

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 25th August, 1970

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (6): ON NOTICE

1. DECENTRALISATION

Dwellingup

The Hon. N. McNEILL, to the Minister for Mines:

In view of the construction of the proposed dam on the South Dandalup River, and the development of the bauxite mineral field in the Dwellingup area, will the Government initiate discussions with the appropriate authorities, both governmental and commercial, to ensure that the policies of decentralisation are continued in order to bring benefits to the Dwellingup area by—

- (a) providing and/or encouraging home building in Dwellingup for the accommodation of the work force associated with these projects;
- (b) construction of a high standard road connecting the dam-site with the township; and
- (c) the development of facilities for tourists in the Murray Valley?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (a) It is considered that the establishment of an industrial complex at Pinjarra and the construction of the South Dandalup River Dam will bring a number of indirect benefits to Dwellingup and other adjacent areas. In this direction the advantageous siting of houses for the required work force will be kept under constant review. However, the growing trend towards providing mobile homes at construction sites may be an important economic factor in these considerations.
- (b) Discussions have already taken place on the need to provide a good standard road between Dwellingup and the damsite. It has been decided that in the first stage upgrading of the existing road will be undertaken and investigations to improve sections of the existing alignments are being carried out by

the Main Roads Department. Later the road will be further upgraded as the need arises.

- (c) The Tourist Development Authority has advised that it will give consideration to any proposals submitted by the local authorities concerned.

2. WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mining Industry

The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS, to the Minister for Mines:

What are the Workers' Compensation costs per \$100.00 of payroll in the mining industry as it applies to—

- (a) gold mining;
- (b) nickel mining; and
- (c) any other type of mining?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

Workers' Compensation premiums are calculated on the aggregate wages payable provided that, in compiling the aggregate, no wages for any one worker exceeding \$50 per week is taken into account. Maximum premium rates for mining, excluding pneumoconiosis risks, are as follows:

	Rate Per cent. \$ c
(1) Gold mining, asbestos mining, and not otherwise specified	4.96
(2) Ilmenite mining	3.27
(3) Tin mining	1.11
(4) Coal mining	4.28
(5) Geological surveys	1.04

In addition, the following maximum rates apply for pneumoconiosis risks:

	\$ c
(a) Gold mining, asbestos mining, nickel mining and not otherwise specified	6.00
(b) Iron mining, ilmenite mining, bauxite mining, tin mining and geological surveys	2.00
(c) Clerical (mining industry)	1.00

3.

EDUCATION

Albany Senior High School

The Hon. J. M. THOMSON, to the Minister for Mines:

Further to my question on Wednesday, the 19th August, 1970, relating to classroom and other accommodation requirements at the Albany Senior High School—

- (a) how many demountable classrooms are to be provided for the 1971 school year;

- (b) will that number fully overcome the overcrowding and congestion now being experienced;
- (c) has the Government any plans for the construction of further permanent buildings similar to the present main building; or
- (d) are no further permanent or temporary additions envisaged pending the construction of a second high school or technical school in the 1972-75 triennium?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (a) The number of demountable classrooms will be determined on surveys and predictions to be made in November, 1970.
- (b) Yes.
- (c) A Commonwealth Library will be built.
- (d) No permanent building, apart from the Commonwealth Library, will be built prior to the construction of a new Technical School or second High School.

4. RAILWAYS

Perth-Kalgoorlie-Esperance Timetable

The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS, to the Minister for Mines:

- (1) When the re-routing of the Perth-Kalgoorlie Express between Northam and Merredin, via Wyalkatchem, commences—
 - (a) what will be the departure and arrival times in each direction; and
 - (b) what will be the amended timetable of the Railway road bus between Kalgoorlie and Esperance and return?
- (2) When the rail car service is introduced on the standard gauge line between Kalgoorlie and Perth and return—
 - (a) will there be any night passenger train with sleeping accommodation;
 - (b) has the timetable for the road bus service between Kalgoorlie and Esperance and return been finalised; and
 - (c) If so, what are the arrangements?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) (a) Perth depart 4.55 p.m. (Sunday to Friday).
Kalgoorlie arrive 9.30 a.m. (Monday to Saturday).
Kalgoorlie depart 7.0 p.m. (Sunday to Friday).
Perth arrive 10.57 a.m. (Monday to Saturday).

- (b) Saturday, (via Kambalda):
Kalgoorlie depart 10.30 a.m.
Norseman arrive 1.45 p.m.
Norseman depart 2.5 p.m.
Esperance arrive 5.20 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday (via Coolgardie):

- Kalgoorlie depart 10.30 a.m.
Norseman arrive 1.55 p.m.
Norseman depart 2.15 p.m.
Esperance arrive 5.30 p.m.

Sunday (via Kambalda):

- Esperance depart 11.45 a.m.
Norseman arrive 3.0 p.m.
Norseman depart 3.20 p.m.
Kalgoorlie arrive 6.30 p.m.

Wednesday and Friday (via Coolgardie):

- Esperance depart 1.0 p.m.
Norseman arrive 4.15 p.m.
Norseman depart 4.35 p.m.
Coolgardie arrive 7.15 p.m. (connects with train to Perth).
Kalgoorlie arrive 8.15 p.m.

- (2) (a) No, but berths on the interstate train not otherwise occupied between Perth and Kalgoorlie will be allocated for local travel.

- (b) and (c) The timetable is still under consideration.

5. WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Industrial Deafness

The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that in Canada and America, in industry where industrial noise exists—
 - (a) pre-employment audiometric tests are compulsory and are carried out and followed up at least every twelve months;
 - (b) where high noise levels exist, they are labelled hearing protection areas, and the wearing of ear protection devices by employees is mandatory;
 - (c) the ear protection devices have to be the type approved by medical consultants;
 - (d) there is much success in silencing of percussion rock drills by 9dB, which means the impact energy is one-eighth of the total noise;
 - (e) mine car loaders can be silenced 8dB, a reduction of one-seventh;
 - (f) air fans of large or any design can be muffled to the extent that it is possible to hold a normal conversation next to them; and

(g) air compressors can be muffled also so that conversation can be heard comfortably and clearly?

- (2) Will the Minister introduce legislation to prevent injury to the hearing of employees in industry similar to the Industrial Safety Act of 1964 of Ontario, Canada?
- (3) Is it the intention of the Government to legislate to make hearing loss due to industrial noise compensable under the Workers' Compensation Act in Western Australia?
- (4) Is the Minister aware that in Canada, when hearing loss due to industrial noise was made compensable under Workers' Compensation, that where thousands of applications for compensation were expected, not even hundreds applied for it?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (on behalf of the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon), replied:

- (1) (a), (b) and (c) Yes. It is understood that some U.S. states and Canadian provinces have such legislation.
- (d), (e), (f), and (g) Yes.
- (2) No such legislation is at present envisaged.

The Minister for Labour advises with regard to the remaining questions as follows:

- (3) No.
- (4) No.

6.

LAND

Taxation Valuations

The Hon. F. R. WHITE, to the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Further to the reply to my question No. (7) on the 20th August, 1970, would the Minister explain what other methods are used to determine unimproved capital values of land?
- (2) Would the Minister indicate where in legislation or in *Hansard* these other methods have been propounded by a Minister of the Crown?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) and (2) The methods used are those referred to in the answers to questions No. (11) of the 19th August, and No. (7) of the 20th August, 1970.

There are no other methods.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: EIGHTH DAY

Motion

Debate resumed, from the 20th August, on the following motion by The Hon. S. T. J. Thompson:—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency:—

May it please Your Excellency: We, the Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

THE HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (South Metropolitan) [4.50 p.m.]: While speaking on this motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's opening Speech, I wish to deal with several matters which are of direct interest to the economy and the public of Western Australia. In addition, I have several parochial matters to which I wish to refer.

First of all I would like to speak for a moment or two on the annual report of the Director-General of Transport (Mr. Knox). However, before I do so, because I will be criticising, I want to make it very clear that I know Mr. Knox personally and I regard him as a gentleman of very high integrity. Anything I might say of a critical nature in regard to his report is not intended to reflect on him or his staff.

In the three reports he has issued since he has been in office, Mr. Knox has gone to a great deal of trouble to point out the difficulties which confronted him when he was first appointed. He had a very small staff and he had first of all to obtain accommodation and then organise the members of his staff so that they could commence their survey work.

In the report for the year ended June, 1968—and I wish to thank the staff of this Chamber for obtaining a copy of this report for me, as there was not one available in Parliament House—Mr. Knox, in referring to his own position, said—

Whilst my precise duties are set out in Section 21 (1) and 21 (2) of the State Transport Co-ordination Act No. 91 of 1966, I have in the past year when speaking on the role that the Director-General plays endeavoured to precis these duties as follows:

Advise the Minister on how the total user demand for transportation in Western Australia may be best met.

Advise the Minister how our existing investment in transportation facilities may be most advantageously employed.

Advise the Minister how in the future we may best invest the financial resources that will be available to us.

From the use of the word advise it will be seen that the Director-General is not in the line of accountability that leads from the Minister for Transport to the permanent heads of the operating authorities.

I believe that the director and his very small staff must be complimented on the terrific sphere they have covered in their investigations and research into the transport position in Western Australia, and relating it to interstate transport. Many points affect the economy as such; for instance, the redesigning and replanning of the railways, which will have in the future a very direct effect upon the economy.

One point really surprises me in this year's annual report of the director-general. Incidentally, although I have no desire to tell members what they should do, I believe that this report should be read and studied by all members in an endeavour to ascertain whether some further research might be required in order to effect additional improvements to those already taking place.

An analysis of the report will reveal that research has been carried out from the top echelon—if I may use that expression—down; in other words, from the bigger transport companies, the Railways Department, and the airways companies, down to the smaller transporters. The situation in the country districts, where road transport is now being provided in lieu of rail transport, has also been studied.

I was intrigued to read the following opening remarks of Mr. Knox in his report:—

Introduction

On 12th December, 1966, assent was given to "an Act to make better provision for the co-ordination of transport . . ."

I emphasise that word "co-ordination." To continue—

The State Transport Co-ordination Act No. 91 provided for a Director General of Transport who would be charged with a variety of duties. These duties are set out in Sections 21 (i) and (ii). They give the Director-General very wide scope indeed to enquire, research, plan, advise and recommend. They give him no power whatsoever to direct or require.

I suppose I was one of those members who voted when this Bill went through Parliament, but I am sure that when we appoint a Director-General of Transport—and the word "Director" is very plainly in the Act, and in all his reports—and he has no power whatever to direct, then somewhere along the line something has gone wrong, and the

Minister for Transport should have another look at the situation and introduce an appropriate amendment to overcome the position. Mr. Knox continues—

It follows, therefore, that any results or dividends which may flow to the State from the application of the State Transport Co-ordination Act will accrue only through—

agreement by The Minister for Transport in the case of policy type recommendations, and agreement by the many Government agencies, operating and regulatory which make up the transport scene, in the case of professional type recommendations.

