

giant step. Several people in Rockingham were encouraged on arrival from their country of origin to purchase their homes by taking out up to three mortgages. Many others have taken out two mortgages, and almost all of them have at least one.

It was shown in this House on Thursday last by the member for Boulder-Dundas that the increased interest rates racket being perpetrated by building societies and other financial institutions is causing extreme hardship to thousands of Western Australians, and the people in my electorate are in that situation. These facts were brought forward on Thursday but on Wednesday last the Minister for Housing, showing very little concern for the people of Western Australia, made a statement for which I have nothing but condemnation. In reply to a question by the member for Balga, asking whether the Government intended to introduce legislation to control building societies, the Minister said "No".

I would like to read an extract from a news release on the 10th March, 1974, by the same Minister when he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition. At that stage he obviously had a different opinion because he said—

We want a Royal Commission to find out all the facts and to recommend a programme to restore without reservation the right of home ownership which Australians desire.

I conclude with these remarks. I have with me at the moment a petition, soon to be presented, from people who agree with the Minister and indicating that the people of Rockingham also want a Royal Commission. We have the situation where the members on this side of the House want a Royal Commission and the Minister for Housing wants a Royal Commission. As we have already been assured of the Minister's support for a Royal Commission, I trust we can also rely on the support of the rest of his party.

**MR OLD (Katanning) [8.45 p.m.]:** I have pleasure in supporting the motion moved by the member for Wellington. I would like to commence my remarks, as have my colleagues, by offering my sincere congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election to your high office. We have no doubt that the dignity of the Chair will be well maintained by you.

I would also like to voice my thanks to members who have expressed words of welcome and congratulation to me, and to thank them on behalf of other newly elected members. It was indeed a very proud moment when I was elected to the seat of Katanning, and I am well aware of the fact that I am following a man who represented the electorate for 24 of his 27 years in this House; a man who worked diligently not only for Katanning but also for this great State; a man who spent

many years as a Minister of the Crown and carried out his work admirably; one who I know commanded the respect of both sides of the House. I refer, of course, to Sir Crawford Nalder. I pay tribute to him tonight in my initial speech in this House.

In my maiden speech, it is naturally my desire to speak about my electorate and its needs, and to make some suggestions, which may have merit, for the alleviation of those needs.

I represent an electorate of great agricultural wealth and one which has a reasonably sized population. It is bounded by the shires of West Arthur, Kojonup, Broomehill, Katanning, Dumbleyung, and Wagin, and Woodanilling is in the centre. It is quite compact but it has its problems, as have other rural shires.

Probably one of the greatest problems we have is in connection with the extension of the comprehensive water scheme which would greatly add to the productivity of the electorate. I realise that materials are in short supply but when they become available the extension of the scheme to additional rural areas will, I feel, be justified because the expense incurred by the Government would be more than repaid through increased productivity.

In parts of my electorate problems have developed through the rising of the water table, resulting in further encroachment of salt on land which is currently highly productive but will not continue to be so if the salt encroachment is not checked. The increasing area of salt-affected country makes the sinking of dams in this area very risky—in fact, well nigh impossible in many cases. I ask that some consideration be given to the extension of the comprehensive water scheme, especially to the eastern areas of my electorate.

The Katanning electorate is well known internationally for the production of so-called blue wool. This goes back for many years to the time when the electorate was first developed. It is the centre of some of the most noted merino and beef cattle studs in Western Australia. It is highly productive in grain, mutton, lamb, beef, and pig meats. It is the centre of the most concentrated stock-selling markets in the rural areas of Western Australia. In fact, in the year ended the 30th June, 1974, 532 000 trade sheep and 35 500 trade pigs were sold. I say trade sheep because Katanning currently boasts a weekly trade market which is attended by butchers from the metropolitan area and from all parts of the State.

Apart from these sales, the normal store stock sales are held monthly. In fact, from September to December they are held on a weekly basis. Members will see that this is quite an industry.



