

HOSPITALS.*As to Radiographer, Kalgoorlie.*

Mr. OLIVER asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is she aware that there are no x-ray facilities at the Kalgoorlie district hospital between the hours of 5 p.m. on Fridays to 9 a.m. on Mondays?

(2) Is she aware that all x-ray work at the Kalgoorlie district hospital is performed by a radiographer from the Commonwealth Health Laboratory who is an employee of the Commonwealth Government?

(3) Will she give an assurance that a radiographer will be employed by the Kalgoorlie district hospital for duty when the facilities provided by the Commonwealth Health Laboratory are not available?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Arrangements exist for all urgent work to be done during week-ends, but it is agreed that these are not functioning well at present.

(2) Yes, by arrangement with the Commonwealth Health Department.

(3) Radiographers are almost impossible to secure, but close attention is being given by Commonwealth and State officers to the problem of improving the arrangements.

HOUSING COMMISSION.*As to Appointment of Mr. L. F. Barry.*

Mr. MAY asked the Honorary Minister for Housing:

Will he agree to placing on the Table of this House the file dealing with the appointment and duties attached to the position now occupied by Mr. L. F. Barry, of the State Housing Commission?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:
Yes.

SOIL CONSERVATION.*As to Stimulating Officers' Work.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Since it is accepted that the Soil Conservation Act of Western Australia is the best of its type in Australia, will he assure the House that he will give some stimulus to the work of the officers and the conditions that could contribute to arresting the serious soil erosion incidence in this State.

The MINISTER replied:
Yes, I will do so with pleasure.

GOVERNMENT POLICY.*As to Member's Criticism.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE (without notice) asked the Premier:

Does he propose to defend his Government against the attack made upon its policy by the member for Moore in the columns of "The West Australian" of Saturday last?

The PREMIER replied:

I do not feel there is any responsibility on me to answer every newspaper correspondent, but any attacks that are made in this House upon the Government I will be prepared to defend.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Fifth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [4.48]: I should like first to offer you my congratulations, Sir, on your election to the office of Speaker. As a new member who has been in the House only a short time, I am encouraged to know that the Speaker is a man of whom I have heard no criticism from members on either side of the House or from people outside of it. I was very interested in the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition in his speech on the Address-in-reply in relation to closer settlement in the South-West. He put the matter very ably and I only wish that he had spoken longer and developed the theme further. As the member for the new electorate of Blackwood, I am keenly interested in this question which not only applies to my electorate but also to the whole of the South-West. I feel that it would not be unfruitful if the House did give some consideration to the difficulties which are besetting closer settlement in that area.

Firstly, I believe that the problem is essentially an economic one. Under existing circumstances a small farm does not offer sufficient monetary reward for the labour entailed in making it productive. The three main industries upon which closer settlement must depend are dairying, fruitgrowing and the production of potatoes. Of course, there are other activities that could be developed, but those I mention are the three main avenues. If we examine them, we find that in connection with the dairying industry last month the butterfat dairymen received 3s. a lb. for choice butterfat. Of that amount 8d., in round figures, consisted of the Commonwealth subsidy. The reason why the Commonwealth made available that assistance was to maintain and to increase, if possible, the production of butterfat. Despite the fact that that subsidy has been paid for some years, the production of butter-

fat tended to decline until last year when it just about held its own. There was no actual decrease, but the increase was very slight.

It is significant that an industry that is inherently part and parcel of closer settlement development in the South-West should be in a position at times such as the present to require the payment of a substantial subsidy in order to maintain production. The plain fact is that the dairying industry is not particularly attractive from the point of view of anyone desirous of starting out and developing a new farm. For many years the industry has largely tended to be carried on by the farmer with the assistance of his family. The continuance of the dairy farm has been made possible only as the result of the work put in, without the receipt of wages, by members of the farmer's family. If we take the figures for last year in connection with the grade herd recording scheme, we find that the average production per cow was 214 lb. of butterfat.

The records show that 11 per cent. of the cows in the State are under test in connection with the grade herd testing scheme. No-one will dispute the fact that figures based on that scheme would be above the average, because the more progressive farmers are those that submit their herds to the test. An average of 214 lb. per cow means, on the basis of 3s. per lb. for butterfat, that the dairy farmer receives per cow about £32 a year gross. That return is, as it were, out of the bucket. In addition, a certain amount of income is derived from pigs, but in that regard there is a great deal of outgoing as well. The production per cow is not sufficiently large to enable a dairy farmer to pay any appreciable amount in wages. The average number of cows per herd throughout the State is 25.3. On that basis it will be seen that in round figures the dairyman is receiving gross out of the bucket about £800 a year. If he pays an employee £7 a week, that will represent £364 in wages for the year, which is approaching nearly half of his gross income.