Quite a number of reports on transport in Western Australia and the Commonwealth are available if members of Parliament care to read them. A perusal of such reports, including those of the director-general, indicate quite clearly that a group of people has been completely overlooked. The Transport Workers' Union has a membership of 5,000. However, taking into consideration the fact that many hundreds of transport workers in Western Australia are not members of the union, we could raise that figure to 6,000. On page 7 of the third annual report, for the year ended the 30th June, 1969, of the Commissioner of Transport, who is not the Director-General of Transport, is the following:—

At the 30th June, 1968, there were licences in force in respect of 5,850 vehicles, comprising—

Omnibuses—258

Commercial Goods Vehicles—4,678

Of course, we know that since that report the Metropolitan Transport Trust has over 700 buses, to say nothing of the large number of commercial goods vehicles in operation in the metropolitan area. I am not dealing with aeroplanes or taxis at the moment, which make up the balance of the 5,850 vehicles which the commissioner mentions. The point I am trying to make is that each of the vehicles to which I have referred requires a driver; and, in the case of buses, three drivers are sometimes required to cover all shifts.

Surely the Transport Workers' Union of Western Australia should be invited to elect a delegate or nominee to the various transport co-ordination committees of which the Director-General of Transport is in charge.

The ordinary transport driver meets many problems on the roads and, from time to time, he places some of them before his union which then takes them further.

I do not want to weary the House by reading all the reports in my possession, but I want to say that many committees have been formed. A number of organisations have been invited to be represented on the committees. The Transport Advisory Council and the Transport Users Board are

making changes in the pattern of transportation. I suppose all these changes are for the betterment of the actual transport industry, but whether they are for the benefit of the man in the street is another question. After all, he is the person who finally buys goods which have been transported. Further, I do not know of any article which can be bought today which has not passed through several hands at some period in its transportation.

If the Transport Workers' Union had a delegate or a nominee on the committees in an advisory capacity, he could be called in when matters affecting drivers were discussed. So far as the union is concerned, over the last 18 months we have probably seen more industrial strife than at any other time in the whole history of the union in Western Australia. Some of this unrest has been caused by the direct changes that have been made. These changes have been made without any consultation with the people who actually operate the vehicles. They have not, up to date, been given the opportunity to give advice to planning authorities with regard to transportation as it affects the metropolitan area in particular and the State as a whole.

One of the biggest transport firms which cart into the north of the State has frequently underpaid its staff. There were 312 cases of underpayments and, at times, the firm has paid up when it was cornered. However, it has continued with this practice at later dates.

We speak of safety on the roads and, of course, road safety vitally affects the heavy transport driver who has to drive through the night on roads that are not built to carry the type of transport or the volume of traffic which they carry today. The Main Roads Department is to be congratulated for the work it is doing, because the department is gradually upgrading many of the roads. I give full credit to the department for this and I hope it never ceases to carry on with the high standard of work, which is the envy of the rest of Australia.

I had eight cases brought to my attention involving heavy transport drivers, and I shall quote three. The drivers were working from 88 to 115 hours a week carting goods from Perth to the north. There was no overtime and they were expected to arrive at their destinations at specified times. The Director-General of Transport, if he knew of these happenings, would be the last person to agree to this kind of work load. These are matters which could be brought before him.

Many years ago the Transport Workers' Union asked Parliament to pass legislation to control the working hours of these men. The suggestion was that drivers who went into the country should work a maximum of 11 hours and then have eight hours off duty. This happened in the 1930s,

because the union was concerned with safety on the roads and safe working conditions. Look at the few vehicles that were on the roads at that time and look at the number on the roads today!

According to the report, the number of people being transported has reached astronomical figures. At the present time 24,000 people are being transported on 600 buses, and it is suggested that by 1989 probably 48,000 passengers will travel on 1,200 buses. The report goes on to say—

Amongst many significant statistics the study has developed the following:—

In 1970, population of the Perth region will reach 700,000—by 1989 this figure will have increased to 1,436,000.

In 1970, private car ownership in the region will be almost 400,000—by 1989 this total will have increased to 680,000.

In 1970, 24,000 persons using 600 buses and 36,000 persons using 24,000 private cars will enter the Perth central business district each day. If the division between public and private transport does not change, by 1989 as many as 48,000 people in 1,200 buses and 72,000 people in 48,000 private cars could be trying to enter the Perth central business district daily.

This emphasises the point I am making. The Transport Workers' Union will supply drivers for these vehicles. I am sure that at least one member of the union—and, indeed, many more than one—has sufficient education and knowledge of traffic and transport to be a member of some of the committees on transport which are being set up in the metropolitan area.

People speak of co-ordination. Nevertheless, we had a glaring example of lack of co-ordination a few days ago when the City of Perth suggested it would increase parking fees to keep the all-day parker out of the city and enable the shopping parker to come in. This is probably a good idea, but immediately the management of the Metropolitan Transport Trust announced that it could not handle the volume of passenger traffic that would come about if the Perth City Council went ahead with its suggestion. The trust said that it would have to increase charges because it would have to supply many more vehicles.

Co-ordination and co-operation need to be worked at to be successful. A number of departments, commissions, and individuals are currently engaged on this work. There is the office of the Director-General of Transport (Mr. Knox), and that of the Road and Air Transport Commission; and, in addition, Dr. Neilsen, is currently researching the city transport system. I am unable to find out whether he is over or

under Mr. Knox. However, he has been brought to Perth by the Government to research city transport. These are only a few who are working on the problems but, from time to time, there is a lack of co-ordination and co-operation in the whole of the transport system.

Many members of the Chamber will know Mr. Ron Carroll, who is the very popular mayor of the City of Melville. He was one of the early bus owners in Western Australia and, at that time, he had to travel over white roads in Applecross, which was virtually open country then, to get his buses into Perth. He is also a part-time member of the Metropolitan Transport Trust. He has made the statement that one good change was introduced to the transport system in the City of Perth when The Hon. H. E. Graham, who was then the Minister for Transport, called together the 16 various committees that were handling traffic at the time, disbanded them, and formed one committee from the whole. It was envisaged at that time that the people concerned should become a smaller group so that better and tighter control could be exercised.

I have many other figures I could quote, but I do not want to weary the House. I hope I have made the point that the Director-General of Transport has done some marvellous research in the short period that he has been in office. Of course, there is still a great deal more for him to do. As I have said, I would like to know whether Dr. Neilsen is under or over him and whether that gentleman has been employed by the Government to bring forward still another report on the transport situation.

So many reports are available on this subject. I have here reports from the Institute of Transport (Western Australian Section); the National Association of Australian State Road Authorities on Vehicle Limits for Road Safety and Road Protection; the Australian Driving Manual; Traffic (Infringements) Regulations, 1969; a summary of De Leuw, Cather & Company's Phase II Report; and the Australian Health Education Advisory Digest, vol. 6, No. 3 on the A.M.A. policy on road safety.

The few reports I have in front of me are infinitesimal when compared with the number which are available in total. I shall refer to the words used by Mr. Knox in his report. He said—

The role of the Director General of Transport has now been performed for three years. This would seem to be a reasonable period in which some dividend should have accrued to the State, in exchange for the taxpayers' money spent on maintaining the Director General of Transport in his office. It seems appropriate therefore to review what has been achieved in the climate created by the Act and to speculate on whether sufficient dividend has been

returned to the State, and, in the words of a Parliamentary question, "if not, why not?"

My question is identical: If not, why not? I also want to know whether he will be given power to direct or require.

The Hon. E. C. House: Even if he is not, why can't many of these things be implemented? Can the honourable member answer that question?

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That is the question the Transport Workers' Union has asked. Of course, the Minister for Transport (The Hon. R. J. O'Connor) is a young man. He has a great deal of ability and he is not afraid to use it. Because of his activities I am sure he does not spend many hours in bed. However, surely Mr. O'Connor must at times get worried at the lack of co-ordination and the fact that many of the suggestions that are put before him are not adopted. I think that answers the question just put to me by Mr. House.

This is what is worrying the members of the Transport Workers' Union, too. They are taxpayers and are members of a responsible body in the community. They are involved in handling many thousands of tons of goods in this State. For instance, last year 44,000 tons of goods were transported to the north of this State by road transport and, throughout the Commonwealth, 2,250,000 tons were handled. To close on the question of transport I wish to quote a small part of a report compiled by a 22-year-old truck driver from Adelaide, Peter Kondring. He prepared a most comprehensive report on the transport position as he sees it from his experience as an interstate driver. I shall quote only a small portion of the report but it does point to the fact that there are some thinking people in the community, even if they are only truck drivers. I quote—

The health of a nation's economy depends upon a viable transportation system—one that is technologically in tune with the changing requirements of commerce.

Such a system must be reliable to move raw materials to manufacturers, produce to market. It must be safe to carry the nation's people. It must also be a just system—without discrimination, treating all with equality.

In Australia the transport system is mammoth, vital and in a shambles. It is one of the nation's biggest employers and also its sick man.

This in particular, along with all other aspects, make the transportation industry our business, that of the taxpayer.—It affects the very fabric of daily life—the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our homes, our jobs and our recreations. Transportation costs help determine what we pay for goods and

services, and transportation efficiency is a factor in how quickly we receive them. Transportation's technological innovations change our lives by creating new markets, new job opportunities, and even new urban centers.

Good transportation must be free from unlawful discriminatory practices which favors some shippers or localities—usually Government owned—at the expense of others. With the public interest as its basic concern, the Government should REGULATE, preferably on a Federal level, the intra- and interstate movement of people and goods throughout the country—by rail, truck, bus, water and by oil pipeline.

In its regulatory role, the Government bears a responsibility for assuring the Australian public of an adequate, efficient and safe transportation system under PRIVATE ownership.

These days we hear so much about workers going on strike, trying to get higher wages, and so on. The subject has been discussed in this Chamber, even during this debate. But the worker has to go before a tribunal, and face up to long delays, in most cases, before his case is heard. Very often the judgment when handed down is unsatisfactory to him. But look at the position of the street-corner grocer—I am not talking about the little shop only, but about all grocers and other businesses. Shopkeepers can increase their prices on any goods without anybody questioning their right to do so; yet, as I said, the worker has to go through a process of humiliation from the day he sets out to get something to the day he receives it.

There is no denying the fact that transportation costs will increase tremendously within the next month because of the 3c impost or tax increase on petrol. I may be out of order in mentioning this, but I know the honourable member will accept my apology for doing so. Only today I was discussing this matter with a member of Parliament and he was telling me that although he does not live a long way from the metropolitan area, the 3c increase will add from \$400 to \$500 a year onto his cost of transport.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: Not on parliamentary duties.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: What is going to happen to some of those who live a long way from the metropolitan area and have to drive to the city, I do not know. It is all right for me because I will not be driving long distances in the future, but surely, somewhere along the line, the Government can do something about this sort of thing. I know I cannot speak so far as the Federal Government is concerned, but I would suggest to it that when a tax is increased, in the same way as the petrol tax was increased, the increase should not be imposed immediately.

