

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 15th October, 1952.

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

QUESTIONS.

AMMUNITION.

As to Cost and North-West Kangaroo Shooters.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is he aware that owing to the extremely high cost of .303 ammunition (£60 per 1,000, plus 20 per cent. sales tax, compared to pre-war cost of less than £10 per 1,000), practically no kangaroo shooters are operating in the North-West?

(2) Is he aware that some station owners estimate they have 60,000 kangaroos feeding on their properties, and that one owner recently poisoned 27,000 in six weeks?

(3) Will he approach the appropriate Commonwealth Minister to ask for a substantial reduction in the price of ammunition for bona fide kangaroo shooters, seeing that local authorities are willing to supervise the distribution?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. Owing to high costs of ammunition and other costs of operations, plus the higher wages offered to men for other work, the numbers of kangaroo shooters have been reduced considerably.

(2) No; but it is known that large numbers of kangaroos are now on North-West properties and have been on them for years. Where station owners have undertaken organised poisoning drives, particularly water poisoning, they have succeeded in reducing the numbers.

(3) The Minister for Agriculture has already approached the Commonwealth Government for the abolition of the sales tax on ammunition used for vermin destruction. A reduction from 33½ per cent. to 20 per cent. has been secured. Endeavours are still continuing for the abolition of the tax.

Fifty thousand rounds of .303 ammunition have been obtained from the Commonwealth and the Minister has arranged for 25,000 rounds of this to be distributed through vermin boards at cost of £35 per 1,000, plus sales tax and handling charges.

The Commonwealth Government has stated that very little or no .303 ammunition will be available from Australian sources in the near future and the Agriculture Protection Board is endeavouring to arrange for both .303 and .310 ammunition to be obtained from overseas for distribution through vermin boards.

NORTH-WEST JETTIES.

As to Replacement of Piles.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is it a fact that there are practically no jetty piles on hand at most North-West ports, and that a considerable number of piles require renewal?

(2) Can any North-West jetty be considered to be in a state warranting immediate replacement of piles?

(3) Could these jetties become dangerous unless repairs are done without delay?

(4) Is the lack of piles at ports due to inability of State ships to transport them?

(5) If so, what is the solution of the problem? If not, what is the reason for the shortage of piles?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Stocks of piles at ports are generally low. In most jetties early replacement of some piles is desirable.

(2) Yes. Replacement of piles is in progress at several ports at present.

(3) Yes, if delay is unduly prolonged.

(4) and (5) Shipping of piles this year has not been as great as desired, partly owing to the absence of the "Dulverton." Both the "Dorrigo" and "Dulverton" are lifting piles in November.

TRAM AND BUS SERVICES.

As to Shelters at Stopping Places.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has the further conference between the Department and the City Council, as indicated in his reply to my question on the 5th August, 1952, yet been held to discuss the erection of shelters at bus stops in the metropolitan area?

(2) If so, with what result?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) A conference was held to deal with several matters, but adjourned through lack of time before reaching any decision regarding shelters. As soon as arrangements can be made to resume discussion, that question will be given first consideration.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

GUILDFORD ROAD.

As to Rehabilitation.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Have arrangements been made to re-construct the main Guildford-rd. between Mt. Lawley and Guildford Bridge in consequence of the road boards concerned paying proportion of cost?

(2) If the answer is in the affirmative, when is it proposed to commence the work?

(3) Pending the work being started, who is responsible for the maintenance of the road?

(4) Who will be responsible for maintenance of the road during six years of reconstruction?

(5) Is he aware that the road is in a very bad condition between Cresco and Cumby Smith rail crossings?

(6) Is it proposed to make the road of uniform width throughout to overcome bottlenecks at present existing?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Arrangements are in course of being made for the progressive improvement of the road.

(2) Early this summer.

(3) Arrangements are to be made with the local authorities concerned.

(4) The Main Roads Department in collaboration with the local authorities.

(5) The relative condition of the various sections is being assessed.

(6) Sufficient width will be provided to cater for traffic needs having regard to the funds available.

SWAN RIVER.

As to Analyses of Water.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works:

Will he lay on the Table File P.W.D. 31431 dealing with the analyses of the waters of the Swan River?

The MINISTER replied:

The plan mentioned is required for departmental purposes at present, but will be laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday, the 21st October, 1952, for a period of one week only.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Construction at Belmont.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Housing:

How many houses have been erected and/or are in course of erection on both sides of Maida Vale-rd., Belmont, under the following headings:—

(a) Austrian pre-fab.;

(b) Conventional;

(c) Evictee type?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) Austrian precuts—19 erected, 43 in course of erection.

(b) Conventional—155 erected, 6 in course of erection.

(c) Evictee type—Nil.

Not included with (a), (b), (c)—232 tradesmen's flats have been erected.

(b) As to Construction at Ashfield and Bassendean.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Housing:

How many houses have been erected and/or are in course of erection at Ashfield-Bassendean under the following headings:—

(a) Austrian pre-fabs.;

(b) Evictee type;

(c) Conventional?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) Austrian precuts—Nil.

(b) Evictee type—19 erected.

(c) Conventional—5 erected, 5 in course of erection.

In addition to the above, there are 30 Austrian precuts being erected by the State Housing Commission for the W.A.G.R. and six of these have been completed.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Narrogin and Kondinin Pipelines.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the length of the proposed pipeline from Wellington Dam to Narrogin?

(2) What length of pipes has been laid to date?

(3) What is the length of the proposed pipeline from Merredin to Kondinin?

(4) What length of pipe has been laid to date?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 81 miles.

(2) 35½ miles.

(3) 81½ miles.

(4) 26¾ miles.

MILK.

(a) As to Supplies to Outback Centres.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has the committee appointed to go into the question of supplying "reconstituted milk" to outback centres and schools made a report to him?

(2) If not, when is it likely that a report will be received?

(3) Will he lay the file re this matter on the Table of the House for the information of members?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Shortly.

(3) Yes, for one week.

(b) As to Supplies to Geraldton and Northampton Districts.

Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister for Education:

Can he say when the distribution of free milk to school children in the Geraldton and Northampton districts will commence?

The MINISTER replied:

The company originally approached regarding the supply of free milk to school children has since, I understand, discontinued supplying milk from Perth owing to the difficulties encountered.

However, another company which is supplying milk from Perth has been approached and provided satisfactory arrangements can be made, it is hoped to commence supplying free milk to the school children in the Geraldton district in the near future.

The question of making similar arrangements for Northampton has to date been found impracticable.

RAILWAYS.

As to Welshpool-Bassendean Chord Line.

Mr. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

In view of the return of Mr. Dumas, the Director of Works, from abroad, will he collaborate with the Minister for Railways in an endeavour to have an early decision made on the Welshpool-Bassendean chord line?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, I will do that.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Albany Public Cemeteries Subsidy.

Introduced by Mr. Hill.

2, Health Act Amendment (No. 3).

Introduced by Mr. J. Hegney.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. Kelly, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. A. A. M. Coverley (Kimberley) and Mr. Lawrence (South Fremantle) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—FREMANTLE ELECTRICITY UNDERTAKING AGREEMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION—COLLIE COAL INDUSTRY.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.46]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to investigate and report upon the coal mining industry, with particular reference to—

(1) the decreasing percentage of coal being produced from deep mines at Collie when compared with the production of coal from open-cuts at that centre;

(2) the system used in arriving at the price of coal charged to the Government and other consumers,

and generally to make recommendations for the better development, control of the coal mining industry, its management and other matters incidental thereto.

I want to make it perfectly clear that there is nothing in this motion which can be regarded as scalp hunting. The origin or cause of it and the reason for its appearing on the Notice Paper is that it has been instigated by the general anxiety of the people of Collie and of the men working in the coalmining industry in

this State. The reason for the anxiety of these people is that the production of open-cut coal has been steadily increasing ever since operations were commenced in 1943, and in consequence the production of deep-mine coal has been decreasing correspondingly.

Operations on the open-cuts were commenced in Collie in 1943 and when those open-cuts were authorised the idea was to endeavour to meet the shortage of coal which was apparent at the time. It was also understood that while the open-cuts were in operation it would give the coal-mining companies an opportunity of catching up with the development of their deep mines. In November, 1943, when the open-cuts started, the production of deep-mine coal had reached 40,070 tons per month. In June of this year, 1952, the production of deep-mine coal was 39,163 tons per month; this in spite of the fact that the following deep mines had come into operation. These were—

Phoenix mine, which in June, 1952, produced 1,300 tons.

Neath mine, which in June, 1952, produced 2,400 tons.

Centaur mine, which in June, 1952, produced 4,754 tons.

This makes a total increase in deep-mine coal of 8,454 tons per month. In spite of that increase the overall production of deep-mine coal in Collie has fallen below the level it was in 1943. The alarming fall in the production of deep-mine coal was commented on by the Royal Commissioner, Mr. Wallwork, in his report of 1947. He said—

Production on the Collie coalfield reached its pre-war peak in 1938 when 604,792 tons of coal were produced. Since then the output has fluctuated in a remarkable and alarming way.

Since Mr. Wallwork made those comments, the situation has become alarmingly worse. To show how concerned the men employed in the industry are, I shall read a statement by the executive of the Collie Miners' Union published in "The West Australian" on the 14th March last under the heading "Union Concerned Over Deep Mines." The report read—

COLLIE, Thurs.—Concern was expressed today by the Miners' Union executive at the decrease in production from the deep mines on the Collie coalfield.

The executive said that although production from the deep mines had declined seriously in the past four years, output from the open-cuts had more than doubled.

This, they claimed, was not in the best interests of the industry or the State.

After alleging that lack of efficient supervision by successive Governments and the coal companies was having a

serious effect on the field, the executive suggested that a board be appointed to inquire into the industry at Collie.

They also advocated the establishment of a coal board to control the industry.

If that were done, the executive said, better results would be obtained from the mechanisation schemes now in progress.

The executive asserted that at present mechanisation was not bringing about the expected increase in output from the deep mines.

Expansion.

"Industrial expansion in progress in W.A. will result in a still bigger demand for Collie coal and the people in this State should know what is going on in the industry," the executive said in a Press statement.

"The production target this year is 1,000,000 tons and it is estimated that the State will soon need 1,500,000 tons of Collie coal each year.

"Through lack of controlled development in the deep mines the field is not in a position to meet that demand.

"If W.A. is to avoid a coal crisis the Government must insist on more development in the deep mines and less concentration on the open-cuts. In our opinion the open-cuts are being exploited to the detriment of the deep mines.

"The open-cuts should be held in reserve for use in a national emergency."

The executive said that in 1948 the deep mines produced 587,095 tons and last year output from that source had dropped to 490,145 tons.

Open-cut production in 1948 was 145,843 tons compared with 358,330 tons last year.

Production from the open-cuts had continued to increase this year.

That will convey to members some idea of the feeling existing amongst the men working in the industry relative to the situation that has arisen regarding the production of deep-mine as against open-cut coal. The statement I have just read correctly expresses the feeling of the people of Collie and the men working in the industry. I do not think anyone will argue that an incentive exists to produce the best coal that could be raised in this State in order to provide a safeguard against possible Eastern States' competition. A continuance of the open-cut policy would not give us that safeguard.

Open-cut coal is very immature; it disintegrates easily and cannot be transported long distances. In it is contained gravel and other foreign matters that are picked up by the machine loading the coal

and it all goes in as coal and is paid for as such. This naturally creates much antagonism amongst consumers.

Mr. Styants: Is it not screened?

Mr. MAY: No.

Mr. Styants: It is supposed to be.

Mr. MAY: The open-cut coal is not screened; it simply goes from the open-cut up the gantry and drops into the railway wagon. This dirty, awful stuff called coal, as I have said, is creating antagonism to our native fuel amongst consumers, and when the open-cut stuff is mixed with the deep-mine coal—and it is mixed—the position is rendered worse because the quality of the deep-mine coal is accordingly reduced.

In my opinion, some action must be taken to compel the companies to develop their deep mines. As the production of open-cut coal is much more economical and as this coal is easier of access than deep-mine coal, I suppose it is only natural that the companies operating open cuts should lean towards increasing production by that method in preference to undertaking deep mining. Since I have occupied a seat in this House, we have been told on numerous occasions that mechanisation of the mines would be the answer to the problem of producing increased quantities of coal from that source and decreasing the output of open-cut coal. But it has not worked out in that way.

Apart from the new mines I mentioned earlier in my remarks, the same old mines have been operating for 35 or 40 years and it has been found impossible to mechanise them because they are now very deep. No sort of mechanisation was ever expected when they were being developed and, consequently, it is impossible to mechanise them now. Much machinery has been purchased—later on I shall make further reference to this matter of the mechanisation of mines—but a terrific quantity of that machinery has never been used. In the newly developed mines, mechanisation is going ahead and will eventually show the difference between the old and the new method of coalmining.

Western Collieries and the Griffin Coal-mining Co. are the two companies that have set about developing new mines in what I may describe as the correct manner, and very shortly they will be able to make a considerable contribution to the production of deep-mine coal. That is what we should aim to do. I have good authority for saying that there is a new proposal on foot to increase the production of open-cut coal by 130,000 tons a year. This should not be allowed. There is a significance in the amount of 130,000 tons in regard to the requirements of the Goldfields. If it is proposed to supply that market from open-cuts, then I say Kalgoorlie is going to get a very poor class of coal because by the time it gets there

it will be sadly disintegrated, and no doubt the people who buy it will take strong exception to it—and I would not blame them.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of the industry, open-cut coal would be entirely unsuitable for the Goldfields market, and we should take some action to ensure that it is supplied only with the best possible fuel that the State can produce. It seems to me that the interests of the State are being sacrificed by certain coal companies so that they may obtain quick profits by producing coal from open-cuts. In "The West Australian" of the 7th of this month the annual report of Western Collieries, for their first year's operations, is printed, and it states—

The directors of Western Collieries Ltd., in their report for the year ended June 30, 1952, recommend the payment of a maiden dividend of 10 per cent. on ordinary shares. This will require £13,725, and will be paid out of profits for the year.

After deducting all expenses of operation and administration, including depreciation, the year's operations resulted in a net profit of £35,804, with the balance of £2,504 brought in from the previous year and £35 over provision for taxation, there was £38,343 available for allocation.

From that sum, £3,630, representing the balance of flotation expenses, was written off, £600 was provided for taxation and £5,000 for payment of the preference charge. Recommended allocations from the balance are £13,725 for payment of the ordinary dividend, and £10,000 for general reserve. This leaves £5,388 to be carried forward.

The reason why I read the report is that Western Collieries have been permitted to operate only one open-cut. If that company, with one open-cut, is able to show a net profit for the 12 months of £35,804, what must the Amalgamated Collieries be making, as they operate three open-cuts and one of them is producing far more than any other mine on the Collie coal-field? These figures will give members some indication of the extent to which this system of producing coal is being manipulated by the companies in Collie. It seems to me that so far as the companies are concerned it is a question of profit rather than the development of the deep mines.

Unless some authority, other than what we have at present, is set up to control the industry, there will be nothing, apparently, to prevent the companies from going their own sweet way and continuing on the one hand to neglect the development of the deep mines and, on the other, to increase the production from the open-cuts. Eventually this policy will mean that the

State will find itself in the position of being able to produce thousands of tons of coal by the open-cut method—and the private consumers, and also the Government instrumentalities, should not touch such coal on account of its dirty nature—with the result that the over-production of the Eastern States, as we find at present, will be dumped in Western Australia to the detriment of our native coal.

If I were a private consumer and I could get Eastern States coal at the same price as I paid for local fuel, I would immediately switch to the Eastern States product in view of the fact that the Western Australian companies are not giving either the Government departments or the private consumers a fair go in respect to the quality of coal. We were told that the appointment of a State Coal Mining Engineer would alter all this. The coalmining engineer—without reflecting on him at all—has held his position now for nearly three years, but the state of the industry has simply gone from bad to worse. It would appear that he has no authority to enforce any measures that he thinks should be taken for the betterment of the industry. As a matter of fact, at a conference held in Collie on the 25th June, he admitted that it was an undisputed fact that development of the deep mines was sadly neglected.

If the engineer had the authority we were given to understand he would have to direct the companies to do certain work in certain mines, it would have been a step in the right direction. I said earlier in the session, when speaking on the Address-in-reply, that if the State Coal Mining Engineer did not have this authority, it should be given to him. That is his job, and is why he was appointed. If after inquiry it is found there was sufficient authority for him to take some action, and he had not taken it, he should be sacked. I do not care who he is. In the sub-leader of "The West Australian" of the 13th October—Monday of this week—we find this—

In its report for 1950-51, the Joint Coal Board estimated Australia's requirements of N.S.W. coal in 1952 at 17,300,000 rising to 19,000,000 tons in 1954. But now the board considers current production to be 2,000,000 tons a year more than the demand, and has recommended that, among other things, output from open-cuts be reduced.

In my opinion that is the correct and necessary thing to do. Unless some step is taken in this State by those in authority—and I assume the authority would come from the Mines Department—to take similar action here, we will find ourselves in the same position as those people in the Eastern States. In Western Australia we apparently cannot do it because

the development of our deep mines is so neglected. The deep mines of this State at present produce 50 per cent. of the coal required in Western Australia; but to such an extent have they been neglected that I am sorry to say that, if there were no open-cuts operating, we would be getting less than 50 per cent. of the coal required to keep our Government instrumentalities in operation.

Another reason for the decrease in the output of deep-mine coal is the mechanisation or attempted mechanisation of the old mines. It has proved a failure. As I said, earlier and quicker profits are obtainable from open-cuts so that there is, apparently, no thought on the part of the companies for the interests of the State. I think I have said enough in regard to the production of deep-mine coal, as against open-cut coal, to show that an inquiry should be held to ascertain why the development of our deep mines is so neglected. The men in the industry and the people, generally, are worried. Everything they own and live for is in Collie. Almost every family there—at least 75 per cent. of them—have undertaken responsibilities in the nature of paying for a home, and so on, and these things are gradually slipping from their grasp for the sake of profits by the coal companies. It will be impossible to have a continuity of supply of our best coal because of the neglect of the deep mines. Deep mining is the only stable method of ensuring a continuity of coal supplies for the State.

Next I come to the system of fixing the price of coal. This, to me—and I feel sure to everyone else—is a very complicated matter, and also one of great secrecy. Yesterday I asked these questions of the Minister representing the Minister for Mines—

Would he inform the House—

(1) The average price of open-cut coal supplied to Government instrumentalities for the financial year ended June, 1952, and the average calorific value and ash content?

(2) The average price of deep mine coal supplied to the Government by the Griffin Coal Company for the financial year ended June, 1952, and the average calorific value and ash content?

The replies were—

(1) Collie Burn is the only mine producing open-cut coal for which separate prices, calorific values and ash contents are available. Particulars are as follow:—

Price—£2 4s. 11d. per ton which is tentative and subject to adjustment.

Calorific value—9,136 B.Th.U. per pound.

Ash content—5.53%.

The reference there to readjustment is where the individual gets puzzled when trying to arrive at the price of coal. The Minister's answer continues—

Coal from other open-cuts is mixed in the screening with deep-mine coal and the prices, calorific values and ash contents are of the mixture.

I will say it is a mixture. The reply in regard to Griffin coal is that the price is £2 8s. 1d. per ton. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, coal being obtained from the Collie Burn open-cut, in the quick way it is obtained, costing £2 4s. 11d. a ton, whilst the Griffin company is producing deep-mine coal—some of the best coal in the State—and receiving £2 8s. 1d. per ton for it; that is 4s. 10d. more per ton for the deep-mine coal, as compared with the open-cut coal produced at Collie Burn? The three mines of the Griffin Company are the Centaur, with 9,744 B.T.U., the Wyvern with 10,082 B.T.U. and the Griffin with 10,084 B.T.U., the ash content being Centaur 3.13, Wyvern 5.20 and Griffin, 4.98. The quality of the coal is superior and the ash content is less, yet there is a difference of only 4s. 10d. per ton in the price.