That is one reason why the dairying industry is being carried on to a great extent by the farmer and his own family, who certainly contribute a very appreciable proportion of the labour involved. A man who is milking 25 cows is fully employed himself in actually handling the stock, the maintenance of the property and the normal farming activities, without being able to devote any great amount of time to the further development of his holding. When it is realised that before he could afford to employ a man to help him the farmer would require to milk another 12 cows, it can be readily seen that the problems besetting the dairy farmer are very real. I mention the dairying industry first as it is probably the main one on which any closer settlement scheme for the South-West must depend.

The fruitgrowing industry is having, and has had over a number of years now, a very difficult time. Naturally the war affected it appreciably. Generally speaking, despite the constant complaints we hear about the price of fruit, the return to the grower is not very great. One of the troubles at the moment in that industry is that it calls for a lot of skilled hand-labour which is not always available, and the cost of that labour, if available, is unfortunately not always commensurate with the returns to the grower. The price of fruit to the local consumer has been very high, but that is not to say that the grower has enjoyed a tremendous return from his crop. As an instance, a large proportion of the growers have been forced to use whitewood cases at a cost of 4s. 6d. per case on the orchard which, on a 40 lb. case of fruit works out at an immediate charge of 1½d. per lb. So members will see that the lot of the orchardist is not particularly happy.

The potato-growing industry is perhaps in a more fortunate position than either of the other two, but at the same time, although the production of potatoes is much greater than it was during pre-war years, difficulty is being experienced in maintaining it. The area under potatoes is tending towards a reduction and with that trend production is likely to decrease. Thus, when we realise that these three basic industries for closer settlement in the South-West are not in as flourishing a condition as we could wish, it will be readily understood that the inducements to men to take up and develop small farms in that part of the State are not sufficiently great to encourage them in that direction. Most of the farms in the South-West that are paying reasonably well are those that were taken up a considerable time ago and on which much development work had taken place. They were, in part, already established farms.

It has often been said that it takes two generations to make a farm in the South-West, and I think there is a lot of truth in that. Unfortunately, while modern machinery and appliances unquestionably cut down considerably the time of development, the cost involved is very often prohibitive for the small man. The use of a bulldozer at £4 per hour is in many instances altogether beyond the means of the farmer who is milking from 15 to 20 cows. For that reason I do not think we can find the solution purely in additional mechanisation. It is true that a great deal of country is being developed at present by bulldozing, but in my own electorate much of that type of work is being carried out by the bigger farmers, the settlers who have been established there for a long period. The developmental work for the most part is being done by them, unfortunately, and not by the smaller men. I said "unfortunately", but I am very pleased that they are doing

this work. Personally I have no criticism to offer concerning them and no grievance against the larger farmers. In a great many cases, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the land was originally taken up at a very low cost—sometimes as low as 1s. or 2s. 6d. an acre—and many of the farms today are in the third and fourth generation of ownership. The land has been subdivided and sons have farmed portion of the old property. Many of those people are very good farmers and are soundly established, and they are the folk who are still further developing their properties because they are in a position to do so.

It is difficult to secure figures to show just what proportion of those bigger holdings is still suitable for closer settlement, but I know from personal experience that the South-West is patchy. We do not get large areas of really good land going continuously from one boundary to another. Properties consist of good and bad land, and I think that any suggestion that there are large areas of good land being held and not developed might easily arise from the size of the holdings concerned, and an analysis will not always bear out the contention. In my electorate the bigger farmer is the man who is producing most of the stuff and also developing his land, to a greater extent than is the case with the smaller holdings, for the reason that he is able to employ the labour and pay for it.

I feel that these difficulties can be very largely overcome if we can increase the productivity of our land in the South-West. We have agricultural problems that are peculiar to that part of the State. There is a very heavy rainfall, but it extends only over about six months of the year, and we have a long dry summer which means that there are agricultural problems, particularly in connection with the establishment of permanent pastures, which are perhaps unique. Those problems will be solved only by additional scientific research. I believe that the Department of Agriculture has, in the past, done a remarkably good job under extremely difficult conditions. It has always been kept short of staff, materials and accommodation. I have a considerable admiration for the work the officers of the department have done, but I feel they should have had much more money made available to them, because these problems will have to be solved by us. We cannot look to other lands to find a solution for the problems which are peculiar to our country.

Of all the agricultural problems which are facing us at the moment, possibly the most pressing is the finding of a satisfactory blade grass to balance our subterranean clover pastures. The lack of research work which should have been undertaken is clearly illustrated by a reply

which the Superintendent of Dairying gave at a South-West Conference recently to a suggestion that it would be beneficial if the Government could make lime available to the farmers. He said that as yet we have not proved by experiment that additional lime applied in the South-West is needed or would be an economic proposition. I think that indicates the need for additional research—the fact that as yet the department is not in a position to say whether additional lime would be a good thing or not—and I hope that this Government and future Governments will take a much more realistic view of this matter than has been the case in the past.

