

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Before the tenants went in, they had to dispose of three-quarters of their furniture because the houses were so small. They had to dispose of furniture gathered during a lifetime. We as a Government do not want to build anything of an emergency nature. When we do build houses, we do so as a permanent measure.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: But you are meeting an emergency condition.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the emergency houses could also disappear after the emergency disappeared, it would be another matter. Everyone knows that a shack will remain a shack for all time.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I disagree with you entirely. I have seen a few, and they are quite comfortable. Additions are being made to them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pleased that the hon. member is proud of them. I am sure I am not, irrespective of which Government built them. I would be just as ashamed of them if my Government had built them. But I am sure that my Government will not build such shacks.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I am also sure that members of the previous Government are also ashamed of them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The three main features of the Bill are the setting up of the court; an attempt to do something to stave off the avalanche of evictions; and covering the period back to the 1st May. In this legislation we believe that something fair and reasonable has been put up. If this House agrees with the Bill, very few people will have cause for complaint. When members speak on the second reading, I would like them to tell me what parties would be hurt by the proposals, and who would have cause for complaint. No doubt, many will complain, but I only want those who complain to do so if they are not getting a fair deal. If members can put up something on those lines, I am prepared to give consideration to their views.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Do you think it is fair for any Government to put up a conglomeration of words such as these and call them a Bill?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do. It is a good Bill.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: I do not call it a Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would have thought that the hon. member, whose education went on for many years longer than mine, would at least have understood the common English language in the Bill. For myself, I have no difficulty in understanding it.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What is meant by Clause 15?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I shall tell the hon. member at the right time. I cannot be sidetracked. I have always been careful during the second reading to deal with Bills only in a general way. I have done that all along. To particularise, we must get down to the Committee stage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 8th July, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.**RAILWAYS.***(a) As to Diesel and Road Bus Passengers.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways:

What has been the average number of passengers, per trip, carried during the last year by—

- (a) Wildflower class diesel;
- (b) Governor class diesel;
- (c) semi-trailer railway road bus;
- (d) rigid type railway road bus?

The MINISTER replied:

Statistics for the different types or diesel railcars and road buses are not kept for railway purposes, but the records are being examined to see whether the information required can be ascertained.

(b) As to Sleeper Chairs for Ravensthorpe-Hopetoun Buses.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the long distance involved and the absence of any alternative form of public transport for the more distant portion of the route, will the Railway Department arrange for sleeper chairs similar to those provided by the Midland Railway Co. on its Geraldton service, to be installed on buses used for the Perth to Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun route?

The MINISTER replied:

It is understood the sleeper chairs in the Midland Railway Co.'s buses are used on the overnight service only. The Hopetoun run is regarded as a daylight service, and no alteration of the existing seating, which is of sponge rubber, is proposed at present.

(c) As to Perth-Merredin Diesel and Bus Services, Road Mileage.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways: What is the passenger miles to potential percentage for the Perth to Merredin route of—

- (a) diesel rail cars;
- (b) railway road service buses?

The MINISTER replied:

- (a) This information is not available.
- (b) 52.86 per cent.

(d) As to Road Bus Service, Finances and Condition.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways:

To the 31st May, 1954—

- (1) What is the total capital cost of the railway road service bus fleet?
- (2) How much of this has been written off and repaid by the railway road services?

- (3) What is the remaining value on the books to depreciate and how many buses have been fully depreciated?
- (4) What number of buses is in the fleet?
- (5) How many of these buses were placed in service—
 - (a) before the 1st March, 1950;
 - (b) since the 1st March, 1950?
- (6) What is the condition of each class of the above?

The MINISTER replied:

To the 29th May, 1954—

- (1) £300,780.
- (2) £227,377 has been debited to the road services operating account.
- (3) £43,342—22 fully depreciated.
- (4) Fifty-four.
- (5) (a) 30; (b) 24.
- (6) Good.

(e) As to Fires Caused by Locomotives and Coal.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What steps, if any, are being taken by the W.A.G.R. to prevent the incidence next summer of fires caused by locomotives?

(2) Is it the intention of the W.A.G.R. to increase the use of Newcastle coal in agricultural areas next summer?

(3) Is there any evidence that Collie coal, which has been stockpiled in the open for lengthy periods, is more likely to cause fires than freshly mined coal?

(4) What further experiments, if any, are being carried out with existing or new types of spark arresters, with a view to further reduction of the danger from fires?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The routine overhaul and replacement where necessary of all spark arresting appliances. The issue to the staff of instructions on fire precautions, based on daily reports from the Weather Bureau. Advice to adjacent land owners of the date of proposed burning off by railway gangs. The provision of thousands of miles of fire-breaks and burning off of the railway reserve, which last year was estimated to cost £36,000.

(2) Yes.

(3) Collie coal is not suitable for stockpiling, except in water conservation, and except in very unusual circumstances is not resorted to.

(4) The department is keeping abreast of the latest developments on other railway systems. The master mechanics front-end type, which was designed overseas, has been chosen as the standard for the W.A.G.R. and is considered to be the most effective type evolved to date.

(f) *As to New Line.*

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that a railway line has recently been constructed across the Albany Highway about 42 miles from Perth?

(2) Who constructed this line?

(3) By what authority—statutory or otherwise—has it been authorised?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Millars' Timber and Trading Co. Ltd.

(3) By the authority of the Minister for Local Government under the powers contained in the Road Districts Act, 1919-48.

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS.

As to Number and Wage Levels of Victims.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Labour:

The report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, as deposited on the Table of the House on the 6th July, reveals that 221 serious accidents and 1,302 minor accidents took place in the year to December, 1952.

(1) Can he state the relative figures for the year 1953 and for any of the completed quarters of 1954?

(2) Can he state the number of days incapacity represented by the accidents?

(3) Can he indicate approximately the wage level of the persons to whom these accidents occur?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) These figures are at present being compiled and will be made available as soon as they are completed.

(3) No.

MOTOR VEHICLES.

As to Use for Droving Stock.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has a regulation (No. 82A) recently been made which provides that a person shall not use a motor vehicle for the droving of cattle on a road?

(2) Are sheep included in the definition of cattle?

(3) Is this regulation applicable to roads in the country districts controlled by local authorities?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) Yes.

HOUSING.

As to Acquisition of Busselton Aerodrome Site.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Housing:

Concerning the closing down of the Commonwealth aerodrome at Busselton, will he give consideration to the possibility of acquiring this land, which comprises an area of 80 to 90 acres, being fully sewered and with a water supply installed, for the purpose of erecting Commonwealth-State houses and also the building of houses under the State Housing Act?

The MINISTER replied:

The Busselton aerodrome area has not been considered as a housing area for the following reasons:—

(1) It is too remote from the town residential area.

(2) The land is mostly low-lying and unsuitable and is bisected by the Lennox drain.

(3) Under the Busselton Road Board town planning scheme, the land is considered to have an agricultural potential, although it is understood that the local authorities are very keen to maintain it as an aerodrome.

(4) The present demand for housing land in Busselton is along the coastline towards the Quindalup-rd.

STATE HOUSING ACT.

As to Conflict of Interpretations.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Housing:

As the legal interpretation of Section 22 of the State Housing Act Amendment Act, 1950, given to at least one local government authority is at variance with that of the Crown Law Department, would he again refer this section of the Act to the department for consideration?

The MINISTER replied:

If the hon. member will submit a copy of the opinion referred to, arrangements will be made for it to be referred to the Crown Law Department.

ROADS.

(a) *As to Fremantle-Midland Junction Route.*

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has any finality been reached with regard to the route of the Fremantle-Midland Junction through-road in the Wattle Grove-Forrestfield-Maida Vale districts?

(2) Is survey work on this route being co-ordinated with that of the proposed route of the Midland Junction-Cannington railway?

(3) When is it likely that an official announcement on this matter will be made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes.

(3) It is expected that an announcement can be made in a few weeks' time.

(b) *As to Rehabilitation of Guildford-rd.*

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware of the condition of the surface of Guildford-rd. between the Mt. Lawley subway and Grosvenor-rd.?

(2) Does he not agree that this section is in urgent need of resurfacing?

(3) If so, will he take steps to have this section drag-surfaced immediately and if not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Such work is necessary but not relatively urgent.

(3) Other sections assessed to have a greater relative urgency for treatment will absorb all the funds available.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

(a) *As to Completion of "B" Station, South Fremantle.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

When is it anticipated that "B" station at South Fremantle will be completed?

The MINISTER replied:

The third unit was brought in early this year. The fourth unit should be running before the end of this year.

(b) *As to Generators at East Perth.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it still the intention of the Commission to replace a number of the old and out-of-date generators at East Perth, with a modern 25,000 kw. unit?

(2) If so, when will these alterations be made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, but with a 30,000 kw. modern unit.

(2) The order has been placed and foundation work has started. If the contractors keep to their schedule, it is anticipated that the unit will be running in the latter half of 1956.

EDUCATION.

(a) *As to East Maylands School and Adjacent Swamp.*

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

As it is now agreed that the swamp adjoining the East Maylands School constitutes a danger to health, does he not agree that this work should be considered more urgent than other drainage works?

The MINISTER replied:

No. Any danger to the health of school children lies in physical contact with the swamp, and the action taken to fence it is considered adequate to guard against such danger. The urgency of the work will be considered in relation to other drainage requirements where very high water levels affect living conditions.

(b) *As to Supply Teachers and Position of Headmasters' Wives.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What is his policy regarding the employment of headmasters' wives as supply teachers?

(2) Does he realise that recent dismissals of headmasters' wives have caused some disaffection amongst headmasters in the department?

(3) In the appointment or the dismissal of supply teachers, does he not agree that the primary considerations should be qualifications, experience and efficiency?

(4) If the answer to No. (3) is substantially in the negative, upon what basis are appointments or dismissals made?

(5) If the answer to No. (3) is substantially correct, does it mean that headmasters' wives are not good teachers, and lack qualifications, experience and efficiency?

(6) Does the policy, spoken of, apply to the wives of first assistants or deputy headmasters?

(7) If not, why is there any differentiation?

(8) How does he justify the sectional victimisation of headmasters' wives?

(9) Does he not think that the policy of the department as suggested by the recent dismissals of headmasters' wives victimises or penalises both the headmasters and their wives?

(10) Does he think that such a policy is good in principle?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The policy is not to employ as supply teachers the wives of senior officers of the department who are in receipt of high salaries.

(2) There have been no "dismissals" of teachers. Supply teachers are employed only as the staffing needs of the department dictate and, when their services are no longer required, their appointments are lapsed. I am unaware of any disaffection amongst headmasters.

(3), (4) and (5) Consideration is given to qualifications, experience and efficiency, but other factors also must be considered, such as availability for appointment in all locations, suitability for the particular vacancy in question, etc.

(6) No, nor does it apply to wives of lower paid headmasters.

(7) Answered by No. (1).

(8) The Government considers it preferable to employ a person who needs the money rather than one whose husband is in a well-paid position.

(9) No.

(10) Yes.

MEAT.

As to Shortage of Supplies.

Mr. NIMMO (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Is he aware that quite a lot of suburban butchers' shops have not received one side of lamb this week and that shops will be out of meat by the week-end?

The MINISTER replied:

I am not aware of any such position, but will make inquiries for the hon. member.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon.

H. H. Styants—Kalgoorlie) [2.27]: Before proceeding to deal with the affairs of the department for which I am Minister, I should like to express my appreciation of the action of the member for Roe who conceded me the right to continue the debate at this stage because I shall be absent in the country districts next week.

I wish to deal firstly with the general position of the Railway Department. It is true that for the last 12 months a very large sum is shown as a deficit, and I am not going to hold out much hope to Parliament that the financial position will be very greatly improved in future. Although there was a deficit on last year's operations of £2,900,000 including interest and depreciation, the amount was £2,750,000 less than the deficit for the previous year. The preceding year does not afford a particularly good guide because the metal trades strike occurred in that period and practically immobilised the railways for at least three months.

The reason why I cannot hold out much hope of a substantial improvement this year is that the costs of operating the railways have increased to a much greater extent than has the freight and fare schedule of the department. Before passing on to give the House an example of how impossible it is for the department to balance its budget under those conditions, I may say that while I do not think the financial position of the railways will greatly improve this year, I believe that on the score of efficiency there will be very considerable improvement.