Members can imagine what must be happening in regard to the price for that open-cut coal. So far I have been unable to obtain any information about the actual price being paid for it, but later on I will give some figures that I have worked out and that I think are somewhere near the mark. I would like to know why the price for the coal from the open-cuts is not available. That coal is mixed in with the deep-mine coal and the price, ash content and calorific value available are "of the mixture" and it certainly is a mixture. This method, if allowed to continue, will mean the ruin of our coalfields, and I would like to be able to discover how the price of the mixture is arrived at. That is a question that should be investigated in order to inform the general public what system is used in arriving at the price for the mixture.

I am given to understand that the price of Amalgamated Collieries' coal to private consumers is less than the price charged to the Government and the State Electricity Commission, and less than the charge to the Swan Portland Cement Company, which is an associate of Amalgamated Collieries Ltd. That is a further point that should be investigated. In order to elucidate the price at which coal is being sold I have obtained the output of each mine for the month of August, those being the latest published figures, together with the prices paid for the various tonnages. The Co-operative, a deep mine, produced 3,312 tons, valued at £9,237 which, according to my reckoning, gives a figure of £2 15s. 9d. per ton. The Proprietary, a deep mine, produced 2,449 tons, valued at £8,066, or £3 5s. 10d. per ton.

Then there were the Neath and the Cardiff, both deep mines, with a total tonnage of 3,180, the estimated value being £9,540, or £3 per ton. The Stockton deep mine produced 4,301 tons, valued at £13,452, or £3 2s. 6½d. per ton. The Stockton open-cut produced 5,539 tons, valued at £17,324, giving the same figure per ton as for the Stockton deep mine. It seems to me that the coal from both those mines is put over the gantry together and is mixed up, and the price appears to be worked out at £3 2s. 6½d. per ton. The Ewington open-cut, another Amalgamated Collieries production unit, produced 3,494 tons, valued at £11,477, or £3, 3s. 5d. per ton. The Black Diamond open-cut, yet another Amalgamated Collieries' producer, produced 4,303 tons, valued at £12,003, or £2 15s. 9½d. per ton. The Collie Burn open-cut, operated by Western Collieries, produced 2,512 tons, valued at £5,422, or £2 3s. 2d. per ton.

It does not appear that the prices given in this House yesterday were correct because the figure then mentioned was £2 4s. 11d. per ton. So much for the figures given here in answer to questions asked by members. Western Collieries No. 1 produced 255 tons—that is a deep mine—valued at £550, or £2 3s. 1½d. per ton, which is almost identical with the price for Collie Burn open-cut coal. Western Collieries No. 2—which is hardly developed yet—produced 20 tons valued at £43 or £2 3s. per ton. The Griffin, a deep mine, produced 2,856 tons, valued at £14,247, or £4 19s. 9d. per ton, whereas the figure given in reply to my question yesterday was £2 8s. 1d. per ton. Either the figures published monthly in the Press are wrong or the figures given in reply to my question yesterday were wrong. I would like to know which is correct.

Mr. Styants: They are probably both wrong.

Mr. MAY: I think that is a pretty good guess. The Wyvern deep mine—next to the Griffin and belonging to the same people—produced 3,120 tons, valued at £15,512, or £4 18s. 8½d. per ton, which is only ½d. different from the Griffin figure. The Pheonix produced 1,086 tons, valued at £5,405, or £4 19s. 6½d. per ton and the Centaur mine, belonging to the same company, produced 1,843 tons, valued at £9,203, or £4 18s. 10d. per ton. I would therefore suggest that with all these differing prices the accountant who works out the figures must be a genius. How the prices for the various lots of coal are arrived at is beyond my comprehension and I think is a matter that requires investigation. It is all very confusing to me, as I think it must be to any member of the general public who desires to know what the position is.

It is well known that for some considerable time the industry has been working under the cost-plus system. I am unable

to obtain any reliable information as to the method of arriving at prices under that system. I believe that the coal from each particular mine or open-cut should be paid for according to calorific value and ash content. Each open-cut and deep mine would then have to stand on its own merits and the consumer would be paying for the quality of coal that he received. In his report as a Royal Commissioner in 1947, Mr. Wallwork said—

The cost-plus system offers no incentive to increased efficiency from either the colliery manager or the miner. It favours the uneconomic use and wastage of supplies, machinery, electricity and manpower. Some idea of its effect on prices and also on production which bears a direct relationship to prices in inverse ratio, can be gauged from the ruling prices paid by the Railway Department for coal supplied by the Amalgamated Collieries and the Griffin Coal Company respectively.

He continues—

Any reduction in prices due to the effect of high production on the Collié field since March, 1946, should not be mistaken for an indication that the cost-plus system is fair in its operation. On the other hand, it could be averred that the cost-plus system is responsible for the whole of the recent considerable increase in coal production costs.

He says further—

The fixing of the price to private consumers by the Coal Commissioner at a much lower price than railway coal, which is present cost, with a small margin of profit, is in effect a concession to private enterprises at the expense of the community as a whole.

That is from the Royal Commissioner's report which gives his summing up of the cost-plus system that has been in operation over a number of years. Since 1947 the position, as stated by Mr. Wallwork, has continued to retrogress right up to the present. It would be interesting to know what steps the coal companies take, under the cost-plus system, to ensure that everything provided under that system—machinery, stores and so on—is properly used and the money provided over and above the cost of production is properly spent. In his summing up on page 57 of the report, Mr. Wallwork also says—

The findings which stand out in sharp relief as the result of inspections and inquiries made since I entered on this Commission in March, 1946, are as follows:—

A. We in the State of Western Australia possess an immensely valuable national asset consisting of the

vast resources of easily-won coal deposited by Nature within convenient reach of our centres of population and likely centres of industry.

B. The coalmining companies have failed, in spite of the resources at their disposal, to meet the fuel requirements of industry in quantity, quality or grade and still continue to do so.

C. The coalmining industry should not be allowed to drift along without or out of control as it did in the years 1943-1945.

D. Production and marketing of coal should be subject to the direct supervision of a statutory board or commission.

E. The supervising authority should concentrate on 100 per cent. extraction and 100 per cent. use of coal seams worked whether high or low grade.

Those are a few of the remarks made in his summing up following the inquiry in 1946, but notwithstanding that investigation, very little indeed has been done to implement the recommendations. I would say that the comments of Mr. Wallwork, the Royal Commissioner, apply equally today to a worse position than existed at the time he made that report. I think I have said enough to warrant an inquiry into the industry. I believe it is necessary to prove that the industry can be conducted on more economical lines than it is at present.

We hear a great many complaints by the general public about the cost of electricity and power supplies. Is it any wonder? Our native fuel, the coal which belongs to this State, is a natural asset and is being mined, produced and sold in such an uneconomical manner that it results in high prices for the coal used on our railways and by the State Electricity Commission to such an extent that it becomes necessary for those public utilities to increase their charges to the general public. Apart from that, I again remind the House of the large population in Collié where these mines are being worked. They have invested all their savings in what they own in the district, and it is a sore point indeed to the men working in the industry, who understand it from A to Z, to see the waste that is occurring every day without supervision, and apparently with nobody from the Mines Department in control having authority to say that this shall be done or shall not be done.

So the companies go along in their own sweet way, seeing nothing but profits. Until this state of affairs is ended and the operation of the industry comes under some authority whereby the best coal can be produced at the most reasonable cost, having regard to what the men should get from the industry and what the com-

panies should receive, I consider that an inquiry is necessary, not with the object of making somebody a scapegoat, but with the sole intention of proving that certain things are being done in the industry that should not be done. If greater control is to be exercised over the coal-mining industry, I believe that an inquiry by a Select Committee is warranted. I earnestly recommend to the House the adoption of this motion.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

MOTION—HOUSING.

As to Austrian Prefabricated Homes and Rents.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [5.37]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House, because dereliction of duty, weakness and inefficiency in administration have caused the extraordinarily high capital cost of the Austrian prefabricated houses, it is unfair to assess rentals on this cost, which should be substantially written down to permit of a reduction in the rents to make them comparable with those of locally-produced houses in accordance with the expressed intentions of the Commonwealth Government when it decided to provide the subsidy of £300 for each imported house erected.

I intend to endeavour, with the information at my disposal, to justify this motion, which is of serious import, and at the outset, I want to say that it is not aimed at any individual or set of individuals, but its purpose is to try to correct a situation which, if allowed to continue unchecked, will bring disaster to a very important part of the administration of Western Australia. The magnitude of my task was not simplified by the attitude adopted by the Government in making the relevant papers available and in limiting me to a period of one week in which to peruse a number of files which, I understand, approximate 75, and further, in the way those files were put together.

Ordinarily, on examining a file, one expects to find the papers thereon in some sort of rotation, but on some of these files it was clear that there were many pages missing and there was nothing on the files to suggest where the missing pages might be found. For example, on File No. 1831/50 there was a reference on page 122 to something which had been minuted on the previous page, No. 121, but that page was not there; nor was there anything to indicate where it was. It was of little help to me to be told yesterday that page 121 was to be found in vol. 1 of File No. 3916/49. A paper which was placed on a file commenced in 1950 is subsequently to be found in vol. 1 of a file commenced in 1949! I ask any member: Who would expect to look for such a paper on such a file?

So when we consider the very limited time which is at the disposal of members of the Opposition to go through these files and also the way in which they were supposed to have been changed about, it can easily be appreciated how difficult the task was. However, despite that, I think I found sufficient evidence to justify the motion I have moved and which I propose now to discuss. But before doing so, I will refer to some information which was given to me this afternoon. I do not know whether it is accurate or not. I was told at Willagee Park that there had been present in the area this morning a party of politicians. If there had been such a party present, it must have comprised members supporting the Government and if they did go there, I am happy to know that they did so.

It is as well that they should be informed at first hand of the houses about which I am speaking, and I do not complain, like the Minister for Housing, who, on a previous occasion, objected when I visited a portion of my electorate without advising him. I am glad to know that they did make the visit to enlighten their minds on an important subject. I too made a visit this afternoon, to bring my knowledge of the subject up to date so that I can speak with complete accuracy regarding these buildings. I may not be justified in the feeling, but nevertheless I feel that all the papers I was entitled to get were not supplied. For example, I had information, and very definite information, that certain officers in the State Housing Commission, because of their concern about the way things were heading, had asked to be given their instructions in writing. I found nothing on the files which would indicate that that was so. They might have made the request verbally, or the papers upon which they made such a request might not have been supplied.

Nevertheless, I was reliably informed that it was a fact that certain officers in the accounts branch of the Housing Commission, because they were so worried about the situation, asked that their instructions be put in writing before they submitted certain accounts for payment. The Minister, when he replies, can say whether or not that is true. This particular minute would suggest that it is true. I quote from page 82A on File 3355/51. The minute is from Mr. Herlihy, the clerk in charge of the architectural division, to the accountant. He commences his minute in a very unusual way as follows:—

I have been instructed by Architect Grayson to put up an interim payment for extras.

In the ordinary course of a man's duty, if it was his job to put forward a payment for extras and it was quite regular, he would not start off a minute by saying, "I have been instructed" to do something. It

would be part of his duty. Yet this officer commences his minute in the way I have indicated! It may be perfectly all right; but in view of what I have been told, it suggests that these officers were concerned about the situation and wanted to tread warily. I shall read that minute to members again. Then it sets out the following particulars:—

	£	s.	d.
Net sum	21,338	16	8
Present progress, 91.4 per cent.	19,502	18	7
Claim as submitted for extras and rise and fall	5,841	9	3

Mr. Herlihy does not say that the claim has been investigated, checked and agreed to. He says, "claim as submitted,"—and it is put forward for payment. I could find nothing on the file that would enable me to ascertain how that figure was arrived at and whether or not it was justified—nothing to substantiate it at all. It is quite possible that the relevant papers may have been on some other file in view of what we found out recently, but I say the place for those papers was on the file I have referred to. At any rate, I could not find them, and I repeat that it is significant that the officer concerned commenced his minute in such a way. At this stage I want to read a few questions I asked in this House on the 5th August, all of which, except the last, could have been asked by a person without any information at all. The questions were—

(1) What is the amount per week of the highest rent which is being charged to tenants of the State Housing Commission's houses?

(2) Where are the houses with the highest rentals situated?

(3) What is the amount per week of the rent which is charged to tenants of the Austrian prefabricated houses at Willagee?

(4) What is the size of the Austrian prefabricated houses?

(5) What is the total number of Austrian prefabricated houses for which components have been purchased?

(6) Has all the material for these houses arrived in Western Australia? If not, how many complete sets of components have been received?

(7) How many Austrian prefabricated houses have been erected?

(8) What was the average landed cost of a complete set of components for each house?

(9) What was the average cost of erecting each house?

(10) What is the total cost to date for preventive measures against siren wasp infestation of the components of the Austrian prefabricated houses?

(11) Is this expense loaded on to the cost of the houses, with a consequent increase in the rent charged to tenants?

(12) Has payment been made to the vendors for all Austrian prefabricated houses in connection with which contracts have been made? If not, what is the amount of the State's outstanding liability?

(13) If there is any liability outstanding on the purchase of these houses, what amount will have to be met out of the loan funds which have been allocated for this financial year?

Next there is the 14th question, and this was the one to which I required an answer. It was as follows:—

(14) Has the point ever been raised in connection with these houses that certain costs or charges were excessive or fictitious and payment should be withheld?

Let us take the Minister's answer to the last question. It was:—

(14) When it was found necessary to arrange importation of houses it was realised that costs of imported houses would exceed costs of houses erected with locally-produced materials and to that end the Commonwealth Government has approved of a subsidy of £300 per house against the increased cost.

No fair-minded person could in any sense regard that answer as a reply to the question asked. The fact that the Minister completely evaded the question instead of coming out with a strong denial was sufficient to indicate to me that I was right on the spot. If I needed any further proof, here it is: At the time the censure motion was moved with respect to me when I endeavoured to get information on the subject, the Deputy Premier tabled certain papers and amongst them was a statement from the Public Service Commissioner in the course of which—I shall not quote the whole of his minute—he had this to say:—

As regards the questions asked by Mr. Tonkin on the 5th August, I had (on the 6th August) discussed with Mr. Brownlie and Mr. Telfer the possibility of a member of the Commission's staff having given information to Mr. Tonkin as it appeared to all three of us that the questions could not have been put in the manner in which they were, except as a result of a discussion with a person who had much more than a casual knowledge of Sandwell and Wood's contract account with the Commission.

After that document had been tabled, I rang up the Premier and asked him if he had any objection to my having a dis-

cussion with the Public Service Commissioner. He said "No." I then had a discussion with the Public Service Commissioner and I asked him which of the questions in the series I asked on the 5th August caused him to come to that conclusion. I took the questions one by one, and Mr. Taylor finally agreed that it was the last one that caused him to think I must have been receiving information from an officer of the Commission. That was a fortnight before I saw Gorddard. So close was I to the spot that on the day after I asked the questions Mr. Brownlie and Mr. Telfer had the conference with the Public Service Commissioner. If I had fired an arrow that was wide of the mark, would there have been any need for the conference to find out where I was getting the information on which I had based my questions?

Since I was so close to the target, all three at the conference came to the conclusion—quite an erroneous conclusion, I might add—that at that time an officer of the Commission was supplying me with information. In other words, I was so close to the mark that I could not have been so close without getting inside information. As a matter of fact, all the information I had in my possession at the time—and I had plenty—came to me from members of the public who were not employed in the Civil Service but who, I have no doubt, got their information, indirectly or directly, from members of the Civil Service who were perturbed about what was going on inside the department. Members can see how close to the mark I was when Mr. Brownlie, Mr. Telfer and Mr. Taylor came to the conclusion that I was obtaining inside information a fortnight before I attempted to get it.

Right through the files I examined, there is a statement here, a sentence there—all indicating evidence of uncertainty on the part of officers and concern on their part amounting even to alarm. I predict that there will be complete chaos in this department if someone with the requisite knowledge and authority does not immediately take a hand there and straighten things out. Already there are claims amounting to thousands of pounds in dispute between contractors and the Commission. I suggest the Minister should refer to File No. 3355/51. There are claims involving thousands of pounds already in dispute, and the project has barely started!

When the Commonwealth made its decision to grant a subsidy of £300, it was for the purpose of trying to enable Governments to increase their building rate without penalising the tenants. It was agreed that the £300 would be a sufficient sum to bridge the gap between the cost of locally-produced houses and that of the imported ones. On page 55 of File No.

5831/50, I read a letter from the chairman of the Commission to his Minister, Mr. Wild. At this time the Commission had under consideration tenders received for the construction of 750 houses. The letter included the following:—

It was agreed at the Melbourne conference there was necessity to adjust the capital indebtedness on imported houses to a figure comparable with the valuation of a similar type of house built under local conditions so that rentals assessed in accordance with the Commonwealth-State scheme on imported and locally-produced houses would be comparable and sales might be effected.

Thus it was agreed at the Melbourne conference that that was to be the situation. There is a further minute from the chairman, under date the 25th September, 1950, to his Minister, Mr. Wild, as follows:—

The gap between the cost of imported houses and of local houses to be bridged by subsidy from the Commonwealth and State contributions. In the event of the Commonwealth subsidy being insufficient, the Commonwealth would not object to the difference being a capital charge and recovered in rents.

The specific point obviously had been put forward as to what the situation would be if the cost of the imported houses exceeded the cost of locally produced houses by more than the £300 subsidy. In that event the Commonwealth would not object to the difference being recovered in rent from the tenant. But obviously it was intended that an attempt should be made to make the rents comparable. Cabinet approved on the 25th September of 900 imported houses being purchased. As it is clear that it was the intention to try to bring these rentals close together, I propose to read from a further minute on the subject from the then secretary, Mr. Bond, to his Minister at page 47 of File 3916/49, Volume 3. This is very significant because it shows that up to that stage the intention of the Commission was to follow out the idea of the Commonwealth. This is what the secretary wrote—

The Commission proposes to spread the extra cost of imported homes over locally built houses completed and now being constructed. A formula is now being worked out but it is fraught with difficulty.

I could not find on the files anything subsequent to that which would indicate whether Mr. Bond was successful in working out a formula or whether he abandoned the idea. I could not find anything that would give any information on the subject at all. Surely there should have appeared on that file some minute from the secretary saying that it had not been possible to evolve a formula, or that the de-

cision had been made to make these particular tenants carry the whole cost. But I cannot find the papers, though I am not saying they were not there. They could have been, because 75 files comprise a lot of paper. But I do not think they were there and they were certainly not on the file where one would expect to find them.

At page 94 on the file from which I have been quoting, there is a minute dated the 8th November addressed to the Commission from the chairman saying that owing to the instability of a man named Baldwin, negotiations for the erection of these Austrian houses had come to an end and it was therefore intended to approach three builders—Sandwell and Wood, Plunketts and Brine & Son—in connection with the erection of these houses. There was a firm called Thermo Builders W.A. Ltd., which was negotiating a contract with the Government, and the Government had gone so far as to write a letter indicating that it intended to accept the contract. But no contract was actually signed. This firm was going to contract to erect these houses complete in Western Australia for a sum of £1,650. That is, the firm would get the components in Austria, bring them out and put them up in Western Australia for £1,650. The firm was prepared to sign at that figure.

When the chairman made up his mind that this local company was a bit unstable, and to use it would be unwise, he said that negotiations were at an end. Some members of the company wanted to interview the chairman with a view to having the contract signed but, according to the file, he said that no good purpose would be served by seeing them. So he would not discuss the matter any further. But at that stage I find there was a draft Press statement ready. This statement was never made but it is on the file as a draft. It is on page 109 of File 5831/50, and is as follows:—

The tender price accepted by the Commission, less the Commonwealth subsidy of £300 per house, will provide a home at a price somewhat comparable with the local price for a house of similar type.

That draft of a Press statement shows just how closely the Housing Commission came to clinching the deal with Thermo Builders Ltd. At the last minute, Mr. Brownlie decided that negotiations were at an end. No contract had actually been signed, but you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that it was pretty close up when that draft Press statement was already prepared. On the 17th November, there was a minute which is to be found on pages 116 and 117 of File No. 5831/50 from the chairman of the Commission to the Minister, and I ask that particular attention be paid to it because it is a very important one in this story. It reads as follows:—

(1) You are aware of the position which has arisen in regard to imported homes, the Commission having found it necessary to terminate negotiations with the local company which was to be responsible for the erection of the units in Western Australia. A contract had not actually been signed.

