

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 1st September, 1954.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### RAILWAYS.

#### (a) As to Encouragement of Decentralisation.

Mr. HILL asked the Premier:

Has the Government ever given consideration to the relief of congestion at Fremantle, on the railways leading to that port, and to endeavouring to bring about a policy of decentralisation by—

- The provision of land transport facilities between the lower South-West and the port of Albany;
- adjustments of railway charges to encourage the use of the Great Southern railway and the port of Albany?

The PREMIER replied:

The subject of general transport and shipment of goods is constantly under review. Shippers of goods have a big influence in deciding the points from which goods are shipped.

#### (b) As to Standard Gauge, Kalgoorlie-Fremantle.

Mr. ACKLAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

In July last a statement appeared in "The West Australian" that there was a probability of negotiations being opened up between the Commonwealth and State Governments on the matter of installing a standard gauge railway between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle. In the booklet recently issued by the Department of National Development, works to the value of £600,000,000 are specified as being in process of completion or to be undertaken, but no such work as that I have mentioned is provided for.

(a) Can he state whether the construction of the standard gauge railway has been considered by his Government and, if so, what decisions have been reached; and

(b) At what stage are the negotiations at present?

The PREMIER replied:

The chairman of the Railways Commission, Mr. Hall, is at present attending a conference of Australian railway commissioners at Port Augusta. During his visit, he will take advantage of the opportunity to discuss the question of rail gauge from Kalgoorlie to Perth with the Commonwealth Commissioner of Railways. On his return to Perth, he will submit a report through his Minister to the Government and the matter will receive further consideration.

### FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

#### As to Site, etc.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has a decision been made to build the new railway bridge at Fremantle alongside the existing traffic bridge?

(2) Is it necessary for the railway to cross the river at Fremantle at all?

(3) What difference to the answer given to No. (2) would a south-of-the-river railway make?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A decision on the siting of a new railway bridge will be made when the occasion arises to build one.

(2) It is at present considered necessary for the railway to cross the river at Fremantle.

(3) None.

#### WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) *As to Extension of Comprehensive Scheme.*

Hon. V. DONEY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Now that tenders are being called within the State for 30 in. steel piping sufficient to take the comprehensive water supply pipeline from Wellington Dam to the Great Southern railway line at Narrogin, will he—

(a) name the approximate date upon which the department will recommence the actual work of pipe-laying; and

(b) state whether it is the Government's intention to take the work through to Narrogin without further stoppages?

(2) Meanwhile, is his department seeking further tenders for the making of the smaller diameter steel piping necessary to continue the pipelines north to Pingelly-Brookton and southward to the southern limit?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Pipelaying has not been stopped. The laying of the 30 in. main has proceeded steadily during 1953-54 at an average rate of about one half-mile per month. It is anticipated that from October to the end of the financial year, the work will be speeded up considerably.

(b) The Government hopes to be able to continue the laying to Narrogin without interruption.

(2) Design and investigation are proceeding and tenders will be called well in advance of actual requirements.

(b) *As to Inadequacy, Narrogin and Pingelly.*

Hon. V. DONEY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

Does he know that the central and lower southern districts have, thus far, experienced most disappointing rains and that already Narrogin—with a fast-growing population—is expecting the customary heavy restrictions, while Pingelly's water

supply continues—as for many years past—to have no use at all other than for slushing purposes?

The MINISTER replied:

The position of storages in town supplies as a result of disappointing winter rains is known.

(c) *As to Financing Comprehensive Scheme.*

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

In view of the fact that, in the Federal Estimates for 1954-55, provision has been made for an expenditure of £450,000 towards the cost of the comprehensive water scheme in this State—

(1) Was this amount made available in response to an application by the State Government?

(2) Was the amount determined by the Federal Government without reference to the State?

(3) Does the State Government intend to make a similar sum available during the current year?

(4) If not, what sum does the State Government intend to make available this financial year?

(5) Including the £450,000 mentioned above, this will make the Commonwealth Government's contribution to this work £1,551,981. What sum—including the current year's contribution—has been made available by the State Government towards the cost of this work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No.

(3) A larger sum will be made available.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

(5) The State has already expended £1,141,560 and has made provision in the current year's Loan Estimates for £493,500. Endeavours are being made to find ways and means of increasing that allocation.

