answers are:—

(1) No.

(2) The board is awaiting proposals from the Perth City Council before making a decision.

(3) Until the proposals are received and the board submits its views to me, I am unable to decide.

(4) Unfortunately, quite a large section of the park has been spoilt by the incursion of foreign grasses, resulting in serious bush fires, causing damage to the natural flora.

(5) Until the report mentioned is available, I am unable to decide.

(6) Answered by No. (5).

(b) As to Necessity for Legislation.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Is King's Park a Class "A" reserve and, if so, will it be necessary for a Bill to be passed by Parliament before any portion of the park can be handed over as the site for an Olympic swimming pool?

The MINISTER replied:

My information is that it will be necessary to pass legislation for the purpose.

RAILWAYS.*(a) As to Name of New Station, etc.*

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is to be the name of the new railway station below Karrakatta?

(2) Will the showground platform be used on occasions other than in Show Week?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The new station will be known as Loch-st. In the first place, there was a suggestion that it should be called Graylands, but representations were made from certain quarters that that name was not favoured. I understand that the Nomenclature Society also suggested Graylands, but the Railway Department has decided upon Loch-st. because it is immediately opposite that street. The department intends that new stopping places in the metropolitan area, whenever convenient—in most cases it will be convenient—will be named after the particular street adjacent to the stopping place.

(2) It will be used only when there is a function at the showground that necessitates the opening of the eastern gates of the ground for the admittance of patrons.

(b) *As to Standard Gauge, Kalgoorlie-Fremantle.*

Mr. ACKLAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

Some weeks ago, he stated that the matter of the standardisation of the rail gauge between Fremantle and Kalgoorlie would be discussed at a conference of railway commissioners to be held in August and that, following the conference a report would be submitted by the chairman of the Railways Commission. Has the report been supplied and, if so, is the Government in a position to state what action is proposed?

The PREMIER replied:

No report has yet been submitted. I shall arrange for the Minister for Railways to ascertain from the chairman of the commission when the report is likely to be available.

(c) *As to Disappearance of Telegraph Poles, Kulikup.*

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I should like permission, Mr. Speaker, to make a report following certain questions which have been asked by the member for Blackwood regarding the disappearance of a number of telegraph poles belonging to the Railway Department. Quite a number of answers have been given to the questions, and my last one was that the matter would be the subject of a report by the department and the C.I.B. and that when the information was received, I would convey it to the House.

Having gone into the matter, I wish now to report that the first information was that 189 telegraph poles had disappeared from railway property at the siding of Kulikup, and that these had been burned by the gang. That was not quite correct,

as only 19 of the poles had been burned. It is alleged that they were white ant-eaten and dry-rotted. The report also at that time indicated that 40 poles had been used in the locality, and, strangely enough, the remainder were missing. That was what caused me to endeavour to find out what had happened.

With that end in view, I had one of the Railway Department's investigators visit the area to discover what had become of the remaining poles. He reported that the poles had been removed by a local settler, with the permission of the ganger, and the ganger alleged that he had had permission from the telecommunications engineer in charge at Bunbury to get rid of the poles. Upon a question being raised as to the authority of the ganger or the telecommunications engineer to dispose of the poles, the local settler, when it became known to him, immediately returned them to the Railway Department.

Our investigator reported that, in his opinion, there had been no money passed between the ganger and the local settler and that there was no evidence of wrongdoing in that direction. The Railway Department decided that because its own investigator had interviewed only the telecommunications engineer, the ganger and the local settler, it would put the matter in the hands of the C.I.B. to discover whether any money had been passed in connection with the disposal of the poles.

The C.I.B. sent a man down and he interviewed quite a number of people in the area. His report is that he is quite satisfied that no money was passed in connection with the transaction. I have shown the reports of the C.I.B. and our own investigator to the member for Blackwood and I understand that he is satisfied that no illegal practices were indulged in regarding this matter.

The two employees concerned have been suitably dealt with by the department, and it is my opinion, after reading the reports, that the whole matter was brought about by a lack of appreciation on the part of the two railway employees, the ganger and the telecommunications engineer, in Bunbury, of the true value of the poles.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am completely satisfied that the matter referred to by the Minister has been thoroughly investigated, and I am in complete accord with the action taken.

MIDLAND JUNCTION ABATTOIR.

(a) *As to Holding of Inquiry.*

Mr. NALDER (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) With regard to the stoppage at Midland Junction abattoir, was he correctly reported in the Press this morning as saying that he considers that a comprehensive

independent inquiry should be held into the whole situation at the Midland Junction abattoir?

(2) Has the board also suggested that an inquiry be held?

(3) If an inquiry is to be held, is it to be done immediately?

The MINISTER replied:

I was correctly reported in this morning's Press and, in fact, I endeavoured to initiate an inquiry in August last, but owing to the illness of the person we hoped to get to make the investigation, he was not, and still is not, available. An inquiry in Queensland for a suitable practical man to undertake the inquiry fell through yesterday, because the man sought is now investigating a similar situation in Victoria at the request of the Government of that State.

We are still endeavouring to find a suitable man who is available to make the inquiry. The hon. member can rest assured that the Government considers this a matter of urgency. At an interview that the Abattoir Board had with me several weeks ago, I indicated my intention to hold an inquiry and the board fully concurred and said they would welcome it. The inquiry will be held just as soon as we can secure the services of a suitable man.

(b) *As to Terms of Inquiry.*

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

With regard to the proposed inquiry at the abattoir, who will lay down the terms of the inquiry, or will the person conducting the investigation be asked to submit a report as to what is the best way to get the result desired by the Government?

The MINISTER replied:

The scope of the inquiry will be indicated by me. It will be all-embracing and there will be no restrictions whatever on any section which the investigator desires to look into. On the basis of his report, I think action should be taken to amend what is developing into a rather disappointing situation.

MOTOR-VEHICLES.

As to Fitting Two Rear Vision Mirrors.

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Minister for Police:

Will he give consideration to amending the traffic regulations so as to make it compulsory for motor-vehicles to be fitted with two rear vision mirrors, one inside the vehicle and one on the right front-hand mudguard, if the vehicle is of right-hand drive, or on the left hand mudguard if of left-hand drive, so as to minimise the number of accidents?

The MINISTER replied:

I do not administer the Traffic Act but will pass the question on to the Chief Secretary and ask him to give the hon. member's proposal consideration.

ELECTORAL.

As to Redistribution of Seats Legislation.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

Can he give the House any more positive information about the proposed introduction of a redistribution of seats Bill?

The PREMIER replied:

The only additional information I can give members is that the Chief Parliamentary Draftsman is now, and has been for some days, engaged on the preparation of a Bill.

The Minister for Works: And it looks as if the Greenough electorate will be wiped out.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Forests Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Forests.
2. Vermin Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—LOAN, £14,808,000.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [2.43]: I am glad to have opportunity of taking part in the debate on this Bill, because loan moneys are of considerable interest to all members. The Treasurer gave the House an outline of how the loan moneys are to be spent, and this measure provides for the raising of the sum of £14,808,000, while from the General Loan Fund it is expected that £17,000,000 will be spent during the year 1954-55.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation in the Chamber.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: In this Loan Bill we have a considerable amount of that expenditure—a total of nearly £15,000,000 out of a proposed expenditure of £17,000,000. The Loan Estimates, which, I repeat, are of interest to all members, indicate the development of the State in many directions. Members, naturally, are interested in their own electorates, and, of course, the spending of loan money has a vital effect on each individual electorate. Now, as always, there is a keen demand by

members to have as much money as possible spent in their respective electorates. There is no doubt that the needs of Western Australian electorates are very great today. I have heard previous Treasurers indicate what amount of money would be necessary if all the requests of members were agreed to. We know that there is a limit up to which these requests can be met, and we must make the best use of the money available.

The Treasurer: Requests from members are small compared with some from various departments.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As the Treasurer knows, I have considerable experience in that direction and I know, when I was in office, what those amounts were and the disappointment expressed by my colleagues when they could not get all they required. Many of the public works now in progress were either initiated or approved by my own Government, and, of course, they must be finished. There is always something left over when a Government goes out of office. Loan programmes are continuous, and, when works are put in train, of necessity they must be finalised. With the growth of the State, it is natural to expect an expanding public works programme. We still have a great demand for water supplies, hospitals, schools, harbour development, drainage and sewerage, while, in addition, there is North-West development, of which the Premier spoke. So one could continue with the many requests that are received by the Government for the expenditure of loan funds.

On looking at the Loan Bill I am, of course, interested in the amount of money absorbed by that great spending department, the railways. I remember when the late Mr. McCallum was Minister for Works that he talked of the Public Works Department as being the great spending department, and he said that the loan money spent by it was a barometer indicating the progress of the State. Today, I think the Railway Department has superseded the Public Works Department for the position of the great spending department. I was not surprised to hear the Treasurer express considerable concern about the loan money that was being spent by the railways. However, I shall say something about that later.

I notice that the State public debt was £165,371,704, at the 30th June last. At the end of June, 1953, the indebtedness under that heading was £152,141,000. If we check on how the debt per head of population is growing, it causes us some concern. From the latest edition of the Pocket Year Book for 1954, members can get some idea of how the net debt per head of population is increasing. At the 30th June, 1954, the amount of debt per head of population was £257 11s. 9d.; at the end of June, 1953, it was £244 19s. 10d., an increase of £12 11s. 11d. per head.

When the Loan Estimates and the Loan Bill are introduced each year, members should, on looking at the loan indebtedness generally, note what effect the expenditure is having on the population as a whole, and indeed, on the general economy of the State. I know that when my own Government was in power, there was a considerable increase in loan expenditure. We were in office during the inflationary period and, as public works had to be carried out, they were undertaken at a cost that used to give me, as Treasurer, considerable concern.

I had a look at the latest tables I was able to get and I noticed that £4,357,000 of our loan funds was fully productive, and £43,000,000 was partly reproductive. On this loan there was a deficiency of £646,500 for the year. The total unproductive public works amounted to £98,000,000, and today, of course, it would be much nearer £100,000,000. The expenditure on those public works shows a deficiency of approximately £9,800,000 for the year.

We know that a great deal of public money must be totally unproductive because, as members know, public buildings such as schools and hospitals must be built, and there is necessary spending in other directions from which we cannot hope to obtain any direct return. Among those listed as being totally unproductive is the charcoal iron and steel industry, which showed a deficiency of approximately £80,000 for the last financial year. I am very keen indeed to see what the Auditor General has to say about this undertaking.