(2) The Commission proposes to proceed with the importation of homes from abroad and with this in view has opened negotiations direct with the manufacturers whose architect, now in London, has indicated by cable he is prepared to supply direct to the Commission. Conditions are now being drawn up for incorporation in a contract.

(3) If this new arrangement is finalised, the Commission will find it necessary to receive the units on arrival and arrange for their erection with migrant and local labour—the latter being key men only. The task is a formidable one involving expenditure of some £300,000 and requiring a skilled team of building tradesmen and on site workers as well as a large amount of equipment. The acceptance of delivery and erection can be arranged in one of several ways:—

- (i) Public tender, including storage, carting to site and erection.
- (ii) Private tender for as above by invitation to leading builders who are known to have the capacity and ability to submit a price for consideration—one builder only to be selected. No tender necessarily to be accepted.
- (iii) An invitation to one builder known to have capacity, etc., to submit price for work as above.
- (iv) Invitation to a number of builders—say three—to share jointly in the work at a mutually arranged price.
- (v) The whole of the work to be undertaken by the State Housing Commission.

The Commission has given careful consideration to the matter and feels that the best course would be to invite private tenders to enable one builder to be selected to do the work—in accordance with suggestion No. (ii).

The reasons for this recommendation were—

So, not only did the Commission give its decision as to which method ought to be followed, but also backed it up with reasons. I continue quoting from the minute—

(a) Public tenders (Suggestion (1)) would involve time and delay and attract a number of builders who have not the capacity or equipment to undertake the work.

(b) The suggestion (No. (iii)) for an approach to and an arrangement for one builder would best suit the Commission, but it would undoubtedly bring criticism from other builders not given the opportunity and who would no doubt claim to be equipped to do the work.

(c) The invitation to about three selected builders to share the work (Suggestion No. (iv)) would have some merit in allaying criticism of selection of one builder, but would increase the difficulties of the job of erection—needing perfect timing of transport and erection and the splitting up of shipments perhaps among three builders, and the inevitable complications which would occur with the division and employment of migrant labour.

(d) The erection by the State Housing Commission (Suggestion No. (v)) should only be undertaken as a last resort because of the problems of setting up another "day labour" team and the equipment needed to undertake a job of this magnitude—a job which private industry is well equipped to handle.

In all the circumstances, the Commission therefore recommended calling for private tenders from a minimum number of builders capable and willing to undertake the work with a view of giving a contract to one of them for the transport, storage and erection of the total number of imported dwellings.

That was not the recommendation that the Minister sent to Cabinet, although the chairman had prepared for his Minister a minute to the Premier in Cabinet in accordance with that decision. The minute still remains on the file unsigned by the Minister and the envelope all ready to take it. Those papers are still on the file. Ten days later the Minister made an entirely different recommendation to Cabinet without any explanation as to why he did it. There is nothing on the file to show why he did not act on the decision of the Commission. Instead, he sent a minute which recommended that the Commission should select one gentleman and give him a one million pound contract without calling tenders. That was the recommendation the Minister sent to Cabinet and not the decision of the Housing Commission that tenders should be called. In all my experience I have never known a Government to select one firm or one individual and hand to that firm or individual a one million pound contract without calling tenders.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To preserve the continuity of my remarks I shall refer to the minute from the chairman of the State Housing Commission to his Minis-

ter in which he sets out the recommendation of the Commission. The conclusion of the minute is—

In all the circumstances the Commission therefore recommended calling for private tenders from a minimum number of builders capable and willing to undertake the work with a view of giving the contract to one of them for the transport, storage and erection of the total number of imported dwellings.

In accordance with that decision the necessary minute was prepared for the Minister's signature and an envelope was typed ready for the minute to be sent to the Premier. That minute and the envelope still remain on the file, the minute being unsigned. But 10 days later the Minister sent a minute to the Premier in Cabinet. This minute appears on page 28 of File 1160/51 and it appears to be a copy from File 5831/50. It reads—

The Hon. Premier—In Cabinet.

Early this year tenders were called from overseas from persons or companies willing to erect 950 pre-fabricated houses—

I think that is an error in typing and the number should have been 900.

—in Western Australia (750 for the State Housing Commission, and 150 for the Railways Department). There were 19 tenderers and the prices ranged from £1,650 to just over £3,000.

After due consideration the State Housing Commission decided to accept the lowest tender from Thermo Insulated Units Ltd., Austria, of £1,650, which with the rebate of £300 allowed by the Commonwealth Government, resulted in £1,350 net Western Australia.

Negotiations with this company have proved extremely difficult due to the exchange rate, the Austrian (alien) labour, and the collapse of the local firm who were acting as agents for Thermo Insulated Units Limited. The State Housing Commission were in a position approximately three weeks ago to sign the contract when the local agency collapsed. Negotiations were made direct with Thermo Insulated Units Limited who now agreed to deal direct with the State Housing Commission.

The State Housing Commission will therefore have to find a local contractor who will be prepared to supervise and administer the erection of the pre-fabricated houses.

I want you, Mr. Speaker, to mark how this minute now differs from the decision of the Commission. The Minister's minute goes on—

There are two methods of obtaining a contractor—

1. By calling tenders from builders capable of undertaking this work;

2. By selecting a builder or builders who have proved to the State Housing Commission that they would be capable of performing such a contract.

After some consideration, I recommend that the State Housing Commission be empowered to select a builder or builders to undertake this work.

Members will notice that that minute is not in accordance with the decision of the Housing Commission which was that tenders should be invited. This minute informs Cabinet that there are two ways of doing the job—calling tenders or selecting a builder and the Minister recommended selecting a builder. A most extraordinary procedure! It might have been excusable if the job had been to erect 10 or 12 houses but this was a contract involving a sum of £1,000,000 or more; as a matter of fact, at its conclusion it will involve a payment to this firm of £1,250,000. That contract was given to a firm without calling tenders and at a time when on the files of the Housing Commission there was an adverse report about this builder.

Cabinet agreed to this recommendation and I want to state here that I cannot understand the Government. I cannot understand why it accepted the Minister's recommendation for a £1,000,000 contract to be given without tenders being called, even if the Minister recommended that that be done. Let us contrast that with what is done in private business. Recently we noticed where the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was about to get busy with its undertaking. I quote from "The West Australian" of the 10th October—

The resident engineer (Mr. C. H. E. Rebbeck) would arrive in Perth on Monday, Mr. Mason said.

Kellogg International Corporation and Costain-John Brown Ltd., the prime contractors, would also send their representatives this month.

Mr. Mason said that in a month or so people would see the beginning of "great activity" at the site.

He explained that the construction of the project was being undertaken by contractors, and that the company would not be large employers of staff and labour, or set up a large organisation until the construction work drew to a close and the refinery was ready for commissioning.

He had made a point of obtaining confirmation from London that tenders would not finally be accepted by the contractors until they had arrived in the State.

They would set up an office here, Mr. Mason said and would give Australian firms an equal chance to compete for business offering.

Not only is this firm calling tenders overseas, but it is intending to leave the position open in order that tenders may be invited from Australian firms also. This firm did not select a contractor and say, "There is a contract for £1,000,000 or £2,000,000." No; it called tenders and that is what Governments usually do in jobs of this magnitude. That is what the Commission recommended should be done in this case, but instead the Minister recommended to his Government that the Commission be allowed to select a builder or builders, without any competition, and give them the contracts.

Mr. Yates: Was it possible to get builders to submit tenders at that time?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is nothing on the file to show whether there was or was not.

Mr. Yates: They had been calling tenders for war service homes for a long time and had not been able to get builders to tender.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Commission must have known that at the time it made the recommendation. The Commission recommended that tenders be called.

Mr. Yates: It might have been the usual thing to do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No it was not. The Commission gave its reasons; it backed up its recommendations with reasons and prepared a minute to be sent to Cabinet in accordance with that decision—that was the minute the Minister failed to send and there is nothing on the file to indicate why he did not send it. The sum involved in this contract was £959,235 on the base figure of £1,065 16s. 4d. for each house, subject to rise and fall from the 1st February, 1951. So it was obvious that more than £1,000,000 was involved in this contract and the Commission had in mind that Plunketts and Brine & Sons might be interested in doing the work. There is nothing on the file to indicate whether they were ever approached. They might have been—I do not know—but there is nothing on the file to show that the Commission had reason to change its mind. All that appears is the minute from the Minister which is contrary to the Commission's decision.

I would like to know why the Commission's decision was not followed. Why was not the Government advised of the Commission's decision and why did the Government agree to give a £1,000,000 contract, or allow the Commission to give it to a person selected without competition? I say there is the first dereliction of duty. As tenders were not invited there

was no guarantee that the job would be done at a competitive price. The tenants who will have to pay the rent on these houses will have to pay a rent based upon the cost of erection and those costs might conceivably have been lower if there had been some competition for this lucrative contract, because lucrative it was indeed. At page 221 of File 3916/49 there appears a copy of the proposed agreement with Thermo Insulated Units Ltd. and I notice in the contract that there is no rise and fall provision so far as the supply of the components is concerned.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: On the 20th February, 1951, there was a letter from the firm of Sandwell and Wood setting out its organisation's capacity. On the 28th February, 1951, a tender was submitted from this firm for £1,066 18s. 10d. which, members will notice, is £1 2s. 6d. more than the figure I previously quoted, this being attributed to an item for insurance. On the 12th March, 1951, there is a letter from a Mr. Nish, who I understand was an architect with the Commission, to the secretary. He mentions there is a quote from Sandwell and Wood dated the 28th February which has been received, and there is a minute on the file saying that this quote was approved at the board meeting on the 12th March. There is nothing to show whether quotes had been obtained from anybody else; it simply says there is a quote from Sandwell and Wood and their quote has been approved.

The strange thing about this is that precisely at the time when the Commission was approving Sandwell and Wood's quote there was an adverse report on the file against this firm and its ability to carry out the work of the Commission. I was in some difficulty as to whether I should read this report or not because on the file it is marked confidential. But I considered the matter and discussed it with officers of the House. Once a file is tabled here it is public property and no document which was previously confidential is any longer so. So I propose to quote from this report because it has a direct bearing upon the argument I am advancing.

The Premier: I should imagine it will be very difficult to get any confidential reports in future.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The fault is not mine if it is there on the file. The Minister made these papers available and he should have known there was a confidential report on the file. It should not have been filed anyhow if it is confidential, because it would be available for all the other officers to see. Once it was filed it was no longer confidential.

Mr. Yates: If you do not file confidential letters, what do you suggest should be done with them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It should not have been filed on an ordinary file circulating between departments.

Mr. Yates: It is still secret in the department.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, is it?

Mr. Yates: There are plenty of confidential communications on Ministers' files.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When papers are placed on these files and they are tabled, they are no longer confidential.

The Chief Secretary: Is it essential to your argument?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Very essential to my argument.

The Chief Secretary: Not to use the name!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The point is that at the time this firm was selected for this job there was an adverse confidential report on the file in connection with its ability to do the work of the Commission.

The Minister for Lands: Why do you not leave it at that? As an ex-Minister surely you will honour a confidential letter on a file.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is no longer confidential when tabled.

Mr. Grayden: Do you think it should have been removed from the file before it was tabled?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In the first place it is unusual to put a confidential letter of this nature on a file of this nature; secondly, there would have been no objection if the Minister, before tabling the papers, had taken this letter off and informed the House that a confidential report had been removed before the files were tabled.

The Premier: Would that have satisfied you?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. I would have then asked the Minister if he would let me see the report in confidence.

The Minister for Lands: Would you have used the letter?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No.

The Minister for Lands: Then there would not have been much satisfaction in seeing it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Would there not? This report from which I am going to quote was on the Table of the House for a week. Any member of the public could have read it; members could have taken extracts from it and so, in quoting from it now, I cannot see that I am doing anything which could be objected to in the slightest degree. This letter is to be found on page 97 of File 8952/49, dated the 12th March, 1951. It is addressed to the secretary of the Commission by one of its officers. It reads—

The initial experience of this firm's supply and despatch of pre-cut houses to country towns was, as you know, most unsatisfactory, the main reasons being—

And then are set out five reasons. It goes on—

As you are aware, matters drifted from bad to worse until a climax was reached about two weeks ago.

Then the minute mentions the name of the firm and says one of the principals had his attention drawn to the position. It then makes reference to the building of a stockpile and a target date for the building of it, and says—

The target for the completion of this stockpile was the 8th March. Today, the 12th March, only joinery is necessary to complete the task.

This I am assured will be completed today. I feel that many of the difficulties we have experienced would not have occurred if Mr. — had been able to give a greater degree of his personal attention to the inaugural organisation of the supply only programme.

The next part of this report indicates the belief of this officer that it would not be right to give this firm any further additional work at this stage. I may be wrong in my assumption but I will leave it to members to judge when I have read the paragraph. It is as follows:—

It is assumed that the proposal that Mr. — undertake further work will not detract from the supply only programme, nor prevent him from giving the programme at least that degree of personal supervision that he is now doing.

To me that indicates that this officer believes that this firm already had as much as it could cope with satisfactorily, and that it would require the personal attention of the principal. He believed that any further work, if it were to be work of considerable magnitude, would seriously affect what was being done or would be beyond the capacity of this organisation. Yet this firm was selected for this £1,000,000 contract.

At page 19 of File 1160/51, dated the 14th March, 1951, the secretary of the Housing Commission wrote to this particular firm giving the preliminary advice that the Commission accepts the firm's quote of £1,066 18s. 10d., less a rebate of £1 2s. 6d., for insurance, for the erection and extras as set out in the letter of the 28th ultimo. The secretary then wrote to the chairman of the Commission, who was in England, giving him something definite on this thermo units contract, saying that a price had now been agreed upon with this firm. After a long night con-

ference, the Commission was convinced by this firm that it could set up the necessary organisation. Why would it be necessary, if the Commission had made a preliminary inquiry and had specially selected this firm, to have a night-long conference for it to be convinced that the firm could do the job?

The Premier: You said it was a £1,000,000 contract. Surely you would not object to hours being taken in discussing it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I offer no objection to taking hours to discuss it. What I offer objection to is that the Commission did not ask a few other people who could have convinced the Commission without its having to take hours to decide.

The Premier: I should think it would have taken hours with a contract of this size.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think it would. I cannot imagine, for example, that a firm like Brine and Sons would have taken hours to convince the Commission that it could do the job.

The Premier: Was not Mr. Brine a member of the Commission?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know.

The Premier: I think he was at that time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It would be interesting to know whether he was present; perhaps the Minister could supply the information later on.

The Minister for Housing: He happens to be one of the members of the technical committee who recommended the contract; he was a member at the time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister can make his explanation in due course but there is nothing on the file to indicate why this firm was selected, and given the opportunity to prove it could do the job when, as far as I can ascertain, nobody else was given a similar opportunity. On the 23rd April, 1951, the contract was signed with this firm for the job to be completed on the 31st March, 1953. That is a very short time from now and the contract has not been a quarter completed. There is a penalty clause in the contract for delay; 5s. per house for each day that the houses are uncompleted. But the Commission cannot enforce the penalty because it has not itself kept to the terms of the contract. So it cannot successfully bring any action against this contractor to complete the contract in the time. The result of that is that there has been a considerable delay and each week's delay causes £1,000 to be added to the cost of these houses in interest. Each week of delay adds £1,000 to the capital cost of these houses and this has to be recovered in rent from the unfortunate tenant. This delay can continue because the Commission cannot enforce the penal clauses of the contract.

The Minister for Lands: Have Sandwell & Wood a copy of the contract?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I expect so.

The Minister for Lands: They would have to produce it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What good would that do?

The Minister for Lands: There are the penal clauses in it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Sandwell & Wood know that no penal clause could be enforced against them because the Government did not supply the requisite number of workers to do the job.

The Minister for Lands: Was that the reason?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The Government contracted to supply a certain number of employees and, as it failed to do so, it cannot enforce the contract against the firm. Consequently, the penalty clause does not amount to anything, but £1,000 a week is added to the cost of the contract, and this the tenants will have to pay through the rent. On File 3816/49, vol. 3, p. 47, the secretary advised the Minister that the Commission was prepared to spread the extra cost over all the houses and that a formula was being worked out for the purpose. So far as I can find, nothing more appears on the file to show what happened to that decision.

At page 50 of the same file, the Minister told the secretary to accept Thermobaus offer for the second 450 houses, and Cabinet agreed to this. The cost of the 450 houses was an extra £185, so whatever is the cost of the first 450 houses, it would be increased by £185 for the second 450. Whilst dealing with this figure, I am at a loss to follow the calculations of the officer of the Commission regarding the final prices. The file shows that the cost of the original components for the first 450 houses was £789.

Mr. Yates: Landed in Western Australia.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, £789 in Austria. The second 450 houses were to cost another £185. The file shows that those two sums give a total of £964 whereas, according to my calculation, it should be £974. However, £964 is the figure acted upon throughout the file. Obviously, there is something wrong; a sum of £10 has gone astray somewhere.

We were told by the Minister that the houses cost £2,865; but the file shows that the Housing Commission charged the Railways Commission £2,950 for two houses erected for that body. The statement is that the estimated cost of those houses was £2,950, and that the Housing Commission required payment of that amount. I want to know from the Minister why, if the houses cost £2,865, the Housing Commission told the Railways Commission that they cost £2,950.

I have already stated that this contract was for £1,066 18s. 10d. but, for some reason or other, a decision was made by the Housing Commission to increase the tender price by about £300. As a matter of fact, the increase was £324. This is set out in a minute to the chairman by the clerk in charge, Architectural Division, and is dated the 23rd September, 1952—

Hereunder is a statement setting out amounts which could be paid to Messrs Sandwell & Wood as an interim adjustment for extras incorporated in the T.I.U. type homes. In assessing the amounts, the value of certain standard extras, as provided by the Quantity Surveyor and the Architect, has been used as a base and the actual percentage progress of each group has been applied to this figure. Account has had to be taken of known extras already assessed and paid in full and also of amounts already paid as rise and fall extras.

Then is set out an example of the calculation. The minute concludes—

This method of assessment is tantamount to increasing the contract figure for the erection of each house by £324, but it should be understood that under this system certain extras, or a proportion of them, may be paid for before such are actually included in the job. In view, however, of the discussion with the company's representative and the need to give immediate relief, I feel that the action being taken is correct.

Would you please confirm action taken and authorise payment.

Confirmed, R.W.B.

24/9/52.

According to File 8952/49, the chairman then wrote to the firm, as follows:—

Further to my letter and statement of the 22nd September, I am now enclosing a further statement which sets out payments which the Commission is prepared to make as an interim adjustment against extras on the imported house projects.

In assessing the amounts, the value of certain standard extras has been used as a base and the actual progress percentage of each group has been applied to this figure. Account has been taken of known extras already assessed and paid in full and also of amounts previously paid as rise and fall extras.

This method of assessment is tantamount to increasing the contract figure for the erection of each house, but in view of the discussion with your representative and the need to give you immediate relief, the Commission is prepared to make payments on this basis.

Examination of other projects involving the erection of local prefabricated units is being continued and I will advise you of any amounts which can be paid against these as soon as assessment is completed. This assessment is subject to agreement on certain items which have already been discussed with your officers.

Because there is no possibility of enforcing the penalty clause for delay, there is no urge behind the firm to make it get on with the job, so we have this delay running into weeks and weeks, and even months—a delay that is costing a lot of money, to use the chairman's words, £1,000 a week for interest.

On File 1160/51, at p. 116, is a note placed there on the 19th June, and headed, "Note for the File". In this the chairman records having discussed with Mr. Sandwell the slow progress, only 160 houses in course of erection and the Commission paying £1,000 a week in interest on the capital sum outlay. Mr. Sandwell agreed that he would be unable to erect all the houses, but he asked to be given time to state what number he could erect in 18 months. That was the chairman's note.

Mr. Sandwell contracted to complete the erection of these houses on the 31st March next—six months hence—but asked to be given time to make up his mind how many he could erect in the next 18 months! No penalty can be imposed for the delay, but the tenant has to pay for it.