The Shires of Kojonup and Wagin also boast adequate stock-selling facilities. Many important stock sales fixtures are conducted at those centres.

Being a rural area, we naturally have rural industries. Before I proceed to speak about the rural industries, I would like to make one point clear—I am not a farmer; I am a businessman. I am one of a strange ilk in the Country Party—I am the only one. Therefore, if my remarks seem a little weighted towards the rural community, they should not be construed as being unduly biased. However, as a country businessman, I know that my future and the future of my family in the years to come will depend entirely upon rural industry, and this is what we must protect.

In Katanning we have a very modern export meatworks, and I am proud to say it is the only meatworks in Western Australia which is currently exporting mutton. By the continuation of supply, and I hope, by the grace of transport, it will continue in this way. However, if the transport strike continues and the mutton cannot be taken to the ports, then the works must come to a standstill.

In addition we have one of the few remaining flourmills in a country area. This mill operates as a result of the foresight of some of the local businessmen and farmers. The mill was closed down after a takeover bid by a firm which was not interested in milling. Some local people raised money amongst themselves to repurchase the mill and to get it going again. It is a small business, employing about 10 or 12 people, but it is producing flour and some very high grade oatmeal. We are justifiably proud of the fact that these gentlemen saw fit to show their faith in rural industry and true decentralisation by putting their own money in to keep the industry going.

In Wagin we have the engineering works of Pedericks. This works is well known to the rural community and despite the downturn in the rural economy, it has kept going. It produces high quality farm machinery and undertakes general engineering works as a service to the community.

A new venture in Wagin is a starea plant with grain alcohol as a by-product. Nearing completion is a large building for the off-season storage of superphosphate. That is the extent of industry in the electorate, but I assure members that we are very conscious of the benefits from these industries, and we would welcome any new inquiries. The local authorities are very keen to give assistance to any manufacturing organisation which wishes to come to the area.

Had it not been for the withholding of the superphosphate subsidy and the doubling of the price of superphosphate, with the resultant downturn in the use

of this fertiliser, the inland superphosphate works would have become a reality. Had this happened, I believe the works would have been successful. I venture the opinion that an inland superphosphate works would have commenced in the central great southern, I think within my electorate, and this would have been a welcome industry and a great move forward in decentralisation. However, obviously it will be a pipe dream for many years.

I would like to pay tribute to the Association of Regional Councils which was very actively concerned in the planning for the inland superphosphate works. I would like to pay particular tribute to two of the gentlemen who were closely associated with research for the project. They are Mr Percy Payne of Bunbury, and Mr Cliff Stretch of Moberup. These gentlemen worked tirelessly and travelled throughout the Commonwealth promoting the superphosphate works and researching the project.

I have mentioned the water supply, but another way in which we could improve the quality of life in rural areas is to hasten the extensions of the State Electricity Commission. Here again we are plagued with a shortage of material which seems to have become worldwide. However, I urge the State Electricity Commission to ensure that rural extensions are undertaken at the earliest opportunity. People are very keen to avail themselves of the amenities, and I am sure the extension of this service would be appreciated by all concerned.

Like all other rural areas, and like our city cousins, we are very reliant on the State Housing Commission to assist us to accommodate the work force. I realise that the commission has worked under great difficulty since the acute shortage of houses occurred as a result of the last war. To the credit of the commission, it has built as many houses as it can with the amount of money available to do the job. This has brought attendant problems because the quality of housing leaves something to be desired. I am not the first to vent this opinion in the House.

Now that the acuteness of the shortage appears to be easing a little, I urge the commission to consider improving the quality of housing by the inclusion of such amenities as a hot water system. This does not sound very much to ask for in a house, but in State houses in rural areas, a chip bath heater is all that is supplied. We endeavour to obtain skilled labour to get some projects off the ground, but it is rather tough to ask men to bring their families to the country and to put up with conditions such as these when their counterparts in the city rightly ask for and are provided with such facilities as hot water systems.