To give members an idea of what the department is up against in the matter of balancing the budget, I should like to quote the percentage increases that have taken place in the main items of expenditure and the increase in the freight rates for the principal commodities transported from time to time. Coal in 1939, taking 100 as the index figure, cost 14s. 2d. per ton. In 1947 the index figure had risen to 167 and the cost to 23s. 7d. per ton. In 1953 the index figure had gone to 182 and the average cost of coal was 68s. 5d. per ton, and it was 65s. per ton for coal from the Amalgamated Collieries group. So the cost of coal consumed by the railways increased by 382 per cent. Rails, which are in short supply and which we need, in 1939, again taking 100 as the index figure, cost £10; in 1941 the index figure had risen to 151 and the cost to £15 1s. 8d. In 1953 the index figure was 329 and the cost £32 17s. per ton.

In 1939 sleepers, again taking 100 as the index figure, cost £3 15s. per load of timber to provide 25 sleepers in 7ft. lengths. In 1947 the cost had just doubled by going to £7 10s. per load, and in 1953 the index figure had increased from 100 to 508 and the cost per load to £19 1s. In other words, the increased cost of sleepers was 408 per cent. above what it was in 1939.

Let us look at the increases that have taken place in regard to some of our chief commodities. The figures I am about to give may be out 1 or 2 per cent., but they will give a fairly accurate estimate of the position to members. Wheat, which represents 20 per cent. of our freight, was 1.12d. per ton mile in 1939. In 1947 it was the same, but in 1953 it had increased to 2.36d. per ton mile, and in 1954 to 2.83d. Super, which constitutes 10 per cent. of the traffic hauled by the railways, was .47d. per ton mile in 1939. In 1947 it was .48d. per ton mile; in 1953 it was 2.17d. and in 1954 it was 2.92d.

Coal, which constitutes 17½ per cent. of our haulage, was on a freight rate of 1.17d. per ton mile in 1939. In 1947 it was 1.26d.; in 1953 it was 2.63d. and in 1954 it was 2.84d. The totals of these classes of freights, without including live-stock, were in 1939, 1.71d. per ton mile average; in 1947, 1.79d.; in 1953, 3.46d., and in 1954, 4.03d. I draw attention to the fact that the member for Moore would induce people to believe, if they were not in possession of these facts, that the whole of the increases in railway freights—or the major portion of them—were imposed last year by this Government.

Let us have a look at what has occurred. The two principal items which the hon. member usually mentions when debating freights are wheat and super. In 1953, when the present Government took over, the rate for wheat was 2.365d. per ton mile. In 1947, when the hon. member's Government assumed office, it was

1.12d. per ton mile, so actually the freight on wheat was increased by his own Government to the tune of 100 per cent. In 1954 it was raised from 2.36d. per ton mile to 2.83d., which is a fraction of a penny. Yet the hon. member makes accusations against the Minister for Railways and the Labour Government and says that they are totally responsible for the increase in the freights. As a matter of fact, whereas the freight on wheat was increased by more than 100 per cent. by his own Government in 1952, in 1954 the increase in wheat was only a fraction of a penny. Super, in 1939, was on a freight rate of .47d. per ton mile; and in 1953 it had risen to 2.17d. per ton mile.

Hon. D. Brand: Did not you say during the elections that you would progressively reduce them?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Never mind what we said!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It suits you. You come back to it!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Do not start to crow too early because later I want to say a few things to the Leader of the Opposition about railway finances, and the way he let private contractors fleece the Railway Department.

Hon. D. Brand: You will have difficulty in proving that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I will tell you how you are fleecing the public, too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The freight on superphosphate had risen from .47d. per ton mile in 1947, when the present Opposition took over as the Government, to 2.17d. per ton mile in 1953—an increase of about 400 per cent. But I do not hear the member for Moore deploring that fact and making accusations against the then Minister for Railways in his own Government. We find that in 1954 the amount increased from 2.17d. to 2.92d. per ton mile. Whilst the member for Moore might, in his own electorate, put up a good case without any refutation and say that the Labour Government is responsible for the high freights today, a perusal of these figures will show that the Labour Government is not responsible for them, but the hon. member's own Government, the members of which are now sitting in Opposition.

Mr. Ackland: Do you agree that you put the rates up 35 per cent.? That is what I talked about.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The total average freight in 1939 was 1.71d. per ton mile and in 1953, solely by the action of the present Opposition when it was the Government, it had risen to 3.46d. In 1954 it rose from 3.46d. to 4.03d.—again a fraction of a penny. The increase was a little over a halfpenny per ton mile whereas the previous Government had raised the amount by 200 or 300 per cent.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Yet you plonk more on!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the answer to any claim by Opposition members that this Government is responsible for having tremendously inflated railway freights in Western Australia. I am not blaming the Opposition for having raised them because it was absolutely essential to do so. In my opinion, the freight rates which are operating today will be responsible for continuing railway deficits unless we can get a considerable reduction in the cost of the main commodities which are necessary for the running of a railway system.

Mr. Ackland: Do you agree that you put railway freights up by 35 per cent. and did not increase passenger fares?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will give the hon. member plenty of replies directly. I was particularly impressed with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition that special attention must be paid to financial matters in respect of the administration and general running of the railways, and I agree with that. The Railway Department is, of course, our biggest department and is responsible for a tremendous amount of our expenditure. It is therefore necessary to keep a close check upon the finances of the department and for that purpose we decided to replace the third commissioner by one who was an accountant and who understood financial matters, in order to see that the people of the State got value for their money and that certain interests did not get particularly favourable contracts.

Mr. Yates: Are you satisfied with his services up to date?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I think he is doing a particularly good job. I wish now to refer to one of the things which he unearthed and I will proceed to explain it to the House. It is no use the Leader of the Opposition, who was then Premier and Treasurer, saying that he did not know anything about this matter, because he was asked questions in connection with it, and the answers he gave were very evasive, indicating that the then Government was satisfied with this particular contract.

Mr. Hutchinson: That is a habit Ministers have.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The contract was let to the Commonwealth Engineering Co. for 1,000 FD louvered vans, the contract price being £1,436 4s. 6d. each, the entire contract being for approximately £1,500,000. The contract, I repeat, was let to the Commonwealth Engineering Co. which, in turn, sublet a contract for the provision of the timber components to a partnership which was formed and which was afterwards known as the Wagon Timber Construction Co., which was comprised of the four major

timber-milling companies in this State. I refer to Millars' Timber and Trading Co., Bunning Bros., Whittaker Bros. and the State Saw Mills.

It was on the 8th May, 1951, that Cabinet agreed to include the State Saw Mills in the company which afterwards turned out to be a monopoly and which cost the people of this State a considerable sum of money. The then Government could have stopped that monopoly and the resultant exploitation by keeping the State Saw Mills out of this Wagon Timber Construction Co. The conditions of tender were that jarrah and karri were to be used for the superstructure components. Not only did these four companies form a combine, but they also co-opted all the small mills for the purpose of providing the timber components for these 1,000 louvered vans.

I would not have much objection to that, as far as it goes, because I think it might have made for efficiency, providing that these companies had quoted a fair price. I propose now to explain the financial arrangements and the profits which were made in order to see whether we think it was a fair and reasonable price that they quoted. It was an astute and effective move on their part to tie up every stick of jarrah and karri available in the State so that no other tenderer could get the necessary timber except through their monopoly.

The capital of the new company was £50,000 and I wish members to remember that because the amount of profit made, as against the capital invested, is the keynote of my objection. The subcontractors quoted £375 18s. per vehicle. Although Cabinet had agreed to the formation of the company and the inclusion of the State Saw Mills in the monopoly on the 8th May, 1951, prefabrication had not commenced at the 30th June, 1952, but after 12 months of production, when the woodwork components of 190 wagons had been delivered, there was a net profit of £57,729.

These are not my figures. It was such a raw deal the people of the State were given that it drew the comments of the State Treasurer and the Auditor General. An extract from the report of the Auditor General, paragraph (5), folio 345, at page 6, under the heading "Profit Margins," states—

The accounts of the Wagon Timber Construction Company show the full cost of operating from the inception to the 30th June, 1953, to have been—

1951-52, Administration and general expenses, £3,507.

It will be appreciated that they did not prefabricate any components until the 30th June, 1952. From the formation of the company up to June, 1952, that was the cost of administration and general expenses, goodness knows what for. In 1952-53 the timber and other purchases, stacking, wages, repairs and maintenance,

power and light and depreciation, less stocks of timber on hand, and general administration expenses, amounted to £56,511, or a total of £60,018, according to this report.

The apportionment of the above cost on the basis of sales recorded to the 30th June, 1953, shows the following—that for the FD wagons delivered they had been paid £108,000-odd, while the cost to the company of those wagons had been £57,000. Therefore the profit they made amounted to £51,583. For the GF wagons, the sales amounted to £4,900 odd, and they cost the company £2,610, which showed a profit of £2,357. Sundry sales, shown at £591, had cost £310, showing a profit of £281. On sales, which in the aggregate amounted to £114,000, they made £54,000 profit.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They did not charge the country that, but the main contractor.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They charged the Railway Department £114,000 and the profit they made for the year's operations on that turnover was £54,000.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I thought it was the Commonwealth Engineering Co.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Commonwealth Engineering Co. sublet the contract for the timber components.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: So that was what they charged the Commonwealth Engineering Co., and not the State at all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Was not the State paying the Commonwealth Engineering Co.? That company sublet the contract and the point, to my mind, is that by some means every person who got a tender form from the Railway Department, in order to tender for the timber components of these vans, was immediately sent a notification by the Wagon Timber Construction Co., as to what he would have to pay for the timber components—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is that factual?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As I said at the outset, I am not stating my own opinions. I am quoting the results of the Auditor General's investigations, and, despite the high opinion which I have of the abilities of the member for Mt. Lawley, when it comes to a question of finance, I am afraid I would be compelled to agree that the Auditor General or the State Under Treasurer, Mr. Reid, would be a much more reliable authority to take as a guide than would the hon. member. This is what the Auditor General goes on to say—

On the above basis, the cost per wagon for each of the 190 timber sets for the FD wagons averaged £300 10s. 5d. and the profit £271 9s. 9d. Assuming this profit margin is sustained over the full 1,000 timber sets

to be delivered, a total net profit on this sub-contract of approximately £271,000 should be realised.

That means the company will obtain a profit of £271,000 on a contract of £375,000. Yet the Leader of the Opposition lectures us and tells us that we must be careful and watch railway expenditure! The Auditor General continues—

With the agreed extras the original quotation by Wagon Timber Construction Co. amounts to £376 19s. per timber set for the FD wagons, which, without the additional amounts for wage adjustments—

Which were made afterwards on a liberal scale as far as the contractor was concerned—

—was sufficient on the average costs to the 30th June, 1953, to give a profit of £76 8s. 7d. per set or 25.4 per cent. The additional amount for wage adjustment is all profit.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Will the Minister answer this one question? Was the contract let before this timber organisation or partnership was formed? I think the Minister will find that it was. You let the contract and then worried about the timber.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who let the contract?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The Government let the contract.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government did not let this contract.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The Railway Department let the contract for the trucks.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is just fishing.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am trying to find out.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This is what actually happened: A contract for the whole of these 1,000 louvered vans was let to the Commonwealth Engineering Co. at a cost of approximately £1,500,000 and then this particular company was formed.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: After that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: How can the hon. member make out that it was after that?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Wasn't it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: On whose recommendation was the company formed?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I say that the formation of this combine could have been easily prevented by the Treasurer of the day refusing to allow the State Saw Mills to go into it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And would not you have been forced to pay exactly the same for trucks?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Of course. How would the Government have got the trucks if it had acted differently? On whose recommendation did the Government act?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Why did the Leader of the Opposition allow the State Saw Mills to go into a monopoly of any kind?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What difference would it have made?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This combine was to make a profit of £271,000 on a subcontract of £375,000.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It had nothing to do with the State Government, because it had already agreed to pay the price.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You know nothing about it!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes, I do.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley must refrain from interjecting.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have quoted extracts from a report by the Auditor General. If I had the time, I would quote a lot more of his caustic criticism—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And we will give you a lot more later, too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:—of the system which was adopted in this particular case. In addition, without any check-up, an agreement was made and instead of adopting the cost-plus system, which was operating on all contracts at that time and to which there was no objection, the Railway Department agreed, apparently with the concurrence of the Treasurer of the day, to adopt a different system that it thought more simple. The Auditor General said that the adoption of the .5 of 1 per cent. additional for everything, and the way it was applied, meant that this Wagon Timber Construction Co. reaped another harvest.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do you think you have unearthed another scandal?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is an indication that had the Leader of the Opposition practised, while he was Treasurer, what he is advising us to do today, the Railway Department would not have been involved in tenders of this kind.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We would not have had the wagons.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The Railway Department did not pay the money and the Minister knows it. It had nothing to do with the department; the contractor paid the money.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Mt. Lawley is worse today than he was yesterday.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The Premier is laughing! Apparently he thinks it is a joke.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know this hurts the member for Mt. Lawley, but members are entitled to the information. After operating for 12 months and providing 190 wagons, a net profit of £57,000 was made. If we go on at the same ratio of profit—and there is no reason to suppose that it will be different—there will be a profit of £271,000 accruing to the Wagon Timber Construction Co. because it tied up every stick of karri and jarrah in this State and the sub-contractors were forced to obtain their supplies through that organisation.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: If they had charged a lot less, who would have got the money?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The State Saw Mills paid £15,000 of the capital of £50,000. Over a short period the State Saw Mills have repaid to the Treasury the advance of £15,000 and, in addition, have made £27,000 profit. Yet the contracts, which was for approximately £375,000 is not half completed. No doubt the same rate of profit will continue and on the total sum will amount to £271,000.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is this contract with the State?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for Mt. Lawley does not know the slightest thing about it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the Minister please resume his seat? I ask the member for Mt. Lawley to put those questions on the notice paper and refrain from interjecting all the time. He can deal with the subject on the Address-in-reply debate. The Minister for Railways may continue.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Has the Leader of the Opposition ever heard of the incentive payment for the supply of sleepers, which was imposed upon the Railways Department to enable it to obtain the number of sleepers it required? If so, did the Leader of the Opposition approve of that system? A brief history is that in the postwar period, when this contract was entered into, the capacity of the sleeper producing mills in this State appeared to be about 325,000 loads per annum. That was the number which could be made available to the Government of Western Australia, although the sawmillers were sending a certain number out of the State.