I notice in the Loan Bill that provision is made this year for £50,000, I think, to be available for the Wundowie charcoal iron industry. I think we might ask the Treasurer to tell us how much longer he thinks it will be necessary to go on providing money for this industry. When speaking about it some little time ago, I think he expressed some satisfaction regarding the progress it is making. However, when one considers that its loss last year was £80,000, I think members are entitled to know all about it and, as I have said, I look forward with considerable interest to the report of the Auditor General on this undertaking. I hope that when the Minister for Industrial Development introduces his Estimates he will give a full and accurate account of this undertaking and let us know the latest information in regard to it, and what he considers its future to be.

So far, I have been quoting the figures with regard to productive and non-productive spending of loan money. I think there is about 11 per cent. of our loan investments that are wholly productive. That is a very small percentage. However, I am not blaming this Government for that, because loan funds, ever since we

have had Responsible Government, and the figures involved in loan works, go back over many years. Nevertheless, the fact that only 11 per cent. of our loan moneys may be said to be fully productive is something that should give us food for thought, and if members have any suggestions as to where money could be spent on fully productive works, they would be well advised to give their views to the House. Of course, such a state of affairs would not be tolerated in private industry. The fact remains that with a Government it is largely unavoidable in State finance, and we are compelled to spend millions of pounds on totally unproductive works, including those I have already mentioned.

I must confess that, in dealing with loan raisings, I cannot see, in existing circumstances, any prospect of an improved financial position regarding loan money for many years to come. By that I mean that I cannot see the greater proportion of our public works reaching a stage when they will become wholly productive. Indeed, the same could be said about money spent on those public works which are now termed partially reproductive. We cannot look forward to much improvement in that regard for many years.

When we study the expenditure, I think perhaps the railways, of all the great public undertakings, offer the greatest hope in the future for improved finance. The total expenditure on the railways for 1953-54 was £6,588,000, which was £205,000 less than the estimate. For the current year, £5,871,000 has been allotted. Of this amount, £3,070,000 is to be expended on rollingstock and £2,801,000 on track rehabilitation and the Coogee-Kwinana railway. I remember that the Treasurer expressed some pleasure at the fact that railway expenditure will be reduced this year, and I can fully appreciate his feelings.

I know that when I was Treasurer I was alarmed at the various estimates I received of railway rehabilitation. Even after taking into consideration all the inflationary circumstances that existed at that time, I still could not feel any sense of satisfaction respecting the estimates I used to receive periodically for railway rehabilitation. There is no doubt that we should have a clear-cut plan of where we are heading with railway rehabilitation. I would like the Treasurer to tell us when he expects that the expenditure on railways is likely to be very substantially curtailed. In this respect, I am not unmindful of the fact that the Government has commitments which it has to meet, but I think we have gone a considerable way towards meeting those commitments. Large quantities of rollingstock have been received and paid for; other equipment has come to hand which has also been paid for, and it would be

interesting to know to what extent loan moneys are likely to be eased off in connection with the railways in the future.

The Minister for Railways: You went a bit too far as regards stock, according to your policy. That stock has now to go by road.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The same advisers that are advising the present Minister advised the previous Government.

The Minister for Railways: That is not so.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is very largely so. As the Minister knows, transport difficulties arose because of the shortage of railway rollingstock, and because of that shortage road competition accordingly increased. As the Minister also knows—and knows only too well—the more forms of transport there are operating, the more difficulties there are to deal with. They establish what they claim as rights, or, if the Minister would prefer the term, vested interests, and it is very hard to deprive them of those rights. I have considerable sympathy with the Minister in regard to the road transport problem. Whatever happens, we have this huge loan debt hanging over us in relation to the railways. In the public interest, of course, the railways cannot be discarded, and the more we lose of them the more the public has to pay. The money has to be made good from some source.

The Minister for Railways: The Railway Department advised you to get 600 stock trucks on the assurance of your Minister that the road transport permit would only be of a temporary nature. That is on the file.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If that is so it would only be of a temporary nature, but they are still operating, and I have given the Minister some ideas as to the difficulties that confront a government in regard to road transport that has already been established. I think one of the Treasurer's major tasks is to closely watch railway expenditure—not only on the loan side but on the revenue side as well. I repeat what I previously stated, that where such a huge sum of money is involved, the expenditure on both sides could very easily get out of hand. I would say it is one man's job alone to watch the state of our railway finances, and no doubt the Minister has given this matter his closest attention.

The Minister for Railways: We have an accountant on the commission especially deputed to watch that aspect.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is probably a very good thing because not only the Treasurer but the Minister controlling the department would want to know how we are going with regard to railway finances generally. I am doing all I can, with any assistance I am able to obtain, to maintain a close watch on

railway finances, both revenue and loan. I was pleased to see that an increased amount has been made available to house railway employees. I agree with the Treasurer that if we are to have contentment among the employees it is necessary that they should be properly housed.

I find that £2,086,000 has been allocated to public buildings. Of this amount, £1,224,000 will be set aside for school buildings, including works in progress at the 30th June last. There is no doubt that the class of school that is being built in Western Australia is a credit to the Public Works Department, and I am sure we all agree that a good class of school should be built. But seeing the difficulties relative to finance, or the shortage of money, and the tremendous demand there is for school buildings, I sometimes wonder if we could not make the money go further by not going in for such elaborate buildings. I feel there could possibly be some reduction in this expenditure without any real detrimental effect on school building generally.

The Minister for Works: That is precisely what we are doing.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am glad to hear the Minister say that, and I think he is adopting a practical approach to this matter. I am sure he holds the view that I do, that it is necessary to provide the best buildings we can. But we must also consider just how far our finances will go in meeting the heavy demands made upon the Government in regard to school buildings generally.

We also have £639,000 provided for increased hospital accommodation. Here again we all know the need there is for hospitals where every convenience can be made available, hospitals that are not only able to meet today's requirements but to meet those of the future. Once again, however, I believe that some economy could be obtained in this direction. I have seen some of the new hospitals that have been built, and sometimes I think that we could save money in certain directions and build more hospitals with the money thus saved. I hope that the loan funds provided for harbour development will enable the projects to proceed satisfactorily and that the amount will be spent.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It depends on what you call satisfactorily.

The Minister for Lands: What is the bed average in Pinjarra?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I cannot tell the Minister but I know the hospital is full; it is a very busy hospital.

The Minister for Housing: You are looking a bit crook yourself!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I come now to what I regard as one of the most important items of loan expenditure and that is money that is made available for water

supplies. The total estimate for country areas and town water supplies is just on £1,000,000 for this financial year or, to be correct, £955,000. I certainly hope that the full amount will be spent. It is very necessary that we should push on as rapidly as possible with the comprehensive scheme, and we know the difficulties that quite a number of our rural towns are suffering because of the lack of water supplies.

The acute shortage of essential requirements, and the great cost involved in obtaining them in order to enable the comprehensive scheme to continue was one of the major problems confronting the previous Government; yet we continued with this work. Here again I used to be greatly concerned when I received estimates of cost concerning materials required to enable the comprehensive water scheme to continue. We found it necessary to import cement and steel at a greatly increased cost compared with the expenditure involved if we could have obtained supplies locally. But nevertheless we went on with the work.

The Commonwealth Government is, I know, contributing to the cost on a £ for £ basis. The Treasurer can correct me if I am wrong, but I think that Government agreed to provide £ for £ up to a certain amount. I knew that with the greatly increased costs we would exceed that amount, and it was a question either of taking the risk and carrying on, or having to curtail very seriously our water supply programme. Accordingly I went to Melbourne and met the present Prime Minister. I told him just what was happening in relation to the comprehensive water scheme. There were present at that interview Mr. Reid, the former Under Treasurer, and Mr. Doig, the Under Secretary of the Premier's Department. The Prime Minister said he would agree to make finance available on a £ for £ basis up to a certain amount. I presume, therefore, that there is no difficulty about the £ for £ subsidy, and that as long as we continue with the comprehensive water scheme, the Commonwealth Government will provide finance on a £ for £ basis.

The Minister for Works: Only up to a total expenditure of £4,300,000; we estimate the scheme will cost nearly £10,000,000.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That was what I was driving at, but perhaps I did not make myself clear. I think there is an obligation on the Commonwealth to continue to help us with our comprehensive water scheme; and if it has not offered any objection to date, I presume that Government is satisfied to continue financing us until the work has been completed. I think the Government is justified in taking that view.

Hon. D. Brand: That £4,300,000 was based on the 1949 valuation.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That would be so.

The Minister for Works: We have approached the Commonwealth Government several times since to get an indication as to whether it would keep on financing us on the same basis until the scheme is completed. That Government said—and I can understand it saying so—that it would come to a decision on that point when we have reached the amount available under the present scheme.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I gained that impression when the Treasurer was speaking. I can assure the Treasurer that in this matter I will be behind the Government in its expectation that money will be available until the scheme is completed. We should all regard this work as one of urgent priority.

It will be seen that £277,000 has been allotted for country town water supplies, and this, of course, is an essential expenditure. I agree with what the member for Roe said last night when he pointed out that we will never be successful in bringing about decentralisation unless adequate water supplies are provided in the rural areas. I would point out to the Treasurer, however, that the outlay on water supplies is also a very great expenditure and one that should be very seriously watched.

There is no doubt that Western Australia's great need is the provision of water; and it has been said, on a number of occasions, that the ultimate population the State will carry will depend on the amount of water that can be conserved. But during the progress of these great schemes, the Treasurer should keep a close watch on the expenditure of loan money; and if he finds the amount is going to be exceeded, he should want to know why. While we know that our rural areas are in urgent need of water supplies, I think that when they get them, they should not be afraid to use the water because of the high costs involved. I am of the definite opinion that when any Government is considering the raising of additional revenue, the very last charges that should be increased are those relating to water.

The expenditure on the North-West has been considerably increased, but it will be noticed that the great bulk will be spent on State ships. In the current year's estimate, £635,000 will be provided for State shipping. I presume that the new ship for the North-West, which I understand will eventually replace the "Koolinda," will be both a passenger and a stock-carrying vessel. I am glad additional money has been made available for the future development of the North. Naturally more money is required up there.

When I used to attend Loan Council meetings, I asked that special consideration should be given to the North and that loan funds should be made available for

that purpose. I pointed out the position in regard to water supplies in that area. If justice were done, the people there would not be charged any more for water supplies than is charged to people in the metropolitan area. Considerably more money will be spent on roads in the North. I cannot deal at length with that matter, because there is no provision for it in the Loan Bill. When one looks at the loan position generally, one concludes that the Government does not appear to be so short of money.