Pensioners will not get any increase in their pensions until the 1st October, and the same procedure could have been adopted with the increased petrol tax and the increases in sales tax. The prices of some goods were increased last week, and the price of petrol is to be increased from today.

We are trying to keep costs down in Australia, and in Western Australia particularly. Therefore, surely with all the know-how now available to the Government it should be able to devise a better method than has been adopted by the Commonwealth Government in regard to its latest tax increases. I have to agree with Mr. House who complained about taxes, and particularly the road maintenance tax. I know the Minister will be able to answer me back—I think I could tell him exactly what he would say in reply to me.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Before you go on, did I understand you to say that to a certain member of Parliament the 3c a gallon increase in the price of petrol would add another \$400 a year to his transportation costs?

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: He would have to travel 300,000 miles a year for it to cost that much.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I must have misunderstood him.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: I think it was grossly misunderstood, too.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: My word! I was merely going to comment that this particular member must travel enormous distances.

The Hon. J. Dolan: To correct the honourable member, it would be only 12,000 miles a year.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That might be better.

The Hon. E. C. House: If he used power alcohol it would cut his costs.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: When speaking to the Address-in-Reply debate, Mr. House put up a very sound case on behalf of country people—I congratulated him afterwards—but the newspapers did not mention anything about that aspect. However, the newspapers did refer to what the honourable member had to say about the Fitzgerald River reserve. I would remind him that, so far as the road maintenance tax is concerned, he should take his memory back to the time when the Bill to make provision for that tax was before the House. At that time I challenged the Country Party—which party is a member of the coalition Government—and I can remember Mr. Frank Wise not only challenging the members of that party but also appealing to them to vote against the legislation because of what the tax would mean to their supporters. Therefore, I think Mr. House is three or four years too

late with his crying about the effect that the road maintenance tax is having upon his people.

The Hon. E. C. House: If you had heard me correctly—

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The road maintenance tax, has, up to June, 1968, returned to the State a total of \$9,000,000; and has been responsible for bringing into the State a total of \$18,000,000 to be spent on all roads throughout the State. As a matter of fact, the reports compiled by the road, rail, and transport committees, give all the details in this connection.

The Hon. E. C. House: I said that it had an impact only over 200 miles; up to that point it is not great.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I do not know what the honourable member said in that regard, but many times when I have been a member of the Government party in this Chamber—and that was not for very long—I have criticised legislation that has come before the House although I have still voted for it. I have even heard Dr. Hislop, who is a free-thinker, criticise certain Bills but still support them. However, I never heard any member of the Country Party get up and speak in opposition to the road maintenance tax when the legislation was before this Chamber but now, because the tax is affecting their supporters, they are crying about it.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I will tell you something: I always enjoy having you sit next to me when you vote with me on divisions.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You have never had much enjoyment, have you!

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: No, I have not.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Mr. House drew attention to the Fitzgerald River area, and I want to say a few words on this matter. The Minister in charge of flora and fauna is not here today, but he knows that for some considerable time I have been chairman of a committee dealing with this matter. I am glad to say that a younger man in Mr. Taylor, the member for Cockburn, has now taken over the job. The newspaper gave great publicity to what Mr. House had to say when he spoke for and on behalf of a mining company against the conservationists. Today "conservation" seems to be a dirty word, but we cannot help that. I now wish to quote an article published in *The Countryman* of the 20th August, 1970, under the heading "Save that Unique Fitzgerald River, American Pleads." It reads—

Sherwin Carlquist, Professor of Botany, Claremont, California: Reports from Australian friends of mine indicate that the Fitzgerald River reserve may be threatened by exploitation for mineral resources, especially in a way which would grossly alter the region.

As a botanist and naturalist with experience and deep interest in this region (I discovered a plant new to science on East Mt. Barren in this reserve in 1967), I wish to express my concern with that of many Australians in the potential destruction of this area.

In all my travels in Western Australia, I have never seen an area so rich in unusual plants and animals, as well as scenically so beautiful.

East of Mt. Barren, the sand heaths and bays which stretch away from it are not only territories of exceptional natural beauty, they are a treasure-house of incalculably rare and exciting wildlife and wildflowers, many of which grow nowhere else in the world.

Never in my entire field work have I experienced such stimulation as that provided by the Fitzgerald River region.

I wish we here in America had a region of such great potential interest to save as a wilderness area. The areas left for us here to save are not nearly so valuable.

I would think that as a natural area, the Fitzgerald River reserve would be an asset whose attraction for Australian and foreign visitors would repay preservation not merely for its own sake but for the economic advantage of having one of the high points of Australian natural history accessible as a natural area.

Its value in its present form might well outweigh in dollars alone the profit of short-term exploitation.

Please add my voice to those Australians who bear a deep concern for preservation of the Fitzgerald River reserve.

I am grateful to Mr. Dolan for handing me that newspaper cutting.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: On what part of the 600,000 acres was this person? Did he go over all of it? It would be interesting to know.

The Hon. E. C. House: If he was on it at all, was he in a four-wheel drive vehicle?

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I would suggest that, taking this man's status and qualifications into consideration, he would not deliberately set out to tell a lie.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: I do not say he would. I merely want to know what part of the 600,000 acres he was on.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Mr. House said that the area in question is only 6,000 acres out of 600,000. Of course it is, but he omitted to say—and the Minister for Mines can back me up on this—how many thousands of square miles have been pegged for the prospecting of minerals. We who belong to the breed who are conservation-minded are entitled to ask such

questions, as I did when I interjected whilst Mr. House was speaking. Those people who believe in conservation are only asking for a period of grace so that the reserve can be investigated by the experts that we have in Western Australia. There is no need for us to go beyond Dr. Ride when looking for such experts, because the officers we have in Western Australia who are experts on this subject are as good as any in other parts of the world.

It must be borne in mind that no matter how careful a person or a company is when prospecting or developing an area, the ecology is upset to no small degree, and once animals and birds desert any area it is a long while before they return.

The Hon. E. C. House: I did not suggest anything different, did I?

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The honourable member did not say anything about what was requested by the conservationists. He mentioned only what the mining company required and he thought that its demands should be met. I do not deny that the mining company which prospects or develops the area will, in fact, do something in the future towards rehabilitating the ground and re-establishing the existing flora and fauna, but I feel sure it will not be done in one or two years after it has ceased its operations. In my opinion it will take a great deal longer than that. I have only a few months of parliamentary life left to me before I retire, but I can assure the House that I will take an active part in this matter.

In referring to workers trying to secure better conditions, and how they are disadvantaged by increases in the prices of various commodities, I now wish to comment on a statement made by Mr. Abbey. Speaking on the lack of killing facilities at the Midland Junction Abattoir, and when the exporters of lamb and mutton were at a disadvantage during the flush period, Mr. Abbey said—

All the fault does not rest with the abattoirs either, although management may have been deficient in some cases. The unions concerned in the meat industry have not been fair in their approach. During these flush periods they have been very difficult by making excessive demands and going on strike. I certainly hope that in future we shall see a situation where wisdom prevails and where any problems are talked out and dealt with properly.

I join with Mr. Abbey in the hope that in the future conditions will be better, and I have evidence here which will prove that they will be.

During the period when drought conditions were severe and there was a glut of stock coming forward for killing, the Minister for Agriculture had to appeal to farmers to limit the number of stock they were sending to the abattoirs because there was a great shortage of slaughtermen. During

this period several factors brought about some extremely unfortunate and torrid incidents at the Midland Junction Abattoir. One important factor, of course, was the lack of co-operation between the union and the management. At this point we will let the future decide as to whose fault this was.

Another factor that brought about a great deal of friction was the importation of slaughtermen to this State. In effect, they were promised gold on a platter, but subsequently they discovered that there was no gold to be had on the platter and this situation led to a great deal of trouble. Fortunately, the position has now changed. A new manager of the Midland Junction Abattoir has been appointed. He is Mr. Brian Wilson of Adelaide, and he is a man of practical competence. He is endowed with a wonderful personality and that trait enables him to come down to the same level as the men whenever he has any discussions with them. Mr. Wilson took office only in July and there has not been a stoppage since then.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: There has not been any stoppage since July?

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Yes; there has not been any stoppage since July.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I suppose that is pretty good.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: This is excellent compared to what the position was in previous years. The men will always be dissatisfied if the management adopts an attitude similar to that which was adopted in past years. On behalf of the union I want to tell Mr. Bosward that it was very sorry to learn that someone had either sent a threatening letter or made a telephone call to his wife. At no time had members of the union anything against Mr. or Mrs. Bosward personally. However, Mr. Bosward and the men did not seem to be able to co-operate in the same way as Mr. Wilson has done since he has assumed office.

In fact, he is holding another conference with the workers on the 14th September to ascertain what can be done to maintain the good work that is now being performed, and I am sure the farmers will be interested to learn this. It may not sound much to the Minister, but to the farmers I am sure this information will be well received when one considers the conditions that existed at the abattoir in previous years.

I will not outline all the happenings in the past, but I would like to say that during the flush period of meat killing, which had not occurred for many years, a large number of women were engaged by the abattoir management, to which the union agreed. Unfortunately, adequate facilities were not provided for them and this factor alone led to a great deal of trouble between the workers and the management. The nearest toilet was so far away from

their place of work that the female workers took about five minutes to cover the distance. To people outside the abattoir this may seem to be a matter of only minor significance, but to the men working alongside these women it meant a great deal. It was little tin-pot matters such as this that were causing the trouble. However, I have to report that only at midday today, representatives of the union told me they were delighted with the co-operation that now exists between the men at the abattoir and Mr. Wilson. They said that Mr. Wilson is a man who knows his job.

I would like to know why all this trouble was occurring at Midland, but was not occurring at the W.A. Meat Export Works, where Mr. Cliff Bennett is manager, and at Anchorage Butchers, where Mr. Bob Allen is the manager.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: From what you are saying it could be a lack of the tin-pot things.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: What I am saying is that the men at those meat-works exercise some common sense. They do not climb into their ivory towers whenever they are required to discuss some problem with the workers. We have always stated that the trouble at the Midland Junction Abattoir was because of mismanagement.

I would now like to cite one particular case of an epileptic and the problems surrounding the employment of these people. It is not the normal thing to do in Parliament, I suppose, but I want to read a letter to the House which was sent from the Railways Department to Mr. J. J. Harman, M.L.A. It concerns an epileptic who was employed by that department. Mrs. Hutchison would have referred to the letter herself when she was speaking to the debate on the Address-in-Reply, but at that time she did not know about it.