The sawmillers said to the department, "If you are not prepared to pay an incentive price of £2 7s. 6d. a load, you cannot get your full requirements." A load is equivalent to twenty-five 7 feet sleepers. At one time I worked in the sawmilling industry and I can understand that a mill, which is not constructed for the production of sleepers, will not produce them as cheaply as a sleeper-producing mill. As

a result, a reasonable additional charge is justified. The Railway Department required 600,000 sleepers. But do not let us forget that the sawmillers are operating on permits which have a life of only 12 months and they could have been brought to heel quite easily. But they said, "If you do not pay this £2 7s. 6d. incentive price, you will get considerably less sleepers than you require" and the Government paid it. That incentive payment cost the Railway Department an extra £16,000 for its sleepers.

When I became Minister the position was brought under my notice and I said that I considered the price extortionate and that, as the timber was owned by the people of this State, as were the railways, if the sawmillers were not prepared to supply the required number of sleepers for the rehabilitation of the permanent way, the sawmilling permits should be cancelled. A conference was held between representatives of the Railway Commissioners, the Sawmillers' Association and the Minister for Forests, with the result that the incentive price was abolished; there was a slight increase in the general price, and the Railway Department benefited to the extent of some thousands of pounds every year. So that was another matter which would indicate that very close scrutiny of the financial affairs of the railways was not practised by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Treasurer.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It does not bear out your statement that we did nothing to rehabilitate the track.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: On that point, during the six years the previous Government was in office, it was responsible for relaying four miles of track with the exception of a few miles from Boyanup to Busselton.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We got you plenty of materials to go on with the work.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was all the length of track relaid by the previous Government, despite the fact that the commission was constantly bombarding the then Minister for Railways to get on with track rehabilitation. The necessity for this work has been borne out by the number of derailments we have had over the last two years.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: If we could not get the rails, how could we relay the track?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Some months ago, the Railway Commission drew my attention to the fact that a large percentage of livestock carried was being shifted by road transport and, after making inquiries, I found that this claim was substantially correct. I think it was during the special session last April that the Leader of the Opposition said he hoped this Government would not reimpose the

restrictions on road transport of stock in this State. It is just as well for members of this House, and the public generally, to know what happened in regard to this matter.

In 1948, the then Minister for Railways, Hon. H. S. Seward, who is now Senator Seward, lifted the restrictions on road transport and permitted private carriers to carry stock on behalf of stock-owners. This was done because of the inability of the railways to handle this traffic at that time on account of lack of engine power and suitable stock-trucks. However, Mr. Seward made it quite definite—it was a ministerial action—that the restrictions would only be waived until such time as the railways were able to handle the livestock traffic offering.

That was quite reasonable. He realised that the railways would be in a position, in a short time, to handle it but, I take it with the concurrence of the Treasurer of the day, he ordered 600 stock-trucks. Three hundred of them were what is known as BE class for the transport of cattle and they cost £516,000 and there were 300 CXB sheep-trucks which cost, in the aggregate, £659,000. Those trucks have now been delivered and a number of them are standing in sidings with nothing to do because of the unrestricted road transport of livestock. When a great many road hauliers were denied the right, by my predecessor, to cart super and wheat, several of them, realising that there were no restrictions on the cartage of livestock, mounted super-structures on their trucks and are now operating extensively by taking from the Railway Department the benefit of the trucks which a previous Minister, now in Opposition, had ordered at a cost of £1,250,000, and which is to be met by the taxpayers of this State.

What are we to say now? Are we to say that the £1,250,000 spent to provide trucks for the cartage of livestock are to lie idle in sidings, or are we to say that where the railways can give a reasonable service, we will compel the primary producers to use it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I hope you place sufficient emphasis on the word "reasonable," too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course, I realise that the Leader of the Opposition must have been short of an argument against the Railway Department when he quoted an instance of a truck carrying livestock which had taken 16 hours to travel from Waroona to Perth. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that he has not stated the case fairly when he gives that information. He is quite aware that if such an incident did take place, something out of the ordinary must have gone wrong with that particular truck.

He also knows, as well as I do, that the average running time for a goods train operating between Waroona and Perth is about five or six hours. It would be just as unfair for me to quote an instance of a motor-truck that had broken down or capsized and then, when it reached its destination, say that in that particular case the average running time of that motor-truck from point to point was such-and-such.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Stock cannot be loaded at night.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I candidly admit that in many instances road transport of livestock must be permitted when the railways cannot provide a reasonable service. In areas where that is necessary, I would not entertain any idea of compelling a stockowner to use the railways. Nevertheless, I believe that 60 per cent. of the stock being transported by road from country districts to the metropolitan area, and particularly to the Midland Junction saleyards, could quite conveniently and economically be carried by the railways.

The time has arrived when not only the Government but also Parliament must face the critical railway position. In this State we have 1,400 miles of track which does not return, in earnings, half of the operating costs. That is apart altogether from interest and depreciation charges. Those lines were constructed for the pioneering and settlement of outback areas and they are serving mostly the sparsely-populated agricultural centres. They were quite capable then of acting as the transport medium for the whole of the cartage requirements of the people in those districts.

With the advent and improvement of the internal combustion engine, however, a farmer today, because of the licence granted to him, is transporting 90 per cent. of his goods in his own vehicle and denying the railways much payable freight. In the centres that I have mentioned, which are served by a railway line not returning half the operating costs, I would say to the residents, "You can now have your choice: If you want road transport, we will close the railway. The amount of traffic from this area does not permit the luxury of two competitive transport systems running side by side."

If the people in those districts where we have these lines would hold a local plebiscite and decide that they would prefer road transport as against transport by rail, then I think I can safely say that Cabinet would be willing to close any of those sections tomorrow. Financially, they are impossible. The people should be asked to make their choice and the question put to them should be, "Are you prepared to support the railway system for the purpose of transporting the major portion of your goods, both the high freights and the low freights, or do you want the railways closed?"

Mr. Perkins: Would that apply to bringing them right through to the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That would be governed by circumstances. If they were brought a considerable distance from one of our main trunk lines—say 50 per cent. of the distance—there would be a good case for bringing them right through.

Mr. Perkins: You might find them 40 but not 50 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That means another 200 miles where it would have to run parallel to the existing railway. If that is the hon. members' interpretation of transport co-ordination, it is quite foreign to me. That is what Parliament has to face up to. It is not entirely the policy of this Government because when the present Opposition was the Government it decided to rehabilitate the railways. The view expressed by the Opposition then was that the railways were essential to the development of the transport system of the State.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Are you going to subsidise the road service?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is an impossible proposition. If we continue to liberalise, as has been done in a general way over the last 10 or 15 years, we will never get anywhere in squaring our financial budget insofar as it relates to the operation of the railways. About 60 per cent. of the goods transported by the Railway Department is carried at a losing rate.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Would you subsidise the road service?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I certainly would not. That is the catch all the time. Immediately we say to these people, "You either patronise the railways or we close them down, and you can have your road transport to cart all your goods" they claim a subsidy which is the difference between the rail freight and the cost by road. It is not possible to do that. We had the same difficulty when we contemplated closing the Meekatharra-Wiluna line and the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line. By the time we had made available the finance necessary to provide roads and subsidise road transport between 4d. and 10d. per ton mile it would have been a better proposition to rehabilitate the railway and keep it going.

The day of reckoning has, however, arrived and Parliament must decide what it is going to do about the railways. I think it was in 1948, after the Gibson-duPlessis Royal Commission, that the previous Government decided that it would pour millions of the State's money into the rehabilitation of the railways. I do not know if its members are still of that opinion, but one thing is certain that in

the financial interests of the country, and in fairness to the taxpayer, the system that has gone on over the last 10 or 15 years cannot be permitted to continue. I think I have said all I want to about the railways.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Oh, no, you have not! We are not going to let you get away with that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the Leader of the Opposition so desires he can have a go, and I will be permitted, under Standing Orders, to reply to any criticism there may be.

The Minister for Housing: That would not be very difficult, either.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would like now to deal with the outburst of the member for Moore, when he referred to my actions, as Minister for Transport, in relation to what had been done to an officer of the department, arising out of the decision of the Royal Commissioner in the bribery case of last year. I have looked back over the hon. member's speech which induced the present Premier to institute an inquiry, and hold a Royal Commission into this matter. The member for Moore said that his Country Party friend in another place, Mr. Jones, had been going into this matter for some months past.

One of the points raised in the course of his allegations of bribery was that there had been a case of beer delivered at the home of one of the officers of the Transport Board, and, in addition to that, a wireless set that had been given by a certain person's son who was the chief witness for the prosecution at the Royal Commission, was installed in this particular officer's car. In the evidence before the Royal Commission I notice that these two items were never mentioned. I am convinced that it was a figment of the imagination of the member for Moore when he made these allegations about this particular officer.

The Minister for Housing: A mind like a sewer!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A peculiar feature about all this was that the hon. member and his friend and colleague in another place did not have the decency or the courtesy to consult the member of their own party who was then Minister for Transport. They kept him completely in the dark; they went behind his back to the C.I.B.; they also went to the then Premier, Sir Ross McLarty—

Mr. Ackland: We also went to the present Premier.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was long afterwards. Why did the hon. member keep his own Minister for Transport in the dark? My Premier did not keep me, as Minister for Transport, in

the dark. When the hon. member approached him he immediately consulted me, and I in turn approached the C.I.B. and the Police Department, after which investigations were set in motion.

Mr. Ackland: How do you know the past Premier did not consult his Minister?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Because the hon. gentleman did not know anything about it until after the hon. member had stated his case here. The hon. gentleman then asked me if he could see the file in connection with it.

Mr. Ackland: Did he tell you that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It does not matter whether he told me that or not. All I know is that at that stage he did not know anything about it. He asked me to see the file, and I made it available to him in order to see if he was involved as Minister for Transport. He was not involved, however; he was a perfectly honest man. Not only did the member for Moore cast aspersions on the Transport Board, but he did so on the Public Service generally. He said that an authority who should know had told him that graft was not uncommon in the Public Service of Western Australia. He was not satisfied at having a go at the members of the Transport Board, but he also issued untruthful and slanderous statements about the whole of the Public Service of the State. I repeat that such accusations were merely the figments of a suspicious mind.

Mr. Ackland: Members on your side of the House would not agree if they had the courage to express their views.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The result of the Royal Commission was that the particular officer, Mr. McPherson, was exonerated. The Royal Commissioner made certain recommendations—

Mr. Ackland: There was very grave suspicion.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:—among which were that he should be taken away from the particular work in which he had been employed—which incidentally had ceased to exist because the transport of super by road had finished—and the commissioner recommended that he should be put on to work which did not bring him into contact with the general public. I say that the recommendations of the Royal Commission have been carried out in their entirety. As is his usual custom, the member for Moore the other day distorted what were the actual facts. He said that I, as Minister for Transport, had given false and inaccurate answers in reply to questions.