The Minister for Works: I would like to know where it is, then.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I can tell the Minister.

The Minister for Works: I could tell you a few things I would put in train tomorrow if I could get my hand on a few pounds.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Government has a tremendous amount of money.

The Minister for Works: Where is it?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Let us have a look for a few minutes.

Mr. Manning: It is going to Subiaco.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, of course, a lot of it is going down to Subiaco.

The Minister for Housing: You do not know how wrong you are.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Despite the fact that the Government has a record amount under the Commonwealth-State housing agreement—

The Minister for Housing: You are wrong there. The amount has been reduced this year.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The figure of £15,500,000 for general works is not a bad little sum. Then there is £3,500,000 for Commonwealth-State houses. That should keep the Minister pretty busy.

The Minister for Housing: It is £250,000 less than last year.

The Minister for Lands: We need a lot of money to catch up the lag you left.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Let the Minister keep out of this! Then there is £1,500,000 from loan repayments; and approval has been given for the raising by the State Electricity Commission of £3,000,000. I do not think the commission will have any difficulty in raising that amount.

The Minister for Works: It will not have any difficulty in spending it, either.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Probably. That was one of the good things I did at Loan Council meetings: I obtained separate borrowing powers for the State Electricity Commission. Then the Treasurer, with that winning way of his, has persuaded the Australasian Petroleum Company to let its £500,000 continue for another year.

I cannot talk about this, but I think he will get £4,000,000 from the petrol tax this year. I do not think he has much chance of getting anything from the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, so I am not going to add any on that account. However, I am just letting members know what the Government has actually got, and what amount is available.

As I said, when speaking on the Supply Bill a few days ago, the "West Australian" pointed out that from revenue and loan funds the Government will have £62,000,000 to spend, and, taking into account what the Commonwealth provides, a total of £90,000,000. The Minister for Lands is shaking his head and wondering how it can be spent, I suppose.

The Minister for Lands: I am not worried about how it can be spent.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: In the spending of this money, I think the materials supply position has to be taken into consideration. Is it so much a matter of shortage of actual money or being unable to obtain all the materials that are necessary to carry on with the public works programme? There is also the shortage of labour. As we know, money is fairly easy to obtain at present. The Treasurer told us that the Loan Council had approved of a total amount of £200,000,000 being raised; and of this amount the Commonwealth has underwritten £180,000,000, if "underwritten" is the right term to use. The Commonwealth is making advances on the expectancy of £180,000,000 being raised. But in regard to loan raisings—and I think the Treasurer did sound this warning—circumstances can change quickly, and, with no pleasure at all, I state that circumstances are changing.

One has only to look at the recent wool sales, where there was a substantial drop of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That means a great difference to our national income. So what the Treasurer said is perfectly true. If the price of our main exportable commodity continues to fall, great difficulties will be encountered on the loan market. I know that numbers of wool growers are selling privately because they fear they will get a lesser price on the market. Many factors affect the loan market, such as bad seasons and oversea markets. Then loss of confidence in Governments can have a very great effect.

The Minister for Lands: We do not suffer from that here at present.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No, Australia is very fortunate at present, because the main Government that deals with the financial side has done a very good job. I am glad to agree with the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: I am talking about Western Australia.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: There is always a great need for wise spending. All our public works require close scrutiny, so that we shall obtain value for the money spent. A plentiful supply of money is liable to cause unnecessary spending; and, of course, waste comes into it as well. In a country like Western Australia, there is great need to encourage private enterprise to provide all that is possible. We have some very good examples of that at present. There is the search for oil, and there are the great industries at Kwinana itself. Then the Australian Petroleum Co. and B.H.P. are doing something that will be of great benefit to the State. It is the duty of a Government to do everything possible to encourage such great industries to invest all they can in our State.

I am grateful to the Treasurer for having given me this opportunity to speak on the Loan Bill. When we come to individual items in the Estimates, I will have something to say on them. I have looked through the schedules to this Bill, and I think the amount of money made available is required, and that the works listed are such as have to be undertaken.

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [3.27]: I wish to make a few remarks on the Bill, though not of the kind made by the Leader of the Opposition, who covered the ground fully and said all that should be said in the normal way. I wish to raise a question that the ordinary elector might raise, and to which he would not get an answer from the Press or from reading ordinary publications. That question is: At what rate could this country be developed?

At present the rate at which it is being developed is the rate which the Loan Council permits by the allocation of loans every year, which rate, I take it, is based on advice given by the experts to their leaders as to the rate at which we can absorb materials and manpower available at the time. That is the rate of progress today. But to the ordinary elector, that appears to be behind the needs of the moment. Every elector in every district will see a lot of works that could be done are not being carried out, and will say to himself, "Why is not more loan money made available?"

There are many projects on which I would like to see money expended. Two of the main directions in which I have felt that quite a lot of money could be absorbed are the provision of water supplies and the standardisation of railways. Attention to those matters should speed up our present rate of development. With regard to the standardisation of railways, we are handicapped at every turn by the present system, and will be until the matter is set right.

Getting beyond those two points, I would ask what we could do about it if, as a community, we thought development should be

speeded up? What could we do about it apart from going to the Commonwealth Government and asking for this and for that, and transferring money from one job to another? I have come to the conclusion that the only possible way we can speed up the present rate of progress in the normal course of events would be by doing three things which are not now possible.

The first one is to embark upon a much greater migration scheme than we have at present, because according to the figures, only a few thousand people are out of work in the whole of Australia today and covered by the unemployment insurance scheme, while about 39,000 jobs are available. Possibly from Britain, or Europe, a large influx of migration could be arranged. The second is: Could we arrange sufficient loans from the United States, Britain, or, perhaps, Switzerland to match that increased population because we know that each migrant costs roughly £2,000 to put into the country? The third is: Can we get the necessary steel, cement and other requirements for an increased rate of progress?

These are questions I leave with the Premier, and I am sure he has a great deal of knowledge of these matters. If when he replies to the debate he can spend two or three minutes answering them, I will be very interested to hear him, and I am sure others will be, too. We really desire to know, if we want to increase our present rate of development, whether we can do it.

The only other point I want to make is this: What would be the spring behind us to make us want to increase our rather leisurely development? Apart from the questions of water and railway standardisation, which, to me are desperately needed, I cannot see why we, as a community, should be so terribly keen to speed up our leisurely progress except as a matter of self-preservation. We must watch the world statesmen to see what they are trying to do to arrange a tangible peace to carry us on for another 20 or 30 years. That, of course, is outside our sphere.

Unless it was felt that there was some terrible danger ahead, and we were not getting good service from our world statesmen, I would consider that, apart from the two or three urgent things that I have mentioned, the leisurely measure of development is better for this country than to go too fast, and take labour from its private work. After all, if we are true to our innermost thoughts we must, as a community, be more attracted by consumer goods than by these vast public works.

We know they are wonderful for the development of the country, but they are a sacrifice by this generation for the benefit of the next. Therefore a ratio must be struck. I often think, when I come here attempting to assist the development of my district and I present the local point

of view, or when some big work is suggested, that the individual would rather have a variety of consumer goods at his disposal during his life than to go too far with these vast ideas for the days when we will probably have a population of 50,000,000. I support the measure.

MR. HILL (Albany) [3.35]: When the Treasurer delivered his Budget, he said the question of railway finance was largely a question of State finance. A few minutes ago the Leader of the Opposition suggested that we should have one man to look after the question of railway finance.

I am not going to discuss railway finance, but port finance. Members know that the study of ports is my hobby. I was a member of the outports Royal Commission of which the Minister for Railways was chairman and the Minister for Lands a member. Our most important recommendation was for the establishment of a State authority, which, for the sake of convenience, we called the State harbour board.

In my opinion, the best State ports administration—I have travelled all over Australia—is that of South Australia where all ports are under the State Harbour Board which consists of three full-time experts. In Western Australia we have the Fremantle Harbour Board which consists of five amateurs; the Bunbury Harbour Board—another five amateurs; the Albany Harbour Board—another five amateurs. Incidentally, the Albany Chamber of Commerce and the Albany Harbour Board are out to murder me; to hang, draw and quarter me because I advocate a State harbour board!

We also have the Harbour and Light Department which controls the North-West ports. When Cabinet was deciding which Minister should look after the harbour boards, it suggested to the Minister for the North-West that, as he had control of the Harbour and Light Department, he might as well take over the harbour boards, too. When any port requires expenditure, it has to go cap in hand to the Minister for Works.

Members know that we have been slated by the Commonwealth Grants Commission for our unscientific and unco-ordinated port policy. Port finance is just as much a part of the State finance as is railway finance; and it is deteriorating at a more rapid rate than is railway finance. I have here the Auditor General's report, but unfortunately we have no report corresponding to the report of the South Australian Harbour Board.

Anyone who looks at the report on the Fremantle harbour in the Auditor General's report should get a first-class headache. The Fremantle Harbour Trust has often been referred to as the best milch cow in the Treasury herd. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of pounds

have been collected by the Treasury from the Fremantle Harbour Trust, but not sufficient of that money has been paid back to liquidate the debt. In 1951-52, the net surplus of the Fremantle Harbour Trust was £255,938. What was the position in 1952-53? There was a net deficiency for the year of £1,475. That was a deterioration of nearly £270,000 in 12 months. Is not that enough to give one a headache?

Sir David Owen, general manager of the Port of London Authority, in his presidential address to the Institute of Transport had as his subject "The Problem of Port Costs." He gave capital expenditure as the first matter affecting port costs. At Fremantle today we have 18 berths, and the loan liability of that port as at the 30th June, 1953, was £5,414,575. We have heard a lot about the upriver extension which is to provide five berths at a cost, I think, of £6,000,000.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I think you are wrong.

Mr. HILL: That is near enough. This means that because of the addition of five extra berths, we will more than double the loan liability of the port.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: We will not have them. We will have two, and the bridge.

Mr. HILL: If we go outside, the position will be 10 times worse.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are getting a bit bushed.

Mr. HILL: Let us consider the other ports of the State. When, for the purpose of compiling our report, we were considering the evidence given to the out-ports Royal Commission, I made one of the many mistakes I have made in my life. One of the members suggested we should wipe out Bunbury as a port, but I was not prepared to go to that extent at that stage. We were told by the Director of Works, Mr. Dumas, that the silting of Bunbury could definitely be stopped for an expenditure of £500,000. I did not like the proposals of Mr. Dumas and Mr. Stephenson for dealing with the position at Bunbury because I thought it would turn out as it has done. On my suggestion, we reported that Col. Tydeman should be asked to report on the silting at Bunbury. I thought the colonel would have recommended cutting a gap in the breakwater of that port.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Who put in the cut-through?