Members are probably aware that in August of last year the Epilepsy Association held a seminar in Perth at university level which was attended by representatives of similar organisations from all over the world. The Government gave its support to the seminar by paying the cost of the fare required to bring to Perth the secretary of the International Bureau of Epilepsy. It also made available \$500 to meet the cost of printing the report of the conference.

In the book titled, *Epilepsy and Society* it is stated that 15 per cent. of epileptics throughout the Commonwealth are borderline cases; that is, there is only a very fine line between their being employed full time or becoming the recipients of an invalid pension. Mrs. Hutchison interviewed Sir Robert Menzies when he was Prime Minister, and he agreed with her that epileptics were capable of being employed, but he did say that there were difficulties surrounding the payment of workers' compensation and superannuation to them. I think there

are 2,600 epileptics employed in the Commonwealth. In this State some are employed at the chest hospital and in other avenues of employment.

If 15 per cent. of the total of epileptics in Australia are capable of being employed full time, but run the risk of becoming recipients of an invalid pension because of their immediate dismissal if they take a fit whilst at work, surely steps should be taken in this country similar to those that have been taken in the United Kingdom.

In England, under the Disabled Persons Act, 1944, an employer of 20 or more workers is obliged to employ a certain proportion of disabled people. For example, if he has 100 employees he has to employ three workers who are disabled. The Government makes up any difference between the award rate of pay and the actual earnings, and also provides other benefits for these disabled persons.

The point I am making is that in this State we have a number of young men and women who, although suffering from a handicap, are quite capable of being employed. One disabled young man had been employed by the Taxation Department for 21 months. He is 22 or 23 years of age but he has not had an epileptic fit since he was 15. He was employed permanently. He then had a fit, and as a result he was given a letter in which his permanency of employment was retracted and he was offered employment on a temporary basis.

We have the situation where some epileptics are working in the Railways Department. The situation has arisen in Western Australia where both the State and the Commonwealth Governments should get together on this matter.

I now wish to quote portion of a letter which deals with the case of a young man who suffers from this disability. He has been employed in the Railways Department on three occasions. On two of those occasions—in 1968 and 1969—he left the department of his own accord. His father has also been employed in the railways, for a period of over 30 years. The letter states—

His condition came under notice on 24th July, 1970, after suffering an epileptic fit in the boiler shop from where he was transferred to the ambulance room for attention. It was here that it was discovered that he had been suffering from epilepsy and that he had been taking tablets to control this condition for a considerable period. Confirmation was also received from his father, who is also employed in the workshops, that Temporary Labourer . . . did have a history of epilepsy.

In view of the risks involved to himself and others it was decided to dispense with his services and notification to him of termination of services became effective from 4.15 p.m. on 31st July, 1970.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: The last paragraph is a lot of rot.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Regarding the statement as to the risks involved to the worker himself, I would point out that he has had on the average only three *petite mal* fits a year. He has a robust physique, being about three inches taller than I am; and he weighs at least 14 stone. He was dismissed for the reasons set out in the letter I have mentioned, but to the credit of the Minister for Railways he has taken this matter up.

Further on in the letter the following appears:—

In arriving at this decision cognizance was taken of the world-wide effort in recent years to place these unfortunate people in suitable employment.

These people are no more unfortunate than those who suffer from asthma or sugar diabetes. The letter continues—

A lead in this connection was provided by the Commonwealth Employment Service many years ago in providing a specialised service whereby trained officers were placed in each of the regional offices in the capital cities, to assist in placing these people in suitable employment. During the period 1961-1966, 2053 such placements were made by the Commonwealth Employment Service.

The reason I am drawing attention to this letter is that I want to make an appeal to the Ministers of the Crown to make this suggestion to their departments: Where people, such as the one mentioned in the letter I have quoted, apply for employment they should, at least, be given an opportunity to show whether or not they can do the work. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the association and that of the International Bureau of Epilepsy, Governments are the ones who will have to assist in providing employment for these people.

A young lad who suffers from epilepsy has been working at the chest clinic for some time. He is a good footballer and cricketer. He has not applied for a car license. Owing to prejudice that exists through public ignorance, once they are classified as suffering from this disability epileptics seem to be regarded as second-class citizens. They remain in whatever grade of employment they are in and they do not seem to be able to obtain promotion. These people are employed in the Repatriation Department, the Commonwealth Taxation Department, and the Customs Department. Fortunately, one of them has now been accepted on a permanent basis in the Customs Department, because he has not experienced a fit for three years.

Under ordinary circumstances people suffering from this complaint are fit and able bodied, except that occasionally they have to be off work for half an hour at a

time. These people are more stable in their employment and they do not take a Monday off—like some workers do—after they have worked at double time on Sunday.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Minister for Local Government and his department have taken 146 or 147 copies of the booklet dealing with epilepsy. The Minister has assured me that every shire in this State has been supplied with a copy. On behalf of the association I thank the Minister for Local Government for his gesture. The Minister for Education is looking into the situation with a view to supplying schools with these booklets. In view of the large amount of money that has been spent by the Government on this, the association feels that each school in the State should be supplied with a copy.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Anyone is liable to take an epileptic fit at any time, no matter who he is.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am most sincere in my appeal to the Ministers of the Crown to give this matter consideration. If Dr. Hislop has not already spoken during the Address-in-Reply debate I am sure he will be only too happy to support my remarks. I thank members for listening to what I have to say. I support the motion.

THE HON. R. THOMPSON (South Metropolitan) [5.52 p.m.]: I also wish to support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply moved by Mr. Syd Thompson. Reference was made in the Governor's Speech to the formative stages of the proposed ministry for conservation. We have known about this for some time. I feel it is about time that the loose ends were tied up, so that people of the State will know where they are going in respect of conservation.

I am not one of those who are jumping on the bandwagon in relation to conservation or pollution, because the *Hansard* reports of the debates show that over the past 10 or 11 years I have been speaking on this matter, particularly on the side of pollution as it affects the area I represent.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You have been on the side of anti-pollution.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I have been on the side of anti-pollution. Last session when I was dealing with the pollution of underground water supplies I pointed to the situation which existed in the Coogee area, and still exists. In that area abnoxious trades have been established, and a sewerage main runs past the existing works. Yet we find that industrial waste is still being pumped into Cockburn Sound. This matter has been the subject of a great deal of discussion; and it has created ill feeling and received a lot of Press publicity in the last few months.

I feel the Government has a responsibility in this matter. It is idle to say that it will appoint a Minister for conservation. A special ministry does not have to be set up to deal with pollution of the type I have mentioned.

The sewerage line which goes past the existing works at Coogee is a pressure fed main. The solution to the disposing of industrial effluent into Cockburn Sound is a simple one. It would only require the construction of a pondage system at a central point, so that all the effluent could be pumped into it. From that central point the sewage could be fed into the pressure main.

The Press is very vigilant in respect of pollution. Even when a piece of fat is found floating in Cockburn Sound the Press will bring the matter to the notice of the public; and rightly so. I think the public should be thankful to the Press for drawing these matters to the attention of the people.

However, we should also have regard for the industries that are established in that area. Some of them were directed to be established there, and they were not given a choice. Being obnoxious trades they had to be established in an area set aside for that purpose. Therefore, it is a Government responsibility.

At the present time the main establishments which still have a direct connection to dispose of effluent into Cockburn Sound are W.A. Meat Export Works; Shilkin & Son Tannery Works; Watsons Foods Pty. Ltd.; Anchorage Butchers Pty. Ltd.; and a small fish filleting works which taps the pipeline connecting the Watsons Foods Pty. Ltd. premises and Cockburn Sound.

I ask: Is it necessary that the industrial effluent should be discharged into Cockburn Sound at all? There is already a sewerage main running past these works; and it only requires the construction of a pondage system in the vicinity of Ocean Road to enable all the effluent to be pumped to a central point from where it can be fed into the pressure main.

I understand that at the present time a survey is being undertaken at Government expense, but how far it will go I do not know. When we look at Kwinana, which is in the heart of the Cockburn Sound area, we find that under its agreement CSBP is permitted to pump effluent into Cockburn Sound. It is allowed to pump a maximum of 350 tons of gypsum per day into a depth of eight fathoms of water. Gypsum neutralises salt more effectively than any other known material.

Further north we find the B.H.P. works. I have not looked into the industrial effluent from this establishment, but I am told authoritatively that the water which is discharged from these works into Cockburn Sound is clear water, but unfortunately it contains 2 per cent. of iron oxide. In conjunction with the gypsum residue that is

being discharged from CSBP, the effluent from B.H.P. will do further damage to Cockburn Sound.

The effect over a few years from the discharge of thousands of gallons of water containing iron oxide and of a few hundred tons of gypsum per day into Cockburn Sound will be disastrous. The time to act is now. If no action is taken at this stage, then in a few years' time any remedial action to preserve Cockburn Sound as a clean stretch of water will be of no avail. I think the people of the area are entitled to be able to swim in the sound area with complete safety. Criticism can be levelled at the Government, and at the Government only, because it has been inactive in preventing the pollution of Cockburn Sound.

I was also told, by the expert with whom I have discussed these matters, that even with the Swan River a type of pondage system is used by some of the industrial works. I have not investigated this point myself, but according to the expert, when the tide goes out the plug comes out and the effluent runs out to sea. When the tide comes in the plug is replaced.

I give full marks to the Swan River Conservation Board for the work it has done in the Swan and Canning Rivers. Much credit must go to that organisation because it is limited with its finance and cannot police fully the discharge of effluent into the rivers.

Yesterday morning whilst driving to Perth I heard a radio patrol car reporting back to its station. The operator said that he had been looking for pollution but the only pollution he saw was in the Swan River. So it is apparent that the Swan River had its share of pollution yesterday morning.

Whilst on the subject of pollution, I would like to draw attention to Vol. 24, No. 2, of the *Ipa Review* which was published in April-June, 1970. On page 58 appears an article on "Industry and the Environment." It was contributed by Charles B. McCoy, president, and Dr. Samuel Lenher, vice-president, of E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. Evidently these two people work in opposition, but they have got together on this occasion. One man is a conservationist and anti-pollutionist, and the other is a forthright spokesman for American business on environmental problems. The latter has interested himself in anti-pollution measures as they affect particular areas.

I do not intend to quote the whole article, but it is worth while drawing the attention of members to what appears on page 60. The article, in part, reads as follows:—

None of us would want to suggest that industry—or, indeed, any other segment of society—has the special wisdom to set forth an appropriate national policy and make it work. But

by the same token, industry can contribute to the development of sound policy, and has a continuing role to play in its execution.

In this context, there are four points to discuss:

The way we approach the problem.

The costs.

The criteria we set up.

The basic role that the public must play in deciding what the goals will be.

