

But so far as I can see, from the reported utterances of the Premier in Canberra, the figure he had in mind was something like an increase of £2,500,000 to be obtained from railway freights and fares in the coming financial year unless he was able to get £4,500,000 extra from the Commonwealth. That is going to be the figure which I would say would be something in the vicinity of 40 per cent. overall, because I presume there would still be some telescoping, as we call it, of the freight rates to further-out centres such as Kalgoorlie, and others 300 miles or more away. If we are going to impose a further burden of that kind upon the primary producing industries, upon the goldmining industry and upon the people of the country as a whole and the cost of living in the country generally, without trying to reduce the expenditure in the railway service in other directions and without trying to improve its efficiency, I promise you, Sir, that I shall wholeheartedly oppose such a move at every opportunity.

**MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [7.54]:** I have listened attentively to the previous speakers and agree with what the member for Stirling has said. I will not detain the House very long, but I wish to bring before members a very important matter concerning the position of the goldmining industry. In tonight's "Daily News" appears the following:—

**W.A. Gold Shares Up.**

Mt. Magnet mining shares showed gains on the Perth Stock Exchange today.

Oil shares maintained this week's sharp rises.

Hill 50 shares, which have been quoted recently at 84s. seller with buyers offering 82s., strengthened to 84s. 6d. buyer, 85s. seller with sales at 84s. 6d.

Shares in Yenberrie Gold N.L., which is investigating two mines at Mt. Magnet, rose from 3s. buyer, 3s. 1d. seller yesterday to 3s. 5d. buyer with no sales or sellers.

The present Government has been in office for six months and I have no hesitation in praising it for the progress it has made. The previous Government did practically nothing to remove the cause of the disabilities of the mining industry or to apply treatment. Immediately the present Government took over, it faced the cause and removed it by applying treatment in the way of giving some consideration to the industry. It is true that in the dying hours of the last Parliament the then Government gave consideration to Big Bell Mines Ltd.

**Hon. D. Brand:** Very real consideration, too.

**Mr. O'BRIEN:** But instead of giving proper consideration to the industry and advancing approximately £200,000 to enable that mine to develop successfully, it advanced £100,000, after very much consideration.

**Mr. McCulloch:** It was the Commonwealth Government which did that.

**Mr. O'BRIEN:** This means that operations in the goldmining industry are more or less hampered. The Big Bell Mine Company will be in an unfortunate position because the main shaft should always have been kept below the bottom level, and that has not been the case. Only two weeks ago, in the company of His Excellency the Governor, I visited the mine and went to the 1,250ft. level. Work has been carried out there very successfully, but the advance made by the Government was not sufficient.

**Mr. Oldfield:** What has your Government advanced?

**Mr. O'BRIEN:** The Government has progressed very successfully and assisted other mines in a small way. I was very pleased to hear the member for Stirling say that we should leave the railways in existence until every avenue has been exploited. That is very good advice. The railway to Laverton was to have been pulled up by the previous Government. I received urgent wires and replied "Hold fast" because I had unbounded faith in the Goldfields and particularly Laverton. It has now been proved that the Lancefield goldmine in that area is likely to become one of the biggest in the State. The manganese deposit there is very large and the Gladstator mine, which was worked years ago, is now in production and is keeping the State battery going, all because the Government has assisted as it should. If we let the people know that the Government is behind an industry, we remove much of the cause of failure. When something is wrong we must remove the cause and apply the remedy and that is the policy of this Government. Meekatharra, further south, is a field of proved values. That field years ago reached a depth where diamond drilling was required and I feel sure that as soon as money is available the present Government will do the necessary boring, which I believe will prove successful. The Meekatharra and Day Dawn mines are on the upgrade because they are receiving the necessary support.

**Mr. Oldfield:** What support are they receiving?

**Mr. O'BRIEN:** When the previous Government was in power the shares of the Hill 50 mine at Mt. Magnet were worth shillings but today they are worth pounds.

**Hon. D. Brand:** You might take credit for a wet season, but you cannot take credit for that.

**Mr. O'BRIEN:** That mine has been developed by diamond drilling and up-to-date methods encouraged by this Government.



Mr. Oldfield: Who paid for that? Not the Government!

Mr. O'BRIEN: A good deal of diamond drilling is required in the Murchison area which, as some of the old prospectors now in "Sunset" could tell members, will eventually prove to be as rich an area as the Golden Mile. The member for Maylands asked what assistance the Government had given the industry. It has raised the payment to prospectors from £2 to £4 10s. a week and has also paid practically in full for every crushing put through a State battery.

Mr. Oldfield: Which Government increased the allowance to prospectors?

Mr. O'BRIEN: The present Government and it has also paid them in full for the sands which were held by Governments in past years. A prospector now receives practically the full price per ounce for his gold, instead of perhaps £10 only, and that is of great benefit to him. During my last visit to the Murchison I noticed that acreage irrigation was on the move again. In some districts there has been a good season, with the water courses running and the grass two feet high, but in other areas such as out from Cue there is the acreage irrigation with a good harvest of lucerne and grasses to provide for drier times to come. At Wiluna the work of the late Mr. Damon is progressing steadily and I am sure that district will receive favourable consideration from the Government. Under the previous Government we had what was more or less purely a Mullewa line but the present Government will favour no particular area of the State. Many things are required in the Murchison area—houses, for instance—and I am confident we will get them in our turn. The previous Government promised to advance half the cost—approximately £8,000—of a water supply for Mt. Ida. The present Government will extend all these benefits providing it gets a fair deal from the Grants Commission. I ask members to co-operate with the Government so that all may receive their share and a square deal for the electors they represent.

On motion by Mr. Perkins debate adjourned.

#### COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

##### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

*House adjourned at 8.10 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 13th August, 1953.

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

#### QUESTIONS.

##### RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Sleepers, Removal and Renewal.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways:

What was the average cost in the years 1910 and 1938—

- (1) Of each new railway sleeper at point of use in the track?
- (2) Of removing each worn out sleeper and replacing the new sleeper?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) 1910, 1s. 9d.; 1938, 3s. 4d.
- (2) Separate details of the labour cost were not kept but the estimated cost is—1910, 1s.; 1938, 2s. 9d.