

realised that the disorderly conduct charge was a mistake that the assault charge was then preferred."

This seemed like plunging to cover the original blunder.

Has the Premier any comment to offer in connection with the Chief Justice's remarks?

Mr. BRAND replied:

No; I do not wish to make any comments on the Chief Justice's remarks. If the Leader of the Opposition desires more details and an adequate reply to this question, he should direct the inquiry to the Minister for Police.

EAST-WEST ROAD

State's Commitments

6. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Premier:

Arising out of statements he has made concerning the East-West Road or the Eyre Highway, can he inform the House just what mileage is involved from the point of view of the Western Australian Government; and approximately what cost would be involved from the point of view of the Western Australian Government in carrying out its responsibilities regarding the Eyre Highway?

Mr. BRAND replied:

In round figures, from Norseman out to the border the distance is 450-odd miles; and it has been estimated that the cost of that to us might be £8,000,000 or so. The cost could vary according to the availability of water. In the event of having the work done by contract and the job being big enough, that figure might be considerably reduced. However, if the honourable member requires more specific details and cares to put his question on the notice paper, I will obtain the information for him.

STATE TRADING CONCERNS

Disposal of Rural & Industries Bank and State Government Insurance Office

7. Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Premier:

During the second part of a reply to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition the Premier said—

Personally, I have a high regard for individuals associated with Western Australian State trading concerns, but I do not believe that trading is the function of the Government.

In view of his reply, is there any intention to dispose of the Rural & Industries Bank and the State Government Insurance Office?

Mr. BRAND replied:

In order to put the honourable member's mind at ease, the answer is "Not so far."

Mr. Hawke: That makes it worse.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Fifth Day

Debate resumed from the 9th August.

MR. CURRAN (South Fremantle) [4.58]: I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the warm welcome he gave me as a member of Her Majesty's Opposition. I would also like to tender my thanks to members on both sides of the House for the encouragement given to members on making their first speech in the Chamber.

At this stage I also wish to tender my sincere thanks to the electors of South Fremantle for placing me in such a responsible position as that of member for South Fremantle. I feel it is a very great honour for any man to represent in this House an electorate in any part of the State, and to represent it ably.

I have taken a great deal of notice of the proceedings that have taken place since the beginning of this session. I have noticed particularly the procedures of the House, and have attempted to familiarise myself with them; and also to make myself known to the representatives of the various constituencies. One of the things that impressed me most was the very virile attack by the Opposition in regard to the policy that is being set forth by the Government of the day. The Government, I feel, was very hard pressed to answer the criticisms contained in the speeches and questions that were levelled at its Ministers.

Unfortunately, I have also found, since I have been in this House, that although we have a large number of reporters in the gallery, very little of the business transacted here is reported in *The West Australian* newspaper from day to day. I feel that if the public were made fully aware of the things that are being done by Parliament, much greater interest would be taken in the proceedings of this House.

One aspect that has caused great disquiet amongst the public is the action proposed by the Government, for some reason of its own, to rid itself of State instrumentalities. If the public were acquainted with the consequences which would follow the removal of these State assets—that is, by publication in the daily Press—I am sure they would be very disturbed.

I wish to refer at this stage to the questions and answers to which I have listened in respect of the Midland Junction Workshops. I have noticed with great interest

that when questions have been asked about the importation of various component parts and the cost of producing these particular parts in the Midland Junction Workshops, the answers have been completely evasive; to say the least, they have more or less waived the question aside.

I am also very concerned at the remarks made by, I think, the member for East Perth, when he referred to the growing monopolies of the Press of this country. He referred particularly to *The West Australian* which, in my opinion, has displayed all the traits of becoming a complete monopoly in this State; because one has only to see the battle that is being waged at present against a newspaper which, I think, is the only independent newspaper in this State, with a view to subjugating it, and taking over its circulation completely, to see just how great a monopoly is likely to be created.

If that particular monopoly is established—and it is very close to being established at the moment—we will have the situation where the Press will begin to mould the opinion of the people of this State; indeed, it is doing so at the present time. Yet when we refer to other people who are doing this sort of thing, we usually refer to them in the context of brainwashing. That is exactly what the monopolistic Press of this, and other States, is doing at the moment: it is brainwashing the people of Australia; it is brainwashing the people of the State.

I have here an article which proves in essence what I have said. I do not propose to read the entire article, because I do not think it is necessary. The article to which I refer is part of the editorial which appeared in today's issue of *The West Australian*. It refers to increased freights and states—

The increases now imposed are inescapable. Without remedial action and unless the Commonwealth grant is increased

By this means the Press immediately gives to members of the Country Party a peg on which to hang their hats; to enable them to say to their electors, "It is not the Government that is doing this; it is so of necessity, because the Loan Council does not supply sufficient capital to help us keep freights down." That is the way the Press moulds the opinion of the people; and perhaps even the opinion of some of the members of the Government.

I have been a member of the Labor Party for many years, and it has been a great source of pride to me to know that, through its Governments, the Australian Labor Party has to its credit some wonderful achievements. It has achieved these things through successive Labor Governments down the years. I do not think it can be denied by members of the Government that practically all the major projects of this State have been started or

completed by State Labor Governments. To appreciate the full strength of that remark, one has only to look at the plans that have been made by Labor Governments for water conservation, which have already been put into effect; one has only to take note of the number of dams that have been built, or to consider the planning that has been done for the future. Then again, one can turn to the main highway, such as Stirling Highway and the Narrows Bridge—which are all projects undertaken by the Labor Government.