Mr. HILL: The cut-through was suggested by Mr. Stephenson Young. Col. Tydeman said it was the best experiment he could suggest. It cost £109,000, and the member for Bunbury, when standing here a year or two ago, described the work as a tragic blunder. I am still of the opinion that if a gap had been made in the breakwater, the port could have been

maintained for the shipping of timber out and of phosphates in and perhaps a little other cargo.

I will give some figures regarding the Bunbury Harbour Board. I prepared these figures for members who consider that the State should, in the interests of the dear old taxpayer, be run on business lines. To date, £585,500 has been spent on work at Bunbury which engineers claimed would prevent the silting of that port. I am sorry the Minister for Works is going out. Perhaps I am frightening him. The cost of dredging maintenance has been as follows:—

	£.
1950-51	19,989
1951-52	32,538
1952-53	40,224 (estimate £30,000)
1953-54	40,000 (estimated)

It is a matter of interest to know what the cost will be at the end of June. The financial returns for the ports disclose the following figures:—

	Loss on Working. £.	Loss with Interest. £.
1947-48	14,775	42,861
1948-49	8,772	38,385
1949-50	18,024	46,580
1950-51	22,147	55,213
1951-52	28,021	68,510
1952-53	29,468	81,486

The Treasurer does not seem to be interested in these figures. The accumulated loss up to the 30th June, 1953, was £842,000. During 1952-53, some 73 ships called at Bunbury, and the average loss per ship was £1,100; and for every ship that called, more than £500 had to be spent on dredging maintenance.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: From where would you shift your timber if you did not have Bunbury?

Mr. HILL: Timber at present could be more economically hauled by road to Albany than carried by the railways to Bunbury. All transport to Bunbury is substantially subsidised by the poor old taxpayer.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.4 p.m.

Mr. HILL: Before the suspension, I had reached the present position of the port of Bunbury. Now I shall deal with the future. Last November, I asked the Minister for Works this question—

What will be the probable expenditure to complete the groyne extension and breakwater extension to the limit before it will be necessary to employ permanently two dredges on maintenance dredging, as mentioned on page 20 of the Tydeman report?

The reply was—

£180,000 is the estimated expenditure to complete the groyne and breakwater extension. The Tydeman report referred to the employment of two dredges of similar capacity to the old bucket dredge. Future maintenance dredging, after completion of the groyne and breakwater extensions, should be handled without difficulty by one suction dredge.

I hope the Treasurer is listening because I shall give him some interesting figures. What does that reply mean? It means that after spending something like £750,000 to stop the silting, one dredge will have to be employed permanently.

Where will we get the dredge? The "Sir James Mitchell" will be permanently employed at Cockburn Sound and the old "Governor" is used at Bunbury. It is about 50 years since I scored a bulls-eye with one bullet at Albany with the dredge, so I guess it is about time she was sent to the scrap-heap. The Royal Commission recommended against the construction of a deep-water berth at Bunbury at a cost of £600,000. The Minister for Railways was a member of the commission, as was the Minister for Lands. Why did they allow the Government to carry on with that work?

The Minister for Lands: We do not hate Bunbury like you do.

Mr. HILL: Does the Minister remember what he said when we considered the evidence?

The Minister for Lands: I can remember what I shall say.

Mr. HILL: I shall deal with the Minister later. As Minister for Agriculture, it is his duty to see that exporters of fruit get proper service. Forty ships called at Fremantle last year which could have called at Bunbury to pick up fruit. Why was no effort made to divert even one ship to pick up fruit at Bunbury?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Tell us the answer!

Mr. HILL: The last time ships called at that port was when Westralian Farmers chartered two ships to pick up fruit there.

The Treasurer: The previous Minister for Works is looking very guilty!

Mr. HILL: I do not care. Like other people, he has made mistakes. I suggest to the member who interjected that he should take a lesson in the economics of ports. He should remember that the electors he is supposed to represent are taxed to meet the terrific loss incurred by the Bunbury Harbour Board.

The Minister for Housing: Shame!

Mr. HILL: I was referring to the reefer ships which called at Bunbury. They were lovely little ships. Although savings were effected in railage it cost 2d. more to load

a case of fruit at Bunbury compared with Fremantle, so it is not worth while diverting ships to that port. I have had 45 years' experience of shipping fruit. What the growers want is not another port attempting to attract the trade. We want better facilities at the ports of Albany and Fremantle. Experience has shown that a few extra miles of railage to a big port are more than compensated by the improved shipping service from that port.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think we ought to let Bunbury harbour silt up?

Mr. HILL: Definitely. I challenge the Treasurer to justify his continual waste of public money at that port. The Albany Harbour Board has been in operation since 1951, and the Treasurer has received £16,000 in cash from it since then.

The Treasurer: The hon. member must admit that, with the outlay of this tremendous capital expenditure at Albany, the loss to be experienced at Albany will be very great in the near future.

Mr. HILL: I shall deal with that. I shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; but the trouble with the Treasurer is that he does not like the truth about Bunbury harbour. I thank him for the best little bit of ammunition which he has given me. What I suggest is to abandon the port of Bunbury.

The Treasurer: The member for Vasse is looking very interested.

Mr. HILL: The mayor of Bunbury gave evidence at the Outports Royal Commission. I said to him, "Why do you want a deep-water berth?" He said, "We are exporting 1,000 tons of butter from the South-West." I said, "You know about the shipping position." He said, "Yes." I said, "I have a list of the ships which carried butter from Fremantle in 1939." I read it out. I said, "How many of those ships will call at Bunbury?" He said, "None of them. They are mailboats, but if we can get 500 tons of butter for shipment, a ship will call."

The Minister for Lands: And what did you say?

Mr. HILL: I looked at him. The Treasurer thinks this is a joke, but I do not think he is enjoying it. Bunbury people also have a sense of humour. I said, "Can you see shippers saving up butter until they can get 500 tons and have two ships a year when there are two ships a week from Fremantle?" He said, "No." Last week I asked the Minister for Works if he would give particulars and specify the type of production anticipated that could not be more economically handled at Fremantle and Albany than at Bunbury, but he evaded the question by reciting a lot of irrelevant piffle. Now the Minister talks about decentralising at many ports.

People advocating Bunbury as a port have used Queensland as an example. In Queensland, the position can be summarised as a State with seven starving

ports and one ravenous railway. Travelling down Queensland, I was accompanied by a parliamentarian of that State. He told me that the trouble was that Queensland had too many ports, and that the port of Gladstone would gradually swallow the port of Rockhampton. He said that it would have been better for the Government to realise that and close Rockhampton in favour of Gladstone.

The Commonwealth Director of Rail transport visited this House one day, and I said to him, "How is the controversy between Rockhampton and Gladstone going on?" He said, "The trouble is that Gladstone is too close to Brisbane. It is only 300 miles away." Yet in this State I am the only one in this House with enough courage to stand up and advocate the cessation of expenditure on a fifth-rate port between two first-class ports only 300 miles apart.

The Treasurer: Is the Country Party likely to endorse the candidate for Bunbury at the next election?

Mr. HILL: I do not care. I am here to do my duty to the State. The Country Party can fire me if it likes. It may interest members to know that years ago, when I tried to stop the colossal blunder of the bulkhandling terminal at Bunbury, the Leader of my party sat next to me and said, "You have to stop talking about Bunbury or the executive will not endorse you." I said, "Go ahead. If they do not endorse me, I shall go on as an Independent." I want to thank the Treasurer for the best bit of ammunition he has given me. I asked him a question to which he replied—

Shippers of goods have a big influence in deciding the points from which goods are shipped.

Does the Treasurer agree with that?

The Treasurer: I will first of all hear what you have to say.

Mr. HILL: Does the Treasurer remember the month of April, 1951? I do, because there was very nearly a by-election at Albany. The member for Bunbury convened a conference to see what could be done to get more ships to call at Bunbury. So far as I am aware, no report of the proceedings was published, but one who attended on behalf of a superphosphate company said the question was asked, "Who is interested in getting ships to go to Bunbury?" This man said, "We are" and he was the only one interested. I would not be surprised if it would not be cheaper for all concerned to take the phosphate to Picton from Fremantle rather than Bunbury.

There is one-way traffic from the metropolitan area to the South-West. The railways charge 1s. 6d. per ton wharf haulage at Bunbury, 8s. 3d. a ton freight from Bunbury to Picton and 9s. per truck for the siding charge. It would be better for all concerned if the Government said to the phosphate company, "Take all your

phosphate from Fremantle and we will charge you the same as is now charged for taking it from Bunbury." This would mean that the railway trucks now earning nothing would be earning revenue for the department.

Now what about the shipment of wheat? Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. is spending £450,000 to install a terminal at Albany and is going to scrap Bunbury as a port of shipment.

The Treasurer: Is that all the money of C.B.H.?

Mr. HILL: I think so. Reference was made by the Minister for Works to the Albany harbour finance. When the McLarty-Watts Government took office, the town jetty at Albany was simply falling to pieces and the deep-water jetty was in a bad state of repair. Provision was then made for a loan liability of £100,000. Last year the Albany Harbour Board was able to show a surplus of £4,866. I should explain that the berth under construction at Albany has been charged to capital account, but we shall not reap the full benefit from that berth until the second berth is completed.

Mr. Norton: What did the first one cost?

Mr. HILL: I do not know; it is impossible to ascertain. An area of 80 acres of level land alongside the deep water has been reclaimed. At Fremantle when land was resumed for harbour extension just on £20,000 an acre was paid for it. The land resumed at Albany will become immensely valuable in the future, but when the interest is fully charged to the board, the port will show a substantial loss. However, there will be no maintenance cost involved, but in time the Treasurer will receive a substantial profit from the board. The loss on the port would be very small as compared with the economies that could be effected by the use of the port for shipping wheat and the extra revenue that the railways would earn from the haulage of superphosphate.

At Albany we have a port with ever-improving prospects; at Bunbury there is an ever-increasing liability. The whole system of transport largely depends for successful results on the proper use of its ports. Fremantle and Albany are efficient ports—or Albany will be when the harbour work is completed—because they are properly located, whereas Bunbury will always be an inefficient port, improperly located.