The article goes on to state that Governments must play their part. No company, however well disposed towards containing pollution, can do it on its own. Possibly other members have seen pollution occurring in other countries; I have not had that opportunity. Possibly a heavy burden would be placed on some companies if they were forced to cease polluting rivers and lakes. I believe that some rivers and lakes have become sterile, particularly in Canada.

We should, therefore, stop polluting Cockburn Sound. Let us see some action on the part of the Government in an attempt at least to contain the situation as it exists at present.

Sitting suspended from 6.05 to 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Prior to the tea suspension I was about to make the point that Mr. White spoke about land tax as it affects his area, and he gave some excellent examples.

I can recall that several years ago I gave similar examples when a revaluation took place in Cockburn. At that time, from memory, vermin and noxious weeds rates were increased on one property to \$113. The total amount of tax payable on that property was in excess of \$1,000. The area of the property was 43 acres and there was no physical access whatsoever to it because of resumptions by the Railways Department. A man had a block of land that was completely isolated and to which there was no access; yet he was liable for that amount of land tax each year. Eventually he was forced into the position where he had to sell the land.

Similar to the examples given by Mr. White, there were many landholders with five acres containing limestone outcrops which would not feed one rabbit a year, land which could not be subdivided because of the restrictions placed on subdivisions in the area; but the landholders were faced with tax assessments of \$100, which amount was far in excess of that levied by the Cockburn Shire Council.

I know that the Cockburn Shire Council has made preliminary approaches to the Minister for Local Government to have the area declared a town on its centenary next year. However desirable it might be to lift the status of an area from a shire to a town, it results in some

disadvantages as far as the people are concerned. From some letters that I intend to quote in a moment, it will be seen that immediately the status is lifted from a shire to a town the primary producers in the area become subject to land tax assessment under the Land Tax Assessment Act.

I think the Minister should take cognisance of that fact before he grants higher status to a shire in the future. All factors must be taken into consideration. I do not think it is sufficient to say, "Yes, you have the population and annual income which puts you in this category." Other factors such as urban and commercial development of the area generally must be taken into consideration.

The Shire of Cockburn has an area of 52 square miles. Probably three miles square of it is taken up by urban development; it may be a little more than that—I am only guessing here. However, three miles square, or a little more, would be near enough to it. In the main this shire is zoned as rural but the people who are earning income from the land at the present time—whether they be market gardeners, poultry farmers, pig farmers, or small sheep farmers—will be sadly at a disadvantage if they have to pay this tax.

To give proof of this, we know that the town of Melville was made a city two, or two and a half years ago. One of the rural landholders in the Melville area at that time was faced with an enormous land tax bill. The owner of the land wrote to Mr. J. Slattery, who was then the Commissioner of Taxation, objecting to this large tax being imposed on rural properties. I have not got a copy of his letter but the owner told me that was the text of the letter. Mr. Slattery replied to him on the 8th August, 1969, in the following terms:—

Dear Sir,

LAND TAX: WILLAGEE HOLDINGS
PTY. LTD.

With reference to your letter dated 4/7/69, objecting to the Land Tax Assessment based on ownership of land as at 30/6/68 on the grounds that the property is used for agricultural purposes.

The assessment was based on two parcels of land, one situated in the Cockburn Shire district and one in the Melville City district.

The land situated in the Cockburn Shire district has been assessed for Noxious Weed and Vermin Rate only, whilst the land situated in the Melville City district has been assessed for Land Tax, Metro. Region Improvement Tax and Noxious Weed and Vermin Rate.

Under the current provisions of the Land Tax Assessment Act, by reason of amending Act No. 104 of 1965, land

situated within the municipal district of a city or a town, as defined by Local Government Act, 1960, cannot be exempted from Land Tax if it is used for a business or primary production. Under these circumstances Land Tax and Metropolitan Region Improvement Tax has been correctly assessed on Lot 9, Diagram 17533, value \$234000 situated within the municipal district of the City of Melville. Taxability for Metro. Region Improvement Tax of land situated within the Metro. region follows the same provisions as laid down for Land Tax assessment.

Extract of the relevant provisions of the Land Tax Assessment Act:

Sec. 9. For the purposes of this Act land shall be improved land—

- (a) "In the case of land that is not situated in the municipal district of a Municipality that is a city or town as defined in the Local Government Act, 1960, and which is used solely or principally for all or any of the following businesses, namely, an agricultural, pastoral, horticultural, apicultural, grazing, pig raising or poultry farming business."

Sec. 10. (1) The lands and classes of lands hereinafter specified are exempted from assessment for taxation under this Act, viz:—

- (g) Improved Land within the meaning of paragraph (a) of section nine of this Act.

(Paragraphs (a) and (g) are new paragraphs inserted by Act 104 of 1965.)

A letter withdrawing your objection would now be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

J. SLATTERY,
Commissioner of Taxation.

The owner of this land was not quite satisfied because at that particular time, and up till early this year, there was a restriction on subdivision of the land. It was impossible for the owner to subdivide it, and it cost him more time and money. In the meantime, some persons had taken options on the property and the owner was placed in the position where he had to accept the options, despite the fact that he had intended to subdivide the land and put it on the market in competition with a big land and estate agent in the North Lake Road area. He found that he was considerably handicapped and he was unable to do it.

Following receipt of the letter from Mr. Slattery, the owner then wrote to Mr.

Nalder, the Minister for Agriculture. That letter reads—

Re: Land Tax Exemption for
Primary Producers.

As Minister for Agriculture we would like you to explain the reason for the Land Tax Act 104 in 1965 to Assess Land Tax on a property simply on the title of the Local Authority's area. It seems to be legislation that cannot be justified. This impression is also held by the many people we have discussed the facts with, including Ministers of Parliament and staff of Taxation Department, and on good authority only applies to our property and one in Albany.

As this assessment involves us in extortionate cost we request you endeavour to rectify the position so that we are not at a disadvantage with others in the industry.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Nalder replied on the 18th December, 1969, and said—

I have had the subject of your letter of the 5th November, 1969, thoroughly investigated and regret that I cannot find justification to amend the Land Tax Assessment Act as it presently relates to the exemption for primary producers.

The restriction of the exemption for primary producers to land outside municipalities that are cities or towns is based on sound land-use economics.

I would like note to be taken of that. The letter continues—

It is characteristic of cities and towns that the land within their boundaries is used predominantly for residential or commercial purposes. If all of the land in these municipalities has not yet been used for such purposes, it is usual that the area will be subject to development in the foreseeable future.

With urban development the community is involved in the costly provision of services such as roads, water, power and sewerage and drainage systems. Therefore, from a community point of view, it is most desirable that these costs should not be increased unnecessarily by extending them past land that is not being used to its best economic advantage. Although I am sympathetic to primary producers who find their properties in the advance of urban development, I feel they are adequately compensated for the costs of re-location by the marked increase in value of their properties.

I am sure, therefore that you would agree that the extension of any concessions to holders of land in these

circumstances, which would reduce their holding costs and possibly encourage them to withhold their properties from development, would be quite unwarranted.

It is for these reasons that I am unable to consider amending the Land Tax legislation to extend the exemption for primary producers to land within cities and towns.

Yours faithfully,

C. D. NALDER,
Minister for Agriculture.

Although we could agree in broad principle with some of the things said by the Minister for Agriculture, generally his reasons would be unacceptable when it comes to raising the status of a shire that is predominantly rural, and I think he would be wide of the mark in the extreme in saying that urban and commercial development would take over in the foreseeable future. I would say that in the foreseeable future of Cockburn much of the area will still be rural and the people who eke out a living from land in this area will be faced with high land tax bills under the Act.

I would like the Minister at least to give an undertaking in this matter. I know he is not bound to do so, but I feel it will probably be Cockburn next year, Kwinana the year after, then Kalamunda, and who knows what the year after. I think it is good that shires should apply for town status, but the primary producer who has been established in the area—the man who has been of value and who has been the lifeblood of the area—for many years is now being forced into the position where he has to get out or pay exorbitant rates and taxes. Possibly some inquiry could be held into this matter. I feel the provisions laid down are justified provided the people concerned are not withholding their land from urban development. If they are doing so, well and good; they must pay the extra tax. However, if they are not, they should be free from this tax.

The next matter which concerns me is something about which I have been attempting to obtain an answer from the State Housing Commission since November of last year. Some of my constituents who reside in State Housing Commission homes in the Willagee area are also most concerned. Continually letters have been written to the Press; to Mr. Tonkin, the Assembly member for the area; to Mr. Lavery; and to myself. I consider some of the letters written by the State Housing Commission are intended to befuddle the people who receive them, because they are not clear in any shape or form.

I will read out a letter from the State Housing Commission. I have been trying weekly—not monthly, but weekly—to obtain an answer in regard to one particular paragraph in the letter. However, I will

read the whole letter to illustrate the problem. It reads—

Dear Sir,

I wish to advise that the State Housing Commission has, in the interests of future development, decided to retain ownership of an area at WILLAGEE, of which the present property tenanted by you is a part.

The Commission is, therefore, not prepared to approve an application from you to purchase this property, and any implied option given to purchase when you accepted tenancy is hereby withdrawn.

In the event of you desiring to purchase a Commission home in another locality, the Commission will give consideration to an application and, subject to mutual agreement being reached as to locality and house required, is prepared to allow the amount of capital repayments accrued by you on your present rental property as whole or part deposit on the alternative house.

The letter is signed by the Officer in Charge, Sales and Tenancy Section. Anyone who read that letter would gain the impression that certain parts of Willagee are reserved for future development—probably flat development. However, then we come to the last paragraph which says that if the person concerned desires to purchase a home in another locality the commission will give consideration to his application, subject to mutual agreement being reached as to the locality and the house required. The commission also states it is prepared to allow the amount of capital repayments accrued by the person as a deposit on the new house.

So it would appear that everything is bright and rosy as far as the tenant is concerned. I would point out that letters have been going backwards and forwards to and from the commission continually; some, from the commission, addressed to myself, and others addressed to the tenant. However, to date no clarification has been given as to whether or not the tenant will be transferred to a suitable home.

I have another similar case in which the person concerned has been denied the right to purchase a home. He wrote a letter to me which reads as follows:—

Dear Sir,

We came to live at the above address 30.3.57. Previous 2 years was spent at Davis Park under the commission.

We wrote to the commission 5 or 6 years ago wishing to purchase the above property.

We were informed at that time Willagee area was under review for further development.

I later wrote to the commission asking the position because we wished to make improvements to the front of the grounds (drive way, paths, etc.).

I was informed by telephone a couple of days later not to spend time nor money on improvements because the area of Willagee to be affected was not yet known. Since then there has been further correspondence which I now enclose.

The original tenancy agreement set out that a person may buy the home without committing himself straightaway. He could buy it at virtually the price applicable when he took up his tenancy. This provision was included in the 1963 regulations of the commission; and after a further 12 months' period the tenant had to pay \$9.50 and have a valuation carried out if he wished to purchase the home.