These are no mean achievements, particularly when we consider the fact that members on the Government side often accuse the Labor Party of representing sectional interests. If we examine the position, I think we will find that State Labor Governments of all time have laid their plans for the development of the country; for the benefit of the people as a whole. That, I am afraid, cannot be said at all times of members on the Government side, because the debate that has taken place during this, and last, week has shown quite vividly that their concern is not for the general good and welfare of the people of the State but, in quite a lot of instances, it is for the benefit of sectional interests.

I wish to pass now to the question of State Government assets. In the South-West particularly we find the State sawmills which have been established over the years. Great towns and communities have been built up around Government enterprises such as the one I have mentioned. Schools have been built in those districts, and children have been born and brought up there; generations of people have lived and prospered in those areas.

The same can be said of the State Brickworks. I think the member for Warren will go further into the question of the very real asset that the State sawmills have been to the South-West portion of this State particularly. I would also like to refer to the great services that have been rendered to the State by the State Shipping Service. I have had experience of this myself, because I have worked with these vessels, which are usually crammed to the hatch covers with cargo; the cargo is increasing all the time, and the purpose of all this is to develop that wonderful part of Australia—our North-West. I noticed with great pleasure that it is proposed to put another ship on the run. I have no doubt that ship also will carry cargo to its capacity.

What I am trying to develop is the fact that no private concern would at any time have attempted to run a shipping service to the North-West; because had it done so, it would have had to charge such high freight rates that it would have been impossible for people to exist in that part of the country; they would not have been able to pay the freight asked.

The State Shipping Service has been accused on several occasions of showing staggering losses on its balance sheet. But we should not look at the balance sheet when considering the service that this instrumentality has rendered. The figures given in the balance sheet are no criterion, particularly when they are compared with areas of the North-West which, but for the State Shipping Service, would never have been opened up. Accordingly we should not view with any importance figures in balance sheets which might show losses; we should consider the over-all results, which are clearly visible in the North-West.

Coupled with the foregoing instrumentalities is another great project in the shape of the Wyndham Meat Works. In conjunction with the State Shipping Service, it has proved of great benefit to the cattle-raising industries in this particular part of the State. It has been a most wonderful thing to watch. I have always shown great interest in what has taken place in the North-West, because I think it has wonderful potentialities for the future.

I wish now to get back to my own electorate and refer to a question which is a very sore one indeed with, I should say, 100 per cent. of the people in my constituency. I refer to the deterioration that has taken place at South Beach, which was at one time a beautiful holiday resort. This beach—and I go back now many years, to the time when I was only about 13 or 14 years of age—was once the pleasure resort of Western Australia. We had five and six excursion trains coming to it from the country at weekends. These trains were packed with country people and it was a real pleasure to see the crowds congregated at that beach.

I hope the Government, in conjunction with the local authorities, will concentrate more on this particular project and endeavour to bring it back to what it was before; because this would be in the interests both of the children of the district and of the development of the area generally. I assume we all wish to have safe beaches for children; and that was the safest beach in any part of the State. The revenue that came to South Beach many years ago from country people who visited it was tremendous. Its development and return to popularity is also most essential for the local traders in that area. The Government should pay some attention to this matter and try to rectify the situation as soon as it is possible to do so.

I do not wish to speak at any great length. There are many other matters with which I wish to deal at a later stage in this session. I thank members for their kind attention, and I feel I have at least made my mark in this House by making my maiden speech.

MR. SEWELL (Geraldton) [5.13]: With other members in this Chamber I listened with great interest to the speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor in another place when he opened this session of Parliament. As usual, the Governor's Speech contained those things which the Government of the day wished it to contain. I was struck with the Speech not for what it contained but for what it did not contain. I refer particularly to water supplies in this State. In my opinion, the Government of the day is doing a very poor job in that regard. It is recognised, and rightly so, that the population of human beings, and the population of our stock in Western Australia, will be governed by the amount of water that we can conserve, or find, either by wells, springs, storage, or deep boring.

As a country member, I am particularly concerned with the very poor effort that the Government is making in regard to our water storage and our water problems generally. In all the years that Geraldton has been a town, it has suffered from a very poor water supply; and the difficulties in connection with the building of a reservoir to store the annual rainfall have been the main cause of the shortage.

At the present time, Geraldton is mainly supplied from bores on the Wicherina sandplain; and anyone who knows the position would wonder what would happen to the town and district if the bores were to give out. Last year, in the metropolitan area, we had the spectacle of the Minister, from day to day and week to week, appealing to the people not to use too much water and, in some instances, not to use water at all. That had been brought about by the capacity of the storage facilities in the metropolitan area falling to a very low level which, in turn, was brought about by two or three dry seasons.

Unfortunately, we put ourselves in a little bit of fool's paradise if we get two or three of what we term "wet years"; we do not seem to realise that the cycle of dry years will be upon us again. But I urge the Government to spend as much as it possibly can, and to make representations to the Federal Government for a large increase in the amount of loan money made available to this State for the purpose of increasing water supplies throughout the whole of the State.

Various Governments, over the years, have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds in order to improve the water supply at Geraldton; but before the schemes have been finished, the town and district have grown to such an extent that they are again behind scratch. I do not think it is good enough that a town and district of the size and importance of Geraldton should go from year to year living in a hand-to-mouth struggle as far as water supplies are concerned.