Mr. Ackland: Read those questions and replies, and you will find that they are contradictory.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have read the questions, and the answers were perfectly accurate. The member for Moore at no time asked if Mr. McPherson had been removed from the position of chief inspector. All of his questions hinged on whether that officer had been removed from the particular type of work on which he was engaged, and he asked if that officer was engaged on work in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The answer is perfectly true.

Mr. Ackland: It is nothing but a quibble.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not a quibble at all. The hon member did not ask anything about Mr. McPherson's position. Why should he be taken away from the position of chief inspector?

Mr. Ackland: Is he still the chief transport inspector?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and he will remain there as far as I am concerned in accordance with the recommendations. What does the hon. member expect me to do? Does he expect me to take the law into my own hands and inflict some punishment on the inspector for something of which he was exonerated?

Mr. Ackland: He was not exonerated. There was a grave suspicion.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As far as the finding was concerned, he was completely exonerated. I sometimes wonder what is the motive behind the pursuance of this transport officer by the hon. member. Is it because he took certain of his favoured friends there and asked for favours in the shape of carting, not only super but wheat as well, which on his own admission he did, and because he did not get all his favours granted 100 per cent? Or is it because the member for Moore is salving his conscience with his cock-and-bull story told in this House?

These allegations, which could not be substantiated before the Royal Commission, cost the State in the vicinity of £1,500. Is he trying to salve his conscience. As far as I am concerned, I have people are of the opinion that the hon. member cannot even spell the word "conscience." As far as I am concerned, I have carried out the recommendations of the Royal Commission in their entirety. A reclassification of the Public Service recently granted an increase of £25 a year to the position of chief inspector of the Transport Board, and Mr. McPherson got it because he still holds that position. He is entitled to hold it because he had been exonerated by the Royal Commission which considered that the charges were not true, despite the fact that the hon. member went to a meeting of the Road Transport Association, begging for evidence to incriminate Mr. McPherson. Those were honest men. They said they were prepared to give evidence of poor allocation by the chief inspector and unequal

application of the cartage of superphosphate, but they had no knowledge of any bribery.

Mr. Ackland: That is absolutely untrue. That is not what happened at the meeting.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Can the hon. member tell us whether it is a fact that he and his friend from another place had a conversation lasting half-an-hour with Royal Commissioner at King's Park prior to the start of the Royal Commission?

Mr. Ackland: I say it is false. I have no recollection of it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon member denies it that is all right. I want to say again that in my opinion, the recommendations of the Royal Commission have been faithfully carried out. The inference in the question of the hon. member is that I, as Minister for Transport, should have taken the law into my own hands and punished this officer to a greater extent than did the finding of the Royal Commission. That was a form of punishment in that he was to be taken off any kind of work which brought him in close contact with the public.

Mr. Ackland: If the Minister was not so swollen-headed, he would know the feelings of the public towards the Transport Board as it is at present constituted.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can understand inaccurate statements being made by persons outside this House, by people who have no access to information, but ready access to information in the form of files or interviews with departmental officials is available to every member of this House, and there is no need for any member to make inaccurate and unjust accusations.

Mr. Ackland: You have made more inaccurate statements in the last ten minutes than I have during my career in this House.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can tell of other inaccurate statements made by the member for Moore. Yesterday he said that the Minister for Railways had been particularly harsh in dealing with the application of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. regarding an area of railway land for a bulk terminal at Koojeddah. Yesterday was the first time I knew anything about the matter. As a matter of fact, I was at no time consulted by C.B.H. in connection with a site at Koojeddah or Midland Junction.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister has about a minute to go.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The first I knew about the matter was when the Minister for Agriculture brought it up at a Cabinet meeting. If it is any information to the member for Moore, the offer of the lease of railway land at Midland

Junction and the shunting charges were drawn up by me as Minister and were agreed to.

As to Extension of Time.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I move—

That the Minister for Railways be granted an extension of time.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It has never been done before.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You want to squash him.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He will have his chance. We have never given an extension of time.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Fremantle has moved for an extension of time. What length of time?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Fifteen minutes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is against Standing Orders.

Mr. SPEAKER: Any seconder?

Mr. NORTON: I second the motion.

Point of Order.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: On a point of order, I understand that the Standing Orders were amended with the idea that there should be a curtailment of speeches and the time of the House saved. Now the Minister, during the Address-in-reply, has adopted a rather unusual course. He has spoken about the railways which he could well have referred to when introducing his Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will please resume his seat. The Standing Orders say that this motion shall not be debated.

Debate Resumed.

Motion put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I thank members for giving me the opportunity of continuing. Five minutes will probably complete my address. The member for Moore said yesterday that, as Minister for Railways, or as manager of a firm, I would be responsible for any offer or concession which was demanded by the Railway Department or C.B.H. That is no line of logic. In common fairness and decency, the manager of a firm should be consulted by those who want concessions from the firm, and I was never approached or consulted by C.B.H., of which body I understand the hon. member is a director. I never had extended to me the courtesy or decency of receiving an application or being consulted in any way.

The first I knew of the matter was that those responsible had gone behind my back as Minister for Railways to the Minister for Agriculture. He put certain suggestions before Cabinet and they were referred to me as Minister for Railways to see whether they were practicable. As a matter of

fact, in my recommendation to Cabinet, I went a little further than the proposal envisaged by the Minister for Agriculture. My proposal was accepted by Cabinet and there has been no complaint that I know of from C.B.H. Yet the hon. member stood up in his place and said that I intended to levy charges in connection with the Koojieda freight and the space for bulk storage, which were in excess of a price that would have applied to the whole of the haulage from a particular distance.

I repeat that the first I knew of the storage bin at Koojieda was when the hon. member mentioned it yesterday, but that is in keeping with the attacks made on the Minister in a personal sense. I wish to refer to a personal attack made by the member for Stirling in connection with the Ongerup bus service. The hon. member was particularly critical, not on the merits of the case but on the fact that the Minister for Railways had not taken the action which the hon. member thought he should have done. This is another instance where the manager had been by-passed and the department had been dealing with the matter.

It appears that the Gnowangerup Road Board had approached the Railway Commission with the object of getting a road service that would be in competition with the rail service on the Ongerup line. The department had replied to the road board, and I knew nothing about the matter until I received the letter from the member for Stirling asking whether I would make representations in the matter.

I sent the letter to the department, with a request that it be investigated—I did not know that it had already been investigated—and that a draft reply should be sent to me. A copy of the letter was sent to me, indicating the department's unwillingness to have this service. What did the hon. member expect me to do? He has been a Minister. Would he or any other member expect the Minister to have an intimate knowledge of the details of every request that is put up? Did the hon. member expect me, as Minister for Railways, to go down there on *prima facie* evidence to decide whether the professional officers were wrong?

Would he expect me as Minister for Police to go from Esperance in the south to Wyndham in the north to see whether the stationing of a constable at a particular place was warranted? Would he expect me as Minister for Transport to travel from Geraldton to Albany every time somebody made a request for an alteration in the time or route of a particular transport service?

Is it not fair and reasonable to say that the Minister should refer such matters to his professional officers? The hon. member has been a Minister and he knows that the immediate staff of a Minister usually consists of a stenographer and a private

secretary, and my stenographer has a full-time job in dealing with my inwards and outwards correspondence. The Railway Department, on the other hand, has probably 100 stenographers.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: A hundred?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Probably, and they were there when the hon. member was in office.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have been increasing the number pretty rapidly.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When I received the draft reply, it would not follow that I would accept it. Frequently a draft is sent to me dealing with a matter of which I have personal knowledge, and I either reject it or amend it in accordance with my knowledge of the facts. I make no apologies for what was done in this case. I was not consulted. The Railway Commission was consulted, and the first thing I knew about the matter was when I received the hon. member's letter. That letter, as I have explained, I sent on to the Railway Commission and was informed that the service was not justified.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I asked you to review the Railway Commission's decision, and, if you look at the file, you will see that your senior officers had strongly disagreed and that your action was not a review at all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I had not seen the file and knew nothing about the question until I received the hon. member's letter, and when I received the letter, I sent it to the department. Then the file was sent back with a copy of the reply that had been forwarded to the Gnowangerup Road Board. In my opinion, the service is not justified and I agreed with the refusal of the department to provide it. This is one of those cases that crop up from time to time where people want a road bus service to run parallel with the railway when requirements can be adequately met with a diesel service.

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [3.38]: I regret that the Deputy Premier is not in his seat because it is my intention to attack him for his tyrannical action, when Minister for Education, in reducing the salaries of women teachers. Furthermore, I intend to criticise him even more strongly on account of the stubborn attitude which he has adopted and in which he persists.

I listened the other week with great interest to the speech of the Leader of the Country Party when he dealt with the Deputy Premier's attempt to dragoon certain women teachers into applying for certain positions by reducing their salaries; in other words, by withdrawing certain long service increments granted to them in 1951. My interest in the hon. member's speech quickly deepened into

surprise and concern when I heard the Deputy Premier, by interjection, reiterate his belief that the action he had taken was based on sound reasoning.

If I remember rightly, during the speech of the Leader of the Country Party, the Deputy Premier interjected that he had a very good reason for the action he had taken. I said by way of interjection that the reason was not a very good one and he replied that it was first-class. I shall show how first-class it was. Having given the matter lengthy consideration during the past week, my feeling turned to one tinged with despair and alarm.

I say this, not so much on account of the Deputy Premier's action in reducing those salaries, but because of his still stubborn adherence to the belief that his action was correct. I believe—and I feel sure I shall be able to prove—that his despotic action in reducing the salaries and withdrawing the increments was far from being a correct one based on sound reasoning but was unfair in the extreme and harsh to a degree that has seldom been paralleled in the political history of this State.

The Premier: Hell!

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I am perfectly sincere in saying that, in spite of the facetious observation of the Premier. If he had studied this matter, I am sure he would feel similarly. In short, the former Minister for Education punished a large number of women teachers by reducing their salaries become some of them had not applied for certain promotional positions. Does that sound like twentieth century justice to the Premier? Does it even sound like commonsense? Of course it does not. By the teachers of the State it is said to be an outrageous and unjust action.

The Minister for Housing: You will run out of adjectives in a minute.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: The Minister should have heard the adjectives used by the teachers over the action and the reason for it. The action has been described as being one that will bring bitterness and discouragement into the profession; one that is a poor recompense for long, faithful and efficient service.

The Minister for Housing: Who used those terms?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: The teachers, and not only those who were affected, but a cross-section of the teaching service of the Education Department. The action has also been described as one that will breed disaffection throughout the Education Department; one that has cut across an established arbitration procedure; and one that could possibly jeopardise gains achieved through the established tribunal.

I have an extract here which I was not going to read, but following on the interjection of the Minister for Housing I feel it would be appropriate to read a portion of the remarks made by the president of

the Teachers' Union, when he was commenting on the action of the Minister. He said—

Governments of the day fixed salaries, often based on political exigency rather than entitlement. After a stern struggle by the union, the Public Service Appeal Board Act came into existence and by that teachers were entitled to present their claims to an independent tribunal. That Act has been described by one who is not a teacher himself as the "Teachers' Charter." When it was passed hopes leapt high. Salaries were to be taken out of the sphere of political controversy and there could be a confident expectancy that gains obtained from the board would be conserved. This proved well founded for over 30 years because, except for the financial emergency legislation of the 1930's which was Commonwealth and community-wide and one obscure case of £5 lost through inadvertence on both sides, no other case, so far as I am aware, has occurred of a Public Service Appeal Board gain being withdrawn by someone else.

It is true, of course, that with each reclassification there is a revision of salary scales and readjustments are made but I reaffirm that even with such readjustments I know of no other case where a gain in principle obtained from the board has been withdrawn by someone else. Even if this has occurred before, it is nothing to be proud of.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.5 p.m.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: So members can see that the Teachers' Union feels keenly about this loss of long service increments that has been suffered by women teachers. Hopes that leaped high following a long and stern struggle were dashed to the ground by the Minister's action. As an impartial background, I think I should go back and give something of the story so that members may be fully informed on the subject. To do this I shall read a newspaper report of the mass protest meeting of teachers which took place on Tuesday, the 4th May, and which was reported in "The West Australian" on the following day. It reads, after the heading "Withdrawal of Increments Incites Teachers"—

Two hundred women State School teachers had the support of at least an equal number of male teachers last night when they held a protest meeting against a recent decision of the Minister for Education (Mr. Tonkin).

The meeting was held in the Assembly Hall in Pier-st.