In 1964 there was further correspondence stating that £4.15s. was the fee for the valuation. Then we come to the 1st May, 1970. I will read out a letter which illustrates the gobbledygook we get from departments. If people are supposed to understand it, then it is no wonder they get cross and annoyed, to say the least, at some of the decisions made. Possibly the officers concerned do not check previous correspondence, and the next couple of letters I quote will prove my point. This letter is dated the 1st May, 1970, and reads—

Dear Sir,

I wish to advise that the State Housing Commission has, in the interests of future development, decided to retain ownership of an area at WILLAGEE, of which the present property tenanted by you is a part.

The Commission is, therefore, not prepared to approve an application from you to purchase this property, and any implied option given to purchase when you accepted tenancy is hereby withdrawn.

In the event of you desiring to purchase a Commission home in another locality, the Commission will give consideration to an application and, subject to mutual agreement being reached as to locality and house required, is prepared to allow the amount of capital repayments accrued by you on your present rental property as whole or part deposit on the alternative house.

That is in line with the letter I read out previously. Then there is a further letter from the commission on the 29th May, 1970, which reads—

Dear Sir,

In reply to your recent correspondence, unfortunately, I have to advise you that at the moment there are no purchase homes available in the Fremantle area. At the moment all

building is in the Perth area at Balga and Lockridge. There are plans for further building in the Fremantle area later this year and it is suggested that you defer your consideration of proposal for a purchase home until these become available, unless you would like to have a purchase house in Balga or Lockridge.

On the 18th June this year, following further representations, the commission wrote to say—

Your application for a Purchase Home from the State Housing Commission has been listed as from the date of lodgement 10th June 1970 for the Perth districts.

At the present time, Purchase Homes are being allotted to those persons who applied for this district during the month of June 1966.

When your turn has been reached, you will be invited to call and select a home of your choice, in any of the estates available at that time. However, if at that date you are unable to proceed the Commission will have no alternative other than to withdraw the proposal.

It is important therefore, that you notify any change of address, as in the event of a withdrawal, the priority date could not be reinstated.

Your file No. with this Department is 1687/54 and you are requested to quote this number in any future correspondence to this Office.

So we find that on the 29th May the person was told that, provided he could select a house in Balga or Lockridge which suited his needs, his requirements would be met. On the other hand, if he cared to defer his application until further homes were built in the Fremantle area, he could have one of his choice. Then, on the 18th June, that was wiped aside completely and the person concerned was told that he would be considered as a brand new applicant without any equity in his home and placed on an await-turn basis. This is not his fault; he has been a resident in the area since 1957, so he has been a tenant for 13 years. Six or seven years ago, when he wanted to buy his home, he was told he could not; then he was told that he could select a house in the Perth district; now he is told that he is back on the waiting list. I would say that with the number of purchase homes being built, he will be lucky to get a purchase home offered to him within the next seven or eight years.

As the commission pointed out, few homes are being built in the Fremantle area. However these people are entitled to a priority because they have been good tenants for 13 years. They are entitled to a transfer and not to receive silly letters from time to time, one countermanning the other. I do not think it is fair to the

residents of the area and I suggest that more care should be exercised in the department when letters are written so that the people who receive the letters are not fooled.

We find that some people who have resided in this area for many years do not wish to purchase their homes owing to age, infirmity, or their economic situation. They wish to live in the homes they have occupied for many years. As recently as last Sunday morning a dear old lady phoned me and said her husband was very ill and she was worried stiff because she had received a letter saying they were going to be put out of their home. I told her to take no notice of it because, as far as I was concerned, she would not be put out of her home. I think it is disgraceful that people should be prematurely worried about what is going to take place in Willagee.

I doubt whether any development will take place in the next 10 or 15 years because the Housing Commission still has an abundance of land for development in the Fremantle area. It also holds an area of land which borders Hamilton Hill and Coolbellup, through to Phoenix Road, and down to Bibra Lake, which it acquired from the University last year on an exchange basis. The commission also holds land in Spearwood and Coogee Beach, so it has plenty of land that could be developed. The Department of Industrial Development owns a tract of land from Woodman Point down to the Naval Base holiday cottages, and I feel it would be wrong if an industry was established in that area.

These are urban and residential blocks. If my memory serves me right they were subdivided in about 1919, just after the first World War. Although no title has been issued, they are under subdivision.

I feel it is quite wrong that industry should be established on beachfront land; it should be established further inland and the people should be given use of the beachfront and of the choice blocks. People should not have their views obstructed by ugly chimneys, some of which can be seen along the road on which one must drive to go south of Fremantle.

I hope the Minister will give me some clarification on this particular issue, because having seen some of the letters from the Housing Commission, I am convinced it does not know what it is talking about. I have referred this matter to a succession of liaison officers, and while I am not reflecting on these officers we quite often find that one liaison officer goes on leave and is replaced by another and, consequently, he is not altogether in touch with the question. These officers are doing a very hard job and they certainly do their best at all times. They are most attentive to members when they are asked for information; but we have a series of letters being issued to prospective homebuyers and

if the officers of the Housing Commission are not clear on these matters, what can we as members of Parliament tell the people when we are asked for advice in connection with them? It makes us feel utter fools.

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: You speak for yourself.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The honourable member might feel one all the time; I certainly do not.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do not be nasty.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I would now like to deal with the handling of matters by magistrates and solicitors when these cases come before the Married Persons Summary Relief Court where maintenance and separation orders are given.

There seems to be some misconception in the minds of solicitors as to a woman's rights after she receives a maintenance order or a separation order from her husband. I have dealt with probably 20 or 30 such cases in the last few years and I have found that solicitors have often told the woman concerned that it is quite sufficient to obtain a consent agreement. This must, of course, be ratified by the court; but there are cases in which at a later date the woman possibly finds herself in the position where her husband does not live up to the requirements of the maintenance order either in regard to herself or her children, as the case may be, and she then finds it is necessary to resort to assistance from the Child Welfare Department.

This is costing the State thousands of dollars a year when it should be the responsibility of the Department of Social Services. I would like to quote a few examples. If two parties to an agreement decide by consent that they will separate, and the husband agrees to maintain the children and not the wife, the children are then subject to the order that is issued by the magistrate and maintenance is paid by the husband and recovered by the wife for the care of the children.

The wife, however, must work and fend for herself. As time goes on we find that, possibly for health reasons, the wife cannot continue working and as the children get older she feels that she is entitled to a widow's pension; because if a wife has been deserted by her husband for six months and is not maintained by him, she is entitled under the Social Services Act to apply for such a pension. If she comes within the limits of the means test she is, in most cases, granted a widow's pension.

Once she has entered upon a consent agreement, with her husband, she is ruled out for all time from being entitled to a widow's pension, and she must therefore go back to the Child Welfare Department which, in the main, pays about \$22 to \$25 a week, depending on the number of children. There is not much difference between that amount and the amount of the pension.

I feel, however, that this is an unfair burden for the Child Welfare Department to carry and it is brought about by magistrates and solicitors who are trained legal men but who do not trouble to find out the law as it affects the Social Services Act.

It should be brought home quite clearly, particularly to the magistrates, that on all counts where no large money settlement is involved, if a wife who takes action against her husband is awarded even 10c a week, this should be sufficient proof that she had filed a suit for maintenance against her husband. If he deserts her in the future she would then be entitled to a widow's pension.

We find solicitors and others who do this type of work take the easy way out. They do not examine or take into consideration the future of the people with whom they are dealing. Rather than go to court they suggest that it will only involve a small formal hearing and they advise the husband to pay \$5 a week for the child; they suggest that the wife continue working and all they need do is to present themselves at the court and this is how things will be decided.

To explain how this works I would like to give an example of the position. The first action I have here took place in November, 1965. The wife sued the husband before the Married Persons Summary Relief Court, and it was stated in the complaint that he was guilty of constructive desertion of the complainant on the 27th November, 1965. He was also guilty of cruelty to the complainant and of wilful neglect to provide reasonable maintenance for the complainant and the child of the family born on a particular date.

On advice from the solicitor this complaint was withdrawn and on the order we find that the matter was adjourned *sine die*. The case came before the magistrate on the 27th January, 1966. The same grounds were involved—constructive desertion of the complainant on the 27th October, 1965; cruelty to the complainant, and wilful neglect to provide reasonable maintenance for the child of the family.

On this occasion the solicitor advised the wife that he had spoken to the husband and, as a result, he was prepared to pay maintenance for the child. The solicitor asked her whether she would consent to this. The wife said, "I will have to continue working and because of my health it is advisable that I do work." He said, "We will enter into a consent agreement before the Magistrate." This was done and the matter was adjourned *sine die* subject to the order which reads—

By consent order for—

1. Custody of child of marriage to complainant with reasonable access by defendant.

2. Maintenance in respect of said child at £2.10.0. per week, first payment 7th January, 1966, in default one days imprisonment each £1. in arrears.

3. Defendant to pay complainant's costs £10.10.0. default 10 days imprisonment.

The lady in question had a serious breakdown in health and her mother, who is looking after the child, is also suffering from much the same complaint as the daughter. The lady had to give up work and she wishes to apply for a widow's pension, but under the Act, she can never obtain a widow's pension. If she takes the action back to 1965 and sues for maintenance, which was in her original complaint, and she could get an award for maintenance, and her husband deserts her again—as he has on this occasion—she would have a chance of getting a widow's pension. But where do we find the husband? He has not paid anything since 1965.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: There are a lot of missing husbands we can't find.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I appreciate that. I do feel, however, that our law should be tightened up, particularly in relation to the children. The mother's responsibility is with the child. Where it is only a nominal sum of 10c a week, the order should be made against the husband. Consent, maintenance, or separation orders should not be accepted by us. The responsibility should be sheeted home to the Commonwealth Government which administers the Social Services Act. I admit the money does come through the Grants Commission and this helps financially, but I do not think the money the Commonwealth pays will meet the full commitment which is paid by our Child Welfare Department in Western Australia.

If any department in Western Australia deserves credit it is the Child Welfare Department. I think it is possibly the best run department in Western Australia, if not in the entire English-speaking world. The officers of the department are extremely helpful. They do their best to assist people. Admittedly, complaints are received from time to time from difficult people, but there is no doubt that an excellent job is being done by the entire department from the Minister right down to the junior officers.

I do not like to see the State being taken for a ride; this is happening at the moment, and it is brought about by the action of solicitors and magistrates. I hope the Minister will have a very close look at the situation.

When Mr. House was speaking to the motion he referred to the plight of the farmers. I admit that I know very little about farming, but I know of the circumstances in which farmers find themselves because people have come to me in the past

for assistance in these matters. I have visited three different localities and have seen some of the problems that exist. The people who have been on land for a very short period of time are really in very serious difficulty.