I have made these remarks because I am not content to sit here without protesting against the work at No. 2 berth at Albany being stopped while £80,000 is proposed to be spent on a dying port. It is unfortunate that we have not full financial returns for the various ports. Geraldton must be encouraged as a port. I congratulate Co-operative Bulk Handling on its intention to provide facilities at Geraldton on the same lines as those we already

have at Albany. Germany lost the 1914-18 war because it spent money on ports instead of on ships. We must economise on port expenditure. The first duty of this Parliament is to ensure that producers are provided with export facilities at the lowest possible cost.

Mr. Bovell: The port of Busselton is not a charge on the taxpayers.

Mr. HILL: It is not a port at all. I am satisfied that it would be cheaper to transport the timber by road to Albany and ship it from that port.

Mr. Bovell: You are completely at sea.

Mr. HILL: The hon. member has just returned from a trip to South Africa. What a pity it is that we do not follow the lead of that country in the matter of port policy!

Mr. May: Who is preventing you from going there?

Mr. HILL: I have not had an opportunity to go there, but I have studied the transport problems of that country for years. I should like to know what the general manager of South African railways and harbours thought when he saw what we had done. South Africa selected the two most suitable ports and equipped them with first-class terminals.

Mr. Bovell: How many ships are loading at Albany at this moment?

Mr. HILL: I do not know.

Mr. Bovell: There is one loading timber at Busselton.

Mr. HILL: Perhaps so, but one would not call that a ship. It could be carried on the deck of some of the steamers that call at Albany.

Mr. Bovell: Some of your friends in the shipping companies would be annoyed if they knew you had made that statement. The boat is one of the latest additions to McIlwraith McEacharn's line.

Mr. HILL: I wish the hon. member could have seen it at Albany when it was alongside one of the overseas liners that call there. Somebody asked what was happening there, and I replied that one of the larger boats had dropped a dinghy overboard. I have a copy of the "South Western Times" which contains an interesting report. I venture to say that the Treasurer received more money as a result of the cricket match at Bunbury recently than he has received from the Bunbury Harbour Board since 1944-45.

For my part, I challenge the Treasurer to justify his action in ignoring the report of Sir George Buchanan, the Commonwealth Transport Commission of 1929, the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and the State Royal Commission on Outports. When I was last in Bunbury, I was talking to a resident. He remarked

that it was a pity that Albany and Bunbury could not be more friendly. I replied, "Bunbury has only been built up by robbing us. The sooner you realise that Bunbury is a wash-out as a port, the better. You have only two things that we have not got, namely, coal and water. Your future is industrial only." He looked at me and said, "I think you are right. We are too close to Fremantle." When the Treasurer replies to the debate, I hope that he will not track all around the country but will tell us what ships want to use Bunbury.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [4.26]: I congratulate the member for Albany on his speech. It was of such a type that we could do with more of them in this Chamber. It contained not only a good deal of meat, but everybody enjoyed it, and although there was a degree of hilarity, it was all goodhumoured. Speakers on the Loan Bill are afforded an opportunity to deal with a large number of subjects and I should like to touch briefly on two or three. This is an opportunity to discuss the affairs of the State on a fairly broad basis. It is a good thing that we are able to do so and to exchange opinions on the various matters discussed.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke at great length on railway finance. This is a matter to which we should give greater consideration because, as he stated, it is one of the major points of State finance. I think that we would probably be better served in relation to railway finance if the figures relative thereto were brought into such a form as they would be presented if they were the figures of a private company.

Mr. Oldfield: The reports are always 12 months behind, too.

Mr. JOHNSON: Although the railways play a very important part in the financial set-up of the State, I do not consider that our thinking on them is correct. Had the railways continued as they commenced by being a concern of private enterprise, the situation would have been very different. For one thing there would have been nothing like the mileage of railway constructed and as a consequence of that there would have been far less development. However, I should like to see railway finance set out to show the proper cost of transporting various goods duly charged and the difference between the charges that should be made and those that are being made.

The results should then be shown in the finances of the Department of Agriculture because the loss by the railways is a direct subsidy to the agricultural industry and, to some extent, the mining industry. It would be helpful to our thinking to show it in that way. We are not popular with people who represent country districts if we tell them that the railway loss is a direct subsidy to them; but until

such time as people, in general, and members of this Chamber, in particular, can straighten out their thinking, we will continue to get some peculiar results in railway finance.

I am not decrying the necessity for subsidising agriculture; it was particularly necessary in the bad years of the 1930's. Had our accounts been shown in such a manner as to illustrate the subsidy during that period, I think even the farming community would agree that during the good times, through which we have been passing, freights could have been raised, at least to the point of cutting out the subsidy.

A good deal of thinking could be done in relation to transport problems as a whole. The method of charging freight rates is a little unrealistic. We charge freight rates for what I might almost class as sentimental reasons. In reality it costs very little more, or less, to move a truck-load of wool than a truck-load of wheat, but the freight charge is very different. A more realistic method of assessing these charges would save us from some of the statements and actions which have been made by past Governments, present Governments and probably future Governments, in regard to railway finance.

In the development of road transport, there has been a natural tendency for it to skim off the cream—the high freight items—which previously went by rail. This problem is not peculiar to Western Australia or Australia, but is one which has arisen with the development of road transport throughout the world. It was possibly sensible, when railways were the sole means of transport, to subsidise industries such as wheat, which required to have both wheat and super moved at low freight rates, at the expense of the wool-growing industry which could afford to move its lighter-weight freight at a higher rate.

There is no doubt that the wool industry did subsidise the wheat industry in that manner, and in that way railway finance was kept, to some degree, in balance. But now that those goods on which the higher freights are charged are largely lost to the railways because of road transport, the question arises: What is the correct action to take? Various answers have been made in different nations of the world, but they have nearly all tended towards a restriction on the transport of the higher-freight goods; in other words, some type of control. This applies not only in Australia, but also in that home of free enterprise, the U.S.A., where the causes and results have been very similar to our experience.

The railways will continue to lose heavily as long as the goods which are moved are transported at less than the economic

cost. As long as that happens the railways will appear in our Government finance in an unfavourable light. I feel that the present is the time when we should examine all our transport problems to see whether they can be successfully integrated. Yesterday morning, a long article expressing the same view, appeared in the paper. The movement of goods from place to place is one of the principal problems, if not the chief one, of civilisation, because it is by the movement of goods from place to place that production is controlled.

Mr. Oldfield: Transport represents about 25 per cent. of the national income.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is hard to say, because the problem lies not only in railway and road transport, but in the transport of goods inside the factory and the distribution to the purchaser. If at any stage transport is held up, then civilisation and expansion are held up. I am a layman on the subject, but it appears to me that the development of the transport of goods is in need of rationalisation. I would like to see a system whereby the railways were fed by road transport at a limited number of points. Rail transport from those points to the various destinations should be at fairly high speed and carried out, in general, in the most expeditious manner.

As far as I can see, the most expeditious manner is to organise so that road transport handles goods in packaged form—in a single type and size container—so that not the goods, but the container, with the goods in it, is transferred from road transport to the railway vehicles; and then those same containers can be moved from the railway vehicles into ships, if necessary, for delivery to any point in the world. I imagine that something of that type of packaging throughout the world must eventually come about.

The need for rationalisation is very great, and I think that in the interests of the country as a whole, some formal, lengthy study of transport should be commenced. In saying that, I do not suggest a Royal Commission, a departmental inquiry or anything of that nature, but first a long term organised examination of the problem by some of our theoretical experts. I would like to secure the theoretical answers and then measure them up against the practical answers. It is the type of examination of the subject which should be done, I believe, in the Economics Department of the University, possibly under scholarship.

I wish now to refer to a matter related to housing. Our housing problem is gradually moving within sight of solution at current levels, but there is one aspect that has not been looked into since before the war; the question of slum clearance. There are, close to the city, in the inner suburbs, houses that are no longer suitable for human habitation. Many of them are being cleared away to make

room for factories and that is a good development, but a lot of them are in districts that will not become factory areas and some form of planning is required to ensure that once our present housing problem is overcome, we will make some progress with what is called slum clearance.

Of course, I do not suggest that the houses to which I refer are actually slums at present, but they are completely out of date, are bad economically, are difficult for the housewife to handle, and are, to some extent, unhealthy. It is certain that they must eventually disappear. Planning to overcome the difficulty and replace these out-of-date dwellings should be undertaken deliberately now, to ensure that the efficient group of people who handle the affairs of the State Housing Commission may continue to do useful work when the present housing shortage has ended.

Some of the houses to which I refer should be replaced by blocks of flats, as that is the type of accommodation for which there is a need in all cities and of which we, in Western Australia, are rather short. I do not suggest that flats are ideal for everyone. Having lived in a flat for some of the early months of my married life, I agree that flats are not suitable for all people or all occasions, but they are ideal to cater for certain types of accommodation needs. Some of the houses I mention should be replaced by more modern dwellings and others should be planned to be absorbed in industrial areas. Some should be replaced by open spaces and playing fields.

I wish, in passing, to mention a couple of points which the Leader of the Opposition dealt with. He shed a passing tear at the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. drop in the price of wool and indicated that it had had a bad effect on the income of the State—a point with which I agree—but I would also remind members that the amount by which the basic wage has not risen, since the pegging thereof, is more than the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. mentioned. In fact, it goes almost to 10 per cent. Were that increase granted, it could have at least as much, and I think a great deal more effect on the total national economy and the prosperity of the State than would a recovery in the price of wool. I mention that because it is a balancing factor which should be taken into account.

Another matter commented on by the Leader of the Opposition and on which I desire to touch is the housing of railway employees. This is a problem similar to that of housing employees in a number of other industries which require the workers to move from place to place. The banking industry is one with which I am personally familiar, but there are also the post office and various stock firms, as well as other industries, in which employment requires people to move from place to place; and not set up a fixed home in

any one centre. It would be a good thing if not only the Railway Department, but also all the other industries in which people are required to move from place to place, provided accommodation for such employees. That is done now to a limited extent but not fully by each of the industries concerned.

From my own experience, I can say that in country towns the majority of local affairs are run by employees temporarily stationed there. It is they who provide the officers for the tennis, golf, and football clubs and similar sporting bodies as well as the officials of the local parents and citizens' association and the progress association, if there is one. In the main—particularly in regard to railway people—these folk are living in houses that are not rateable and which, under present conditions, are not included under the Local Government Bill.