On the 23rd June, there was a conference between L. Sandwell, A. Sandwell and Mr. Grayson, an officer of the Housing Commission, and the company undertook to erect eight houses a week and to have 550 completed by the 31st December, 1953. If they do not manage it, that will be just too bad, because nothing can be done about it. The next minute will give some idea of the rate of progress. I quote from File 8952/49, dated the 26th September, 1952, so it is right up to date—

Mr. Telfer, the new Secretary of the Housing Commission, to Sandwell & Wood. I wish to bring to your attention the slow progress of the contracts.

A bit late in the day!

The rate of progress for August on 97 houses was 4 per cent. It would take 25 months at this rate to complete.

He finishes by saying—

Progress during June and July was no better.

So progress is being made at a rate that will take 25 months to complete 97 houses being built in August and progress during June and July was no better. That is a statement by the secretary within the last few days. I want to know what they have been doing during the past month.

There are several aspects associated with the delay that have to be considered. The company has been enabled to build up a big stockpile with money advanced by the Government interest free. The file sets out that the amount is £40,000—£40,000 of State money interest free to set up a stockpile! When the goods are taken from the stockpile and put into a job, the firm gets the benefit of the rise-and-fall on those goods and, as one officer has pointed out, that leads to the position that the Government pays for the rise on goods which it had bought with its own money when they were much cheaper. That has been operating for some months. This minute has no direct reference to the Austrian pre-fabricated houses, but it has reference to the use of the stockpile by the firm; and the system of using the stockpile which has been in operation for some years, is still continuing in connection with the Austrian pre-fabs. So, I submit, it has definite application. It states—

Some uncertainty is being felt by officers operating the method of payment adopted in the above project on the following points:—

1. Rise and fall payments are being made, the effective date of which is that of house completion, in spite of the probability that the materials were purchased by the Commission some months before.

The minute goes on—

It is considered that the frequency of presentation of stock sheets fortnightly will take care of the rise and fall.

I do not know whether it would, or not, but I very much doubt it. The fact remains, however, that the stock sheets were not presented frequently, as we shall see from this minute appearing on file 2755/51 at page 96—

Accountant to Architect: From a discussion with Mr. Balsom it appears that there has been no stocktaking of the local material stockpiled for the imported houses contract for some months.

Yet the frequent presentation of stock-sheets was supposed to take care of the rise and fall. It is a fair assumption that if frequent presentation of stock sheets would take care of the rise and fall, and there had not been any stocktaking for months, then the rise and fall had not been taken care of. We can come to no other conclusion. If the rise and fall has not been taken care of, then the firm has received a lot more money from the State than it should have done, and that calls for the early attention of the auditor, as one of the officers has said. The following example will serve to show

how this delay can increase the profit of the contractor, and hence increase the cost of the building. If we look at pages 120 and 121 of File 8952/49 we find this most interesting minute signed J. Tregoweth, to the secretary—

As instructed, I have carried out a check of the calculations of rise and fall assessments, and have also examined the quantities bill in relation to Sandwell & Wood's prefabricated houses for types A1, A2 and A3. I would draw attention first to the fact that I am not a quantity surveyor and have only a layman's knowledge of building trades and all my inquiries were made from an auditor's viewpoint.

Numerous test checks of rise and fall assessments which have been done over the last eight months were carried out, but I was unable to find anything wrong with the calculations.

I am, however, of the opinion that the quantities section is not in receipt of sufficient information to enable an accurate assessment of the amounts due under the Rise and Fall Clause. There were cases where it appeared to me that there was reasonable doubt as to whether a rise should be given owing to the very short period elapsing between an approved rise on an item and the incorporation of that item in the building. However, as the section had no definite report that the goods were on hand prior to the date of the price rise, the builder was granted the amount in the assessment.

An example of this is the case of B. L. Strickland (J2/6807),—builder L. Davenport.

On the 14th December, 1949, the Supervisor reported that the foundations were in and the builder was waiting for bricks. On the 2nd January, 1950, bricks were increased by 5s. per 1,000 and joinery by 12½ per cent.

On the 4th January, the Supervisor reported the brickwork as 8/22 complete and door and window frames in place. The builder was therefore granted both rises which amounted to £6 for bricks and £8 12s. for frames although these items to me seem very doubtful.

I would therefore recommend that the previous system be reverted to in the case of tender contracts and that builders be required to lodge rise and fall claims which would be checked by the quantities section. Where a rise is claimed in similar circumstances to the above, the builders should be requested to supply invoices supporting their claims.

An examination was also carried out of the quantities bill relating to Sandwell and Wood's prefabricated houses, and to the best of my knowledge the bills for the original types priced as at 1st January, 1950, appeared reasonable.

However, these types were modified later by altering the layout of the bathroom, laundry, W.C. and raising the floor level, and adjustment sheets were made out of deductions and additions to the original bill. These adjustments were made by deducting the total of any item which varied and adding in the new total rather than by adding or deducting the amount of the variation.

On checking these variations, two discrepancies were found. Floor timbers had altered owing to the extra length of the stumps and although the new figure had been included in the total, no deduction had been made for the amount included in the original bill. This caused the new price to be £42 18s. 9d. too high in the type A3, and very near this figure in A1 and A2 types.

The other item was for bricks. The original plan used Denaro blocks for foundations and clay bricks for chimneys whereas the modified types used clay bricks throughout. In the adjustments, the Denaro blocks were deducted but not the bricks for chimneys, whereas in the additions, these bricks were again included, thereby causing the price to be a further £49 13s. 9d. too high, in all a total of £92 12s. 6d. for each A3 and approximately the same for the other types.

As these adjustments made it urgently necessary to get out a new price, Mr. Pittaway instructed one of the quantity surveyors to make a check of an amended bill of quantities, which was prepared directly after the adjustments took place, and all papers were left with him for further checking.

It is difficult to see how these omissions occurred from the deduction sheets. There are indications that there have been erasures and in the item relating to bricks it appears that the original figure which has been erased showed only the difference between the old and new figures. This was apparently altered to bring it into line with the other adjustments by including the new total figures, but the corresponding deduction was omitted.

There appears to have been no complete check of the deductions carried out as although the additions have been checked, both as to quantities

and assessments, there is nothing to indicate that the quantities for the deductions have been checked nor by whom.

There is one other point which I feel should be queried. All clearing for the Sandwell and Wood prefab. contracts has been carried out by that firm who have then forwarded accounts to this office, showing actual hours spent on clearing and other details such as fares, etc. These accounts have then been paid in full. In the bill of quantities is an amount of £5 per house for clearing, but this amount has never been deducted. It appears to me this should be a deduction, but I would request that a direction should be issued whether the amount should still be allowed.

Sgd. J. Tregoweth.

Then there is the question of the over-supply of materials to the job. This is a very serious position indeed. I quote from page 82 of File No. 6404/50. The present secretary of the Commission, who was then only the acting secretary, wrote to the manager of the tile firm and pointed out that tiles in excess of the number required for each job were being supplied to the job, and charged for, but no accounting was made subsequently for the excess tiles. Mr. Telfer mentioned that in a number of instances the excess tiles were as many as 200. The tile manufacturers have got the business down to such a fine art that they can say to within a dozen tiles how many are required to roof a particular building. I daresay the member for West Perth could, in a few seconds, say how many tiles would be required to roof a building of certain dimensions.

Mr. Totterdell: I could not tell you how many tiles would be broken in roofing the building, though.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is so, but the hon. member would know how many ought to be sent to the job. It seems it was the practice to send large numbers in excess of the quantity required, but no-one knew what became of the excess tiles. But we do know that the total number delivered was charged up to the job in each instance. Mr. Telfer concludes his minute by saying—

These add unnecessarily to the cost of the houses.

But there was nothing on the file to show what action was taken, or whether anything was done to remedy the position. Here is a further minute on the same subject of the over-supply of materials to the job. At page 48 of File 2541/52 Mr. W. Evans, on the 7th July last, wrote to Mr. Grayson—

It would appear that items such as nails are being duplicated and in one case triplicated when instructing contractors to replace shortages. An example is to be found in folios 13, 11 and 8, wherein the contractor is instructed to supply 50 m.m. nails—

I take it that "m.m." has reference to millimetres—

—to lot 178 on each folio.

Reference to the folios named shows that precisely the same quantity of nails was issued within a few days to the same job and on this point we have a further minute at page 117 of File 3919/51, Architect Grayson to Mr. Selley—

I would like you to ensure that supervisors should make inquiries into extras requested by the contractors for the above. It will be apparent from the attached statement that up to 112 lbs. of nails have been authorised by one supervisor. This appears to be excessive by comparison with the statement given to me by Supervisor Rumbold, which reads as follows:—

Total estimated quantity required per house 210 lbs. Quantity supplied 138 lbs. Quantity added over initial consignment 22 lbs. Present deficiency 50 lbs.

Yet 112 lbs. of nails in addition were supplied to that job, and he says—

Any authority for issue of extras in excess of 50 lbs. must therefore be supported by convincing statement from a foreman or by a physical check by an appropriate supervisor.

At page 44 of 2541/52 Mr. Evans says to Mr. Grayson—

A curious position is likely to arise with the question of 2-inch nails supplied to the first 450 pre-cut houses. 45 cases of 2 inch nails were received from Austria to overcome the shortage of 5 kilo by 50 m.m. nails, in each case. Supervisors are instructing Sandwell and Wood to replace these and I understand that the replacement is coming from the 45 cases. At some distant date the extras for these nails could be paid to Sandwell and Wood when in fact we supplied them.

I asked the Minister who was responsible for the re-stacking in the stores—the labour involved in re-stacking the components—and he said that the contractors were responsible. That is a strange thing, because the file shows a considerable amount of money that the Government is paying out for this labour in the store. It is a sum running into some thousands of pounds per month. I discovered on the file a little calculation made by an officer—the accountant—and dated the 7th May, 1952, wherein he sets out some book-keeping entries in connection with this contract and he shows—

Debit construction of each house £1,285 15s. Credit imported houses suspense account, £1,250. Credit imported houses stock-pile suspense account, £35 15s.

And then he shows how that sum is made up, and starts off by saying—

Cartage from the wharves £20 15s.

According to my reading of the contract the firm is responsible for cartage from the wharves. The contract sets out that the Government had to make the components available at a certain figure, c.i.f., but after they were landed at the port of entry they became the responsibility of the contractor. The Government provided the storage, but the contractor had to get them to store. And yet this item of £20 15s. for each house is shown here as "cartage from the wharves". I want to know why the Government is responsible for that, seeing that the contract says that the contractor should be responsible. Now we come to the handling charges that the Minister said the contractors should have to pay. I find on File 2210/52, on the page between page 2a and page 3—it is not numbered on the file—

Handling charges to the 30th June, 1952, £7,790 6s. 4d. To the 30th July, 1952, £7,897 8s. 7d. To the 31st August, 1952, £13,963 13s.

It says underneath—

Disbursement for August, 1952, handling at the wool store, £5,966 4s. 5d.

I want to know from the Minister why, if the contractor is responsible, the Government is paying the bill for £5,966 4s. 5d., handling charges at the wool store for the month of August.

Mr. Totterdell: What is the condition in the contract?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It says that the contractor is responsible once the goods are delivered at the wharf.

Mr. Totterdell: Are you sure of that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. On this file there is a long list of extras which have been put down for the purpose of calculating interim payments. I propose to select one of these, because I was able to find a detail on the file to show how the accounts are worked out. In this list there is an item "list of standard and variable extras accepted as applicable to imported pre-fabricated houses type T.I.U. (1) 23rd September, 1952." It is—

Item No. 16. Asbestos linings, £18 6s. 6d.

I want the member for West Perth particularly to follow this. That is £18 6s. 6d., which is the figure accepted by the Commission and the figure submitted by Sandwell and Wood, and it is used for the purpose of calculating the rise and fall upon

that. We will examine this transaction carefully. The commencement of it is on File 1160/51, where an officer of the Commission starts to calculate this item and says—

	£	s.	d.
Asbestos in quantities required T.I.U. (1)	11	14	0
Add surcharge, 25 per cent.	2	18	6
One lb. nails		1	6
Cartage on asbestos		11	3
Total	15	5	3
Profit 7½ per cent.	1	2	9
	16	8	0

That is the figure this officer says should be included, but Sandwell and Wood's figure was £18 6s. 6d. and that started an argument. Mr. Hall said to Mr. McEwen—

With regard to item (1) above; would you discuss with Sandwell and Wood the make-up of their price of £18 6s. 6d. which is greater than the above?

Mr. McEwen then sent a message to Mr. Pittaway re item (1)—

This matter was referred to Mr. Buckingham of Sandwell and Wood and he is unwilling to supply the make-up of the £18 6s. 6d. However, he made reference to an allowance of 10 per cent. for waste and broken sheets not allowed for in our estimate.

With that the officer proceeds to make a further calculation and says—

Mr. Pittaway to Mr. Hall, page 142, folio 1160/51. On information obtained from Sandwell and Wood—

It was limited information as the officer said, because Mr. Buckingham would not talk—

—referring to their quote of £18 6s 6d., for asbestos dados and ceilings, the following is the amended estimate:—

	£	s.	d.
Asbestos	11	19	2
Wastage, 7½ per cent.		18	1

I worked it out not as 18s. 1d. but as 17s. 11d. Seven and a half per cent. of £11 19s. 2d. is 17s. 11d. However, the officer says it was 18s. 1d. and continues—

	£	s.	d.
Surcharge 25 per cent.	3	4	4
One lb. nails		1	6
Cartage		12	3
Total	16	15	4

Add profit, 7½ per cent.

Mark you, Mr. Speaker, profit on the 25 per cent surcharge—

—£1 5s. 2d.
Total £18 0s. 6d.

Which is still 6s. short of Sandwell and Wood's figure. But the figure that was accepted by the Commission was not the first calculation made by its officer and not the amended calculation made by that officer, but Sandwell and Wood's figure which they would not properly explain. I ask you Sir, is there room for some inquiry by a competent accountant down there? That is in respect to one item that I was able to detect in a file comprising a mass of papers. The same could apply to other items. With further reference to this confusion of accounts I make mention of this: On page 42 of File 9573/50, volume 2, I think it is—it could be volume 4—this appears—

An amount of £204 7s. 9d. is owing for wharfage and handling.

That is, owing from February. A number of letters were written to the firm about this debt and it did not answer, and on the 17th September it disputed the account. So far as I can find on the file that is where the matter lies at present. Yet, according to the officers of the Commission, as soon as Sandwell & Wood submit an account they want it paid immediately and they kick up a row if it is not. I propose to read this minute. It is a most important one because it comes from the officer whose job it is to authorise most of the payments in the initial stages. I quote from page 123 of File 1160/51 from architect Grayson to the chairman. It reads—

Imported Houses.

Messrs. Sandwell and Wood are lodging claims on extraordinary work involved in the above contract, such as penalty rates, waiting time, substitution of labour, varying overheads and profit margins, some of which we suspect from previous experience, might be offered as a bait to find out how we react. As you know, they expect payment immediately upon lodging accounts and complain vigorously if any time is spent in considering their accounts.

The next portion just about staggers me. It reads—

I can deal with these accounts summarily, but owing to their nature and magnitude my method of dealing with them cannot be guided by specific conditions of contract and I feel should be either considered by an appropriate committee or I would have to be given authority which I do not possess at present.

The first proposal involved some loss of time awaiting committees, and in connection with the second proposal I would prefer to have the consideration of yourself or the Secretary on account of the far reaching implications involved.

Would you mark this, Sir?—

There are instances in financial negotiations where the early interest of the auditor might prevent future repercussions.

I ask members: What is meant by that? What was the purpose of this officer in putting that in his minute to the chairman of the Commission? I endeavoured to get the Premier to obtain the interest of the Auditor General, but the Premier said that to answer my questions the work would not be within the ordinary routine of the Auditor General and the question ought to be submitted to the Housing Commission. In these circumstances, what good would that do? I endeavoured to give the Premier a lead to get the Auditor General to make a special audit at the Housing Commission to prevent these future repercussions, which undoubtedly will occur as surely as night follows day.

Now we come to the inordinate waste that is going on with material lying around all over the place and which is being stolen in large quantities. Under ordinary business practice in building, when a prospective home-owner engages a builder the contractor is responsible for any loss of material from the site. Whoever heard of a builder adding additional costs to the contract price, after the contract is signed, because material which he was using on the job was stolen? He allows for that in his original contract and he takes reasonable precaution to reduce the pilfering to a minimum. Would you believe it, Mr. Speaker, that it was not until August of this year that the chairman of the Commission discovered that the Commission was responsible for all pilfering and not the contractor?

The chairman actually believed that these losses, which were occurring with large quantities of material, were the responsibility of the builder, and he did not find out until the 1st of August this year that they were the responsibility of the Commission. The reason for that is that in the contract the Commission made itself responsible for all losses and the contractor was not slow to point it out. At page 49 of File 3270/52, there is mention, by an officer of the Commission, of the grave concern about the high incidence of theft of materials from the building sites. On the 18th July, 1952, the acting secretary wrote—

The incidence of theft from the sites upon which imported house are being erected is high and the necessary replacement from stock will ultimately produce a major deficiency.

That is a major deficiency for which the tenants will have to pay because this cost is being loaded on the purchase price which is to be recovered through rents. On page 33 of File 2020/52, Mr. Irvine drew attention to the large quantity of material lying around on the building

sites, which must inevitably suffer from either weather or theft. It was because of the failure of the Commission to make the builder responsible that this is going on as he has no need to worry. If anything is lost the Commission has to replace it, so why should the builder worry about keeping things under lock and key or being careful with the use of materials? He is not responsible in the slightest degree.

No wonder there is a high incidence of deficiency, all of which is adding to the cost of these houses which will have to be recovered through rents. At page 22, dated the 1st August, on File 3275/52, there is a minute which is over Mr. Brownlie's name, and he mentions that the contractor was liable for loss or theft of materials on the job. There is an indication there that the matter was discussed with another officer, and Mr. Brownlie later referred to Clause A5 of the specifications which made the Commission liable. Mr. Brownlie fell down very badly through not being aware of that condition in the original contract, which left the Commission liable for all losses and did not impose any responsibility upon the builder.

Another aspect of these losses is this: When they are replaced from the stockpile the contractor gets his profits and benefits under the rise and fall clause when the added cost of these replacements is added to the total cost of the houses. Some further idea of this wastage can be obtained from this minute. Mr. Telfer refers to the discrepancy in tile battens at page 50 of File 3919/51. He says—

There is an apparent discrepancy in tile battens showing a deficiency of 64½ houses out of 450. Losses are so great that we are already 64½ houses short in the tile battens out of a total of 450.

He further says—

It is understood that a number of bundles of tile battens were consigned to houses not requiring them and it is requested that a check be made on all such bundles which may not have been returned to store and that a statement be forwarded of bundles of battens known to have been condemned.

I would like to know how, at this early stage, we could be so many battens short that we are 64½ houses down out of a total of 450. When they are replaced at a higher price the cost will be added to these houses and the tenants will have to meet such cost through their rents. Before I conclude I want to make reference to the moisture content of these materials. It will be remembered that earlier this session I mentioned the statement made by Mr. John D. Roche wherein he said that the moisture content in the buildings

was 30 per cent. I am sorry the Minister is not in his seat at the moment, because I was going to ask him to confirm or deny the statement he made in this House when dealing with that matter, and which was—

The contract between the Commission and the manufacturers provided for a maximum moisture content of 20 per cent. for flooring, framing and external covers, and 15 per cent. for joinery. The material was subject to inspection during production and a final inspection was made prior to shipment by a consulting and inspecting engineer acting on behalf of the Commission.

Then he went on to say—

This timber, instead of having a 30 per cent. moisture content, had actually a content of 20 and 15 per cent.