On this score they are most disappointed. I do not know whether they are correct in their assumption, but they consider the Government is shedding crocodile tears and that no practical assistance is being granted to some sections of the farming community. I understand that drought relief was available to some farmers who could give a first mortgage to the Rural and Industries Bank. However, two of the farmers with whom I have dealt, who come from east of Merredin, have large mortgages on their properties. They did not obtain their land from the Government. This land was developed by a corporation and sold to them. Both these people had to enter into first mortgages with other parties, the Government not being involved, and the mortgages involved were for \$23,000 in one case, and \$27,000 in the other. These amounts are still owing on the farms. Because they cannot give a first mortgage on their properties, no assistance is readily available to them. This is the advice they have given me.

Stock companies, oil companies, and hire-purchase companies to which they are indebted for their super, fuel, and plant, are most difficult to get along with. Once one person knows that a farmer cannot meet his interest payments—and many farmers are in this predicament and cannot meet their interest payments on their mortgages—the oil companies put in a writ, followed by the stock companies, and in some cases, by the finance companies.

However, I must give credit to two finance companies with which I have dealt because they took a more realistic attitude than did the stock companies and oil companies. The finance companies consider that the machinery on which they had a lien was far more valuable than the amount of money owing; but they would extend credit only to January of next year. This is reasonable from their point of view. Now, however, the other companies are taking action for the recovery of their money and three farmers whom I know of will be forced to walk off their farms within the next month when action is taken through the Supreme Court. They will have no alternative because they have no money.

Two of these farmers have crops planted, one having 1,400 acres planted and the other 900 acres. These crops, in all probability, will get them out of most of their trouble—not all of it, but most of it. But, no assistance is available to these people from the Government. Now where do they go? What happens to them? These farmers have devoted eight to 10 years of their lives to their properties and have sunk everything they have earned back into

their farms. Now they are forced into a position where they must get out and they cannot realise on anything on their properties.

On one farm \$21,000 was owing and accrued interest of something like \$2,600, making a total of a little over \$23,000. In May of this year the interest rate was increased. Under the terms of the mortgage this can be done if the mortgagee defaults. As this has occurred, the interest rate has been increased from 7 per cent. to 12 per cent. Members can imagine how this farmer feels when he has to leave his farm. Through his solicitor the mortgage holder has issued an order for possession of the farm. The solicitor points out that though the capital expenditure on this property has been \$68,000, he will be lucky to realise \$25,000 on it.

This is a disgrace in any community. I know the Government has been let down horribly by the actions of the Federal Government. The State Government has stated that \$2,160,000, or thereabouts, is involved. The Commonwealth has completely wiped off the Premier's submissions. However, this is pretty cold comfort to those who, a few years ago, were being held up as the wealth of Western Australia. At that time they were the wealth of Western Australia.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: They will be again.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: In all probability they will be again, and we certainly hope so and wish them success because they have assisted in the stability of Western Australia in more ways than one. Yet we find that these people are being forced off their farms. I know only three, but there are probably 300 or 3,000. I do not know the number in this position.

During the war years legislation was enacted, possibly on a Commonwealth level, to protect the interests of people who fell on hard times or who had to fight in the services. I consider we need similar legislation to protect people who have put their life savings into their farms and in all probability are good citizens in the areas in which they reside.

I am not at all happy with everything in the farming world. I consider that there are still too many St. George's Terrace farmers and that they are obtaining wheat quotas which should normally go to those who are eking out a living from the land. The farmer who works his land is entitled to the quota. If members refer to past speeches I have made on this subject they will find that I have supported the Potato Marketing Board in its dealings as against the part-time market gardener who used to grow for the Onion Marketing Board, which was subsequently disbanded.

Let us face it, most of these St. George's Terrace farmers have invested in land mainly as a taxation dodge so that they

might pour their excess earnings into the land in order to obtain a taxation deduction.

The Hon. V. F. Ferry: Who does the farming for them?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The honourable member should know that they have people employed on their farms. However, the actual farmers are those who need the protection. One of the biggest farmers in the southern hemisphere is in Western Australia, and I am not referring to Sir Eric Smart. He has been overshadowed by a long way by a person who probably would not know the first thing about farming. However, this person has bought into farm after farm, but he gets his income from his other businesses. Because of the wheat quota many legitimate farmers on new land will barely make an existence; that is if they are able to stay on their land. Yet, a person like the one to whom I have referred, has a quota of millions of bushels. He is only one example, but he is the biggest farmer and is possibly the best to give as an example.

Our quotas, to say nothing of our sense of values, are wrong when this type of thing can occur.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Take one of those farmers you mentioned who is in dire financial stress. What would be your attitude if one of these so-called St. George's Terrace farmers wanted to buy his property at a fair valuation?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: First of all, in reply to that interjection, I would say that these farmers do not want to leave their land. They want to stay on it.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Give us a fair answer to the question.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The only time that the St. George's Terrace farmers would have an opportunity to buy these farms would be when the finance companies moved in and sold the properties over farmers' heads.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: If you pick up the paper any Saturday you will read of properties for sale at fair valuation.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: That is quite true, but I am giving instances and the Minister is giving other instances.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You obviously do not want to answer the question.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Those sales are by private negotiation, but that does not get away from the point I was making. I believe our sense of values is wrong when we allow the prosperous to become more prosperous because they are contributing only capital to a farm, while the farmer who contributes his own labour and that of his wife and children, is placed in a position where he is virtually forced away from his living.

Mr. House spoke on the wool industry and at the time I interjected and said that he was advocating something along

the lines of what was commonly known as the Commonwealth wool committee which was in operation during the war years. I have in my hand a document which has been acclaimed by woolgrowers throughout Australia, but it has been given very little publicity up to this stage, although I believe it was mentioned in some of the country papers in Western Australia.

Woolgrowers consider that the proposal propounded in this document would be ideal. It is a lengthy document and I will not read it. Its author is none other than Dr. S. Patterson, M.H.R., which fact speaks for itself when dealing with matters of a rural nature.

I would say from my perusal of the document that the proposition in it is broadly on the same lines, though possibly a little more flexible, as the Commonwealth Government was forced to follow during the 1939-45 war. If any member would like to read this document or have copies of it, I would be only too pleased to supply them. It is headed, "A Statutory Authority for the Handling of Wool." It advocates that the authority should be conducted on a sound basis similar, perhaps, to that applicable to co-operatives.

Then it goes on to deal with the world price, minimum reserve price, subcontracts for international bilateral agreements, and a proposition for woolgrowers to contribute a small percentage. The reason for this is that a capital buildup fund would be needed. It is feared that if the Government gave consideration to implementing the scheme it would immediately say, "No, we do not have sufficient reserve moneys." However, the Commonwealth Government would have to make available the reserve moneys. At a later stage it could be recouped in much the same way as the debentures in Co-operative Bulk Handling are recouped.

The Hon. S. T. J. Thompson: This is only a copy of a scheme that has been put forward many times.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: If the honourable member has read it, he would have knowledge of it.

The Hon. S. T. J. Thompson: It has been published in the paper.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I have not seen it.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Send one to Mr. Macarthur-Onslow.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I do not know him. The last matter I wish to touch on concerns the actions of the P.M.G.'s Department in shires, towns, or cities for that matter.

Under the Local Government Act, any levelling, quarrying, or excavation on blocks of land has to be done to a standard which is acceptable to the shire or the shire engineer. It is not possible to go below certain levels and the levelling must follow contours, and so forth.

Quite a few complaints have been made to me lately in the Shire of Cockburn. I know that the Minister for Local Government knows the area well. Indeed, he has been down there in my company on several occasions. I refer to the corner of Barrington Road where the large shopping centre is situated. The owners of the land behind the centre obtained a zoning for a service station site and took the ground to the required levels.

The P.M.G.'s department installed a trunk line cable to Medina, and put the cable about eight feet above the crown of the road on the road verge.

The owners are almost ready to develop the property, but although their levels are correct, they find they have to pay an exorbitant sum of money to sink the cable below road level. I have a photostat copy of the normal letter sent out by the Postmaster-General to the shire. It says—

Commonwealth of Australia
Postmaster-General's Department No.
Work Authority No.
.....19.....

Dear Sir,

You attention is invited to a proposal by this Department to erect.....
lay

..... in.....
from..... to..... in
Town
the city of.....

Shire

A sketch plan indicating the proposed position of the..... is attached.

The work will be carried out in accordance with the provision of the Post and Telegraph Act of 1901-68 and is expected to commence on or about..... It is the desire of this Department to conform as closely as practicable to the reasonable wishes of all persons or parties concerned; and I shall be glad, therefore if you will communicate with..... within seven days of this notification if your..... desires any variation to the action proposed.

Would you kindly arrange to furnish a written notice of any intention to depart from the existing alignment or levels of land, paths, roads, etc. In the absence of any such communication from you, it will be assumed that the existing alignment and levels are permanent.

Yours faithfully,

Designation.....
Station.....
Telephone No.....

SKETCH PLAN

It does not matter how much the shires object and, in the main, they object vigorously. The department comes along and

says, "It is too expensive to sink below road level." In consequence, the cable is put over a rocky outcrop and a few years later the shire or the landowner has to pay to sink it. I think the Minister should talk very sternly to the department on this question. Indeed, it should be written into our Act that before any P.M.G. work takes place within a shire, the work must have the consent of the full council so that the money of the shires and ratepayers is not wasted on sinking something to a level where it should have been installed in the first place.

After all, the Commonwealth charges individuals an enormous amount for telephone rentals and charges. Possibly the P.M.G.'s Department is the most lucrative business in the world when we consider the costs and charges in Australia in comparison with those of other countries.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Ned Kelly will appear on the new stamps.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I sincerely trust that some clarification will be given on the matters I have raised. I would particularly like to see the effluent in the Coogee area discharged by pipeline into the sewerage treatment plant at Woodman Point. I think that is a must and the people are entitled to this. The married women's protection court would protect the State, apart from the person concerned, from unreasonable payouts from State funds. I also mentioned shire ratings under the Land Tax Assessment Act, and I hope this matter will be dealt with. I support the motion.

THE HON. T. O. PERRY (Lower Central) [8.37 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by Mr. Syd Thompson. I listened to his statements on the progress made in this State. I also listened intently to His Excellency the Governor when he spoke of the growth and development of Western Australia. Unfortunately one section of the community is not sharing in this prosperity; I refer to the farming community.

I agree with some of the statements made by Mr. Ron Thompson. I do not agree with all of them, of course, but I agree with some. I make a plea for a better deal for our farming community. I realise that the prosperity of the rural community as a whole is governed to a large extent by the prosperity of the farming community. The local storekeeper, butcher, and baker all rely on the level of prosperity of the farming community for their very livelihood.