The Minister for Education (Mr. Tonkin) recently advised the State School Teachers' Union that he had decided to withdraw long-service increments to women teachers.

His announcement followed recent reclassifications of teachers by the Public Service Appeal Board.

The Board's reclassifications, announced early this year, were on similar lines to those granted by the Board in 1951 and allowed for yearly increments of £25 a year for female teachers with 20 years' service and £30 a year for 25 years' service.

In a letter to the union secretary (Mr. R. H. Featherstone) under yesterday's date, Mr. Tonkin explained that the reasons why he had dropped the long-service increment to women was that he "disagreed" with such payments in principle and that the allowances militated "against the effective conduct of the Department."

The Minister's decision met with a storm of protest and a great deal of criticism at last night's meeting before four motions were carried.

The headmaster of the Eden Hill School at Bayswater (Mr. A. E. Hartley) described Mr. Tonkin's action as "strange for a Labour Minister belonging to a Government bound to uphold the principles of arbitration."

Although the Public Service Appeal Board had the right to fix the salaries and allowances of a large body of public servants, apparently power was still vested in the Minister to dispense of them "lightheartedly," Mr. Hartley said.

There was ironical laughter when the letter from the Minister explaining his reasons for withdrawing the increments was read.

One speaker said that the Government proposed spending £20,000 a year on the prospects for the future.

"We are not prospects; we are the certainties of the present," the speaker added.

The Minister's decision would be certain to increase disaffection in this State, another speaker added.

Then the report goes on to set out the motions passed at that meeting. Members can understand from the report that the increments which women teachers had received were actually quite meagre; they consisted of £25 per annum after 20 years' service, rising to £30 per annum after 25 years' service.

It should be noted that before receiving those increments teachers had to maintain, for a long period of years, a very high efficiency mark. Nobody should imagine for one minute that those increments were easily obtained; the reverse was the case and this was the limited advance which the women teachers of this State had made towards their goal of equal pay. Despite the meagre nature

of the increments, and apart from the financial aspect involved, those increments marked an important milestone passed in the progress towards equal pay for equal work; and this was the gain that was slashed by the action of the former Minister for Education.

At this stage we should consider further the reason for the Minister's action. Yes, as I have already stated, he had a reason; but what a reason it was! The incredible and fantastic thing about it is that the former Minister for Education still insists that the reason is a good and first-class one. His reason is that women teachers' salaries must be reduced by the whittling down of their long service increments because certain promotional positions had not been applied for when advertised by the department. This undoubtedly means that all these teachers were severely punished because a few did not apply for the position of first assistant.

In the first place, I would suggest that the deduction to be made, if teachers will not apply for promotional positions, is that those positions cannot be attractive enough. It is completely foreign to our way of thinking that retaliatory measures should be taken to force someone to do something that he does not want to do. In effect, the principle behind this action—the principle which the Deputy Premier suggests is a good one for which there is a first-class reason—is that teachers should be starved into submission. I am not joking when I say that.

The principle is that teachers should be starved into doing something that they do not wish to do, that is, by taking away some of their pay so that they will be coerced into applying for a higher position in order to retrieve some of the remuneration they have lost. That is the Minister's reason and what a travesty of justice it is! Members may now realise that I was being conservative in saying that this action is unparalleled in the history of this State. I should have said that it had never been paralleled in this State.

Let us hear more about this reason given by the former Minister for Education from another of the teachers involved. The Leader of the Country Party referred to the quotation I am about to make, but I believe it bears repeating. This is what was reported in the May edition of "The W.A. Teachers' Journal"—

The only reason given by the Minister for this most unfair action is that possession of these long service increments has prevented older women teachers from applying for 14 first assistantships in primary schools. I think I can show you that the holding of these increments has nothing to do with the department's difficulty in filling the advertised position, and anyway if it did, what a reason to give.

Positions are advertised daily in all types of occupations. People who want them apply for them and people who don't want them for personal reasons just don't apply. We have never before heard of reprisals of this nature on those who don't apply.

Of these 167 women who have suffered deductions from salaries 63 are teaching in high schools, technical schools or in the Teachers' College, five are on specialist duties, such as guidance officers, librarians, etc. Sixty-nine are in positions in primary schools already carrying extra responsibility. They were headmistresses, first assistants and training assistants already. That leaves 30 teachers who are simply classified as assistants and five of those are correspondence teachers who probably could not apply for such positions as those advertised. So, we have 25 only who could have been expected to seek first assistantships. Because these 25 women teachers find their present positions congenial and reasonably near their homes and do not wish for transfers, even though they would have commanded higher salaries, 167 women in the department have been deprived of sums of money of £25 and £50 previously awarded to them for long, faithful and efficient services.

We all consider we have been most unjustly and unfairly treated.

In one year 167 teachers are punished because 25 of them do not apply for certain promotional positions! I ask again: Does this sound like a first-class reason for reducing women teachers' salaries? To add weight to the quotation I have just given, there is another extract from "The Teachers' Journal" I would like to read. It has been taken from a speech made by the president of the Teachers' Union. It is headed "Reasons Examined." I think this should be noted carefully. The context goes on—

The reason which has been advanced for the withdrawal of these increments is that they deter women from applying for first assistantships. I do not intend to devote much time to that argument. That would be disproportionate to its weight, even if it can be sustained that long service increments are responsible for lack of applications for first assistantships. The increments were awarded for the work women teachers were doing, not for the work to which they might be promoted. They were awarded in accord with the skill, service and position of the teachers concerned. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and I repeat that women's first assistantships have nothing to do with the case. A little examination suggests the reason these first assistantships do not attract a host of eager applicants may not be because of long service increments at all. Why

don't they receive applications from the hundreds of teachers not getting long service increments. The solution of the first assistantship problem is not to make assistantships less attractive but to make first assistantships more attractive.

However one can understand such a mistake being made and, if one is charitable enough, even a mistake of this magnitude, but what is incomprehensible is the Minister's refusing to see the light; refusing to acknowledge that he ever makes a mistake; refusing to say that his action was wrong or that the reason for it was a puerile one.

Instead he continues to stubbornly reiterate that his action and the reasons for it were first class. Recently, I was reading Professor Murdoch's "Questions and Answers" in a Saturday issue of "The West Australian" and in one of his answers I found a sentence which seems to fit perfectly the Minister's attitude to this question. Professor Murdoch was writing of people who allegedly never make a mistake. He said—

They remain majestically aloof in their impregnable fortress of infallible rightness.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He must have been thinking of the Minister.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: This attitude in a Minister of the Crown is dangerous and, as I have said before, fills me with feelings of despair and alarm. When a Minister of the Crown refuses to concede that his actions were wrong in the face of irrefutable proof to the contrary; when he continues to say that black is white, then public confidence in that Minister must be severely shaken—

The Premier: Wrecked!

Mr. HUTCHINSON: —and we are entitled to ask this question: Do the Premier and his Cabinet support the Deputy Premier in his action in reducing women teachers' salaries because some failed to apply for higher positions, when 142 out of 167 of the teachers penalised were unable to apply because of their already higher gradings or their positions? I think it important that a reply should be given to that question, and before the Premier supports the Deputy Premier in this stand, I suggest he goes into the matter and has a good look at it.

In part, the former Minister for Education reminds one of the philosophy of divine right held by the Stuart kings; and may be called, *mutatis mutandis*, "the divine right of Tonkin." Here is something to cap the whole ridiculous situation. It has been pointed out to me that several teachers who were already first assistants were penalised with the rest, with reductions in salary, for the reason that women teachers had not applied for the position of first-assistant.

Can anything be more silly than that? Nothing possibly, except that many of the teachers were penalised for not applying for first assistantships when they were already in higher positions. The Minister did endeavour to retrieve the situation somewhat when he informed the Teachers' Union that he would approve the payment of a special allowance to those women teachers who were receiving long-service increments—that is, in 1953—in order that their salaries should be no less than that which they received on the 31st December, 1953.

It should be noted, however, that if any of these teachers received subsequent rises, the special allowance would reduce accordingly. At first glance this concession might be regarded by some as patching things up a little, but of a certainty on closer inspection it does not do so. Firstly, this so-called concession pays no regard to those women teachers who qualified and will qualify for long-service increments by long and efficient service, subsequent to the 31st December, 1953. Those teachers are still out in the cold.

Secondly, it is only a stop-gap allowance and it precludes salary rises until the special allowance has been absorbed. Thirdly, and most importantly, it contradicts the Minister's reasoning for the abolition of the increments, because if any of the small proportion of 167 teachers referred to, who were able to apply, did so, they would only benefit by that small amount over and above their special allowance. Accordingly there is little, if any, incentive—certainly far less incentive than previously—for these teachers to apply. The remarks of another teacher are worth quoting, and I give them—

I would like to remark that the Minister is the most contradictory person I have ever heard of. He states that this allowance has been cut out because women have not applied for promotion. At the same time he writes a letter to the union stating that women will not suffer salary reductions but any increase in future will not apply.

Now a woman who has the long-service increment, if she applies for and receives a position as first mistress, will not receive one single penny for it because the Minister says the salary is pegged. Far from encouraging these teachers to apply for promotional positions, the Minister is not giving them one penny for such positions.

Although the teacher I have quoted is not correct in saying that the teachers do not receive one single penny, he is correct in the general conclusion he has drawn. Without doubt this matter, with its possible repercussions, is so important that I feel justified in challenging the Deputy Premier to answer these criticisms, so that

he might either endeavour to justify the stand he has taken or have an opportunity to retreat from that stand.

I am of the opinion that in this regard the Minister has been stubbornly foolish throughout the whole proceedings, and I repeat that an attitude such as I have said the Minister has adopted is a dangerous one in a Minister of the Crown, and he should be severely censured for it. I would also like to challenge the Premier to answer the question I have asked him as to whether or not he supports the continued stand taken by the Deputy Premier, as it is most important that the public should know.

MR. HILL (Albany) [4.27]: As one who takes the trouble to read all reports supplied to Parliament and who takes an intelligent interest in the development of the State, I cannot agree that the State is in a healthy condition. In fact, today Western Australia may be compared to a man who is financially embarrassed and suffers from that dread disease, cancer. Firstly, let me deal with the financial position of the State. When any member asks a Minister for anything that is likely to require expenditure, he is almost sure to receive a reply that there is no money available.

The Premier: That has not applied to Albany over the last six years.

Mr. HILL: The Premier has only been making up for lost time, and I will deal with that later. Apart from this, the Premier, who has just interjected, is chasing every opportunity and exploring every avenue with a view to increasing taxation and costs. I was elected to this Chamber in 1936 and the expenditure for that year was £9,945,000. For the year 1944-45, it was £13,949,000; in 1952-53, the expenditure was £39,392,000 and during the past year it was £43,500,000. We have a population of about 630,000 people, so for the past year the Treasurer has collected about £70 from every man, woman and child in the State.

Let us put it another way. A man with a wife and three children pays on an average £1 a day to finance the State. Of course, a lot of this increase is due to the inflationary spiral, but apart from that our financial position is certainly embarrassing. I will refer to Return 11 submitted with the detailed classification of the Estimates. Our Loan Estimates show a total loan liability of £153,000,000 with a net deficiency of £10,574,610. How long would a private person carry on under those conditions? I have compared this State to a person suffering from cancer. Doctors tell us that our bodies are made up of millions of cells which are continually dying and being replaced by others; but, for some reason that the medical profession cannot discover, too often the cells of a particular part of the body grow at

a disproportionate rate to those in the other parts, and that is the start of a cancerous growth.

This State has a population of 625,000. Numbers are continually dying and being replaced by new births and new arrivals. But, unfortunately, we have a disproportionate growth of the metropolitan area in which there is approximately 60 per cent. of the State's population, located in a region smaller than half the size of the City of London. If one of those small guns at Leighton were mounted on the lawn outside here, it would have nearly 60 per cent of the population of the State within range. I think members will agree that is a terrible state of affairs when it is considered that we have the biggest self-governing community in the world, and one which depends upon primary production for its prosperity.

Return No. 36 shows that the value of wheat produced in 1951-52 was £29,506,000. The value of wool produced in 1952-53 was £39,564,000. Comparable figures for other products for 1952-53 were as follows:—

Gold	....	....	....	12,843,000
Coal	....	....	....	2,553,000
Other minerals	....	....	....	2,615,000

The timber exported was valued at £2,074,000, and total exports amounted to £112,923,000. Practically none of those products came from the metropolitan area.

I have no easy remedy for that state of affairs, but I hope that a few constructive remarks will be acceptable. A few weeks ago, I was going to address a meeting in my electorate, and I got hold of a railway map of Western Australia. I borrowed my little 12-year-old girl's red pencil, and marked the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why did you pick red?