I ask the Minister if that is a true statement. It is the statement he made in this House. I will vouch for what I quoted as a true record of what he said in this House, as I copied it, word for word, from the reported speech. Therefore I ask the Minister if that statement, which is his, is a true one. Unfortunately you, Mr. Speaker, will not allow him to reply to my question because he is not sitting in his seat. Let us see if it is a true statement. I quote from File No. 2160/51, dated the 24th April, 1952, a minute from Mr. Bond, who was then secretary of the Commission, to Messrs. A. E. Turner and John Coates Ltd., who are the agents in England appointed by Mr. Brownlie to handle this contract and who obtained a sum of £12,000 as commission for the job. This is what Mr. Bond wrote—

Tests have been carried out on some components in order to ascertain the moisture content of the timber and this could not be done with any accuracy as the moisture content exceeded the maximum recording capacity of the apparatus, which was 24 per cent.

So we have the Minister standing up in this Chamber and telling us that the maximum moisture content was 20 and 15 per cent., and at the same time we have the secretary of his department writing in complaint to the agent that the timber had been tested for moisture content and that the content exceeded the maximum recording capacity of the apparatus, which was 24 per cent.! Thus we are certain of this: According to Mr. Bond, the moisture content of the timber was at least 24 per cent. Mr. Brownlie was so concerned about the moisture content, which the Minister said was all right, that he sent a cable to Coates which appears on page 101 of File No. 2011/51—

Lancaster's report moisture content anxiously awaited.

There is a minute on the file setting out—

Attached please find copies of correspondence and report submitted by Lancaster.

Search as I did, I could not find those papers that were said to be attached to the file. I do not know what was contained in Lancaster's report. It might confirm the Minister's idea, or it might confirm Mr. Bond's idea. The fact remains that I could not find the report. Further on in the file I found that Turner and Coates, of England, wrote to the Commission and said the moisture content matter had been relatively disregarded—a disregard for which someone will ultimately have to pay. Here we have the Minister standing up in this Chamber saying that instead of there being a 30 per cent. moisture content, it was actually one of 20 or 15 per cent., inferring that the timber complied with the terms of the contract.

On the other hand, we have the secretary of the Commission, the chairman of the Commission and his agent making statements to the contrary, the agent saying that the matter had been relatively disregarded, a disregard for which someone would ultimately have to pay. When I was at Willagee Park this afternoon I had a look at some of these places to see how the timber was reacting to the change in temperature. I found that because of the moisture content, the timber had shrunk so that it had torn away from the nails and had buckled. At one house where some painting was being carried out, the work had to be suspended so that the boards could be replaced on the house and be stopped up.

If the boards had been properly seasoned and the moisture content had been looked after, that expense would have been avoided. Yet the Minister could make a statement like that to which I have referred and which is at variance with the information appearing on the file. Either the Minister is wrong and his officers are right, or his officers are wrong and he is right.

Mr. Graham: Or they are all wrong.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No. I do not think they could all be wrong because the secretary said that the components had been tested for moisture and the content exceeded the recording capacity of the apparatus, which maximum recording figure was 4 per cent. in excess of the maximum stipulated in the contract. I could find nothing on the files to suggest that anyone has done anything about it, either by way of an attempt to obtain compensation from the suppliers for supplying timber the moisture content of which was beyond the maximum allowed or to do anything else about it.

If the Minister can produce the Lancaster report, it might possibly put a different complexion on the matter. I could

not find it, even though the minute on the file stated that it was "attached thereto." The final test as to whether these houses, which have already cost, according to the officers of the State Housing Commission, a sum of £2,950, are too expensive, is to be found in a comparison between what they cost here and what they are costing in other States. I propose to read what the Minister said about the position in the other States. He said—

While objection is being taken to our paying £2,850 odd, less £300 from the Commonwealth, my investigations indicate that the Eastern States suffered worse than we did. Mr. Playford, the Premier of South Australia, paid nearly £4,000 for many of his houses and when the loan cut was announced he had to ask a representative to come from London to see if he could cancel half the contract. In New South Wales and Victoria, with these same houses from Austria and also houses from England, they are paying at least £3,000 or £4,000. Only last week, during the conference of the Master Builders' Association, I had in my office a builder from Victoria who had a contract for erecting these Austrian houses on behalf of the Victorian State Housing Commission. He came specially to see Mr. Brownlie and me in order to tell us of his unfortunate experience over there. They imported about 500 houses and on his contract price, which was within £15 of ours, he found, when the contract was finished, that he had lost £100 per house. He is now suing the Victorian State Housing Commission in an endeavour to recover his losses.

That was the Minister's statement, delivered from his place in this House and presumably to be taken as a truthful and accurate record of the position. I have some official correspondence from other Housing Commissions concerned. The first is from the chief accountant of the Housing Commission in Victoria, and he says—

The contract prices for these houses—

That has reference to the Austrian pre-cut houses.

—within 15 miles of port of entry were £1,850 for 2-bedroom units and £2,250 for those of 3-bedrooms of which £996 and £1,224 respectively represented the CIFE costs; consequently local erection costs were to be £854 and £1,026. The CIFE costs were to be invariable, but local costs are subject to "rise and fall" conditions. In practice, however, certain claims, especially for sea freight rises, had to be admitted and actual landed costs have therefore worked out at about £1,150 and £1,137.5.

The estimated completed costs are £2,400 and £2,800, which, if CIFE costs be deducted show as approximate erection costs £1,250 and £1,425 for the 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units respectively.

At least £500 per house less than ours cost! Next we will take the New South Wales position. This is what the secretary of the Housing Commission there says—

In reply to your inquiry dated the 11th September, 1962, you are advised that this Commission has a contract with Mr. A. Sagmeister of Vienna for the supply of pre-fabricated timber houses.

These houses are different from the Thermobau houses, as the Minister knows.

Type 1.—2-bedroom	....	£1,710
Type 2.—2-bedroom	....	£1,639
Type 3.—3-bedroom	....	£1,866
Type 4.—3-bedroom	....	£1,702

The expected erection costs of the houses are as follows:—

Type 1.	....	£1,025
Type 2.	....	£1,015
Type 3.	....	£1,017
Type 4.	....	£1,121

Thus the total erected cost, inclusive of overseas and shipping costs, will be—

Type 1.	....	£2,735
Type 2.	....	£2,654
Type 3.	....	£2,883
Type 4.	....	£2,823

The costs quoted above do not take into account the £300 subsidy payable by the Commonwealth Government. Actual cost of the houses to the Commission will of course be £300 less than the total erected cost quoted above.

The Minister for Housing: Are there any of those houses here yet?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know.

The Minister for Housing: I do. There are not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, they have erected imported pre-cuts in New South Wales.

The Minister for Housing: I said there are no Sagmeister houses erected in New South Wales.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That does not help the Minister.

The Minister for Housing: It does not help your case.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does it not? These houses are of better quality than the Thermobau houses.

The Minister for Housing: We have only your statement for that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, we have not. I found it on the file. The Minister had better look at it himself. I also found this on the file: That the South Aus-

tralian Government is making available its houses to the people—it does not put tenants in, but sells the houses—at £2,400 each. If they cost £4,000, as the Minister says, that must be a very generous Government. I cannot bring myself to believe that if the houses cost the South Australian Government £4,000 each it will sell them to buyers for £2,400. There are the official figures supplied by the Housing Commissions of the States referred to by the Minister.

It is well known that New South Wales erected Thermobau houses at Normanhurst; but that would not be a fair comparison, because they were erected in 1949, and would not be subject to the increased costs that we have had to face here. But by the time these shortages of material are made up; by the time this £1,000 per week interest bill is added; and by the time this extra handling cost is added, these houses in Western Australia will cost considerably in excess of £3,000. There is not the slightest doubt about that; and it is hundreds and hundreds of pounds too much. The firm that has the contract is prepared to get the whole of the work which it has to carry out done for £515. That is the amount it will sub-contract for, and that only leaves it to supply certain local materials, tiling, plasterboard, material for cement paths, fencing, baths and sinks, and a little plumbing, and there is an amount of about £1,100 available to cover that.

It seems to me that, because of the difficulty that the officers of the Commission are experiencing; the evidence on the files of their concern; and the alarming fact that these overpayments are occurring; that these disputes have already arisen, and that there is difficulty about the stockpile and recouping the Government the £40,000 it has invested, an immediate investigation and straightening up by a competent authority are called for. Finally, the position has to be straightened out one way or the other, because otherwise it will break down by its own rottenness. But this is the important aspect at the moment: All these extra costs, because of the pilfering, delays, shortages, overpayments and breakages have been loaded on to the price. When the timber was put on the ground, it was attacked by white ants because proper precautions were not taken to prevent that.

When white ants were found in the timber, it had to be restacked and treated, and that rehandling and restacking and treatment have put hundreds of pounds on to the cost of the houses, all of which the Commission is going to recover through rents. Is that fair, when these tenants have no option? They go to the Commission for accommodation and the Commission offers them one of these houses. If they refuse to take it, that is the finish: The Commission will do nothing more for them, and they have to go elsewhere. So

they are forced to go into these houses and pay £3 2s. per week, a rent which is that high because of these inordinate costs which should have been and could have been prevented. I therefore feel that the House would be perfectly justified in carrying the motion I have moved.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—STATE FORESTS.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had concurred in the Assembly's resolution.

MOTION—RAILWAYS.

As to Restoration of Week-end Suburban Services.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland)
[9.23]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the suburban rail services should be restored to normal running, particularly the Saturday afternoon and Sunday services.

Last Friday night, a public protest meeting was held in the Midland Junction Town Hall. The mayor of Midland Junction presided and Hon. H. S. W. Parker, M.L.C., myself and a number of other people concerned were on the platform. There were about 200 people in the body of the hall. I think it will be agreed that to have a public meeting of 200 people in a town hall these days is no mean achievement, and indicates the feeling of the people in the district concerning the curtailment of the suburban railway services and their entire elimination on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. To give the House a full idea of what was done at the meeting, I intend to read the resolution agreed to. It was moved by a railwayman and, significantly enough, was seconded by the president of the Old Age Pensioners' Association. Pensioners are feeling the pinch in Midland Junction as much as anybody else as a result of the Government's action. This was the motion—

1. That this meeting of the citizens of Midland Junction strongly protests against the curtailment of the suburban train services and the abolition of Saturday afternoon and Sunday trains, and calls on the Government to immediately restore the normal week-day services and resumption of week-end trains.

2. That Messrs. J. Brady, M.L.A., and H. Parker, M.L.C., be asked to move in Parliament a resolution having for its purpose the resumption of normal suburban train services.

3. That this meeting considers it most unjust that economies in railway services should be attempted

against one section of the taxpayers and against the best interests of the State in favour of private bus companies using largely imported vehicles, fuel and maintenance requirements.

It will be realised that, at the public meeting, various aspects of the matter were discussed, and I think that they fall under four headings. I intend to address the House on each of those headings. At the outset, I would say that this curtailment of suburban rail services affects residents along the lines from Armadale to Perth and from Fremantle to Perth as well, and they are also very upset about the Government's action. The cuts affect the residents in my electorate from the point of view of cost and inconvenience. I feel they also affect the economy of the railways and of the State as a whole and have a bearing on the position at the workshops; and there is also to be taken into consideration the activities of the Government in regard to the increase in railway fares.

Touching on the cost and inconvenience, I would point out the difference between the bus fares and the railway fares between West Midland and Perth. It costs 1s. 7d. on the bus as against 1s. 3d. by train, a difference of 4d. A 5-day ticket on the bus costs 12s. for a junior, whereas a 6-day service is provided by the railways for 10s. for an adult. There are only 22 trains a day as against 41 buses, so that the buses are giving twice the service which is given by the railways which are owned by the public. The bus company runs a service every five or 10 minutes in peak periods and every 40 minutes at other times, whereas the trains run every one hour or every two hours. It will be seen, therefore, that the Government in running such a service does not encourage passengers on the trains, but tends to encourage people to use the buses which run to Midland Junction more frequently.

Saturday afternoon trains have been entirely eliminated, whereas previously there used to be 15. There are no Sunday trains, whereas previously there were 22. Consequently, the people are forced willy-nilly to support the buses on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, because there is no alternative. If a family wishes to go to South Beach or Leighton it is necessary to pay about double the fare on the bus that would be charged by the railways—that is, if they travel during the week. They cannot go by train at the weekend. Whereas at one time a married man with a family of two children could go to South Beach at a total of 7s. 6d., now he has to pay £1 0s. 2d. That is an increase of 300 per cent. to these people. In order to get to South Beach they have to catch two buses, one from Midland Junction to the Supreme Court Gardens and then drag their children half a mile along St. George's Terrace to catch another

bus to take them to Fremantle; after that they have to board a tram to go to South Beach. That costs £1 return whereas previously they could go in a railway train for 7s. 6d.

That might not sound important but these railway workers and industrialists must have some recreation and their wives and families are entitled to it, the same as any other section of the community. It is necessary that they should indulge in some recreation and normally they used the river beaches for swimming purposes but recently they were warned, by no less a person than the Minister for Health, that it was not advisable to swim at our river beaches and that children should swim in the ocean. If a man has any respect for his family he will heed that warning and endeavour to travel to the ocean beaches. Consequently he will now find that it will cost him 300 per cent. more to travel to those beaches than it did previously. If he wants to go to Leighton it costs almost the same as it does to go to South Beach.

In the "Swan Express" newspaper which circulates in the Midland Junction area, it was reported, on the 9th October, that the Minister for Health, writing to the Bassendean Road Board on the 2nd October, said words to this effect—

There will always remain an ever-increasing and inevitable pollution of the river. Swimming pools should be cited in the salt water.

That is one of the reasons why a family man has to go to the ocean beaches for his recreation. Also, many families have to travel to Perth to visit relatives at the Royal Perth Hospital. I have mentioned instances before of how inconvenient this is because we have no hospital facilities in Midland Junction. The St. John ambulance in that district is always bringing patients in to the city. Also, unfortunately, people die and have to be buried at Karrakatta and on many occasions families desire to visit the cemetery at the week-ends. So one could go on mentioning similar instances where it is necessary for people to visit the city. These people have to pay huge travelling costs and the buses are most inconvenient for elderly and invalid people and few relish the idea of travelling in them; they all prefer to travel by train.

The worst feature of this business of the Government forcing people to use buses is that come hail, rain or shine, they have to stand on street corners and wait for the bus. Imagine old people standing around in the heat of the sun without any shelter shed for a quarter of an hour or even up to half an hour waiting for a bus! The same thing happens in the wet weather. Imagine the last two or three days and mothers with young babies waiting to catch buses to the city!

Mr. Yates: That happens in other places as well.

Mr. BRADY: I suppose it does, but in normal circumstances the railways were available and these people could go on to the platforms and take shelter.

Mr. Yates: The people who catch buses outside the Treasury Building are forced to wait around under those conditions. You see thousands of them there every day.

Mr. BRADY: Even so, that does not mean that the Government should aggravate the position when there is no necessity for it. After all, as the member for South Perth knows, there must be 40 platforms on railways premises in the suburban area and they provide a proper shelter so that these old people can sit down or mothers with young babies can take advantage of it.

Mr. Yates: They have never provided it with the tramways or any other similar services.

Mr. BRADY: They have, in certain circumstances, around Victoria Park and in other parts of the metropolitan area.

Mr. Yates: Very few of them.

Mr. BRADY: But the fact remains that the Government has spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money to build up our railways over the years with a view to catering for the travelling public. On the other hand, the private buses have provided no shelters at all and people are put to greater inconvenience in having to travel by bus. Yet the Government expects the public to accept this inconvenience instead of permitting them to travel on their own railways.

Mr. Yates: How many trains do you suggest should run on a Sunday, say from Midland Junction to Perth?

Mr. BRADY: I do not know whether the member for South Perth expects me to say what I regard as the number of trains that should be provided.

Mr. Yates: I do not suggest that.

Mr. BRADY: We should adopt a commonsense approach towards this business and we could probably have a reduced train service on Sundays. But the fact remains that no Government should cut out all trains on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. That is playing right into the hands of private enterprise and against the best interests of the people. As the debate proceeds I intend to show that it is most unreasonable for the Government to do this. Previously train loads of people could be seen going through the suburbs to the hills on Sundays. That will not be the case now because no trains are running. The bus companies will get another rake-off because the people will have to use private buses to travel to places like Glen Forrest, Darlington and other hill resorts. Previously they went by train.

Mr. Manning: You do not seem to like the buses.

Mr. BRADY: I do not like them because their operations are not in the best economic interests of the State and a little elementary mathematics by the member for Harvey will show him that. While the Government is curtailing railway services in order to effect some economy, it is obliged to build roads around the metropolitan area for the local governing bodies. But what do we find? In answer to certain questions I asked only last night, it appears that the Government has undertaken, with the local governing bodies, to spend £60,000 for the maintenance and construction of roads between Maylands and Guildford within the next six years. That means that £10,000 a year is to be expended on the roads which buses will be smashing up. Therefore, the Government is going to get it in the neck both ways. It is going to lose revenue from the railways and, on the other hand, it will be paying out money at the rate of £10,000 a year to enable these buses to run and at the same time collect the revenue that the Government should be getting.

Mr. Yates: The Government gets some revenue from the buses.

Mr. BRADY: How much revenue will it get over and above what it has already had? The private bus companies will receive much more revenue than they will pay to the Government. Also the cutting out of the railways will mean increased importation of oil, tyres, tubes and other motor accessories in order to keep the buses running, whereas, if our railways continue to operate we can fabricate and make our own locomotives, and our own rollingstock, and we can provide locally the coal and water necessary to run them. All these things that are vital to the economy of the State will go overboard, while the private bus companies are allowed to bring in this foreign material in order that they may run their vehicles on our roads which the Government is going to build for them. If the Government thinks that that is the way to govern the State it has a poor appreciation of its duties. I believe that it fully appreciates the facts already, but because of certain political reasons it will not recognise them.

The Minister for Works: Do not talk a lot of rot!

Mr. BRADY: It is not rot at all, because I am able to prove to the Minister that this question was discussed in his own party room and that the Government was giving consideration to increasing the fares and freights for country rail traffic as well as metropolitan. However, what do we find? We find that the metropolitan rates have been increased twice, to a total of 20 per cent. in the past 18 months but the country rates

have remained the same. That information was reported in "The West Australian." So these things are happening and as my motion states, the Government is penalising one section of the taxpayers as against another in its own political interest. So the Government will have to do some explaining in regard to that position.

The people in Midland Junction are not fools. They can see what is going on and, when the elections come around next year, we will find that all these motor firms that handle vehicle parts will be contributing to the Government's party political funds. I do not blame them for that because they are being well recompensed for it. Every day we can see balance sheets of large companies showing profits of £250,000 and £350,000 annually, and some balance sheets are not even published. Therefore, we can see why the Government is favouring the bus companies. However, the fact remains that the people I represent are paying through the nose for their transport. The basic wage has not risen high enough to compensate them for the increases in fares.

Mr. Perkins: They are still getting it for less than cost.

Mr. BRADY: Our friend from the country says they are still getting it for less than cost. He knows full well that the people in the country are obtaining their super for less than cost but we hear nothing of the Government cutting down the super trains. In answer to a question asked by the member for Kalgoorlie in 1950, the Government pointed out that it was losing £299,000 a year on the transport of super, but the trains were not curtailed for the farmers. However, they are curtailed for the working man who is on the basic wage, or a little more, and who has to find transport in the city.

The people in the country who elect my friend who has been interjecting have enjoyed big prices for wheat, wool and cattle for the past five years, and they can well afford to pay the full price for the cartage of their super, but the Government says "No". It says, "We do not want to increase the farmers' freight rates, but let the working man in the city pay higher transport costs. We do not care whether it is the working man, the old age pensioner, the invalid pensioner or the woman with four or five children. We do not care so long as we get the increased revenue." That is party politics! That is what the Young Liberal League advocates at its conferences, but if the Labour Party followed suit, and it were the Government, those on the other side of the House would say that that was the Trades Hall system of governing the country.

The Minister for Works: The member for Merredin-Yilgarn will not have you electioneering for him.

Mr. Perkins: Do you know what the railways have lost on the metropolitan services?

Mr. BRADY: In answer to that question, all I can say is that we can only conjecture. We are told, through statements in the Press recently, that approximately £300,000 was lost on the suburban railways. But what do we find occurred in that period? We find that the railways were closed down for six months. Is that a fair way to present the facts to the public?