I am not decrying the provision of housing to such employees, but am interested in the effect that these people who move from place to place have upon the districts in which they reside temporarily. I wish it to be quite clear that the experience of all of us who have moved around in that way is that people of this kind are the life and spirit of the districts concerned. I do not intend to deal with the question of loan expenditure within my own electorate, other than directly with the various Ministers concerned.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—MARRIED WOMEN'S PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.55] in moving the second reading said: The parent Act allows a magistrate to grant to a wife, where the husband and wife are separated, legal custody of her child or children. But there is no provision in the Act which gives a magistrate the discretion of granting or otherwise an order for access by the husband and father to the children. An application for access in such circumstances has to be made under Section 44 of the divorce Code and, consequently, has to be made to a judge. The cost involved in such procedure is quite considerable and ranges, I understand, from anywhere between £15 and £25.

It is thought that there is no necessity for applications of this kind to go before, and be decided by, a judge. The Act which we are seeking to amend through the

the medium of this Bill gives to a magistrate the right to do many things which are more important than the granting of access by a husband and father to his child or children when he is separated from his wife. Therefore, it is thought quite reasonable and sensible to amend the Act to give the same magistrate the opportunity of receiving applications for access by the father to the children under reasonable conditions and at reasonable times.

The Bill sets out the essential condition to be applied by a magistrate in considering applications, that essential condition being that the welfare of the child or children must be the overriding factor when he decides upon an application. The magistrate will be given the right to permit a husband access to the children at such times and in such conditions as he thinks fit. The Bill also provides for any applications which have been granted to be subsequently cancelled or varied. Here again, the dominant consideration is to be the welfare of the child or children. It could easily occur, occasionally at any rate, that an application which had been granted might, in some respect or other, be abused by the husband concerned, and his abuse of the granting of the application and its use by him might very easily and would, I think almost certainly, be detrimental to the children concerned. Therefore the Bill provides that the magistrate can, in such circumstances, cancel an application altogether or vary it in such a way as he deems advisable.

The measure further provides that, at the discretion of the magistrate, applications can be heard privately instead of publicly. Once more the overriding consideration as to whether an application will be heard by a magistrate publicly or in Chambers is to be the welfare of the child or children concerned.

It is believed that the passing of the Bill into law and its operation as an amendment to the principal Act will be beneficial to all concerned and will make it easier, and certainly far less expensive for husbands and fathers who desire to lodge applications of access, to at least make such applications and have them heard. There would be no certainty that any application once made and heard would be granted, but the magistrate would have complete discretion to make a decision based on the merits of the application. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. V. R. Abbott, debate adjourned.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th October.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [5.2]: This Bill seeks to do some things of which I can approve and some to which I must object. I have no objection whatever to the provision in the Bill that, in lieu of an Act containing both a board and a committee, the committee alone shall operate. No objection can be taken to that, but rather the contrary, in that one body is quite competent to deal with any cases that may need action under the parent law. However, I am somewhat concerned about other aspects of the Bill.

Firstly, if one looks at the parent Act one will see that if the board, which is now to cease to exist, came to a decision, that decision would not be effective unless it was unanimous. In my opinion, there are extremely strong reasons for that and that unanimity, in my view, should be translated into law and continued on the statute book if the Bill be passed. The committee consisted of two Government officers and one person with a knowledge of land conditions in which district the land, subject to review, is situated. That person is appointed, obviously, for the reason that he is more aware of local conditions in the area concerned than either of the two Government officers could be.

If he formed the opinion, on sound grounds and local knowledge, that there was no justification for applying the principles of the Act to any particular area of land, in my view it would be most improper that he could be completely overruled by the two Government officials. In effect, circumstances could arise in which he might just as well not be there, because if the two Government officials were of the opinion that action should be taken then, in the absence of unanimity, action could be taken in respect of the land against the advice of the most knowledgeable person on the committee. I say "most knowledgeable" in referring to local conditions and to the area in question.

It is true that the law will provide, if the Bill is passed, that before the recommendation of the committee is acted upon, notice is to be given to the owner of the land and he is to have the right of appeal to a judge. In those circumstances, it might, of course, very well be that the judge would be satisfied that the report of the committee should not be presented to the Government for reasons that might have actuated the third member of the committee in refusing to give the recommendation his support. But I think that that is a very cumbersome and improper way of bringing about what, in respect of that piece of land, would be a just decision and one which would be liable to prove expensive to the person concerned.

I fail to see why the provision for unanimity of decisions was not included in the Bill because surely it will be apparent to most of us, if not all of us, that action of the kind contemplated by this measure

is such that will cause considerable concern and upset, if the operations of the Bill come into force, in respect to any piece of land. Surely it would be desirable, both from the Government's point of view and from mine, to ensure, as far as possible, that where land is to be recommended to be taken that there is little or no prospect of the committee's recommendation being rejected at any stage.

That insurance could best be arrived at by the unanimity I have mentioned. Of course it is vital, in my view, to have the knowledge and experience of someone versed in local conditions and operations which vary greatly in the various parts of Western Australia; so much so that there are very few people who could be expected to be able to understand and appreciate the problems of development and production in every part of the State.

But if the opinion of the local person who is to be appointed is to be overruled, as it could be if the Bill becomes law, by the two Government officers, that could readily happen, because I submit that however knowledgeable and fair-minded the Government officers may be, the area of Western Australia is so great, its conditions of one kind and another so diversified, that it is practically impossible for such men, without the local colour, to be able, at all times, to reach a fair decision.

Again, the problem of whether sufficient use was being made of any given area of land—the absence of which sufficient use would warrant some action under this legislation—is not a very easy one to solve. I know of areas of land in Western Australia which are the property, so far as the Lands and Titles Office is concerned, of one individual, but upon which there are more people happily working and reasonably well housed, with reasonable amenities, than there would be if the property were divided into what might be regarded as the correct number of living areas for individual persons.

I have one such property in mind at the moment. There are no less than seven houses on it, as well as a single man's quarters. A school bus that passes picks up 13 children from that farm to take them to school. Yet it could be argued— notwithstanding the tremendous production that takes place there, and the considerable volume of employment it provides to a considerable number of persons; and I would say without fear of contradiction they are happily maintained—that if we divided it into seven farms—which would be the absolute maximum number; I doubt whether we could successfully divide it into more than five—that it would be a much better proposition for the State. I suggest it would not be.

Only a person well acquainted with climatic and productive conditions, and to some extent acquainted with the operational conditions of the place, would, I

venture to say, be able to sit properly in judgment on such a property as that. In my view, the provision for unanimity of this committee would go far to remove the doubts that exist in the minds of many people as to its decisions. Therefore I repeat, both from the Government's point of view and the point of view of the people concerned, that it is extremely desirable that there should be a unanimous recommendation before any action is taken.

Nor am I entirely satisfied with the proposed amendment to Section 7 of the Act. I think the terms of Section 7 should be incorporated in regard to the activities of the committee, although, *prima facie*, they refer to those of the board which is to become extinct. Section 7 of the Act provides—

If, after service by the Board of notice under Section 6, an owner fails to notify the Board within the prescribed time, of his intention to himself put the land to reasonable use or to subdivide the land for sale

All that is to be cut out, and as I understand it, the section is to read—

If the Minister recommends, the Governor may by notice in the Gazette declare that the land or defined portion thereof has been taken under this Act.

Surely it is reasonable that the owner of the land should have an opportunity of doing the fair thing, if he is not doing it in the opinion of the committee! Surely it is desirable that notice should be given him of the intention, and that he should be granted a reasonable time to decide whether or not he is going to carry out what may be regarded as his fair obligation to the State.

If he is going to carry it out and proceeds to provide the committee with sound proposals for its development, then I think the committee's activities in regard to his land should cease. If we are to use this legislation, surely it is not merely to be used to change the ownership of one piece of land from one person to another! Surely it is to be used to ensure that land which is reasonably capable of increased production is made to produce the increase desired! It would be news to me that the measure is intended only to take land from A and transfer it to B, C, D and E.

My conception is that it is to ensure that A, within a reasonable time, makes proper use of the land and produces from it as much as might be expected of a reasonable man; otherwise it is to be made available to somebody else who will be in a position to do so. In short, the amendments proposed in this Bill deteriorate, in my opinion, the legislation which, in the first instance was to be a check on people who hold large areas of land simply for the purpose of holding them, and not for the purpose of production. Whereas now it appears to me to be becoming a piece of

legislation where the aim and ambition is to take large areas of land from one person who holds them and transfer them to somebody else, without giving consideration to the person who held them, as to whether he is prepared and capable of developing them as a reasonable man might be expected to do.

That I suggest is undesirable. There are not such limited areas of land in Western Australia that we find the possibilities of accommodating additional settlers very difficult. There are considerable areas of land in this State available to many hundreds of persons, but I suggest that it will be very many years before those areas are utilised, or even taken up. The ambition is that there should be a reasonable quantity of production, bearing in mind the climatic and other conditions which prevail in the area, from the land which has been alienated from the Crown. As I understand it, that was the original intention of this legislation, but it seems to me there is some inclination to depart from it. I think such inclination is unwise.

There is also a proposal in the Bill to repeal Section 14 of the principal Act and that has a bearing on the point I have just been discussing, for Section 14 says this—

If at any time it is proved to the satisfaction of the Board that any land declared to be subject to this Act has been so utilised that it should no longer be subject to this Act, the Governor shall, on the recommendation of the Board, by notice in the Gazette, discharge the land from the operation of this Act.

There we have exactly the same idea as that I have just been talking about. The owner of the land satisfies the authority that he is now doing the right thing by the land, and incidentally by the community, and it is therefore consistent for the Government to declare that the land which previously had been under notice by the authority, should be released therefrom.

The Bill proposes to repeal that section, which indicates to me, as I am sure it will to other members, that once the committee has set its mark upon some land, no matter what the owner may contemplate, suggest or be prepared to do, he has for all time lost the opportunity of undertaking its development. So once again I must express the hope that wiser counsels will prevail on this matter and that the original spirit of the legislation, as I understand it, will be retained.

There are many differing opinions as to what certain types of land in Western Australia will do in the way of production, and those points of view are the more diversified by the considerable differences which exist in the climatic and other conditions of this State to which I have

referred. It would be useless in the district which you, Mr. Speaker, represent, to suggest that a 5,000-acre property would maintain a man, his family and an employee or two. On the other hand, it would be ridiculous to suggest that in very large portions of my electorate a person requires 100,000 acres in order to carry on. So in Western Australia, no hard and fast rules can be laid down—and I suppose that cannot be done elsewhere—as to what any particular piece of land should be able to provide in the way of production.