I do not wish to weary the House with a long speech on the depressed state of our farming industries. I think members are aware that all is not well with our primary industries. Every time we pick up a paper, turn on the radio, or the television set, this fact is highlighted. Those members who represent rural or country areas are particularly aware of the problem. Many

of them have attended protest meetings or meetings convened to try to solve the problem. In the city we have witnessed a protest march organised by farmers' wives. Therefore, I think we can accept that the problem is real and that the problem is serious.

It is not confined to this State alone, nor even to Australia. Many of the major agricultural countries in the world have similar problems. I refer to France, Britain, Canada, and America. Many producers in those countries receive varying degrees of help, mostly by way of subsidies.

I personally have very vivid memories of the depression of the 1930s when men walked not only our city streets, but indeed our country roads in search of work. My old home was built alongside one of the major highways and hardly a day went past when men did not call begging for food. They were not professional tramps. Some were tradespeople: carpenters, bricklayers, and plumbers. Others were unskilled labourers, but almost all were genuinely seeking work and were prepared to work. They offered to work for food only and, indeed, many did work for weeks and months for only their keep.

The position of farmers in the drought areas of the State at the moment—not only new land farmers but all those who have heavy financial commitments—is practically the same as the position of the farmer in the 1930s. The only difference I suppose is that at that time the whole of the world felt the impact of the depression.

However, today most sections of the Australian community enjoy unparalleled prosperity. Therefore, I must ask the question: Why is it that, in a time of unparalleled national prosperity, many of our farmers are experiencing a challenge to their very future?

Secondary industries in this country enjoy tariff protection. If it were not for tariff protection, many of them could not even exist. I believe that many of our secondary industries enjoy too high a level of tariff protection. When one reads of the enormous profits made by big companies one is forced to ask: When these companies apply for tariff protection, is it granted too readily or too haphazardly without investigating the necessity for such a high level of tariff protection?

For instance, let us take B.H.P. That company applied for an increase in the price of steel and was granted an increase of 3.5 per cent. Almost immediately it announced a record all-time profit of \$58,000,000. The oil companies applied for an increase in the price of fuel and were granted an increase of 1c per gallon. In that year the Shell Oil Company announced a record profit of \$9,000,000.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: This is not tariff protection.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: As far as B.H.P. is concerned, if it was not given tariff protection it would have to compete with any other steel company in the world. It enjoys tariff protection against overseas products.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I wonder what the honourable member means by tariff protection. That is an increase in the price.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: Yes, but the protection given through the Tariff Board enables the company to charge this price; otherwise the imported product would be cheaper than the product manufactured in Australia.

Let us take, for instance, the motor industry. The motor industry appealed for increased protection against Japanese motorcars and was granted that protection. Look at the profits of General Motors-Holden in that year. Immediately it put up the price of the Holden motorcar; in fact, it did so within a few weeks of being granted increased tariff protection. In the very year that the Ford Motor Company was granted increased tariff protection against Japanese motorcars it announced a record profit in Australia. Surely these things want looking at.

I am not against tariff protection. I realise that the motor industry is the biggest industrial employer of labour in Australia. Without tariff protection there would be no—or very few—secondary industries, and we would have a very much smaller population. However, perhaps the farmer could grow wool at 30c a pound and the wheat farmer could produce wheat at 70c a bushel.

If it is good enough for the Federal Government to interfere with the economics of this country to allow secondary industries to exist—which I am not against—it should go a step further and adopt a policy which will allow primary industries and secondary industries to co-exist.

I believe the tariff policy is putting a burden on the primary producer which he cannot meet. Consequently, I think that compensation in some manner should be given to the primary producer. As soon as the primary producer complains about difficulties in his operations he is preached to and told to become more efficient. I think it is time many of our secondary industries became more efficient and relied on a lower level of tariff protection.

I believe, too, that indirect tariff protection is creating a bigger burden than the direct effect, but that is something that is impossible to measure or assess. When the unions appeal to the Arbitration Commission for increases in the basic wage, surely the commission must be influenced by industry's capacity to pay! And when one sees the tremendous profits I mentioned a short time ago one realises why there are terrific increases in the basic wage. I believe that instead of allowing

wages to spiral if we dampened down our economy by lower tariff protection the wage-earner's pay packet would buy more and we would have less industrial unrest among the wage-earners in this country. The accepted method of the Federal Government, or the Federal Treasurer, to dampen down inflation is to increase interest rates. I believe the same end could be achieved by a different method.

I might ask: Of what importance is agriculture to the economy of Australia? As it supplies roughly 60 per cent. of our export income it must be of immense importance.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You don't really ask that question. You know that it is important.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: Then I have answered my own question. If it is so important we should adopt a policy to allow agriculture to co-exist with secondary industries. It is all very well to talk about a love of the land; that people will continue in agriculture because of their strong love of the land. I possess a strong love of the land; I love the smell of damp earth after the first winter rains, and I love the smell of curing hay in the paddocks. It is nice to watch cattle or stock feeding on lush pastures; it is good to see a farm with well-kept buildings and fences. But it requires a little more than a love of the land to keep one's enthusiasm when financial ruin stares one in the face. It takes a lot to keep it up under those circumstances.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Wool has a good smell and it smells a lot better at 60c than it does at 35c.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Spoken by an expert.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: What the Minister says is very true, but I still claim it would be possible to produce wool at 30c. If it were not for the high cost of our tariff protection many of our young people would be able to continue on the land. Unless we give farmers some protection they will not be able to continue. Farming people do not want charity; all they want is a fair return on capital invested and a reward for labour expended. I think both State and Federal Governments have a role to play in keeping people on the land. We need to take a close look at transport costs in Western Australia. There should be a reduction in probate and death duties on primary producers' estates. As members know, in Victoria such estates are assessed at about two-thirds the normal rate of probate, or the rate for estates of those engaged in other industries. Primary producers represent 8.59 per cent. of our population, and yet they pay 51.9 per cent. of the probate and death duties in Australia.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: That hardly indicates they are impoverished.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: I think it would indicate we have a ridiculous idea of land values.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: You can be land poor.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: That is so. Last year farming returns fell by 19 per cent., and it is estimated that this year they will fall even further. The figures of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics prove that money invested in agriculture returns about 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. Money invested in many other industries will return 10 per cent. or 12 per cent. It is much easier to finance probate or death duties from an investment on which the return is 10 per cent. or 12 per cent. than it is from an investment returning 2 per cent. or 3 per cent.

The Hon. J. Dolan: What about those companies which are buying big properties in the north? Do not tell me that they are investing their money at 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. You could not tell that to a moron.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: I can only quote the figure of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics regarding money invested in agriculture. I do not know what is happening in the north but I certainly know what is happening in the south, and it would be at about the figure I quoted.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I don't think you are far out, either.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: I believe the Federal Government should provide long-term finance at a lower rate of interest to keep men on the land. After the war we had the soldiers' settlement schemes and money was provided at a reasonable rate of interest over a long term. I think this is one way to help people out of the fix they are in today.

As the Federal Government has interfered with the economy of this country by a policy of tariff protection—and I am not condemning what it has done—it has placed a burden on the farming community. Therefore I believe the Commonwealth Government should compensate the farming community by granting long-term finance at a reasonable rate of interest. In my opinion, action should be taken now; the position is desperate, and we will have people walking off the land, as we did in the 1930s, unless something is done about it.

In this regard I must issue one word of warning: It is only fair to say that I will not support any legislation that will increase the burden on the farming community. I think they have borne all they can possibly bear.

In the past we have seen great fluctuations in the demand for agricultural produce. In your lifetime, Mr. President, you would have seen this happen. In the 1930s it was almost impossible to sell much of our produce, and yet just after the war there was such a demand for it that we

could not meet that demand. If we are to allow farming to become run down, or to reach a depressed state, how will we ever be able to meet a demand for our produce when such a demand comes?

It is not so long ago that many people were prophesying that before the turn of this century we would not be able to feed the starving world. I think it was in the 1940s and 1950s people were saying that by the 1970s we would not be able to feed the starving world, and politicians of all political parties were calling for increased production. Finance was made available for agricultural development and farmers were encouraged to borrow. Farming consultants, bank managers, and economists were advocating that the farmers should develop their properties in an effort to feed the starving world that was envisaged we would see before the turn of the century.

In this State we boasted about throwing open for selection 1,000,000 acres a year. We thought this was a good move. It was claimed that this was necessary in an effort to balance our overseas payments. Of course, now that we have mineral development we do not seem so concerned about our agricultural production. In my view all the blame for the current crisis cannot be placed on the farmer alone; there are others who have to share it. One of our problems, of course is the marketing of our produce. Big manufacturing companies concern themselves not only with the manufacture of their products but also with the marketing of them. They would resent any suggestion that it was not their right to do that. Yet when the primary producer demands to have control of the marketing of his produce there is a hue and cry.

We have had two referendums in Australia since the last World War in regard to the marketing of wool. Thousands of dollars were spent on propaganda in an effort to defeat these marketing proposals that were put forward by the primary producers. Now we have another marketing proposal which looked as though it was almost off the ground but in the Eastern States there has been some opposition to it. If it is good enough for the secondary industries to control the marketing of their products, why should not the primary producer have some control over the marketing of his produce?

Before long we will have in Western Australia a referendum in regard to the marketing of lamb. If this scheme is accepted I have no doubt it will benefit not only the primary producers but also the consumers because they will get their lamb at a cheaper price. As a matter of fact, I am sure such a scheme would benefit all concerned. However, already there has been some opposition to the proposal.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Who are these people who are opposing these things?

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: They are not our people. The honourable member would have read about it in the Press.

The Hon. J. Dolan: They are not our people; they are your people.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: They are not my people.

The Hon. J. Dolan: They are the ones you support.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: I trust that the members of this House will not only support the single marketing authority, but I also sincerely trust they will give it statutory powers.

I do not want to jump on the bandwagon, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without registering my disapproval of the way in which our old-age pensioners are treated today. I would remind the House that we are living in the year 1970. This is not 1370 or 1570. I believe that the old-age pension could be calculated as a percentage of the basic wage. I am not saying here what that percentage should be, but I believe it should be a percentage that will give pensioners a reasonable standard of living. The pension should be tied to the basic wage, so that every time the basic wage goes up the pension goes up, too.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Ten years ago I said it should be 75 per cent.

The Hon. T. O. PERRY: There has been a good deal of criticism of the Federal Government in this regard, but I am of the opinion that the pension should be tied to the basic wage so that every time the cost-of-living goes up, and the basic wage is increased, the old people can be provided for. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. V. J. Ferry.

House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 25th August, 1970

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. A. Manning) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (32): ON NOTICE

1.

POLICE

Prosecutions

Mr. TAYLOR, to the Minister for Police:

During each of the years 1966-67, 1967-68, 1968-69 and 1969-70—

(1) What number of persons were prosecuted on all grounds who gave their place of living as—

(a) no fixed address; or