The Minister for Education: It is not the way the calculation was made.

Mr. BRADY: A statement was published in the Press that there was a loss of £300,000 and, if the Minister does not believe me, I will read the statement to him.

The Minister for Education: All I am saying is that that was not the way the calculation was made.

Mr. BRADY: I do not know how it was made, but that is what appeared in the Press. But what do we find? We find that 70 per cent. of the costs are fixed. So, no matter whether the trains are running on a Sunday or a Wednesday, the public still has to pay 70 per cent. of the cost, and yet the railroad is closed down, the stations are closed down, and the engines and rollingstock are at a standstill, but a certain overhead charge for maintenance goes on for 365 days of the year.

The Minister for Education: And if that were included the loss would have been £1,250,000 and not £300,000.

Mr. BRADY: That is only the Government approach. In the Eastern States the suburban services are cheaper on a Sunday than on a week day, despite the fact that the penalty rates are greater there than they are here. The fares in the various States are as follows:—

Western Australia—		Sunday.	Week Day.
5 miles	....	1s. 8d.	1s. 4d.
10 miles	....	2s. 6d.	2s. 2d.
South Australia—		Return.	Return.
5 miles	....	0s. 9d.	1s. 1d.
10 miles	....	1s. 3d.	1s. 11d.
Victoria—		Sat. Return.	Sun. Return.
5 miles	....	1s. 8d.	1s. 3d.
10 miles	....	2s. 2d.	1s. 5d.
New South Wales—		Fri., Sat., Sun. Return.	
5 miles	....	1s. 6d.	
10 miles	....	2s. 0d.	
Queensland—			
5 miles	....	0s. 10d.	
10 miles	....	2s. 0d.	

That shows that not only are we paying higher rates for Sunday travel but also we are paying higher rates for week-day travel, and yet the Government is not satisfied. Therefore I hope that our friends on the other side of the House, particularly those who represent electorates situated between Perth and Armadale and Perth and Fremantle, will have re-

gard to these circumstances and realise how their friends from the country are leading them up the garden path. I am therefore looking for some support on this motion from those members.

Mr. Perkins: Are you aware that the rates per mile for passenger traffic in the metropolitan area are only half the rates prescribed for country areas?

Mr. BRADY: No, I am not aware of that.

Mr. Perkins: I suggest that you have a look at it.

Mr. BRADY: I suggest that travel in the metropolitan area is about five times greater than it is in the country areas. Has the hon. member thought about that? At a very difficult time in the history of the railways the Government has adopted an attitude it should not have done. In 1945 the number of passenger fares was 18,000,000, and in 1950 it dropped to about 11,200,000. But last year under the new policy of the Railways Commissioners, it had gone up about 350,000 in 12 months. It passed the last stage downwards and was going up, and now we find that the Government has hopped in and cut down daily trains and entirely cut out those on Saturday and Sunday.

The Government will tell the public that it is hanging on to these services until the diesel engines arrive next year. In other words it is trying to convey the fact that it is hanging on to these services so that the people will get accustomed to using buses until next June or July. It is farcical and it would be a joke were it not so serious, because it is the people who have to pay the fares. I ask my friend who interjected as to how many passenger fares there were and to find out how many people travel in the metropolitan area as against the country. He knows that those who travel to the metropolitan area from the country travel in their own buses and trucks, like himself. They have those vehicles and they use them. So it is not fair for the Government to impose these increased costs on the metropolitan people and in addition to that to cut out the Saturday and Sunday services.

Here is another instance: On Saturday one can see three or four trains leaving the metropolitan area from Perth on race days. These are going to the local race meetings or to Helena Vale. So all these train passengers too, are to be turned over to the bus companies. Surely the Government is not going to tell us that these particular trains did not pay, because time and a quarter has to be paid for Saturday afternoons. Apparently the Railway Commissioners in the other four States believe that the week-end passenger service is as good as any service.

Mr. Yates: They do not pay in the other States.

Mr. BRADY: They do; if the member for South Perth analysed the figures for New South Wales he would find that what I say is correct.

The Minister for Education: Electric trains run at 50 miles an hour.

Mr. BRADY: Let us turn now to the question of electric trains, and the service run on Sunday by diesel electric cars. These move as fast as electric trains. What is more, the services in the metropolitan area by the suburban diesel electrics are run at practically no cost because most of the station officers are taken off, and the diesel electric cars are managed by conductors on those cars. I cannot conceive of any cheaper method of running a service but we are led to believe that this is one of the reasons why the Government wants to hang on until the diesels arrive next year.

A diesel can be run at 5s. a train mile whereas an electric train costs £2 a train mile. Here the Government has an opportunity of running diesels at week-ends and proposes to cut them out entirely. I say without hesitation that this is driving the people on to the buses. In addition to that, the Government has to maintain the road at an enormous cost in order to keep the buses going. So the time is drawing near when it will lose its revenue from the railways.

Mr. Griffith: Do you suggest that diesels can be run without any men on the stations.

Mr. BRADY: I do; there are no men on the stations during the week-ends. The diesels are managed by conductors. The member for Canning apparently does not know what is happening in his district. The people in my electorate are ringing me up constantly and complimenting me upon moving this motion. One man rang me up and said that he hopes to get up a public meeting. Apparently there are three people, members of the Ministry, who have formed a special committee. They are the Deputy Leader of the Government, the Minister for Transport and the Attorney General. While members on the Government side have apparently been told something in the Caucus meeting they have not been told the whole story. It is most unfortunate that these members should form a special committee and should consider it necessary to take action when we already have three Commissioners of Railways.

We are led to believe that these three Commissioners are ace men; that they are authorities on how to run railways and how to maintain them, and how to look after the engineering side of things. Yet these men are not able to make a simple decision as to whether trains should or should not run at week-ends. I do not know what authority Mr. Webb has but he said that the men of

the Commissioners were opposed to this. It appears, therefore, that the three gentlemen I have named have told the Commissioners for Railways how they should run the railways, they have become super commissioners. The whole matter has become a political football and, the more one looks at it, the more one realises that it is party politics in the worst possible form. However, the Government will reap the whirlwind in March next, if it does not do so before.

Apart from the fact that the economy of the railways in this State is affected, and a £30,000,000 Government project has been thrown overboard in the interests of the private bus companies, we have the fact that in the workshops at Midland Junction there are approximately 2,000 employees and about £1,000,000 worth of equipment. As I said last night, the railway men tell me they are waiting for work in the shops where there is about £700,000 worth of machinery and building whilst their work is being given to the private companies. So it seems that the Government has a desire to get rid of the railways. These workshops could be maintaining engines, coaches, rollingstock, railway buses and so on if they were given the opportunity to do so. What is more, the action of the Government is undermining the confidence of the railway men in their future.

A lot of young men joined the railways and thought they had a career as foremen fitters or engineers, and ultimately perhaps as works managers. They are losing heart and are going to private employment. As a matter of fact, figures prove that the employees are leaving the workshops at a greater rate than they are employed, because they have no confidence in their future there. About two years ago there were hoardings all over the metropolitan area entreating young men to join the railways for a career; telling them that in the railways they could learn this and that, and that the railways were worth £30,000,000. Yet we find that these men cannot get permanent work and have to go outside to get it.

The Minister for Lands: Was not the strike responsible for this?

Mr. BRADY: Again we have the Government swan song of the strike. The strike has been blamed for a lot of things, but I have not heard the Minister for Lands tell me that it was responsible for getting 1½ million pounds from the Commonwealth Government. There is no question at all that the workers were entitled to marginal increases which they did not get.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is a bit away from the motion.

Mr. BRADY: It is a bit away from the motion and I wish you would keep the Minister for Lands in order, Mr. Speaker!

Though the railways lost money through the strike, the Government has been reimbursed to the extent of a million and a half by the Commonwealth Government. Nevertheless, the people are suffering the inconvenience arising from increased fares, straphanging and waiting in queues in all sorts of weather, although they are taxpayers of the Commonwealth and have to find the money which apparently is being used to build up the private bus companies and help to depreciate the value of our railways.

The Attorney General: What sort of a tax do you suggest should be imposed to provide the money to carry on the railways?

Mr. BRADY: The Attorney General has stuck his head right out by asking that question. The people in the rural areas, those who are getting high prices for their wheat, wool and stock, are the people who ought to pay.

The Attorney General: They are paying the highest rates of any people in Australia.

Mr. BRADY: The Government lost £300,000 on the haulage of super. in one year, so how can the Minister contend that those people pay the highest rates of any in Australia? The St. George's-terrace farmers, and quite a lot of supporters of the Liberal-Country Party Government should pay more on goods that are being transported to the country, particularly on the bulldozers and heavy farming machinery sent from the metropolitan area. Yet those companies are able to produce profits of £250,000 or £350,000 a year and build huge factories in the metropolitan area, while working men have to sleep in tents, caravans and mia-mias.

The Minister for Lands: That is a good one!

Mr. Manning: Try to come down to earth!

Mr. Griffith: Tell us another!

Mr. BRADY: Ministers do not like to be reminded of that. Maybe some members on the Government side of the House are shareholders in those companies and dislike the mention of these facts. Certain supporters of the Government are shareholders, and even directors, in some of these companies, some in this House and some in another place.

The Minister for Lands: So are you. You are a director of the Guildford Co-operative.

Mr. BRADY: It may be that the Minister for Lands has a guilty conscience.

The Minister for Lands: My conscience is always clear.

Mr. BRADY: If Ministers persist in sticking their heads out, I shall give them a bit more.

The Minister for Works: You are doing a really good job!

Mr. BRADY: I think I have said sufficient—

The Minister for Works: You have said too much.

Mr. BRADY: —to be able to prove to the people of the State that this Government is victimising the residents of the metropolitan area. I have shown that in the Eastern States railway rates have been cut at week-ends to encourage people to travel. In no other State of the Commonwealth has the Sunday service been cut out entirely; this State alone has been singled out for that treatment. The people of Midland Junction had every justification for entering a protest, despite what the Minister for Railways stated in the Press. In fact, the Minister does not seem to be at all conversant with the position.

People of the metropolitan area, particularly in my district, cannot afford to buy houses or cars. Yet they are called upon to pay the increased rail fares. It is outrageous that the Government should single them out for such treatment. I have shown that they are receiving a very raw deal. When the motion is put to the House, I hope it will have the support of the member for Canning, the member for Cottesloe and indeed the representatives of other metropolitan constituencies because, by voting for the motion, they will be doing a service to the people in their electorates. If they oppose the motion, their action will be tantamount to telling their constituents that they are not entitled to this service and, in that event, I hope they get what they are looking for at the next election.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [10.51]: I support the motion. The member for Guildford-Midland has built up a good case for the people who live in the eastern suburbs. When we consider the history of the railways, we cannot deny that this system has led to the development of all the towns from Perth to Bellevue and beyond. For many years there was no bus service, but eventually the Transport Board permitted the bus companies to encroach upon the preserves of the Railway Department, and the consequence was a depletion of railway revenue.

A couple of years ago, I submitted a question to the Minister for Railways regarding the revenue earned at the Meltham station. I had been urging for years the construction of a station there, but the then Commissioner of Railways could not proceed with the work because of the shortage of loan funds, and the war intervened. Then I urged the adoption of an alternative form of transport, but the Commissioner, Mr. Ellis, would not approve of the extension of the tramway to that area, although he at the time was in control of the tramways also. He maintained that the solution of the transport problem was the establishment of a

siding at Meltham. After I was defeated, the siding was constructed. I have been informed that the revenue earned at that station has been substantial and has justified the establishment of this additional siding. The Bayswater station has always been a paying proposition, and I believe the same applies to Bassendean.

I have lived in the eastern suburbs all my life, and have always patronised the railway. I regard it as the most satisfactory form of transport, being much more comfortable than riding in a bus. The population in those areas has been built up through the service given by the railways, and now we have a Government prepared to allow the service to be whittled down and the traffic handed over to private bus companies. The proprietors of these companies are men who consistently support the Government and so are being well recompensed for their support. I know this from activities that have come under my notice in the district I represent.

People in the suburbs from Mt. Lawley to Midland Junction have depended on the railways for transport facilities. Though the department has been confronted with difficulties over the years in consequence of recurring deficits, this does not apply solely to the metropolitan railway services. It applies to the railways throughout the State, for the simple reason that this instrumentality has been regarded over the years as a developmental concern necessary to open up the State. As members are fully aware, railways were built in various areas where it was well known they would not be a paying proposition, but their construction was considered to be justified on the score that they would lead to the development of the country. Where farmers were producing wheat, the railways would be used to take supplies to them and bring in their product. Unfortunately, many of the spur lines did not pay, for the reason that the freights were kept low in order that the agricultural resources of this country might be built up.

As the member for Guildford-Midland has said, we now find that the wealthy section of the community, such as the woolgrowers, who have been getting a substantial rake-off in recent years, continue to look forward to low freights. On the other hand, people in the metropolitan area who have patronised the railways are denied that service because it suits the Government to build up patronage for the private omnibus companies. That is a retrograde step. It has been suggested in correspondence to the Press that the railways should be abolished.

Mr. Owen: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I know that the railway through the hon. member's electorate was dispensed with, but that was

a danger to life because of the route it had to take on the zigzag line. That is probably the reason it was abolished. Also prisoners were not being taken by train any more to the prison farm beyond where the hon. member lives, because it was too far to travel after alighting from the train.

In Eastern Australia the railway systems have not been eliminated. There are steam trains travelling between Adelaide and the suburbs. In Victoria and New South Wales they have the more modern system of electrification, and the speed at which the trains travel in New South Wales is stupendous. If it were not for the electrification system, I do not know how the State would handle the traffic. Certainly the buses could not do it. The time is overdue when our suburban services should be modernised to make them faster.

There is a good deal of substance in what the member for Guildford-Midland had to say regarding the fact that for the most part we do not have to import steel for our railways. It is produced in Australia and can be fabricated at the Midland Junction workshops where the work done is second to none in any part of the world. At Midland Junction boilers and locomotives can be constructed that will bear comparison with those made anywhere else. Then we obtain our fuel from Collie, so that from the point of view of the State's economy, it is much sounder to give support to the railways, and even to steam trains, than to import other transport requirements.

The time has come when we must consider these factors. We must ask ourselves whether we can continue importing oil, petrol and motorcars from outside Australia, when we cannot afford to pay for them. We must take stock of our position, and when we do we cannot but regard the decision of the Government to run fewer passenger trains as a retrograde step.

Mr. Perkins: All modern engines are diesels.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I know. We are living in an age where transport is fast; but when we review the past and compare it with the present, I wonder whether it is worthwhile. We are killing more people by transport than was the case 30 years ago in the days of the horse and cart. They were good old days and probably life was much happier. Even in the air, terrific speeds are reached and planes are travelling faster than sound. But people are being killed off by speed. That is called progress, but I do not know whether it is progress.

Mr. Perkins: You would not suggest that the Western Australian trains travel too fast, would you?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: They travel fast enough for me, and I think that the railway passenger service should be restored as soon as possible. I support the motion.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the 24th September.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.15]: The member for Leederville stated, when moving the second reading, that this is a small Bill. On its face value, the Bill looks simple, and does not appear to present any problems, but, in fact, this is not the case. The parent Act, which the Bill seeks to amend, was passed in 1884 in order to make provision for bank holidays and any obligations in regard to payments and other acts on those days. Because of obligations in regard to payments, a definition of "non-business days" was included in the Bills of Exchange Act, 1884, as follows:—

(a) Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day.

(b) A bank holiday under The Bank Holidays Act, 1884, or Acts amending it.

Any other day is a business day. This is set out in Section 93. This Act is now superseded by the Bills of Exchange Act (Commonwealth) which makes the same provision as the State Act, and Saturday is therefore a legal business day. The intention of the parent Act was to give authority for the commemorating of certain named days which possessed some religious or national significance, for example, Good Friday or the Sovereign's birthday. Subsequent amendments have brought this Act up to date in regard to holidays which are enjoyed by banking staff. It is obvious, therefore, that the Act intended each holiday to be a rest or respite from work for the purpose of such commemoration.

If this Bill became law, it would mean that every Saturday would be a bank holiday, and this was not the intention of the Act, as each Saturday has no particular significance. The amendment is designed to shorten the working week of 40 hours from six days to five. Therefore Saturday would become a "holiday" after the working week had been fully worked, and in the true sense could not be regarded as a holiday from work. Members must agree that this was not intended by Parliament when the parent Act was passed. It is wrong in principle to circumvent the intention of Parliament in regard to bank holidays in an endeavour to provide that Saturday should become a holiday.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Did you say the Act was passed in 1884?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That should be altered now, should it not?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It all depends on what provisions it is desired to alter. If Saturday were regarded as a holiday, it would still be a business day under the Commonwealth Bills of Exchange Act. What the hon. member desires is that Saturday should be brought into line with Sunday and be regarded as a non-business day. I would point out that named holidays in the Second Schedule of the Act, such as Christmas Day and Anzac Day, periodically fall on a Saturday and that is the day on which they are commemorated. The Bill does not lay down any procedure for this eventuality. There has been a tendency by the hon. member to over-simplify the granting of a five-day working week to bank officers.

It must be remembered that three sections of legislation are involved. The Bank Holidays Act, the Bills of Exchange Act (Commonwealth) and the industrial award of the State Arbitration Court. Even if agreement were reached with the court for a five-day working week, the proposed amendment would be useless unless the Commonwealth Government was prepared to amend the Bills of Exchange Act in favour of Western Australia, declaring Saturday to be a non-business day. The function of the associated banks is to give a service to the public, and until such time as the community as a whole has conditioned itself to a uniform five-day week in business circles, it would be inadvisable to change the present procedure.

It is important to point out that if the Bill were implemented, banks would close every Saturday throughout Western Australia. Approximately 110 of the country shopping centres in Western Australia now observe a Saturday half holiday, and some 10 or 12 retain Wednesday as their half holiday. So far as country banks are concerned, they are open for business each Saturday morning, and this suits the country trade at the present time. The Bank of New South Wales has, at the moment, negotiations before the Arbitration Court, but a five-day working week is not listed among the claims. It simply desires to be brought into line with the conditions which operate in regard to the associated banks.

The hon. member has drawn attention to the fact that the banks close on Saturdays in certain parts of Tasmania, namely Hobart and the Municipality of Glenorchy. He also informed the House that the Tasmanian Shops Act was amended in 1937 to provide for the closing of shops on Saturday in Hobart and Glenorchy. However, it was not until 1945 that the Bank Holidays Act was amended to pro-

vide for the closing of banks. As quoted by the hon. member in his second reading speech, the Tasmanian Industrial Registrar stated, "There is no evidence of inconvenience being caused as most business establishments are closed on that day." I repeat—"as most business establishments are closed on that day." This is not the position either in Western Australia or the rest of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Johnson: Did they amend the Commonwealth Bills of Exchange Act to permit of that?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The hon. member should just listen to me. It may be argued that if Tasmania could amend its Bank Holidays Act without offending against the Bills of Exchange Act (Commonwealth), why cannot we in this State. There is a simple answer to this. Tasmania did not amend the schedule of the Bank Holidays Act by adding the words "each and every Saturday" to the list of named holidays. Saturdays are not included in the schedule of named holidays, but are deemed to be holidays for the purposes of the Act.

I would again remind the House that shops do not close on Saturday mornings. On the 5th May, 1946, the president of the Bank Officers' Association of Western Australia, Mr. Malcolm, wrote to the Premier, and an extract from his letter is as follows:—

It is my Association's intention to approach the banks so that if shops and offices are closed on Saturday mornings the banks will be behind the staffs in their efforts to obtain Saturday morning closing also.

Members should note that he said "if shops and offices are closed on Saturdays mornings." In reply, the then Minister for Labour—the late Hon. A. H. Panton—on the 25th June, 1946, wrote as follows:—

It would appear that the request of your Association is somewhat premature as its implementation is dependent on the closure of the majority of business houses on Saturday morning.