Mr. HILL: Because it shows plainly, and I hope the hon. member can see it. This little girl, who is in her first year at high school, looked at the map and said, "What is that for, Dad?" I said, "There is nearly 60 per cent. of the State's population in that little area." She did what I hope members will do. She looked at the whole map, and then at the little red area, and she said, "How silly!" It is said that tragedy and comedy are closely related. This state of affairs is a terrible tragedy.

A couple of days later it was proudly announced over the wireless that Professor Stephenson, the town planning expert, had said that we must plan for a Perth population of 1,000,000 in 50 years' time. No one will deny that town planning is important, but I think all who consider the welfare of the State will agree with me when I say we need a sound policy of State planning to check this cancerous growth of the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Housing: Would that include the Kwinana oil refinery?

Mr. HILL: Roughly, it would.

The Minister for Housing: That is a cancerous growth, too, is it?

Mr. HILL: Unfortunately, we could not prevent its being established at Kwinana, but it is better to have it there than amongst the congested population in the Eastern States. We need to consider and carefully study the State as a whole and look for the natural advantages that exist in the different parts.

Mr. Norton: In the North-West!

Mr. HILL: For example, at present we are ascertaining the natural advantages of Rough Range, and we are all hoping the time is not far distant when modern science and invention will be applied to use, for the benefit of the State, the oil which we feel sure exists there.

The Minister for Housing: How are the Albany coal deposits?

Mr. HILL: We have not got any coal at Albany. Nature did not give us coal, but a good harbour. I know very little about the North-West, so I am not going to talk about it. I will leave that to the member for Gascoyne and others who are acquainted with that area. As members know, I represent the most southern part of the State. Some years ago, I went to Parliament House in Adelaide and met the Speaker, Mr. (now Sir) Robert Nichols. He had just been to Western Australia, and he said, "You have a great country at the back of Albany and you should be carrying a population of 2,000,000 people. A block on the King River or the Kalgan River would suit me."

When I returned to Western Australia and came to this House, I managed to pick up an old map. As I looked at the South-West Land Division, my eye caught the Blackwood River, and I followed it to where it continued roughly to midway between Fremantle and Albany, and out to the rabbit-proof fence, down to the coast and back to the starting point. As I looked at it, I thought, "A second Victoria," and, holding the same position as Melbourne does in Victoria, there is the port of Albany. We must ask ourselves why, in this southern province of ours, we have about 10 per cent. of the State's population, whereas in the little red strip I marked on the map there is nearly 60 per cent.

One of the first things Sir John Forrest did when he became Premier of this State, was to set out to develop the port of Fremantle, and rightly so. He and successive Governments built railways radiating from Fremantle in all directions. Ships have come to Fremantle; trade has followed ships; population has followed trade; and political influence has followed population; and that is the cause of the cancerous growth of the metropolitan area.

What has been the position at Albany? Look at the railway map! The Great Southern railway was built by private enterprise, as was the Elleker-Denmark railway. All the Government-built railways, instead of following the natural lie of the country to Albany, have gone westward. Politicians have built railways apparently with the intention of wiping out Albany as a port. They have neglected to build lines that would bring trade to Albany.

During the war, the Sydney "Bulletin," referred to me as the member for Albany, "which has one of the finest ports and one of the finest harbours in the southern hemisphere, but which is the most neglected port in the British Empire." It referred to the remark I made that an American sailor spent more money on a ring for his girl than all the Labour Governments had spent on the port of Albany in 23 years.

The McLarty-Watts Government must be complimented for setting out to catch up with past mistakes and to develop what I term our southern province. It set out to develop Albany, and we have two wharves under construction and nearly 80 acres of reclamation work. The Harbour Board is already crying out for more reclamation work to be done. We have one of the finest superphosphate works in Australia, if not in the world. It will begin operations in a few months' time with a capacity of 60,000 tons. I can imagine the Minister for Railways saying to the super companies before many weeks are out, "For goodness sake, double your capacity at Albany." A few days ago I was at the opening of a warehouse which was built at a cost of £20,000. A merchant who was there turned to the manager of the warehouse and said, "We are not going to make the mistake you have made. We are going to build our place big enough."

Between now and the end of the year a sum of about £80,000 will be spent on premises for two banks at Albany—one for the Rural & Industries Bank and the other for the Commonwealth Bank. Big businesses are taking an interest in the development of the district all around Albany. Within the last five years the population of Albany has almost doubled. Government land development schemes are in operation, and today private individuals are out to develop their holdings. I can safely say that the McLarty-Watts Government has well and truly put our southern province on the road to prosperity, but there is still more to be done.

We have that gap in the transport system between Albany and the South-West and I appeal to the Government, if it cannot build a railway there, to provide a good all-weather road so that the lower South-West can use its natural port. When I was once speaking on the Estimates the member for Vasse interjected and said,

"Tell us the advantages of Albany." Nothing will give me greater pleasure. I was talking to Col. Tydeman who said, "You could not provide for £500,000,000 what Nature has supplied at Albany."

Nature not only provided one of the finest natural harbours there but has allowed easy grades right through to Merredin and Southern Cross. But Nature did not do everything for Albany. There are some things we have not got, and I will deal with them later. A few days ago a certain member of this House called me a b—— f—— because over the years I have tried to stop the criminal waste of putting money into Bunbury.

Mr. Andrew: What about another record?

Mr. HILL: Go on! I am used to being called a fool.

Mr. Andrew: I did not say anything about a fool. I said, "What about another record?"

Mr. HILL: I will give the hon. member another record, too. In my first Address-in-reply speech I referred to my failure to stop the bulk handling terminal being erected at Bunbury instead of at Albany. I said—

I wish to recommend the Government to place a big brass plate on the silo setting out the names of the present Ministry, in order that in time to come when the silo is keeping company with the Fremantle dock and the Henderson naval base, people will know who were the men that ignored expert advice, persisted in a losing fight against Nature, and preferred Bunbury to Albany.

Mr. Yates: How long ago was that?

Mr. HILL: It was 17 years ago. A few days ago I had the pleasure of showing the Premier our super works and our bulk handling terminal. What a pity we have not got that brass plate at Bunbury! If the Premier is going to insist on throwing money into the ocean at Bunbury I suggest another brass plate be put there with these words on it: "This work was started by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, Minister for Works in 1946, and since then so much has been spent on it."

The Premier: And carried on by Hon. D. Brand.

Mr. HILL: That should be done so that in a few years' time we would know who was responsible. News came over the wireless recently that the men employed by the Harbour and Light Department at Bunbury were being shifted to level a site for the power station there. I congratulate the Government on its decision to erect a most powerful power station of this nature.

The Premier: Do you suggest we should also put the power house at Albany.

Mr. HILL: In 25 years' time, if the Premier carries out my suggestion, the people will point with pride to the men responsible for the power house.

The Premier: Would you put a brass plate up with the name of the Government on it that started it?

Mr. HILL: That could be done, but it does not matter.

Hon. D. Brand: It does.

Mr. HILL: The hon. member can put his name on the brass plate as one who carried on the deep water jetty proposition at Bunbury. An amount of £600,000 is being spent there. I was a member of a Royal Commission on which also were the present Minister for Railways, who was the chairman of it, and the Minister for Lands, that advised against the deep water jetty at Bunbury. This sum of £600,000 which is being spent there will not bring another 100 tons more trade to the port, but it will increase the losses of the Bunbury Harbour Board by £28,000 a year. It means, too, that, if the Government continues with the work, there will be £600,000 less for other essential work. Now I am going to talk of the advantages of Bunbury and the disadvantages of Albany.

Mr. Ackland: Are there any?

Mr. HILL: Yes. Nature is never 100 per cent. generous. There is no coal within a reasonable distance of Albany and our water supply will be a big problem in the future. Within 150 miles radius of Albany we have 10 per cent. of the State's population. Within 40 miles of Bunbury there are millions of tons of coal and a large water supply, and within 150 miles of Bunbury there would be 80 per cent. of the State's population. I cannot see industries being established in this State to compete with the export trade, but I can see more industries being promoted for Western Australia.

I sincerely hope that the Government will not only carry on with the power station at Bunbury, but will see that water and power are supplied in the Bunbury district at 20 per cent. less than the cost at which it is provided in the metropolitan area. I will do all in my power to encourage the establishment of industries at Bunbury, or any other place, as long as it is done outside the metropolitan area. The Premier likes to have a laugh at me now and again, so I shall refer him to a remark that I made to him on the Estimates. I referred to the fact that the Bunbury Harbour Board showed a loss of £181,000 for the year. The member for South Perth interjected, "What was the loss at Albany?" I replied that the figures were not available, to which the Premier added: "Just as well."

It was just as well for the Premier! The figures for Bunbury show that the loss for the year was £181,000, and the accumulated deficiency was £842,005. The

figures for Albany are—a loss of £102 and an accumulated surplus for the Albany Harbour Board of £4,466 12s. 8d. In addition to the loss made by the Bunbury Harbour Board, we have the terrific loss made as a result of the costly blunder of putting the super works there instead of at Albany. Those works at Bunbury are in the wrong place for back loading. An amount of £35,000 for interest is charged at Albany on the capital account because the Harbour Board there is not making use of the work that has been carried out.

When it pays the full interest on the work that has been done at Albany, the local harbour board will show a substantial loss, but that loss will be small compared with the economy that will be effected by the use of Albany instead of Bunbury as the port for the Great Southern. While on the question of port finances, I saw some figures which are not any cause for laughter; they gave me a shock. One of the best milch cows that the Treasurer has had for many years has been the Fremantle Harbour Trust.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I agree with you there.

Mr. HILL: I wonder if the hon. member has seen the figures that I have in front of me. For 1951-52 the net surplus was £255,931; but this is what gave me a shock—for 1952-53 the net deficiency was £1,475. I think all members will agree that that is a very sorry state of affairs. Fremantle is an example of what not to do when Government moneys are expended. The member for Fremantle just interjected and mentioned the profits shown by Fremantle. Over the years, when the Fremantle Harbour Trust showed a profit, the money was drawn into Consolidated Revenue instead of being used for paying off the loan liability of that port. As a result, today the Fremantle Harbour Trust is being charged with a terrific interest bill for money that should have been paid years ago instead of being diverted into Consolidated Revenue.

Some members think I am a bit of a joke because I battle for Albany. That has been my job. Albany is the natural centre for our southern province and a number of people in the southern end of the State advocate that the province should be a separate State. That has a lot to commend it, but I am afraid it is not a practical proposition. Sir James Mitchell often pointed out that in that section we have the largest area of undeveloped land in any of the temperate zones in the world.

Three years ago I was in Adelaide and the member for Mt. Gambier took me under his wing. I also met the member for Port Lincoln, and that town, like Albany, has a group of natural harbours. The Mt. Gambier people used to say to the Port Lincoln people, "You give us one of your harbours and we will give you some

of our rainfall." Of course that is not possible, but the southern end of our State is fortunate because it has one of the finest groups of harbours in the world and one of the finest climates. But, as I have pointed out, we have the largest area of undeveloped land in the temperate zones of the world. It is the duty of members of this Parliament to help to develop that area. If we do not do so, we will not hold Australia.

I am afraid that there are a lot of difficulties connected with Esperance, but I was pleased to see that experiments are to be made with the light land in that area. It is a great pity that the railway was not put through there 50 years ago. Had it been built, Esperance would have been in a different position today. In the north we have Geraldton and I am sorry that I cannot give the member for Geraldton one of my spare harbours; I would do so if possible. But the member for Geraldton can rest assured that I will give my whole-hearted support in an endeavour to increase the population in that part of the State.

Mr. May: He will be very grateful.

Mr. HILL: I congratulate the member for Gascoyne on the discovery of oil in his electorate and I hope that the member for Kimberley and the member for Pilbara, and all other North-West members, will do their best to ensure that a careful survey is made of the North-West. They cannot produce butter, apples or pears in that part of the State, but I am sure that Nature has given them some valuable assets. It is our responsibility to see that those assets are developed for the good of the State as a whole.

One of the grandest views in Australia is that from King's Park and I am never tired of looking at it. But we must remember that, as we stand and watch that beautiful view from King's Park, we are looking at only a small part of Western Australia and the prosperity of that area depends upon the development of the country as a whole. I trust that we will apply modern ideas and scientific experience to all the areas throughout the State; but we must remember that our money for all purposes is limited. If we spend it fighting Nature when the fight is not necessary, instead of taking advantage of Nature's gifts, it is an uneconomical proposition.