(d) *As to Position at Collie.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Is it a fact that the Wellington Dam will have to be completely drained before a commencement is made to raise the existing wall?

(2) If such is the case, what provision will be made to ensure an adequate supply of water for Collie during the period that water will not be available from the Wellington Dam?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Collie will be supplied during the summer months principally from Wellington Dam, and sufficient water will be retained in Mungilup Dam to tide Collie over the few weeks in May-June, 1955, that Wellington Dam will be empty.

*(e) As to Arrangements for Allanson.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

In view of the fact that it is anticipated an increase in the population of Allanson will take place as a result of the new deep coalmines now being developed, will he state what arrangements are being made to ensure an adequate water supply for this town?

The MINISTER replied:

Any water supply scheme for Allanson would come from the Wellington Dam through the 30 in. main and not from the Collie supply at Mungilup. Preparatory to raising the Wellington Weir, the reservoir has to be emptied to enable alterations to valves and outlet pipes, etc. Until this work has been completed, it will not be possible to provide a town supply for Allanson.

*(f) As to Personnel of Water Board.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Who are the members of the water board in Western Australia?

(2) Under what Act do they obtain their authority?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) Under the Water Boards Act, 1904, provision is made for the constitution of water areas and a separate board to be constituted for each water area.

Under the provisions of the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1912, the Minister for Water Supplies, Sewerage and Drainage may exercise the powers conferred on a water board in the absence of a locally-constituted board.

At present there are 10 locally constituted water boards in operation.

### KILLARNEY ESTATE.

*As to Provision of Shopping Area.*

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Has any provision been made for a shopping area in the new Killarney Estate, Scarborough?

(2) If not, in view of the growth of this district and the necessity for people having to walk long distances to shops, when does the Housing Commission intend to make land available for shops?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

### BASIC WAGE.

*As to Tabling Court's Remarks.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Justice:

Will he lay on the Table of the House a copy of the remarks of the Arbitration Court bench in the delivery of the latest judgment on the basic wage adjustment?

The MINISTER replied:

I have the papers here and will place them on the Table of the House.

### JUNIOR FARMERS.

*As to Advisory Committee.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Does a committee exist to advise him on junior farmer matters?

(2) What are the names of the personnel, and what office do they hold?

(3) Has this committee always acted?

(4) If not, when was the personnel changed, and why?

(5) How many full-time junior farmer organisers operate in the State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The composition of the committee is as follows:—

(a) The Director of Education or his nominee as chairman. (Mr. V. F. Box, Superintendent of Secondary Education.)

(b) Ex officio members—

The Superintendent of Youth Education, Mr. R. E. Halliday.

The representative of the Director of Agriculture, Mr. I. Thomas, Deputy Director of Agriculture.

The State president of the Junior Farmers' Federation, Mr. Ross Meston, of Bolgart.

One representative of the executive of the Junior Farmers' Federation, Mr. H. Lundy of Cunderdin.

(c) Members selected by the Minister—

A representative of the Royal Agricultural Society, Mr. H. N. Higham, president of the Royal Agricultural Society.

A representative of the Farmers' Union, Mr. W. Noakes, general president of the Farmers' Union of W.A.

A representative of the Institute of Agricultural Science, Mr. A. M. Stewart.

A representative of the Country Women's Association, Lady McLarty, State president of the Country Women's Association.

(3) It was convened on the 16th December, 1953.

(4) No previous committee was appointed.

(5) Two.

#### ROTTNEST ISLAND.

*As to Increasing Rental Accommodation.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Mines:

Whilst it is realised that ordinary housing commitments for the people are a first priority, is it possible further to increase the rental accommodation on Rottnest Island?

The MINISTER replied:

This matter is receiving the continued consideration of the board. Two new large-type bungalows were built early last year. Three large cottages are now in the course of construction and will be available for occupation during the coming summer months. Expansion rate is, however, slow, as the island's development is dependent entirely on its own revenue resources.

#### CAUSEWAY EXTENSIONS.

*As to Completion and Traffic Arrangements.*

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Works:

(1) When will the final extensions to the Causeway be completed?

(2) During the process of connecting roads, will the Causeway be closed to traffic for any period?