That was Labour's approach to the matter.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How long ago?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: In 1946.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Many things have happened since then.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am in complete agreement with the views expressed in 1946, as circumstances which existed then have not changed in any way. In conclusion I would like to sum up my objections to the Bill as follows: It is a complete departure from the spirit and intention of the Bank Holidays Act. To have a day declared as a "holiday" at the conclusion of the working week is an incorrect approach to "holidays" and their particular significance. If legislation is

introduced so that the working week ends on the Friday night, how can the Saturday be declared a half holiday?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You want things to stay as they were in 1884.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The addition of a further holiday, or non-business day, may lead to serious complications in the Bills of Exchange Act in regard to days of grace, noting or protesting of bills. It could lead to Parliament usurping the functions of the State Arbitration Court. Until a general five-day business week is accepted by the community a sectional approach on behalf of bank officers is premature. The Commonwealth Bank need not conform to State legislation.

I have endeavoured to inform the House of the many difficulties which I consider will have to be surmounted if the Bill were to become law, and for these reasons, hope that it will not have the support of members. I have some correspondence from the Perth Chamber of Commerce that I would like to read. The first letter is dated the 1st October, 1952, and is addressed to the Premier. It is couched in these terms:—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

Members of the Perth Chamber have asked that the following views be presented to you in opposition to the above Bill, introduced by Mr. S. E. I. Johnson, which is at present before Parliament.

Saturday is not a general holiday in Western Australia and there is a legitimate and real public need to be met by the Banks on that day. It would not be desirable to legislate for the closure of the banks on Saturday mornings, whilst ordinary trade is still being carried on. It is considered that whilst ordinary trading is conducted on a Saturday morning, the commercial community, retailers and the public, are entitled to expect banking facilities to be made available to them, especially in respect to change, deposits and withdrawals.

Retailers and others would be called upon to hold large sums of cash over every weekend if the banks were to be closed on Saturday mornings, and this may encourage theft and lead to substantial losses.

The closing of the Commonwealth Savings Bank would be detrimental to the public, who will not have facilities to make deposits of their wages and savings on Saturday mornings.

In view of the difficult economic situation at present and the need for greater effort on the part of the whole community, the members of the Chamber of Commerce trust that the Government will oppose and defeat the amendment Bill.

The Chamber wrote again under date the 2nd October, 1952, as follows:—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

Further to my letter of 1st instant, the Fire & Accident Underwriters' Association have written to my Chamber concerning a statement by Mr. Johnson, when he introduced the above Bill. A press report states that the Insurance offices enjoy a similar privilege, namely, Saturday morning closing.

The association advises that this statement is totally incorrect and would like to have the statement refuted. In confirmation of this I herewith enclose a copy of the association's letter.

That letter, from the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Western Australia to the Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Perth, states—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

In introducing the above Bill (which provides for the closing of banks on Saturdays) in the Legislative Assembly on the 24th ult., Mr. Johnson (Labour, Leederville) is alleged to have stated that this was a privilege enjoyed by insurance offices. Notice to this effect appeared in the Press report the following morning but, as you are aware, is totally incorrect. My committee, therefore, hope that should an opportunity present itself, your organisation will see that the statement is refuted in the proper quarter.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I will bet that chap does not work on Saturday mornings.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Betting is illegal and so I am not prepared to bet on that point. Members have heard the member for Guildford-Midland and the member for Middle Swan speak of the towns of Midland and Guildford, in relation to train services, this afternoon. I have been doing business in Midland Junction for the last 30 years and I know that the banking facilities there on Saturday mornings are made great use of in those industrial towns.

Mr Styants: Limited use; they are open only from 10 a.m. till 11.30.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: During those hours one sees queues at the banks, waiting to do business. Members may laugh, but what I am saying is correct. The banks in Midland Junction serve the whole of the hills district, and the Swan district and producers come a long way to do their banking business on Saturday mornings—quite apart from the workers at Midland Junction who do their banking on Saturday mornings.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You said they could not do without late shopping.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: What does the hon. member mean by that?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You said they could not do without the Friday night shopping, years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They are not open on Friday nights.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: No, but they used to be.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The banks at Midland Junction render great service to the people of the surrounding districts, as well as the working men of that area, who also do their banking on Saturday mornings. Do not let us interfere with these facilities but keep them available, at least as long as the shops remain open on Saturday mornings. Saturday morning banking is a great convenience, particularly for people from outlying districts, and it offers security for the takings of businesses on Saturday mornings. The banks receive deposits and give change and, in Midland Junction, serve the people from as far out as Chidlow's Well. There is no bank between Midland Junction and Toodyay, Northam or York.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What about the shops that open on Saturday afternoon?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: On Saturday afternoon the town of Midland Junction is practically empty; the only shops then open being those that supply fruit, confectionary or refreshments. The big trading concerns are all closed down.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The hotels are open.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They bank all the money they have on hand on Saturday mornings and they have strong safes in which to lock further takings safely away. There is always someone resident on hotel premises, which is not the case with the business houses. As has already been said by a former Minister for Labour, the closing of banks on Saturday mornings is premature until the trading concerns agree to close also on that morning. I oppose the Bill.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [10.35]: In this country, as in other countries, banking has become vital to industry.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Not as vital as industry is to banking.

Mr. BOVELL: In Western Australia the banks have been built up by their officers and without its staff no bank could function efficiently. As a former bank officer I am convinced that the staffs of the banks wish to give to the community that service which their institution demands. In this State a number of business concerns remain open on Saturday mornings and, especially in the country districts where no safe deposit facilities are provided for clients of the banks, it is necessary to have banking facilities available on Saturday mornings.

Hon. E. Nulsen: If you were still a bank officer you would like Saturday morning off.

Mr. BOVELL: I would still consider my duty above my personal convenience, I hope.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I am a bit sceptical about that.

Mr. BOVELL: In reply to the hon. member's interjection, I desire to say that I have many personal friends, bank officers, throughout the length and breadth of the State. They have had two or three weeks in which to communicate with me if they considered this Bill desirable, but I have not had one communication from any of them, either for or against the measure as submitted by the member for Leederville. I believe that bank officers are imbued with the idea of service and I think it is necessary to retain this service for the present.

I hope the time will come when it is no longer necessary for the banks to remain open on Saturday mornings, but that time has not yet arrived. I believe that in this regard I have expressed the opinion of bank officers generally. In the electorate I represent there are a number of timber workers who have no banking facilities—savings bank or otherwise—at the mills and Saturday morning banking gives them opportunity to go to either Busselton or Margaret River and conduct their business. In the interests of those workers I consider it is desirable to retain this facility for them on Saturday mornings.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The workers can very easily handle all the wages they get.

Mr. BOVELL: The deposits of the savings bank are built up mainly from the workers' savings and, despite the inferences of members opposite, I believe the worker is still as desirous as is anybody else of effecting savings.

Mr. Styants: Yes, but he is not given the opportunity.

Mr. BOVELL: He is endeavouring to maintain that thrift which is necessary in our community.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Your Minister for Prices will not allow him to save.

Mr. BOVELL: Despite the Minister for Prices, they have saved.

The Minister for Labour: Too right they have!

Mr. BOVELL: Statistics of the Commonwealth Savings Bank, which caters for the savings of most working people, show that the increase in savings has been quite evident during post-war years. That is due to the sound economy of the working people of this country.

Mr. Styants: Western Australia has the lowest average per head in the Commonwealth.

Mr. BOVELL: There are a number of Monday holidays for banks and other institutions during the year and therefore to prevent people from having banking facilities from Friday afternoon until perhaps the following Tuesday morning, would be to fix too long a period. It is not right that people should have to hold cash in their own custody for such a long time. There has been a number of spectacular cash robberies in the Eastern States and therefore I consider it desirable that the banks retain, for the time being, their present service to the community. The member for Leederville is to be commended for his interest in what he considers to be the needs of bank officers and I believe that the day will come when this facility will be made available to them. But it is my considered opinion that the present is not an opportune time to close the banks on Saturday mornings. For those reasons I oppose the Bill.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [10.42]: I wish to make one or two comments on this particular Bill and I have no doubt that if it is carried in the form in which it has been presented to the House it could achieve the end that its mover desires. But it is an extremely clumsy method and probably extremely undesirable from a parliamentary drafting point of view to achieve that end by declaring each Saturday a public holiday when, in effect, what the hon. member really desires to do is to place Saturdays in the same category as Sundays. That is not what he is doing in this Bill. He has attempted to use the other section of the Act to declare each Saturday a bank holiday when in effect he really wants to make a Saturday, so far as banks are concerned, come within the same category as a Sunday.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What difference would that make?

Mr. PERKINS: No difference except that it is extremely bad drafting and I have heard members on that side of the House, on numerous occasions, complain about clumsy methods of dealing with parliamentary business.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Put the second reading through and assist him to improve it.

Mr. PERKINS: It is necessary, to do the job properly, to make other amendments to the legislation, particularly if the hon. member desires to tackle the business on a proper and orderly parliamentary basis. However, that is in passing and I would like to comment on the inconvenience that the measure would cause to the business community. Here again one can say that it is an extraordinarily clumsy and disorderly method of dealing with the problem of working days.

Obviously there have been many changes in recent times and one example, as the hon. member said, is that the Civil Ser-

vice now works only five days a week. We are tackling this problem in many bites and by tackling it in that fashion a great many anomalies are being created. Obviously, if some sections of the business community are to be asked to work on Saturday mornings, other sections of the business community which are complementary should also work until such time as we decide on a five-day working week. If a five-day working week is to be our policy then let us carry it out in an orderly fashion rather than create further anomalies such as this Bill will do. I realise that it is not possible for the member for Leederville to tackle the larger problem, but it is possible for Parliament as a whole to do so and I think it would be more desirable to do that than create further anomalies which will cause some difficulty to the business community.

Both the Minister and the member for Vasse quoted instances where inconvenience could be caused and I do not propose to cover the same ground. It is obvious that in country towns, for instance, when people want to do business on a Saturday morning it does suit them to do their banking business as well. If a man cannot do his banking business on that day there will be a tendency for Saturday morning trade generally to diminish. Some members in this House will say that that is desirable, but if it is, why not tackle the problem in a straightforward manner and cut out Saturday trading altogether?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They have in some places.

Mr. PERKINS: If that is to be the policy, then let us carry it out. We should know where we are going. But I would remind members that that will bring further problems in its train. I can remember, not long ago, when I brought a storm of opposition upon my head from members sitting on the other side of the House simply because I said that it was inevitable that Australian people would have to pay more for their food in the future than they have been accustomed to pay in the past.

If we are to have a five-day working week for the business community, we cannot expect the people in the rural community to observe different standards, and we will have to face up to the implications of those changes. Some day, perhaps, we in Australia will be able to enjoy a very high standard of living without working at all, but as far as one can see that day is a long way off. But it has been possible for some sections of the community to get favoured treatment at the expense of others. Times are changing and it has been noticeable in recent years that where the same facilities are not available there is a tendency for people to desert certain areas. I have quoted figures in this House from time to time about the drift of population from the country to the metropolitan area.

I put it to the House that if we are going to have a five-day week in industry it will be necessary to examine the difference that will make to the cost of goods throughout industry. I do not wish to develop that argument further at this moment but it is a question that has to be examined.

Hon. E. Nulsen: We have a partial five-day week in industry now. A number of firms are closed on Saturdays.

Mr. PERKINS: I am pointing out that it is being done in some cases and consequently some people are getting an advantage while others are not. I am suggesting that we should not create any more anomalies at the moment. I also think it is necessary to pay some heed to what effect this proposal is going to have on costs throughout industry generally. I give it as my considered opinion that it will have a very great effect on rural industries, and will inevitably result in demands being made by the rural community for considerably increased prices for their products, or otherwise it will be impossible to keep up rural production. At present we have the spectacle of the rural industries being left almost entirely to provide the goods for export to build up our overseas credit. The goldmining industry, which is represented by some members in this House, has shown diminishing production for some considerable time. I regard that as a form of rural industry, and unfortunately, many other private products have shown a decrease in production.

It is left almost entirely to wool to provide the major portion of the credits overseas which are necessary to pay for the imports into this country, and Australia is placed in the position that every time there is a fluctuation in wool prices there is either a small boom or a depression in the Australian economic position. Although that has no direct connection with the Bill, the measure can have some effect on costs throughout industry generally if the banking industry is permitted a five-day working week. This method of tackling the problem is going to produce more anomalies, and in my view it is not a desirable way. I have no doubt that it will suit the bank officers to have a five-day working week, because probably most of them would prefer it. But there are other means of obtaining that end and I think it should be considered as part of the general pattern of our working hours. I will not support the second reading.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville—in reply) [10.58]: I am surprised that so much interest was shown in this small matter and that so much misrepresentation should have taken place, and that members who have spoken should speak with such vehemence and force after having slept

through my speech when I introduced the measure, whereas I know that, had they read it, they would have found that I have answered all the arguments submitted. It leads me to doubt whether members on the other side of the House, if they have ears with which to hear, can understand—

Mr. Bovell: We read the Bill.

Mr. JOHNSON: —and whether, having eyes, they can read.

The Minister for Labour: Do not be like a silly schoolboy.

Mr. JOHNSON: I will—

The Minister for Labour: Do not be so dumb-witted.

Mr. JOHNSON: —deal with the speeches that have been made from the bottom up, or, in other words, backwards. The member for Roe has said that this is a piecemeal way of getting a five-day week. So it is. We have been doing that for a long time, if the member for Roe does not already know it. He may remember that the five-day working week was introduced about January, 1950, for practically the whole of industry and, if he looks at the awards of many industrial unions in which he is interested, including the shearers' award, he will find that they work a five-day week. The Bill is piecemeal and it is so designed. It is designed for the benefit of a group to which I have belonged for a long time.

The Bill is introduced with the object of benefiting that group because, as has been mentioned in the padded speeches of other members, banking is an important industry and, owing to the fact that so many other sections of commerce and industry are working a five-day week, the banking section is the most important of the clerical industry, and it is finding difficulty in obtaining first-class recruits, which it needs. I mentioned that the five-day week was introduced into some sections of industry later than others because it was found that some branches could not operate immediately under a five-day week.

Mr. Perkins: How will other industries get on if they do not introduce a five-day working week?

Mr. JOHNSON: They will have to find the recruits that are available to them. Farming is an essential industry; more so than is the banking industry.

Mr. Perkins: I thought that every part of industry was essential.

Mr. JOHNSON: Some parts are more essential than others. The clerical section's most important part is the banking industry. I am not pretending that banking is productive, because it is not, but it is essential. Without banking, there could be no exchange of goods.

Mr. Perkins: What about the people who distribute the goods? Do not you think they are just as important?

Mr. JOHNSON: The people who distribute goods are in the same position as those who are working a five-day week. In the main, they are working a 10-shift fortnight.

Mr. Oldfield: But most of them work back on Saturday morning.

Mr. JOHNSON: Let the hon. member have a look at his figures and stick to something he knows something about.

Mr. Oldfield: I think the hon. member will find that most men in the transport industry work on Saturday mornings.

Mr. JOHNSON: That might be so. I said that they work a 10-shift fortnight. I got the impression from what the member for Roe said that he desires a five-day week for industry throughout the State.

Mr. Perkins: I did not say that.

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member conveyed that impression. He thinks that the whole of industry should be granted the benefit of a five-day working week immediately. As I have said, the majority of those in industry already enjoy such a week and there is no reason why another section should not do so. If the member for Roe had taken notice of what I said when introducing the Bill, he would have realised that my object was to have it put on the statute book with a view to having it proclaimed at a later stage because, as I pointed out, it is impossible for this Parliament to grant a five-day week to those in the banking business without amendment to the Bank Holidays Act or the Commonwealth Bills of Exchange Act. We cannot amend the Bills of Exchange Act because we do not sit in the Commonwealth Legislature. For the information of the Minister, that Act lays down that a bank holiday is a non-working day and it was with that point of view that the Bill was drafted. We cannot amend that Act. I do not know whether the Minister knows that.

Mr. Hoar: He does not know anything.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Commonwealth Bills of Exchange Act, which he read but does not understand, says that a bank holiday is a non-business day. If we amend the appropriate State Act to make Saturday a holiday Saturday becomes a non-business day. I trust I make myself clear.

Mr. Perkins: Why do you not put it in the same category as Sunday?

Mr. JOHNSON: It could have been done in that way, but on the advice of a very clumsy drafting officer—in the opinion of the member for Roe—it was done this way; it was a legal man who suggested it.

Mr. Perkins: I cannot imagine that the member for Melville would be very happy about it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do not rope me into this. I have enough to deal with.

Mr. JOHNSON: From my limited experience of the Bank Holidays Act and the Bills of Exchange Act I think it is probably the best way, because we cannot insert into the Commonwealth Act the words, "and Saturdays" alongside "Sundays". The Commonwealth Act does remain the same. If we make Saturday a bank holiday it is effective. I do not claim to know very much, but it appears to me to be fairly simple English.

Mr. Perkins: Are you going to bring in another Bill to give the same advantages to shops and shopkeepers?

Mr. JOHNSON: I would certainly like to introduce a five-day week for all workers, but that would be opposed by members of the Government as intruding on the province of the Arbitration Court, which the Minister said this was doing, but which it is not. As I pointed out, the Arbitration Court cannot close banks on a Saturday. It can award a five-day week, but if it should do so the banks would have to remain open on Saturdays to comply with the Bills of Exchange Act because the Bills of Exchange Act says, as the Minister quoted, "Apart from the days as stated all other days are business days." If Saturday is not a bank holiday no matter what the Arbitration Court says the banks must operate on Saturdays and that means at overtime rates. I trust that point is clear.

In passing I wish to refer to the speech made by the member for Vasse. He tells me that none of his friends in the bank wrote to him either for or against the Bill. I have received correspondence not only from people in this State, but from the Eastern States as well in regard to it and they have all wished the Bill well. I was much impressed with the outstanding desire of the member for Vasse to give service in the banking industry. Yet this gentleman with such a great desire to give service to the banking community found reason to leave it.

Mr. Bovell: I was not thinking of banking officers. I was thinking of the rest of the community.

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member was talking about the wish of the members of the banking fraternity to give service to the customers of the banks. I will quote for him, as I did in my speech when I moved the second reading of the Bill, the results of a poll taken of those gentlemen. I am afraid the member for Vasse was asleep during this part. Ballot papers were distributed to 1,500 members of the Association of whom 1,206 or 91 per cent. took advantage of that ballot.

Mr. Bovell: You are the one that is asleep. I was talking of the effect of the service of the bank officers to the community, not to the bank officers.

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member should contain himself and not blow up; he is not a balloon. As I was saying the bank officers are so keen to render service on Saturdays to their customers that 91 per cent. took advantage of this ballot. Of those 1,129 or 94 per cent. voted yes. Six per cent. or 72 people voted against it. Had the member for Vasse still been in the service of the bank the number would have been 73, or perhaps he would not have taken advantage of the ballot as it was a secret and postal ballot. On the other hand it is possible that he would not have understood what it was about. I do feel that in his speech—

Mr. Bovell: I must say that in my banking experience—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. JOHNSON: I regret that owing to the accent with which the member for Vasse speaks I find it difficult to understand him.

The Minister for Labour: Don't be so funny! You want to hear your own voice; you are like a parrot.

Mr. JOHNSON: One of these days I will have something to say about the Minister and I will quote—

The Minister for Labour: Like a parrot.

Mr. JOHNSON: I would like to deal with the Minister's speech and once again, as I feel I should, backwards. He says it is premature.

The Minister for Labour: I would not like to say you were.

Mr. JOHNSON: I was not, I was a fortnight late, if the Minister must know. But why go into family history?

Mr. Hoar: So was the Minister.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He has been late ever since.

The Minister for Labour: I was well matured.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are dealing with banking!

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister says the measure is premature. If he feels that is so I still appeal to him and the supporters of the Government to put it on the statute book because if they will look at, read, and have explained to them the final provision, they will notice that the Act will come into being on a date to be proclaimed. If it is premature then the proclamation can perhaps be delayed a little.

Mr. Bovell: All Acts come into being when they are proclaimed.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is something the member for Vasse thinks he has taught me. I would also like to commend the Minister on the opportunity he grasped with a loud voice to beat his local drum. If the Bill is supported and his sup-

porters can read "Hansard" they will appreciate that part. To continue backwards through the Minister's speech, he comes to light with a letter from the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association saying that my mention of their business was totally incorrect. I would suggest he replies to them saying that they should not—I emphasise the "not"—take notice of newspaper articles and think they are totally accurate; they should refer to "Hansard."