The provision of a hot water system is a small thing, and it would not add greatly to the cost of the houses. I feel in this enlightened day and age we must endeavour to provide better quality housing than we have in the past.

Local government is a subject in which I am very interested, having had 13 years' association with it. I do not claim to be an expert, but I do claim to know some of the problems which beset local authorities. Local government provides the first contact that citizens have with any arm of government, and it bears a great responsibility in the community. In fact, many amenities are required by the ratepayers of a town; and when they require an amenity the first body they turn to is the local authority, and rightly so. However, local authorities have a limited amount of funds as, I suppose, has the State Government. They must disburse their funds judiciously on road works, etc., and endeavour to provide those amenities which are rightly demanded by the ratepayers. I refer to such facilities as swimming pools and libraries.

With regard to libraries, I feel there should be an easing of the stringent requirements imposed by the Library Board in respect of country libraries. It is all very nice to expect libraries to be housed in Taj Mahal-like buildings; but in the early days of the Library Board some shires were able to house libraries in old parts of their town halls and civic community centres. Those libraries are still housed in those buildings and functioning satisfactorily; in fact, they are functioning just as satisfactorily as those which are housed in new buildings. So I would suggest that as a method of lessening this problem some consideration be given by the Library Board to easing the stringent restrictions it has placed upon the building of libraries.

Also, I think it is time we had a look at the provision of a realistic subsidy for country swimming pools. To my knowledge the subsidy has not changed for some years, and the value of the dollar has diminished greatly. Therefore, I suggest that even if only to catch up with inflation some adjustment should be made to the subsidy.

Probably one of the most important aspects I wish to raise—and you will be relieved to know, Mr Speaker, that I am nearing the end—is the matter of transport. I do urge the Government of which I am proud to be a part to look into the overall matter of transport in the life of the current Parliament. I know that the Minister has this in mind, but I would like to cite an instance in the south-west part of my electorate; as a matter of fact, it is in the south-west corner of the Kojonup Shire. The area to which I refer is known as Mobrurp. In this district we have one of the

last frontiers where one can be a modern pioneer, because this is the last area of timber country in my electorate.

The people there are modern pioneers. They are not all people of great wealth; they are people who are budgeting and working hard in an endeavour to carve farms out of the timber country. Some of them are returned soldiers from the Vietnam war, and they are endeavouring to establish farms for themselves in an area which could rightly be described as isolated from a transport point of view. The nearest railhead is Kojonup, which is some 30 to 35 miles to the north; and the Cranbrook railhead is some 50 miles to the south-east.

These people are expected to cart their wool from Mobrurp to Kojonup and put it on rail there. Then it travels east to Katanning and then south to Albany, a distance of about 170 miles; whereas if it could be taken from Mobrurp direct to Albany the distance would be about 70 miles. This seems ridiculous both to them and to me. I cannot see why the position should not be investigated and why these people should not be provided with a transport service similar to that which operates in the Pingrup-Ongerup area whereby superphosphate may be taken to the farm and produce taken from the farm to the port. Not only would this ensure better transport facilities for the people of Mobrurp, but it would also ensure greater usage of the Port of Albany. I am sure my friend, the member for Albany, will support me strongly in that regard.

Mr Speaker, I am quite a champion of country living. I have lived in the country for the greater part of my life, apart from a year or two after the war. I hope that I will live in the country for the rest of my life. I believe the majority of people who currently live in the country desire to remain, but I feel we must give them some encouragement to keep them there. Today we are sending some of our brightest youth to the metropolitan area because it is there that tertiary education and employment opportunities are to be found. Once these young people go to the metropolitan area it is hard to get them to return to the country because, having graduated in their chosen professions or vocations, they find that research and employment opportunities are available in the city but not in the country.

There is no easy solution to this, but I would like consideration given to the pipe dream of a university in the country. I am aware that this has been talked and thought about for many years, but unfortunately the second university is being built in the metropolitan area. Even if we could have in the country area a rural chair of the university it would be a start and, in fact, a very great step forward towards a realistic attitude in respect of decentralisation.