It is essential that the development of the South-West should not be hampered by a lack of agricultural research, which I believe is the keystone to the whole problem. I know that the Leader of the Opposition, when he was Minister for Agriculture, was well aware of the necessity for a very much enlarged grant to the department; and I know that if he had had his way he would have had it adequately and properly housed. He is in no way to be held responsible for the fact that the present housing of the department is not what it should be. Nevertheless the need still exists—in fact it is probably greater today than ever it was—for additional research, because the necessity for increasing our production per acre is very much bound up with the economic welfare of the country. If we compare our production of 214 lb. of butterfat per cow, to which I referred, with the average production in Denmark of 316 lb. per cow we can appreciate the room for improvement here. And, after all, the Australian dairy farmer has to compete with the Danish farmer on the world's markets.

There are other things we will need before we can get closer settlement in the South-West. We will have to provide additional amenities, not only on the farms but in the towns as well. We will have to provide adequate water supplies. The idea exists that because we have bounteous rainfall in the South-West no water problems exist there; but actually it is no use having a heavy rainfall if the water is allowed to run away, and unless we have adequate means of conservation and reticulation we will have a water problem during the summer months in the South-West. It may be of interest to members to know that last summer the Railway Department hauled very considerable quantities of water to Bridgetown, despite the fact that that centre is in the 35 in. rainfall area.

We have to recognise that if we are to persuade people to go into the country—and particularly young people and young married couples—to take up farming, we

must have available to them the amenities that are enjoyed by people in the city. There is no reason why any young wife should want to go to the country and face the difficulties of rearing a family under some of the almost primitive conditions that have existed in the past other than the present economic position that arises through the prosperous condition of the various agricultural industries. If we want people to go into the country, we will have to see that those industries can sustain them on a standard of living and with sufficient amenities to make life attractive.

I have suggested that the problem could be solved, to some extent at any rate—and I believe to a very large extent—by additional agricultural research coupled with improved methods, and the necessary development and distribution of the machinery which is most suited to the requirements of that particular portion of the country. I have not suggested that I think the solution lies in increased prices, because I do not believe the solution does lie in raising the price of anything. If we could devote thought and ingenuity to endeavouring to reduce costs rather than merely put prices up, we might do far more towards solving the problem of the inflationary spiral. It is not a matter that should be dealt with on purely party political lines. It is one with which we are all concerned and the finding of a solution is important to every one of us. If we can all approach it from the viewpoint of seeing what we can contribute towards reducing the inflationary spiral rather than try to demonstrate that the blame lies elsewhere, I think we will come far closer to a solution.

If we can increase the production per acre of our land the costs of production will be reduced, and to that extent we will have contributed to the elimination of the inflationary spiral. I know that at present the costs in the dairying industry are based on the assumption that the dairy farmer works 56 hours per week, and I know that most dairy farmers would be very pleased if they did work only 56 hours a week. We cannot reasonably ask a dairy farmer to work longer than that, but I do think we should give him all the assistance we can towards reducing his costs.

I do not believe the answer to the problem lies in increasing the price of everything, but if we can bring down the costs encountered by all farmers I think that they in turn will be in a very much better position to cope with the reduction in world prices. I am very much afraid such reduction is inevitable. I cannot say when it will come, but I hate to think what the result will be when it does come, if present costs are not reduced. We must do all we can to see that

the farmer uses the best methods possible and is assisted to solve the very many problems which beset him. I hope that members will appreciate the difficulties with which settlers in the South-West are faced, and will make some effort to alleviate some of those difficulties.

MR. GUTHRIE (Bunbury) [5.13]: In speaking to the motion, may I first congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the office you have so ably filled in the last three years. I would like also to express my thanks to the members of this House, who have all treated me with great courtesy, and to the members of the staff who have been very helpful to me.

All that I propose to say will have to do with Bunbury, and the first thing I wish to mention is the desirability of the establishment of a steel and iron industry in that district. Such an industry was promised to Bunbury some time ago and in September last year a firm of consultants, Brasserts Ltd., undertook an extensive survey of the district to see whether there was any suitable place available for the erection of a foundry. Up to date we have received no word about the matter and the people of my electorate are wondering whether any report has been made to the Government.

I now wish to direct a few remarks to the tourist industry. In the South-West people are becoming more tourist-minded, and favourable conditions lend themselves to more tourists coming from overseas or the Eastern States. What we require is help from the Government. We have our own Tourist Bureau but, as members realise, the tourist business is expensive to run and we require some assistance from the Government. I do not know whether I am too early in asking for help from this source, but that is what we really require.

The South-West, in common with other portions of the State, is enjoying a period of prosperity and development is proceeding in both towns and rural areas. The development of these South-West towns brings the need for such amenities as gas, sewerage, surface drainage and electric power. These are the functions of Government. In regard to gas, the Lurgi system has been proved practicable but the proposal to build a plant has been pigeon-holed.

The timber industry is of vital importance. Years ago when karri first came on to the market thousands of pounds were spent in finding means of disposing of this timber. Karri is not favoured by many builders but it would be a great pity if, after spending thousands of pounds in finding a market, we lost it. If we stop exporting karri we definitely will lose our markets and be forced to look elsewhere. So far as jarrah is concerned the quantity exported is merely a token of our previous exports. If we do not export to the Eastern States then we will