The Minister for Labour: I suggest you write that letter.

Mr. JOHNSON: If the Minister wishes me to do so I will.

The Minister for Labour: Please do.

Mr. JOHNSON: With the Minister's authority?

The Minister for Labour: Yes, I will give you their address if you like.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is not totally incorrect, as members will find if they refer to my speech. I said that they worked with very much reduced staffs. I did not say that the offices were closed. What I said was that they had so little business that they were able to do it with a reduced staff and that some of the staff put in an appearance on Saturday only once in six weeks.

Mr. Manning: You would make a poor old cow farmer.

Mr. JOHNSON: I have no ambition to be one.

The Minister for Labour: Cows work seven days a week.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: And still we are short of butter.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I know one cow that does not.

Mr. JOHNSON: As to the letter from the Chamber of Commerce mentioned by the Minister to the effect that retailers and others held large sums in cash which might tempt people to steal it, if he knew something of business, he would be aware that the banks are open on Saturday morning from 9.30 to 11 a.m. and that the takings in retail businesses on Saturday mornings are in the main unbanked that day. The banking business done on Saturday mornings is from Friday's trading and has already been held on the premises of the business people over one long dark night, during which it has been under the care of our most efficient police force, who would also be on duty on Saturday, because they have a roster system and also on duty on Sunday.

Mr. Bovell: What about giving the police a five-day week?

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member should look into matters before interjecting in that strain because the police work a five-day roster system.

Mr. Bovell: The police protect the community seven days a week. You want the banks to open on only five days a week.

Mr. JOHNSON: I believe that the Chamber of Commerce possibly took the contents of a letter dealing with Friday night late shopping because it reveals the same outlook and thought. Why should not we progress? The Minister said that the Commonwealth Bank need not conform to the amendment. Does he believe that? Did someone advise him to that effect?

The Minister for Labour: Do you think I would say it if I did not believe it?

Mr. JOHNSON: I should say that the Minister would believe anything placed in front of him because he read that portion of his remarks from copious notes. If he made inquiries from a competent person, he would find that the Commonwealth Bank does conform to State laws and that in Tasmania it did conform to the laws of that State. Thus that point has been completely cleared, but if he desires further confirmation, I assure him that members of the Commonwealth Bank staff are as keen as are members of the private bank staffs for this reform, and that there would be some difficulty in persuading Commonwealth Bank officials to continue giving a six-day-a-week service while others in the same business were giving a service on only five days. It is a practice of the Commonwealth Bank to conform to State laws whether there is a legal requirement or not. If the staff of the Attorney General examined the proposal, I think he would be advised that the Commonwealth Bank would be required to abide by the effect of the Commonwealth Bills of Exchange Act in this State.

The idea that most amused me in the Minister's reply was that the Bank Holidays Act was never intended to grant a five-day week. The Act was passed in 1884. In that year retail businesses were working considerably more than a 40-hour week—probably somewhere in the region of 60 hours, but, like the Minister, I do not remember. Banking business was then available to the public during the same hours as at present, with the exception that the opening time on Saturday is now 9.30 instead of 10 o'clock and that the closing hour is 1 a.m. instead of noon. Consequently, during the period when ordinary business hours have been reduced from 60 to 40, the banking service to the public has been reduced by only half an hour.

Does the Minister believe that, because it was good enough for him in 1884, it should be good enough for the banking fraternity in 1952? Other people have progressed in that time. Why not bank employees? Reference was made to the fact that the Bank of New South Wales is dealing with claims before the State Arbitration Court and that there is not included a claim for a five-day week. If the Minister sought advice, he would find

that those proceedings are designed only to bring that bank into line with the award reached by agreement with the other private trading banks.

The Minister for Labour: That is what I said.

Mr. JOHNSON: The policy of the Bank Officials Association of Western Australia Union of Workers is to try to deal with all the private banks as a single body—a practice that I believe members on both sides of the House regard as sound. If the Minister made inquiry, he would find that a claim for a five-day week was included in the original log which led to the award with the other banks.

Mr. Yates: Is it essential that bank officials should have Saturday morning off?

Mr. JOHNSON: Like other people, they want a five-day week, and they want the Saturday morning free because that is the sensible day to take the time off. Owing to the change in industry resulting from the adoption of a five-day week in lieu of a six-day week, Saturday morning has ceased to be as important as it was in banking circles, and to close the banks on that day would have less real effect on business. I think I have made the position as clear as it was when I introduced the Bill. I know that the speeches of the Minister, the member for Vasse and the member for Roe have tended to cloud the issue and that not a terrific amount of attention has been given to everything I have said. But I feel that I have made it fairly clear that if this provision goes on the statute book, and is not proclaimed until such time as the court or the employers will agree to a five-day week, that will make it possible for the court to grant a five-day week or for the employers to agree to a five-day week without having to make an approach to the legislature.

It is impossible for a five-day week to be granted in this industry, except by means of this or some similar legislation. I have made it clear that it is desired by the people most concerned—the employees—and there has been only one small opponent, namely, the Chamber of Commerce—not the Chamber of Manufactures, by the way, which represents industries operating a five-day week, and they are productive industries in the main.

Mr. Bovell: This is a protective industry; it may not be a productive one.

Mr. JOHNSON: Would the hon. member inform me from whom and from what it is protected?

Mr. Bovell: It protects the savings of the people.

The Minister for Education: He said "protective," not "protected."

Mr. JOHNSON: I regret that I was unable once again to understand the hon. member's diction.

Mr. Bovell: You require to go back to school.

Mr. JOHNSON: That may be a reflection upon my schooling or it may be a reflection upon the clarity of speech of the member for Vasse or perhaps on the audibility of voices in the Chamber.

The Minister for Labour: Why are you stonewalling your own Bill?

Mr. JOHNSON: I want to make this point clear. Without this amendment, a five-day week cannot be granted. If this measure is put on the statute book, it does not have to be declared immediately. It is desired by the people in the industry and it will not affect any material section of banking customers to any marked degree. The statement by the Minister that the Commonwealth Bank would be outside the Act is not borne out by the facts.

Question put and negatived.

Bill defeated.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE DEPUTY PREMIER (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [11.24]: I have no objection to the motion, but I want to voice a protest on behalf of private members, particularly on this side of the House. I think it would be an act of courtesy on the part of those who decide on these special adjournments and alterations of the usual sitting hours if members were given some prior notice of the Government's intentions. I understand this decision was reached yesterday, and it would be an advantage, particularly to country members who have some difficulty in arranging visits to their constituencies if, when those responsible deem it necessary to alter the times of sittings, they would notify members so that they could arrange to visit their electorates.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [11.25]: I very much regret that the Deputy Premier, on behalf of the Government, has moved this motion. If we take the period of last week and this week, we find that up to this time Parliament has been sitting, in all, for about 14½ hours. It is known, of course, that sittings were shortened last week and on one day abandoned altogether because the Royal Show was under way. Nevertheless, on the occasions on which we met last week, the sittings were very short. The sitting yesterday was extremely short, too. Today we have had a long sitting, and now it is proposed to abandon tomorrow's sitting altogether.

I think the reason for this is to be found mainly in the lack of Government business on the notice paper. If the House were to meet tomorrow the Government business on the notice paper could be easily disposed of, to the extent that would be

possible, in about two hours. The Government would not want to be left at the end of tomorrow's sitting, even if it were only a short sitting, with little or no business on the notice paper for the following Tuesday. The decision not to sit tomorrow enables the Government to carry some business over on the notice paper until next Tuesday.

By comparison with the small amount of Government business on the notice paper, we find that there is a large amount of private members' business. From experience, we know, too, just what is likely to happen to most of this business in a week or two weeks' time. There are some very important items of business on the notice paper put there by private members. For instance, we have one motion calling for the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the activities of a certain firm located in Perth. Very serious charges were made against that firm in this House. Those charges were made, if I remember rightly, at least three weeks ago.

Nothing has been done since to enable the firm to have what it should certainly have—an early or a reasonably early opportunity to make its reply to the charges before a tribunal which could be looked upon as being capable of dealing exhaustively and fairly with the situation. I had hoped the Government would have come to some decision on that issue long before now, and have made some public announcement about it, so that whatever proposal it had in mind, could have been put in train prior to this. If a sitting were held tomorrow, the whole of it could well be devoted to a consideration of private members' business. Last week was lost completely to those members with items on the notice paper, because on private members' day the House did not meet at all, but was adjourned all through the day.

It was people's day at the Royal Show, and it was reasonably thought, by all members, I believe, that they should have an opportunity to be at the Show, and not have to meet to attend to parliamentary duties either in the afternoon or the evening. It would be a very good gesture on the part of the Government if, in the circumstances, it were to allow Parliament to meet tomorrow for the usual hours from, say, 2.30 to 6.10 p.m., and to devote the whole period to a further consideration of private members' business. That procedure would not only assist those members who have items on the notice paper, but would also help the Government to get the notice paper cleared more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Therefore I appeal to the Deputy Premier to reconsider the question in the light of what I have said. I hope he will be able to see his way clear to withdraw the motion, and

to allow the House to meet tomorrow even though the whole of the sitting be devoted to a consideration of private members' business.

MR. MOIR (Boulder) [11.32]: I, too, would like to add my protest to the proposal. There is quite a lot of private members' business on the notice paper—14 items comprising motions and Bills—while the Government has five Bills, one of which is in the Committee stage and four which have to be read a second time. As one who has an item on the notice paper, I feel that the House could well meet tomorrow and deal either with the Government business, and thus enable private members' business to come further forward on the notice paper, or else allow private members' business to be considered. I point out that last week we sat on the 7th October from 7.30 to 10.29 p.m.—a matter of 2 hours 59 minutes and on the 9th October from 4.30 to 6.6 p.m.—a matter of one hour 36 minutes, or a total of 4 hours 35 minutes. Now we are confronted with the position that the House has sat for two days this week and is now to be adjourned. I, and other Goldfields members, who cannot get transport to our electorates until Friday might have to fill in time on Thursday and Friday.

We should be allowed to bring forward matters of vital importance to our electors. The motion standing in my name on the notice paper is most important to thousands of people, not only in my electorate, but in all the Goldfields electorates—that is the question of a Select Committee to inquire into the goldmining industry. I hope the Deputy Premier will reconsider the question of adjourning the House in such a way that we can get on with the business and not have a repetition of what occurred at the end of last session, when we had to sit here in the small hours of the morning, night after night, finally ending up with a 28½ hour sitting, to dispose of the Government business. Voices at that time were raised against the procedure, and we received an assurance from the Premier that he would give special consideration to methods of dealing with the business brought before the House. I think we can justifiably ask that tomorrow be not set aside, but that we meet here to transact the business of the people we represent.

MR. HOAR (Warren) [11.36]: I, too, express my disapproval of the Government's intention to waste completely the usual sitting hours tomorrow. Last evening the Premier, in reply to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, attempted to give some assurance that the claims of private members would receive due attention during the session, but he did not impress me that he felt he could do much

about it. It did not seem to me that the Premier had a very clear idea as to how this could be effected, bearing in mind the considerable number of private members' items on the notice paper. Therefore it struck me at the time, as it does now, that quite probably a number of these items which are important, not only to the members moving them, but to the great bulk of the people who are interested in the subject—many of them, might not be considered this session.

There is an opportunity now, especially as Government business is so sparse on the notice paper, to give private members their right to express themselves, by way of motions or otherwise, according to their requirements. But if we lose tomorrow entirely, it does not need much imagination to know that a considerable number of the items on the notice paper—quite apart from others that might be added in the future—will not receive any attention at all. If that occurs, considering the state of the notice paper, it will be a disgrace to this Parliament. I have in mind one item in particular—the one in relation to the proposed inquiry into soldier settlement. This is tremendously important to the State.

According to the position of that item on the notice paper now, it is doubtful whether it will come up for discussion prior to another two or three weeks; and if we should have an early ending of the parliamentary session, it is quite likely that the possibility of holding such an inquiry as I propose would not eventuate, or would be useless during the course of this Parliament. Bearing in mind that there might be an early election next year, it simply means that a motion of this importance to the State as a whole, and to soldier settlers in particular, might be totally disregarded.

An opportunity exists tomorrow at least to bring further forward an item of this description which is now almost at the bottom of the notice paper. The Government could use the time available tomorrow to give private members the right to express themselves. There is on the notice paper of the Legislative Council a notice of motion on the question that I have mentioned, because apparently members there feel that it may not be the intention of the Government to have the question debated here if it can possibly avoid doing so. It would be a disgraceful thing if the Government were to waste time tomorrow instead of using it profitably to debate matters of this description. In order to test the feeling of the House, I move an amendment—

That the words "four thirty p.m. on Tuesday next" be struck out and the words "two fifteen p.m. tomorrow" inserted in lieu.

THE DEPUTY PREMIER (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling—on amendment) [11.42]: Something over 24 hours ago—this will answer the member for Kalgoorlie—the Premier advised the Leader of the Opposition of his desire in this matter, which arises primarily from the sudden call he has had to Canberra. I understood from him—I am surprised now to learn the contrary—that the Leader of the Opposition at that time did not disagree to the proposal.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: There was nothing definite about it last night. I have here the notes that passed between the Premier and myself about it.

THE DEPUTY PREMIER: I know he mentioned it to the hon. member this evening, but he definitely told the Leader of the Opposition what was in his mind yesterday. If the House sat tomorrow, it would be extremely inconvenient to me, and the greater part of its time would be taken up, I think, by the introduction of the legislation concerning the B.H.P. The Leader of the Opposition knows that for public reasons it would be convenient for me not to have to be here tomorrow.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: There are other Ministers.

THE DEPUTY PREMIER: Admittedly, but in the circumstances outlined I would point out that it has been the practice of this House over many years for the Government to have some rights in such a matter. I oppose the amendment.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth—on amendment) [11.45]: I do not think the Deputy Premier did justice to himself, as the bone of contention is the shoddy treatment being accorded to private members.

The Deputy Premier: No shoddy treatment is being accorded to private members.

MR. GRAHAM: There appears to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the Government to prevent private members proceeding with the items standing in their names on the notice paper.

The Deputy Premier: I assure you that is not so.

MR. GRAHAM: Last Thursday, we all expected to sit after tea, but did not do so, presumably because the Government had not sufficient legislation ready, though there was a whole stack of private members' business on the notice paper. I think every member was amazed last night when the House rose at approximately 9.30, as we had then opportunity of dealing with private members' business if the Government had not its legislative programme ready. Standing in the name of private members on the notice paper there are seven Bills and nine motions, four of which are seeking inquiries. If they are agreed to, there will be considerable work for certain members to do

before the end of this session of Parliament, and so the matter is of considerable urgency.

It is unfortunate that the Premier has been called away and that the Deputy Premier has an important public engagement tomorrow, but a study of the list of private members' business reveals that there are only two items that require any attention on the part of Ministers—the Minister for Lands on the question of super and the Minister for Housing in relation to gold production. All the other items could be proceeded with without the intervention of Ministers except possibly to secure the adjournment of the debate. In the absence of the Premier and Deputy Premier it would be possible to make considerable inroads into private members' business now outstanding.

With other members, I believe that much of what appears on the notice paper will not receive adequate consideration, and in that I refer particularly to the several private members' Bills, because if success is attendant on the efforts of private members, it will be useless for those Bills to be forwarded to another place in the final week or so of the session without the originator of each Bill being able to be in that Chamber for the purpose of steering the measure through. Such a process is difficult at any time, let alone in the dying hours of a Parliament.

Why did the Deputy Premier deliberately avoid the question of giving attention to private members' business? The Government seems to be exceedingly selfish in that regard. So long as it can arrange the business to suit its own convenience, private members can go hang. I have complained on many occasions of the shabby treatment afforded private members. I assure the Deputy Premier that there has been no planned campaign to clutter up the notice paper, but private members have submitted for consideration matters of interest to themselves and the public generally. It is to be expected that in some cases they are anxious to advance certain matters immediately before an election for their own very good reasons.

Mr. SPEAKER: There has been no reply to the debate yet.

Mr. GRAHAM: No. The amendment was moved following the complaint that the opportunity available tomorrow should be seized to deal with some of the items appearing on the notice paper in the names of private members. If the Government has nothing ready, or if it does not suit the convenience of particular Ministers tomorrow, there is nothing to prevent us from endeavouring to clear the notice paper which, after all, would be of some advantage to the Government because some of the items would be dealt with and perhaps eliminated. So I ask the

House to agree to the reasonable amendment that has been submitted by the member for Warren.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam—on amendment) [11.51]: I want to speak for about two minutes only. Last night the Premier mentioned to me that he would be leaving Perth this evening and that the Deputy Premier would be absent from Perth on Thursday. He told me that in view of those circumstances he thought the House would not be sitting on Thursday, and he undertook to let me know as early as possible this afternoon. Late this afternoon he sent me this note—

We will not be sitting tomorrow. I will be leaving after tea and will return on Monday night.

I sent this note to the Premier—

What is wrong with sitting tomorrow to make some progress with private members' business? There was no discussion of such business last Wednesday because of Royal Show holiday. I would give you a pair and we would also provide one for Arthur Watts.

You will see from that, Mr. Speaker, that we were quite prepared to co-operate with the Premier and the Deputy Premier to ensure that the Government would be at no voting disadvantage in the event of the House sitting tomorrow, and in the further event of some vote having to be taken. I cannot see any reason why, simply because the Premier is away and the Deputy Premier will be absent tomorrow, there should be no sitting of the House. We have the Minister for Works, the Attorney General, the Chief Secretary and also the Minister for Health, who are all senior Ministers.

Surely those Ministers would be capable of looking after the affairs of the House from say 2.30 to 6 p.m., a period of less than four hours. I think that this amendment should be carried, and I am surprised and sorry that the Deputy Premier was not able to see his way clear to agree to it. I hope the majority of members will vote for it.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	15
Noes	.....	20
Majority against		5

Ayes.	
Mr. Brady	Mr. Moir
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Kelly
Mr. May	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Brand	Mr. Oldfield
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Owen
Mr. Corneli	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Read
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hill	Mr. Yates
Mr. Manning	Mr. Boveil

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. Ackland
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Needham	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Rodoreda	Mr. Totterdell

Amendment thus negatived.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.56 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 16th October, 1952.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Road Cartage.

Hon. A. R. JONES (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

In view of the Minister's reply to Mr. Loton's question to the effect that, in special circumstances, a farmer's carrier could be granted a license or permit to carry superphosphate for a farmer and save the farmer the terminal charge, will the Minister instruct the Transport Board accordingly as it is unaware of this arrangement?

The MINISTER replied:

I do not think the Transport Board is unaware of the position, because that was what was carried at a meeting of the Equalisation Committee. However, I will inquire into the matter to see what cases may have been submitted and what their fate may have been.

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

As to Cundee Lee Mission Water Supply.

Hon. G. BENNETTS (for Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is he aware—

- of the dire hardship imposed on the Cundee Lee Mission through lack of water supply;
- that it is paying approximately 1s. per gallon for water from the Commonwealth railways;
- that it is trying to sink bores with a jumper bar by hand, because the Government will not obtain drilling rig for it;
- that the progress and advancement of the whole mission is halted because of lack of water;
- that the total cost to the Government in the past two years of establishing this mission has not exceeded £400 (exclusive of rations);
- that all cost of establishing the mission over and above this sum has been borne by the missionaries?

(2) Will he give an assurance of his full support in obtaining the needed gear for this mission to carry on its good work for the natives at this end of the Trans. line?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) (a) The missionaries were warned by the Commissioner of Native Affairs that water would be a major problem, and that they should concentrate on locating an adequate supply before commencing work among the natives.

In November, 1951, the Department of Native Affairs received two separate requests from the mission, one for assistance in excavating dams, and a verbal one for assistance in obtaining a boring plant. The mission was asked to specify exactly what assistance it desired but has not yet given this information.

The field superintendent of the mission discussed the problem a few weeks ago with the Commissioner, who advised him