Even in good districts, there is no consistency in the type of soil and land that is available. They can change many times in a few miles. The productive capacity at one end of a property can be very different from that at the other. Then again of recent times the cost of developing land has reached astronomical figures. It is not easy today to provide the funds to carry out development, even on comparatively small properties which nobody would suggest were too large for individual owners. It can only be done, as a general rule and with the average person, over a considerable period of years. In many cases it is a two-generation problem.

I venture to say that much of the heavily timbered country of our southern areas when once cleared will not, within one generation, reach its productive capacity. So in dealing with the problem of what I might call the reclamation of land which has been alienated from the Crown, we have to be extremely careful, and we should not do away with the safeguards which the originators of this legislation apparently deemed necessary, but which this Bill seeks to remove. My attitude to this measure can be summarised in a few words. I propose to support the second reading. I hope that in some of the aspects to which I have referred, the Bill will be amended in Committee. If it is not so amended, then I do not see my way clear to support it further.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [5.28]: The member for Stirling has very largely expressed the point of view that I hold towards this Bill, and for the same reasons. This Bill is required virtually because of an Act of Parliament passed in 1945, which, from my point of view, so disorganised the then Act that it is now realised the Act is not suitable for use.

The reason why the Act was amended in 1945, as then given by the Minister for Lands, Hon. A. H. Panton, was that the existing Act was not suitable for use in connection with the acquisition of land for soldier settlement. At that time, I expressed the view that although I, personally, and, I believed, the whole House were very sympathetic to the acquisition of land for soldier settlement, it could be very much better accomplished by an Act dealing with soldier settlement instead of trying to

amend an existing statute by introducing provisions so altering the situation that it could be interpreted differently. Little notice was taken of my views, I being a private member.

The then Minister, in moving the second reading of the Bill, according to "Hansard" of 1945 at page 606, said—

In view of the land settlement that is to take place and particularly by way of soldier settlement, we desire to bring this Act, and probably some others, more up to date.

In my remarks at page 742 I said—

The Minister stated that one of the objects of the Bill was to assist in settling soldiers on the land. I should have thought that the Minister would consider soldier settlement of sufficient importance to warrant a Bill of its own.

At this stage the Minister interjected, "You will get one, too." I continued—

But will not the original Act be very jumbled if it includes some of the amendments suggested? I believe in the soldiers receiving preferential treatment and I believe the Minister agrees with that. The original closer settlement legislation, however, was designed for quite a different purpose.

My point was that provisions that might be suitable for soldier settlement and for the acquisition of land for that purpose were not suitable for general use. Soldier settlement is something that has a first demand on the community, or very largely so, and therefore, action can be taken to that end which ordinarily would not be justified. What I said then has proved to be correct, because the Minister for Lands, who belongs to the same party as did Mr. Panton, is bringing in a Bill to clean up the mess made by the Act of 1945. I think the Minister would have been wiser had he now taken steps to repeal that Act and had reverted to the original 1927 provisions with any amendments considered desirable.

The Minister for Lands: That would be too slow.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I do not think so.

The Minister for Lands: Do you know that the land could remain unutilised for over three years.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, for quite a period, but that could have been remedied by amendments to adjust the situation.

The Minister for Lands: That is what we are doing by this Bill.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I do not agree with the Minister. He is going a little too far, as was pointed out by the Leader of the Country Party. Under the 1927 Act, the procedure admittedly was somewhat slow, but it was not unreasonable in

the situation that existed, and the times provided for the various phases could have been hastened under the present measure if thought necessary. There are provisions that I consider are more suitable for general use than those now proposed. If we need land for soldier settlement, that is one thing, and we should pass a Bill for the purpose so that the land could be acquired for purposes relating to repatriation. Provisions that should be approved for this purpose would not be applicable to general use.

Under the Bill, a land-owner would be given no warning at all. It is well known that land might be considered to be fully utilised and well developed in certain circumstances and then, in a few years, would not be so regarded. There are such operations as irrigation and drainage that alter the circumstances. Land might be considered to be well utilised until a large drainage scheme was installed and then something different would be applicable. The same argument would apply to irrigation, roads and other facilities. The conditions would vary according to the time in which a decision had to be made. I think the Minister will agree with that. Certain land might be fully developed under prevailing conditions and then, in the course of a year or two, owing to a change in the situation, the land might be considered to be undeveloped.

The Minister for Lands: If there was any justification for complaint by the owner, he would immediately have the protection of the court.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: He could not have the protection of the court for the reason that the decision of the court must be based on the conditions existing at the time action was taken by the board. A property might not be undeveloped at the time action was taken by the board, but that condition might have been brought about during the preceding six months.

The Minister for Lands: You are struggling a bit with that argument.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I am not.

The Minister for Lands: Then put it more clearly.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: A decision as to whether a property is being properly utilised varies according to the time when the decision is made and the conditions attending it. Take an exaggerated case: At one stage a property might be considered to be fully utilised. In six months' time, a railway might be opened up and the trains might be running. From that time onward, the property might be regarded as being not fully utilised, even though the owner would have known of the intention to build the line. To a large extent the same argument would apply to a road.

The Minister for Lands: That does not answer the question. The owner would get the protection of the court.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: He would not. As soon as the railway was operating, it would probably be a correct decision that the land was not being utilised to the maximum. If the board then acted, the judge would have to find that at the time the notice was issued to the owner by the board, the land was not being properly utilised.

The Minister for Lands: The board cannot act if there is an appeal, and if there is an appeal he can get that protection within 30 days.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is so.

The Minister for Lands: Why do not you admit it?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The judge only decides what was the condition of the property at the time the notice was given.

The Minister for Lands: It is 30 days before.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, if the Minister likes. The Government might have been reasonable and said, "We are going to investigate this if you do not do something." That is another matter. He is not obliged to give any warning. Once that action is taken, the court cannot say, "Was this a fair thing?"

The Minister for Lands: That is just what it does say.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: It cannot, because it is not provided for.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, it is.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I have the Act here.

The Minister for Lands: Read the Bill.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I have read both. I say that although the property has not been fully utilised, the time factor should be taken into account, and reasonable notice given. That was provided for in the 1927 Bill but, as the member for Stirling said, those provisions are being eliminated. To all intents and purposes, they do not work now because we have two systems operating in the one measure. No Government would utilise a slow system when a faster one was provided. There is the system under the board and the system under the committee.

The Minister for Lands: That is in the Act.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is what I am saying.

The Minister for Lands: We want to get rid of one. If you defeat the Bill, we will still have two.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is so, but the Minister does not have to use them both. He is given an alternative. I appreciate the Minister's difficulty.

The Minister for Lands: I have no difficulty.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: He is in the same difficulty as a previous Minister for Lands was in when I criticised him. I do not believe in delving into the past, but I said then that the Minister would be jumbled and that the Act would be a mixture and would not work well. He said it would. The Minister now is saying the same thing, and he will be just as wrong as the Minister for Lands was then.

The Minister for Lands: As far as I am concerned, you can leave the two. We are tidying it up because we promised the member for Stirling we would.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know, but I say the 1945 Act should not have been passed, and the Minister, should take the opportunity now to remedy the position in a manner more reasonable to the farming community. The Minister's Government likes acquisition. It wants land for building, so it resumes thousands of acres. It does not even seek to negotiate; and this is what it does with regard to farms.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: It resumed hundreds of acres without giving any notice or attempting to negotiate. It says, "We will take this," and bang it goes!

The Minister for Housing: Like Wanneroo.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The argument is that, in the interests of the community, people must suffer. I am frightened the Government will do the same here.

The Minister for Lands: Nobody will suffer under this.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, they will.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: They could, because under this the Government could jump a man's property as quick as anything. There is no provision that, "You will have to do something with it or the Government will." The land will be resumed. The feeble excuse the Government gave was, "If we had given warning, the price would have gone up." Was not that a beaut!

Mr. J. Hegney: That is what your Minister said here four years ago.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I think that is about the weakest excuse the Hawke Government has put forward for an unpleasant action. I do not think the Premier thought up that one, but I do not know who did. I do not think that he, as Treasurer, would have gruded a few extra pounds by giving these people some warning. Why did not the Government negotiate and give a fair thing?

The Minister for Works: Did you put up that point of view to your Government?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes; my word I did!

The Minister for Works: It took no notice of it, then.

The Premier: The Premier of those days must have overruled you.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: If it was put up, then the Premier can imagine that someone overruled me. The Minister for Works said that in connection with Air Beef the Premier was being consulted. I think it is probable that Cabinet will approve the Minister's view, so even the Premier could be overruled.

The Minister for Works: I did not say that at all.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Minister said something very like it.

The Minister for Works: No, very far from it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I have been provoked into being led away.

Mr. Johnson: Why do not you consult a lawyer?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Now those are really fighting words, boy! I will probably get tough.

The Premier: This is Thursday afternoonitis!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: A provision might have been left in giving a man the opportunity to remedy what the Minister is objecting to. That is only fair in our democratic system. The man should have an opportunity of saying, "If you think it ought to be developed—apparently I have not developed it as I should—I will do it now." The matter could then be left to the court or other tribunal to say what was a fair thing.

The Minister for Lands: That is what the court will do now.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No, it cannot. Again, the Minister should have said, "If you cannot develop this, you must give the general public an opportunity to develop it." But those provisions are being cut out. Why the Minister is doing that I do not know. The Minister keeps on saying he does not want to do this; that he wants to do a fair thing; and that he wants everyone to be happy. Why does he not carry out his wishes?

The Minister for Lands: I am—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This private debate has gone on long enough. The Minister has the right of reply. I ask the member for Mt. Lawley to address the Chair.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I do not know why the Government does not want to give a man who owns land the opportunity to

utilise it in the way he wishes. No one can argue that is not a justifiable attitude. Everyone ought to have the right to be cautioned, and then if a man does not do what he should, well and good. The Minister said this was too slow. If it was, he should have taken action in this Bill to shorten the period and could have left it in the hands of the judge to say, "We think you should not be given an opportunity," or "We think you should be given an opportunity on these terms only," and the terms and conditions could have been made those that the judge thought fit. Had that provision been inserted in the Bill I would have been satisfied, but it was not. The Government wants the committee still to say, "We consider you have not in the past utilised this land to the best advantage." I challenge the Government to get a legal opinion on this aspect—

The Minister for Lands: We have had it.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Then why not read it out? I cannot imagine it. I appeal to the Minister to give a few days thought to the points I have raised. He says he wants to conform to what is fair and just, and I believe him, but just as the Minister for Lands in 1945 would not take my warning, so if the Minister now does not take my warning he will be doing, in fact, something which he says he does not intend to do. I hope wisdom will prevail so that some opportunity may be given to the man who has erred. Subject to that, I will not oppose the second reading.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [5.52]: When introducing the Bill the Minister said that the real reason for its introduction was to substitute the committee for the board. He explained that under the provisions of the Act there were a board and a committee operating and he said he preferred to keep the committee and do away with the board. I thought his reasons were logical in that respect, inasmuch as he did not want both the board and the committee doing the same work.