MR. OLDFIELD (Maylands) [4.56]: I rise this afternoon to have one or two things to say about my own electorate. Firstly, I would like to refer to the old problem of Guildford-rd. This is the fourth session since I have been a member of Parliament and each session I have asked that the urgent work on this road be carried out. Some two years ago, under the previous Government, an agreement

was reached between the local authorities concerned—that is, the Perth, Bassendean and Bayswater Road Boards—and the Public Works Department. Under this agreement the road boards were to contribute a certain amount, according to the chainage within their areas and the condition of the road. The Bassendean Road Board was committed for 15s. per chain per annum, the Bayswater Road Board about 25s. per chain per annum and the Perth Road Board approximately £2 10s. per chain per annum. That proposal when submitted to the local authorities, was readily accepted.

It was a fair proposition and the boards considered it the best way to have the road finally put in order. I do not say that the present Administration acted wrongly, but it saw fit to do what the local authorities had really wanted done for many years. Last session the Government declared Guildford-rd. an "A" class road under the Traffic Act. In other words, Guildford-rd. was put on the same footing as Stirling Highway, Canning Highway and one or two other roads in the metropolitan area. Since Guildford-rd. has been the responsibility of the Main Roads Department, a large sum of money has been spent on its rehabilitation; but nowhere near what was expected. About 35 chains of road have been widened to the full width and put in first-class order—that is the section from Grosvenor-rd. to Garratt-rd.

From questions I asked the Minister for Works yesterday, it appears that we cannot expect much more to be done until next autumn and then the section from Ninth Avenue to Grosvenor-rd. and Grosvenor-rd. to Slade-st. will be attended to. Answers I received to questions asked today indicate that the department is well aware of the condition of the surface of the section between the Mt. Lawley Subway and Grosvenor-rd. It is three years since the bus service took over from the trams along that road. Yet the tram lines have never been reclaimed and nothing has been spent on that particular section of the road in the meantime. As a result the surface is rapidly deteriorating. If any member who has not done so were to traverse that road, or ask somebody who uses it regularly what its condition was, he would soon find it was a disgrace to Western Australia.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are they not repairing it now?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Only a small section of it. I am referring to the part which is the full width of the road from the Mt. Lawley subway to about Ninth Avenue. A crag surface would be sufficient to put it in order for many years to come. This part, as I have said, is the full width and cannot be further widened. This road happens to be two miles shorter than the Great Eastern Highway at Midland Junction and

the last traffic count showed that there is twice the density of traffic on the Guildford-rd. than there is on the Great Eastern Highway, despite the fact that instructions were issued by the Transport Board for all heavy traffic to use the Great Eastern Highway.

If those instructions had not been issued, I feel certain that the count would have been much greater for the traffic using Guildford-rd. The count taken two years ago from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. was 4,000 vehicles a day at the Bassendean bridge and the traffic at the Helena River bridge in South Guildford was 2,000 vehicles a day. We must take into account, however, that a lot of the traffic leaves Guildford-rd. at Garratt-rd., crosses the Swan River at the Garratt-rd. bridge and picks up the Great Eastern Highway through to Midland and various other destinations.

We will have more idea, therefore, of the amount of traffic using Guildford-rd., between Mt. Lawley subway and Garratt-rd. Accordingly I take this opportunity of appealing to the Government to make a special effort in relation to this road. Some two or three years ago Mr. Leach himself informed me that he considered that a quarter inch of drag surface for that part of the road would put it in order for 15 years. The foundations of the road are excellent and were laid in the old days when handwork was the order of the day.

Hon. D. Brand: It is a most important highway.

Mr. OLDFIELD: It certainly is. The foundations of the road are very good; it is the surfacing and the pounding down that really matter. It would be a tremendous expense to reconstruct that road, and would also be quite unnecessary. A drag surface would level it out and put it in first-class order.

The Premier: Work is being carried out on that road.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I am speaking about the road from the subway to Ninth Avenue where it is at its full width. As the member for Greenough has said, it is a very important highway, and the traffic count has shown that it is carrying twice the amount of traffic that passes over the Great Eastern Highway; in fact, in parts it is carrying three times the amount. I appeal to the Government to put in a drag surface. It would certainly make the member for Guildford-Midland and the member for Middle Swan very happy because, like myself, they continually have their electors on their backs about the road.

The Premier: I would use it more myself.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Undoubtedly the Premier goes via the Great Eastern Highway because the road is in better nick. This

brings me to another problem connected with traffic. It is the one that has been mentioned here on occasions, namely, the bridge across the Narrows. All the members from south of the river keep wearying the House about a bridge across the Narrows. I have no quarrel with their doing that. I would like to point out, however, that perhaps 20 years ago the first urgency for a second bridge across the river was possibly stressed at South Perth. Conditions have altered.

Today, however, most people seem to have taken up the old catch cry, "A bridge across the Narrows." I have had a good look at the map and have taken measurements and the distance from a bridge across the Narrows compared with the road across the Causeway is shorter by 36 chains when taken as far as Canning Bridge. On the other hand, a bridge from about Coode-st. in South Perth across to the foot of Barrack-st. would shorten the distance by one mile.

The Minister for Housing: It would bring the traffic into the heart of the city.

Mr. OLDFIELD: It would be one mile shorter.

The Minister for Housing: You would have twice as much traffic up Barrack-st., which is undesirable.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The traffic could use Riverside Drive or Spring-st.

The Minister for Housing: It would still have to go into the city.

Mr. OLDFIELD: It could go along Riverside Drive. I am merely pointing out that a bridge from Coode-st. to the foot of Barrack-st. would be shorter and from the maps that members have studied, we know that the depth of water is about 2ft.

The Minister for Education: What is the distance?

Mr. OLDFIELD: One knows how quickly it is possible for an artificial island to be made. The distance across would not be more than a mile. Perth has a tremendous traffic problem confronting it at the moment and most of us know how rapidly the city is expanding. When we go across to the north side of the line we find that Perth has extended in that direction. Retail businesses there are flourishing and suites of offices have been opened up and are being used by solicitors and other professional men. They are doing this because there is no room in Perth. Accordingly, the portion immediately north of the line has become a very real part of the City of Perth.

There are many thousands of people employed in industries north of the line, and the traffic coming from the southern side of the river can get to the north of Perth only by using the Causeway and going through the city. There is no method of by-passing the city whatever. Likewise,

all the traffic from a very rapidly expanding residential and industrial area—I refer now to the Middle Swan and Canning electorates, East Belmont, Maida Vale, etc.—all uses the Causeway and proceed over the Beaufort-st. bridge on the way north of the line.

I would suggest that the people responsible for building bridges across the Swan River confer with the traffic authorities and consider where the first bridge to go across the river is required. Despite the fact that 20 years ago the urgency was across the Narrows on the south side of the river, I suggest that another problem has reared its head and surpasses in importance the Narrows proposition.

What I have in mind is a traffic bridge across the Swan River north or east of the Causeway, somewhere in the vicinity of the Bunbury railway bridge. If a bridge were constructed near the Bunbury railway bridge it would take all the traffic from north of the line to some of the southern suburbs. From a traffic angle, Perth is badly situated. There are two entrances from the east, one from Riverside Drive and one from Adelaide Terrace. From the west there are two or three approaches. From the north, there is the William-st. bridge and Beaufort-st. bridge.

The Premier: And what bridges!

Mr. OLDFIELD: I agree they are not very suitable for the traffic involved. I would suggest that the Government takes a look at the plan and confers with the traffic authorities to ascertain the traffic which passes the line and crosses the Causeway, traffic which could be avoided by erecting a bridge at the east or north of the Causeway.

Another matter I wish to touch on, and I do this reluctantly, is one on which hon. members will agree with me. It is a case where a decision arrived at has not been abided by. Most fair-minded people and all members of this House will agree with me—it is a pity the member for Moore is not in his seat—that he is a person of honourable intentions, a righteous man, a member always fired by zeal and enthusiasm to do his job. We all know he is the type of person who carries out his job with all the conscience he is capable of commanding.

If anything troubles his conscience, if he feels that a thing is not right, he does not hesitate to bring the matter before the House. He is not backward in airing what he thinks is wrong. Some 12 months ago we all know the action he took with regard to alleged bribery in the Transport Board.

The Premier: I think the hon. member should not praise the member for Moore behind his back.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I think the member for Moore acted according to the dictates of his conscience. There is no doubt about that. Certain persons went along and told

him a story. He felt there was some truth in what they were saying and he did what every member would have done under the circumstances. Not being able to get satisfaction elsewhere, he came and placed the matter before the House. The Government as a result appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the charges.

The Minister for Housing: No one objects to that, but to his persecution of the individual.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Does the Minister want to make a speech? I know he can do a far better job than I. It appears that a person named W. A. Lockyer approached the member for Moore with a complaint that he was not getting any super carting to which he was entitled. This man was an elector in the Moore electorate. The member for Moore did what every member would have done. He took the matter up. He considered that unfair treatment was being meted out; he went to the department concerned and interviewed Mr. McPherson.

For certain reasons Mr. McPherson saw fit to refuse to allocate Mr. Lockyer any super carting. The member for Moore then appealed to the chairman of the Transport Board, Mr. Howard. Mr. Howard also refused to give Mr. Lockyer any super carting. I do not know what the reasons were. Obviously the board had some reasons upon which Mr. McPherson was acting. Whatever it was, the member for Moore admitted to the member for Boulder last night, by way of interjection, that he improperly used his position in influencing the board to give super carting where he thought it was entitled to be placed.

We all agree that he was acting in the best interests of one of his electors. When the member for Moore found he could not get the board to give carting to one of his electors, he started to listen to these stories. Whether they were true or false, none of us is in a position to say. The fact is there was an inquiry and a finding. After hearing allegations made by certain disgruntled carters, he decided to see the Commissioner of Police. The commissioner directed the C.I.B. to investigate the case immediately. That was in November, 1952. I have the greatest admiration for our Police Force and I think the C.I.B. and the Police Force of this State are some of the most efficient in Australia. No breath of suspicion can fall upon them as far as corruption is concerned.

We do read of allegations made in this regard in other States. I have the greatest faith and confidence in our Police Force. I think it is very efficient. If it were at all possible to lay a specific charge, if it were at all possible to set a trap or to obtain specific and sufficient evidence to warrant the placing of such a charge against a public servant, I am sure the C.I.B. would be quite capable and would be successful in ferreting out the true facts.

However, the then Premier, who is now the member for Murray, received a report from the Commissioner of Police, recommending that no action be taken in this matter. This showed that the C.I.B. and the Commissioner of Police considered that the complaints were rather frivolous. Then the member for Moore, not to be denied, continued to act upon the dictates of his conscience. He believed that bribery and corruption were rife in the department. Nothing would shift him from that belief.

I suppose a person is entitled to his own beliefs. If he is privileged to belong to this Chamber, he is privileged to air his views on any subject whatever. He took the opportunity to do that. I have no quarrel with him in so doing. When he aired his views before this House, he asked for an inquiry. The Government consented and appointed a Royal Commission. The member for Moore was so zealous and so anxious that the offenders be caught up with, that he was prepared to fabricate evidence to adduce to this House.

I wish to quote from the transcript of evidence taken on oath before the Royal Commissioner. On the day when the member for Moore made his speech in this House, he told us that Hon. A. R. Jones was making a similar speech in another place. The member for Moore asked permission to read what he wished to say so that the phraseology used in the two Chambers would coincide. I want members to bear that point in mind. A reference to "Hansard" will show that the two speeches were identical. The member for Moore, under cross-examination before the Royal Commission, was questioned and replied as follows:

The meeting on the 1st January was only a casual one on the race-course?—Yes, quite by accident.

Was Mr. Jones with you then?—No.

You made the following statement in your speech:—"I understand that the police and the informant had other interviews, but after a considerable time, we again met the informant." Where did that meeting take place between you, Mr. Jones and Wilson?—I do not remember; but we did meet him.

It was at a joint meeting between you, Mr. Jones and Wilson that he told you that for some weeks he had not paid moneys and received no carting?—That is right.

Where did that meeting take place?

—I do not remember. But we did meet Wilson after meeting the Commissioner. I met him on the 4th January.

Was the occasion on which he met you and Mr. Jones before the 1st January or after?—Before.

Was it at Parliament House?—No.

In Mr. Carlyle's office?—Probably in the city. I met him in the city and the second time was in the Commissioner's office.

Where was the third time? This was the occasion on which he told you that he paid no bribes and received no carting. You realise the importance of it to the officer being charged?