Well, Sir, I feel that possibly I have talked long enough. But before I conclude I would ask members through you, Sir, to think of the small country towns which have suffered as a result of the rural recession. I am not speaking of farmers now but of towns. I refer specifically to towns such as Dumbleyung, which has declined in population. There are empty shops in Dumbleyung now, and the last indignity is about to be dealt to the town inasmuch as it is about to lose its post office. A post office is not a great mark of achievement, but at least it signifies that the people have a town. The Postmaster-General intends to withdraw the post office from Dumbleyung for the sake of saving a few miserable dollars.

That is a great injustice and I would ask the Government to support me and to see that this does not happen to Dumbleyung or to any other town comparable to Dumbleyung in Western Australia.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence, and I thank members for listening to me in silence. I know probably this is the only time they will listen to me in silence and, believe me, I have appreciated it.

**MR BERTRAM** (Mt. Hawthorn) [9.08 p.m.]: Firstly I would like to place on record my appreciation of the tremendous job of work done by the previous Government in the Twenty-seventh Parliament—John Tonkin's Labor Government. In so doing I not only place appreciation on the record on behalf of myself, but on behalf of an overwhelming number of people in the Mt. Hawthorn electorate and of thousands upon thousands of people in the State of Western Australia.

The tragedy is that the previous Government came into office and took over a run-down situation, but its performance was such that it kept on doing a good job notwithstanding adversity—bearing in mind that it had a majority of only one member in this place, and all the knocking that one could possibly imagine would occur did in fact occur—and yet in full flight it was suddenly removed from office. I am tempted to say that had the election been held not on the 30th March but a few weeks later the Tonkin Government might very well still have been in office.

Mr Jamieson: We only needed about three more television appearances by the Premier and we would have been right. He was our trump card, but we could not play him often enough.

Mr BERTRAM: I will touch on that in a moment.

Mr Nanovich: You should be able to accept defeat, Mr Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Jamieson: Hello! He is out of the horse show again.

Mr Nanovich: Watch out that you don't run into an elbow.

Mr BERTRAM: We are now in my belief and anticipation back to where we were in the miserable years from 1968 to 1971. I was in this place then and I experienced those years. Is that not good enough evidence?

Mr O'Neil: That is what made those years miserable.

Mr BERTRAM: I forecast that we are in for a bleaker spell now than in that period between 1968 and 1971. I ask members to take heed of this warning because we are no longer confronted on this side by the leader of the then Government. We have a new leader now. He is called a Liberal although he is in fact a Conservative.

Mr Jamieson: And an ultra Conservative at that!

Mr BERTRAM: I have no objection to his being a Conservative; that is his right. I believe that what a person is is what matters, not what he is called. He is a Conservative and, as a consequence of that, we on this side and the public are in for a bleak time. I will touch upon that shortly.

About a year ago I rose in this place and, amongst other things, said that the party then known as the Australian Country Party was irretrievably doomed. I repeat that forecast now. At that time, members of the Country Party took me literally; apparently they accepted it as a correct forecast because they began chasing around, trying to bolster themselves up. The political leaders of the Country Party, very anxious to get votes and out of touch with their electors, decided that they would create this thing called the National Alliance with which we are now confronted. The National Alliance was never national and was never an alliance. We read not so long ago that the National Alliance was dead. I do not know whether it is dead. The members who came here were elected in the usual way. At the time, they were sailing under the flag of the National Alliance and for all practical purposes the National Alliance was represented here, although there was one defector even then. He apparently nominated for the election as a member of the Country Party.

It is a sad state of affairs when a person sets about a dissolution of his de facto marriage and dissolves that marriage without telling his partner or giving his partner notice of intention. The first his partner knows of the situation is when he reads it in the newspaper or sees it on television. That is a sad commentary on the National Alliance. The only chance for the National Alliance, sometimes known as the Country Party, is for the recent forecast of the Leader