But there is more in the Bill than that, and some of its provisions which seek to delete certain sections of the Act are important. I think that when introducing the measure the Minister should have told us something about them. The Bill proposes to repeal the section which states that before acquisition can take place, the recommendation of the committee shall be unanimous.

As the member for Stirling said, there are three members of that committee, two of them Government nominees and one a representative of the district in which he resides. The two Government nominees might easily make a recommendation to the Minister that certain land be acquired,

while the man on the spot, who knew all about land development in the area, would be outvoted. I see no reason why that section should be repealed and I wonder whether the Minister has an explanation.

There is need for great care to be exercised in the acquisition or resumption of land as such action is never very popular and creates much bitterness and hostility. I do not think resumption should be resorted to unless the circumstances make it essential. I agree with the member for Stirling that before land is resumed there should be a unanimous recommendation from the committee.

The Act makes reference to the best use of land and states that if it is not put to the best use it can be acquired. I am concerned as to how the question of whether land is being put to the best use is to be decided. If a man is interested in one particular form of farming, he will obviously make the greatest success of land development in that direction. It would be entirely wrong to acquire a man's property and tell him that it should be utilised for dairying when he would perhaps prefer to go in for sheep raising.

There is today a much greater demand for primary production in certain directions than in others, and I think difficulty would be experienced in developing land if the farmer was told in which direction he had to farm. It is there where the local advice is of value and that is a further reason why there should be a unanimous opinion by the committee before it is decided to acquire land. Ever since the beginning of development in this State the holding of land and investment in land was considered to afford the safest security and I think it is a good thing to encourage that outlook. Unless those on the land feel that they have security one cannot expect to obtain the best results from the land.

As we all know, in recent years there have been tremendous advances in land clearing and development generally. Today we have the bulldozer, the scrub roller and many other implements that are used for clearing and cultivation, which did not exist a few years ago. They are making a great difference to the development of land in this State. I agree, with the member for Stirling, that those who own land should be given the opportunity of utilising it before it is taken from them, and that in these days, when our population is increasing so rapidly, land should not be held out of production.

It is natural that with an increased population there will be a greater demand for land and the Government will be faced with greater responsibility in regard to food production. As has been said, that responsibility is not only to our own people, but also to those in other countries. The amendments foreshadowed by the member

for Stirling are worthy of the Minister's consideration. I hope he will agree that the recommendation from the committee shall be unanimous. It could easily be that the local representative's advice could be ignored because there are two Government nominees and they might take an entirely different view from that held by the local representative. So, while I support the second reading, I trust that the amendments which have been foreshadowed, will be agreed to by the Government.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. E. K. Hoar—Warren—in reply) [6.2]: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I do not think there is any difference of opinion here about the fact that we should utilise our land to the best advantage and see that large tracts of it are not left unutilised in these days when the State is progressing so quickly. It is that point of view, more than anything else, that induced me to try to clean up the Act in the way we have in this Bill and to dispense, once and for all, with the cumbersome method that has existed for so many years.

Personally, I do not think anybody, who is truthful when he says that there should be no unutilised land in unreasonable quantities, could agree with the provision that is in the Act today under which, if all the periods are added together, a man can own land for three years and four months before any of it can be taken away from him, no matter what emergency may arise. In other words, a person can defeat the purpose of the Minister or the Government for three years and four months.

Although I do not remember who it was, one member suggested that we should allow some reasonable period. What is a reasonable period? Is it three years and four months, or is it 12 months or is it 18 months? How can anyone say what is a reasonable period, bearing in mind the variety of agricultural pursuits today and where one activity takes so much longer to develop than another? How can we say, in an Act of Parliament, what is a reasonable period?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You can leave it to the judge.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is exactly what we are doing in the Bill because, by deleting the provision in regard to the board, we are deleting what I call the obnoxious provision that prevents progress from being made. We are still retaining the provision that allows the committee to be appointed by the Minister who may feel that a certain area of land, from a State point of view, would be of more use if it were subdivided and he can have an inquiry made to discover whether the land is being utilised or not.

For this purpose he appoints two officers plus a farmer with local experience to make the inquiry.

The reason for insisting that the committee's reports shall not be unanimous is because it is the responsibility of the Minister to effect acquisition. Under the provisions as they existed, the board operated without the authority of the Minister; under the Act it had authority to acquire land. Because of the importance of the board it was necessary that the members' opinion should be unanimous. Only after they have made investigation and have decided what they thought should be done did they report to the Minister.

The committee was appointed in 1945 to reverse that and to give the Minister of the day an opportunity of acquiring land for war service land settlement, instead of waiting three years. Because the committee appointed by the Minister had to refer its findings to him and as the Minister had to accept full responsibility for what was done as regards the acquiring of land, there was no need for a unanimous decision because it was the Minister's or the Government's responsibility to do what was thought right.

If we are to take out of the Act all reference to the board and retain the provision for the committee, before the committee makes a report to the Minister it must, first of all, issue a report to the farmer. That is fair enough. There is nothing unjust about that. Then it makes a report to the Minister. If, after looking at it, the Minister feels that the acquisition is justified, he can notify the farmer to that effect and the farmer can, immediately, or within 30 days, appeal and have his case heard.

When the judge who sits on the case hears the evidence—and expert witnesses from both sides are available—he will be in a position to say, "In my opinion the Minister is wrong. It is not fair. This man has just told me that within 12 months he intends to do this, that and the other thing to his property. I think that is a fair thing and he should be permitted to keep his land." He can override the Minister and there is no appeal against the judge's decision.

Mr. Court: The judge has not that power.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The judge has that power under the committee proposal.

Mr. Court: No, he has not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Are you looking at the board or the committee?

Mr. Court: The committee.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The position is that the owner or occupier of land may, within 30 days, appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court against a

report and the judge may annul, confirm or amend the report and his decision is final.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not know about that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is so.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: On what ground?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the ground of the evidence that is presented to him.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: No, only on the ground as provided in the Act. That is all he can determine.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I imagine that this is what would occur. The report that is made by the committee to the Minister would be evidence. There would be witnesses called for and against and the judge would either annul it or amend it. The reason why we want to grant him that power is because no one would suffer an injustice when he was presiding on questions of land acquired for war service land settlement. I know that the late Mr. Panton had that in mind when he introduced his Bill to the House.

Why provide for the appointment of a board and a committee in the same Act when they are both doing the one job? Also, why retain one of those bodies when, because of its cumbersome nature, it could allow the acquisition of land to be deferred for over three years? What we desire today is a decision made on the spot, and we can get it within 30 days after an appeal. No member will deny that there is not one court in this country that is going to do anyone an injustice.

I do not think there is any importance in the arguments raised by members, although I can appreciate their line of reasoning. The member for Stirling referred to the proposed amendment to Section 7 which has a bearing on this question, namely, whether there should be unanimity of decision or not. The hon. member stated that by repealing Section 7, an owner would not be able to effect any further development of his land that he may desire in a reasonable time. That is perfectly true, but that can only be given effect to if a judge of the Supreme Court agrees to such a request. If an owner of land feels that he has been unjustly treated, he will not let the matter go without an appeal.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do you offer any objection to unanimity of decision by the board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot offer any objection to that in principle. However, there is no necessity for unanimity in the decisions made by this committee as there was in the decisions made by the board, because in this case the

Minister receives the report. However, under the existing provisions of the Act, the board did not have the power, at all times, to make any decision that it liked and because of that its report had to be based on a unanimous decision. As far as I am concerned, the more agreement that can be obtained among men who are doing a certain job, the better. I do not think that the references made to Section 7 carry much weight because the right of appeal is included in the Bill.

Apart from that, the main point I want to stress is that if members do not care for the Bill to such an extent that they vote against it and it is defeated, it would not alter the Act in any way because there is provision in the Act for both the board and the committee to operate. All the Bill seeks to do is to repeal those cumbersome sections relating to a board which are not in the best interests of a tidy Act of Parliament. The only reason the Bill has been introduced now is because of the promise made last year to the member for Stirling. I think members will agree that it is not much use having two bodies operating to do the one job.

What members desire today is to retain some of the features that relate to the operations of the board and apply them to the operations of the committee. By doing that they would make it just as awkward for the committee to operate as it was for the board. In these days we do not want to do that. If we are to have the increased population we envisage, I think that, as far as land settlement is concerned, we should adopt a method whereby we can acquire land as fast as possible.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I would like to insert a provision in the Bill to ensure that all land is paid for as soon as possible after acquisition.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that it is nearly 6.15 p.m.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 2nd November, 1954.

CONTENTS.	Page
Assent to Bills	2458
Questions : Railways, as to Eastern States bookings from Fremantle	2458
State Housing Commission, as to resumption and prices, Belmont Park	2458
Leave of absence	2459
Bills : Bush Fires, reports	2459
Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment, 2r.	2459
Supply (No. 2) (£15,000,000), 2r.	2461
Loan, £14,808,000, 1r.	2472
Workers' Compensation Act Amendment, 2r.	2472
Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r.	2488

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Local Courts Act Amendment.
- 2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

As to Eastern States Bookings from Fremantle.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES asked the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the Railway Department's proposal to terminate the issuing of tickets from the Fremantle booking office for passengers travelling to the Eastern States?
- (2) If the answer is in the affirmative, will he endeavour to have the present arrangements continued?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

- (1) In the interests of economy, a variation in the existing interstate booking practice at Fremantle station was brought into operation on the 1st November, 1954. In so far as the passenger is concerned, there is no alteration to the previous arrangements and a ticket may be obtained at the time the booking is made.
- (2) Answered by No. (1).

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION.

As to Resumptions and Prices, Belmont Park.

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

What is it considered will be the average price per acre that will be paid to owners for the land resumed by the State Housing Commission in the Belmont Park road district?