—I cannot give you the exact date, but it was prior to the 1st January.

When was it?—More likely well into December.

So it goes on. The member for Moore insisted that there was a third meeting with Mr. Jones and Mr. Wilson. When we turn to page 152 of the transcript, we find that Mr. Jones had this to say, in answer to questions by counsel—

And then a meeting at the trots?—Yes.

And then the meeting by arrangement on the morning after the announcement was made?—Yes.

Apart from the chance meetings in the street, have you seen or interviewed him (Wilson) with anyone else on any other occasion?—No.

Mr. Ackland seemed to have the impression this morning that there was another meeting at which you were present and which took place somewhere in the city. He felt sure it took place, but could not remember where?—No, that is not a fact. I never met Mr. Wilson with Mr. Ackland on any other occasion.

You would not agree that there was another meeting between you and Mr. Wilson and Mr. Ackland?—No. The inference of both of our statements in the House was that we had met a third time but, so that our statements would coincide, I tied up my statement with Mr. Wilson at the trots as Mr. Ackland had done at the races.

The Minister for Agriculture: What a lovely state of affairs!

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, this was Mr. Jones giving evidence on oath. Questions and answers continued—

As far as you were concerned there was no other meeting between you and Mr. Ackland and Mr. Wilson, apart from what you have told us of?—No, that is correct.

Thus, there were two meetings, but the member for Moore, on oath, insisted that there were three. Mr. Jones, on oath, said there were only two. They had put their heads together and made up a story to make it sound more convincing to the House. That is the sort of thing that went on in this case. During the few weeks preceding the sitting of the Royal Commission, a most unusual step was taken—one without precedent—and that was that the C.I.B. was asked to assist in the securing of witnesses. Certain officers of the C.I.B. were

employed for three or four weeks in the endeavour to obtain sufficient evidence to sheet home the charges.

The Minister for Housing: That was after the appointment of the Royal Commission?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes; this was the second time that officers of the C.I.B. had been on the job. In the first place, the commissioner recommended that no further action be taken. After the commission had been appointed, and prior to its meeting, officers of the C.I.B. were active in questioning various people. They received a whisper, and they obtained names from the member for Moore and saw disgruntled carters, but could not produce anything concrete.

Another point I wish to mention. According to vol. 1 of "Hansard," 1953, at page 188, the member for Moore stated that he had a statement from a man, who was Wilson, to the effect that he and his son had given McPherson a car radio and a case of beer. When Mr. Wilson appeared before the Royal Commissioner, no mention whatever was made of the case of beer or of the car radio. He had an opportunity to put the evidence before the commissioner, but there was no mention of those two items. Why was that? Had those gifts been made, it would have been easy to prove who had bought and paid for the car radio.

The Minister for Railways: That was never mentioned at the Royal Commission.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The fact is that this House was given two specific instances, and yet, when it came to inquiry by the Royal Commission, no mention was made of them on oath. When nobody was prepared to back up those statements on oath, we may write them off.

The Minister for Housing: Would you suggest that the Royal Commissioner was the member for Moore?

Mr. OLDFIELD: No. The Royal Commissioner was unable to find that any of the allegations had been proved. Yet, in spite of that fact, the member for Moore last night told us he still believed that there was bribery in the department. By way of questions he has been endeavouring continually to persecute McPherson and I think he wants that officer to get the sack, but the Minister has not taken that action. I will say this much for the Government, that it has carried out the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner, who in the course of his recommendation said—

In view of what I consider to be partiality shown in the administration of his section, I respectfully recommend for consideration that he be moved to some other form of work.

That has been done, so I have no quarrel with the Government in view of the fact that it has carried out the only recommendation made. I do not think any fair-minded member could quarrel with the

Government for not having gone beyond the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

Hon. D. Brand: What is McPherson doing now?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Apparently the Royal Commissioner felt it would be advisable in all the circumstances and in fairness to everybody that Mr. McPherson should not continue in a job which brought him into direct contact with the public, and I understand that he has been moved to other work where he is in charge of the designation of bus stops.

Mr. O'Brien: What is your grievance? Have you one?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I can't afford one.

The Premier: They are expensive.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The Royal Commissioner said, further—

I feel it my duty to make the above recommendation, but in view of my findings on the specific charges and as the administration of the board is not in question, no further recommendation is necessary.

That was absolute and final, after a thorough investigation.

Another interesting point, while we are dealing with the personalities concerned in this affair, is the personality of the member for Moore, who has himself had something to do with preferential treatment. He read a statement from the findings of the Royal Commissioner about partiality being shown and, as was admitted yesterday, he was possibly improperly using his own position in trying to get favours for his friends, but even before the Royal Commission, under oath—I think he would always tell the truth under oath—the member for Moore gave the following evidence:—

I think you are a director of Co-operative Bulk Handling?—Yes.

Do they handle the wheat carting?—Yes.

Did you know that Wilson was a wheatcarter?—Yes.

Did you know that he was fully occupied carting wheat during the year 1952?—No, I did not know that. I knew he had carted wheat for them.

Did you know anything about his wheat-carting operations?—I knew this; after going to the police I asked them if they could give him some carting; I would like them to.

You asked the police if they could give him some carting?—No, the C.B.H. could give him some carting. I do not think he got very much.

That shows that the hon. member did try to use his position as director of the company to get this person some carting, but he got him only a little, if any, and that was parallel with the partiality shown at the Transport Board.

At the inquiry Mr. McPherson was questioned under oath and admitted there was a preference list and that partiality had to be shown and he gave his reasons. No doubt C.B.H. had the same reasons for partiality at its end. I would like to point out that the policy that was in existence at the board was not that of the officers concerned, but of the board itself, because it was the board that laid down the list of priorities or preferences covering individuals who came within certain categories.

McPherson was in the unfortunate position of having to implement the policy of the board. I do not quarrel with that policy as I believe the board probably had good reasons for it. We know that there is a type of carter who is willing to handle profitable loading but who, as soon as the best of it is over, goes somewhere else and, when that work cuts out, wants to come back and get a bread-and-butter line again. Obviously the board felt that the people who stuck to it were entitled to preference. Under oath McPherson said—

During the time when there was a shortage of trucks for the cartage of super on what basis did you allocate the work or what preferences were given?—We had quite a list of preferences, and these were always very hard to keep. We had preferences to carriers who had originally established themselves as super hauliers and had fully co-operated irrespective of the size of the load and the destination involved. Then we had carriers who had shown every co-operation in other directions, especially during the metal trades strike. Then we had preferences for carriers whose truck capacity was commensurate with the load offering to be transported. Again, we gave preference to those carriers who were easily available by means of urgent telephonic communication. We gave preferences to local carriers.

That has reference to the carter operating in the district to which the super had to be transported. McPherson continued—

The time factor often prevented their engagement.

Undoubtedly it would, because if a load was to go to a certain area and the driver was already in that area the load could not wait and would have to be given to the first truck that was available. McPherson further said—

We also gave preferences to out-of-work wheat carters who had in past seasons fully co-operated and put their vehicles at our disposal at all times when called upon to do so. We had quite a list of preferences. That is all I can think of at the moment.

It is only natural that they had a list of preferences and that everybody could not get full-time work as there were too many

trucks for the amount of work offering. There was, admittedly, a list of preferences and the person responsible for allocating the loading may have advised the board with regard to the preferences.

I do not know about that but the board was in charge of the policy which McPherson had to carry out, just as the Under Treasurer has to carry out the bad financial policies initiated by the present Government—if any. Yesterday the member for Moore read a couple of extracts from the findings of the Royal Commissioner, but I would remind the House that anyone can go through "Hansard" and take a sentence or paragraph out of its context with the result that its meaning is entirely altered. I have heard the Minister for Works do that many a time.

The Minister for Works: You have not.

Mr. OLDFIELD: To be fair, one must read not just a sentence or paragraph but the whole of the context. The Royal Commissioner said—

All matters referred to the commission from Messrs. Ackland and Jones, however general they may have been, were inquired into by the Commission.

With reference to the allegations of bribery and other irregularities he said.

These latter allegations were very general in their nature and I think Mr. Ackland relied, as he pointed out in the House and also in his letter to the Premier, on the assurance that further allegations would be forthcoming. As it turned out, however, many of these further allegations were not forthcoming.

Further on the commissioner said—

Before generalising, however, I shall deal with the evidence in respect of the specific charges.

He then goes on to quote various sections of the Criminal Code, and he concluded that section of his findings by saying this—

This means that I am required to find that criminal offences have or have not been committed. This being so, I think that in fairness to all concerned, I must adopt the criminal as distinct from the civil test as to whether or not specific individuals have been guilty of bribery. In other words, I must act as a jury and be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt rather than on the balance of probability.

That proved there was no doubt in the commissioner's mind as to any of these allegations being sustained. Dealing with the comments he made on the evidence given by various witnesses, he had this to say about one named Frederick Wilson—

I feel that the jury, being warned that it is dangerous to act on the uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice, would bring in a finding of not guilty.

As to the evidence given by one named George Jelavich, the commissioner had this to say—

I find, therefore, that Jelavich is not prepared to tell the whole truth and lied about silly matters. This being so, his whole evidence becomes suspect, and I therefore reject it. I find his allegations unproved.

Again, regarding a witness named Stanley William Kinlock, the commissioner had this to say—

McPherson's story is the more likely.

This being so, I find Kinlock's allegations in the negative.

The member for Moore did not read these findings to the House last night. The commissioner has found nothing proven and his recommendations have been carried out. Therefore, I was sorry to hear the member for Moore, in answer to an interjection by the member for South Fremantle, who said, "What have you got against Mr. McPherson?" say, "What have I got against anybody whom I believe is dishonest?" After reading the whole of the commissioner's findings, and, I am sure, the transcript of the evidence, has the member for Moore any right, under privilege of this House, to say that he thinks a person is dishonest?

The Minister for Housing: Hear, hear!

Mr. OLDFIELD: Later in his speech the member for Moore referred to Mr. Howard, the present chairman of the board, who was appointed by the McLarty-Watts Government and not by the present one. Therefore, there was no political bias when the member for Moore said this—

I believe he was quite incapable of holding down a position as chairman of that board.

Those are the words I want the House to remember. In one statement he said that he believed that McPherson is dishonest and later he said that Mr. Howard is not capable of acting as chairman of the Transport Board. I would like the member for Moore to show a little compassion.

Mr. Heal: What?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Compassion! He should feel a little inquiry towards the world and abide by the umpire's decision. He has had his inquiry and he got all his complaints off his chest in this Chamber, but because he was unable to prove any of the charges that he made; because he was unable to have the officers of the Transport Board as a whole thrown into gaol, he is trying to persecute an individual.

Mr. O'Brien: He is a bad loser.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I would like to point out to the member for Moore, however, that Mr. McPherson has been found not guilty of all the allegations made against him by a properly constituted Royal Commission and with a trained legal man acting as the commissioner. Also, he was assisted by a trained legal counsel, namely, the Crown Prosecutor. The member for Moore should realise that Mr. McPherson is a family man who naturally is trying to lead a peaceful and normal life. Apparently the member for Moore considers that he should not be allowed to do so.

The Premier: He should not be allowed!

Mr. OLDFIELD: I understand that Mr. McPherson has two young children aged from 12 to 14 years. He and his wife have to live in the community and his children have to attend school. It is not very pleasant for him or his family to have to pick up the paper and see his name mentioned almost daily after the inquiry has been closed.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Have you any idea of what is at the bottom of it all?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Will the hon. member please let me finish? I believe that the member for Moore is upsetting what has always been and should be a peaceful home. I ask him to abide by the umpire's decision and be big enough to accept it. We should have no more of this political humbug. I say that because what is really at the bottom of it all—as the member for Fremantle has asked—is that I believe the real intention of the member for Moore was shown when he said that Mr. Howard is not a fit and capable person to be chairman of the Transport Board. Unfortunately, Mr. McPherson has become a political football and I have no doubt that the object of the member for Moore is to bring discredit upon all the officers of the Transport Board and to have Mr. Howard removed from office so that one of the hon. member's friends can be appointed in his place.

That is what is behind it all. Mr. Ackland has admitted to the House that he has friends in the Transport Board. As is shown by the statement he made last night, he wants to get rid of Mr. Howard and then, when one of his friends is appointed to the position, he can approach him and say, "I have a friend called Jack Jones or Tom Smith who wants permission to cart super or something else" and he will have all the facilities granted to him. I therefore trust that all these attacks on Mr. McPherson will cease and that he will be allowed to live in peace and enjoy a normal life in society.

On motion by Mr. May, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.