(3) Will Riverside Drive be closed for traffic at any period during the change-over?

(4) Has any approach been made to the Perth City Council regarding the widening of Adelaide Terrace?

(5) If so, what is the reply?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In December next.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) No.

(5) Answered by No. (4).

#### MT. HENRY HOME.

*As to Extensions and Cost.*

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What was the cost of the original buildings, furniture and fittings of Mt. Henry Home?

(2) How much will the present extensions cost?

(3) When is the work likely to be completed?

(4) When it is completed, how many women will the home provide accommodation for—

(a) in flats;

(b) in the hospital section;

(c) in rooms?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £229,815.

(2) £460,000.

(3) In progressive stages by August, 1955.

(4) When work now in progress is completed, the numbers will be—

(a) Six married couples.

(b) 104.

(c) Single rooms 61; double rooms 104; senile wards 80.

#### LAND SETTLEMENT.

*As to Farms at Eneabba.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Does the Government intend to proceed immediately with land settlement at Eneabba, west of the Midland line?

(2) How many farms are to be established on this area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Development at Eneabba has already commenced. Land classification has been completed, exploratory water boring carried out, and subdivisional surveys into farms are proceeding.

An area of 8,000 acres has been fallowed, and an access road from Three Springs is under construction by the Department of Main Roads.

(2) Subdivision into 50 farms, in the first instance, has been approved by the Commonwealth.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

*(a) As to Cost of Printing.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) What was the cost of printing the Local Government Bill?

(2) If a reprint is necessary before the Bill comes before the House, what expense will be involved in the change?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) £1,604.

(2) Cost depends on number of pages to be altered but it is estimated that it will not exceed £100.

*(b) As to Cost of Previous Measure.*

Mr. McCULLOCH (without notice) asked the Premier:

Has he any idea of the cost of the Local Government Bill, which was printed during the term of the previous Government and which was scrapped?

The PREMIER replied:

No.

*(c) As to Date of Debate.*

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Last week, when replying to a question asked by the member for Greenough, I said I could not give even an approximate date of when the Local Government Bill would be introduced, but I undertook to get the information. The Minister for Local Government estimates that the Bill will be ready to be presented to the House about the middle of September.

**HOUSING.***(a) As to Houses Completed by Commission.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

How many houses were completed by the State Housing Commission in the metropolitan area between the 1st January and the 28th August, 1954?

The MINISTER replied:

From the 1st January to the 31st August, 1954,—1,462.

*(b) As to Housing of Evictees by Commission.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

How many families who were evicted by order of the court were housed by the State Housing Commission in each of the weeks since the 12th July of this year?

The MINISTER replied:

Week ended 17/7/54—19  
Week ended 24/7/54—16  
Week ended 31/7/54—16  
Week ended 7/8/54—13  
Week ended 14/8/54—15  
Week ended 21/8/54—26  
Week ended 28/8/54—19

*(c) As to Workers' Homes, Murchison District.*

Mr. O'BRIEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Is it the intention of the State Housing Commission to build workers' homes in the towns of Mt. Magnet, Cue, Meekatharra and Laverton, where they will be urgently required in the near future?

The MINISTER replied:

It is not intended at the present juncture to erect houses in all the centres that have been mentioned, but consideration is being given to certain of them.

Mr. Hutchinson: What about some flats?

**HARBOURS.***As to Wharf Handling Charges.*

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When replying to a question asked on the 19th August by the member for Maylands, I indicated that it would take some time to collect the information requested. I now have the information that was sought, and I would like it to lie on the Table of the House for one week.

**CHILDREN'S COURT.***As to Erection of New Building.*

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Premier:

Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the erection of a new Children's Court building to replace the totally inadequate one now existing in Irwin-st.?

The PREMIER replied:

Not at present.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES.***As to Commissioner's Report.*

Mr. OLDFIELD (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

Could he give the House some indication as to when the commissioner's report on the adjustment of local government boundaries will be available?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

I could not say offhand, but I will get the information for the hon. member and the House.

**WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT LEGISLATION.***(a) As to Effect of 1950-51 Measure.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

In view of his statement in the House yesterday that the previous Government had "sold the birthright of the State to oil and other minerals to the Midland Railway Co.", is he aware that the purpose of the legislation passed in 1950-51 was primarily to protect soldier settlers, and that it neither added to nor subtracted from the existing rights of the Midland Railway Co.?

The MINISTER replied:

I am aware that the legislation did depart from the status quo at the time and that previous mention had never been made in any of the agreements with the Midland Railway Co. of gold, silver and precious metals, so that the Act did differ in that regard.

*(b) As to Debate on Bill.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Is the Minister not aware that that particular legislation was fully debated in both Houses, and mention was specifically made of the company's mineral rights, including mineral oil, and that the Bill received the support of all parties in both Houses and was passed without a division?

The MINISTER replied:

As I stated last night, I think it was unfortunate that the Bill got through without very much debate on that particular clause.

*(c) As to Reference to Mines Department.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Is he not also aware that, in a matter such as this, where the purely legal aspect of the entitlement of the soldier settler to the land was at issue, it was unnecessary to refer the matter to the Mines Department when the mineral rights aspect remained unaltered?

The MINISTER replied:

I consider that the matter should have been referred to the Mines Department, seeing that it dealt with something that was purely within the jurisdiction of that department.

*(d) As to Support of Previous Minister.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Did not the Minister for Mines in the former Labour Government obtain the adjournment of the debate and speak to the Bill and express general satisfaction with it?

The MINISTER replied:

The Leader of the Opposition has apparently looked up that point. I do not know whether that was so or not.

*(e) As to Midland Railway Co.'s Rights.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Does he not know that the 1950-51 legislation adversely criticised by him was—

(1) (a) Designed to facilitate the granting of titles to soldier settlers;

(b) that it did not alter in any way the existing position as regards the Midland Railway Co.'s entitlement to certain mineral rights;

(c) that the amending Bill was fully examined and actively supported by both the then Government and the Opposition?

(2) (a) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," does not that make his criticism unfair and misleading?

(b) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," will he re-examine his criticism and amplify to the House the grounds on which his criticism was based?

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope that the tendency to ask questions, the subject matters of which could well have been dealt with in the course of the debate yesterday, will not extend. Members had an opportunity during the debate to ask for the information now being raised by their questions. It is not quite fair to the Minister to adopt that attitude.

The MINISTER replied:

I have had about a minute-and-a-half's notice in regard to these questions. The hon. member was good enough to give me that much notice.

(1) (a) I am perfectly well aware of the legislation that was indicated at that time, and the manner in which the references to the particular subject that the hon. member has in mind were dealt with, and I gave some explanation of the matter last night.

(b) This, too, was dealt with very fully. In the address I gave here last night, the matter of mineral rights was of secondary importance to that which I attached to gold, precious metals and silver. The whole context of my speech dealt primarily with those three metals which were the ones that were included in the 1950-51 legislation, but which had never been included in legislation at any time prior to then.

(c) This is repetition, and therefore tedious. The Leader of the Opposition has already asked me this question and has received an answer.

(2) (a) I do not consider that my criticism was unfair or misleading. The statement I made here last night was in accordance with fact and, as I told the member for Toodyay, it would be substantiated, if necessary.

Hon. L. Thorn: I will tell you all about that later.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: (b) The answer to this question is definitely that the criticism was not biased in any way. It was soundly based, and what I said last night, I stick to.

*(f) As to Consultation with Solicitors of Interested Parties.*

Mr. WILD (for Hon. A. V. R. Abbott, and without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Does the Minister consider that there is anything improper in the action of the solicitors of parties to a contract with the Government conferring with the Crown Law advisers?

(2) Is the Minister aware that in framing legislation bearing on agreements as between the Government and other contracting parties, it is usual practice for the legal advisers of such parties to confer with the Crown Law advisers?

(3) Does not he think it is sensible and practical that the solicitors for contracting parties should confer with the Crown Law advisers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) I do not intend to try to answer these questions in full because I have not even a copy of them, but I would say that it is not usual practice for a Minister, when preparing a Bill, to consult with those who are most concerned in the legislation. I think it would be quite all right from the company's angle to endeavour to get something put into a Bill that it desired, but I do not think it is very right for the Government to chase around and take these statements *holus bolus* as was the case in this particular instance.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Hutchinson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver (Subiaco) on the ground of ill-health.

#### BILL—POTATO GROWING INDUSTRY TRUST FUND ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture and read a first time.

#### BILLS (2)—REPORT.

1. War Service Land Settlement Scheme.
2. Lotteries (Control).  
Adopted.

#### MOTION—BASIC WAGE.

*As to Quarterly Adjustments.*

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [4.59]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House wage and salary-earners and their dependants, by being deprived of all cost of living adjustments, are being called upon to bear more than their fair share of whatever burden it might be necessary for the community as a whole to carry to maintain economic stability.

I feel that this House has a heavy responsibility to deal with the problem which is confronting the wage and salary-earners of the State. I say that advisedly, because this Chamber, in conjunction with another place, has been largely responsible for the debacle with which the workers of Western Australia are now faced. It appears that within a comparatively short time we will be up against an industrial upheaval such as we have never before

experienced, unless the powers that be realise that there must be some semblance of social justice and economic stability provided for our wage and salary-earners.

Hon. D. Brand: Do you really think there will be an industrial upheaval in this State?

Mr. BRADY: I feel that there will be something more than an upheaval if a serious view is not taken by all concerned in regard to the plight of a large section of the people of this State.

The Minister for Housing: Especially after the next quarterly cost-of-living figures are announced.

Mr. BRADY: For the second time in 12 months, the Arbitration Court of Western Australia, a most responsible body, has decided against giving the workers of this State the benefit of an increased basic wage to which they are justly entitled, and I use the words "justly entitled" with emphasis. The president of the Arbitration Court feels that the economies of the State and of the Commonwealth cannot afford to pay an increased basic wage.

I prefaced my opening remarks by saying that this Parliament must accept a major share of the responsibility for the present position, as the main factor in the increased cost of living in recent months has been rent. In the increased rent figures recently placed before the court, there was included the result of only a fortnight's increases, which amounted to about 9s. 9d. per week. I want members to visualise what will happen when the full quarter's figures are available, as it will then be found that house rents will have increased by 200 or 300 per cent. Are the workers of this State to be asked to accept that burden and pay for it out of their wages, just as they have been asked to accept the recent increase, without any redress?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will the fair rents court agree to rents going up to the extent of 300 per cent.?

Mr. BRADY: I do not think the fair rents court will be functioning by the time the next quarterly review takes place, but increases in rent will be reflected in the figures placed before the court. Rents started to increase as from the 30th April last and yet, after a period of over three months, the fair rents court is still not functioning. A further aspect of the position which requires consideration is the increase in meat prices. During the term of office of the McLarty-Watts Government, this House passed legislation setting up a control board for the Midland Junction abattoir, and at that time we were led to believe that, as a result of the activities of that board, the price of meat would be brought down and that the abattoir would be made to function more economically.

We find, however, that the president of the Arbitration Court, in giving his determination in connection with the basic wage, lays emphasis on the fact that meat prices have again risen. That implies that in his previous determination he had regard to the rise in meat prices and has now had to do so again. One might be entitled to ask whether this control board has justified its appointment. From what I can hear, about both industrial disputes at the abattoir and the rising price of meat, I feel that the board has not justified itself, and I believe we will have to pay close attention to it in the near future.

In the short time since the court made its determination last Thursday, I have not been able to do all the research I would have liked, and my approach to this question may therefore be different from that of some other members, but I want to ask during the course of this debate, where we are heading, as a State, if our workers, who are involved in production, just as much as are the primary producers, are not to get a fair share of what is produced? Having that in mind, I will not be able to cover all the points I would like to deal with, and so I hope that many other members will take part in the debate in order that we may discuss fully what the future holds for both wage and salary workers, and also the primary producers and others, who are indirectly interested in this question of the basic wage.

There are a hundred and one aspects that have presented themselves to me in connection with this matter, and I will not be able to deal with them all in detail. It is for that reason that I hope other members will give some of these factors consideration before the debate ends. I have mentioned the likely effect of the increases in rents and meat prices on the basic wage figures for the next quarter. Another question that arises is whether, in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government has recently granted reductions in taxation, the court should have refused to increase the basic wage. In giving his determination, the president of the Arbitration Court said he felt that the basic wage in this State should not be higher than the rates obtaining in other States of the Commonwealth.

However, for upwards of 30 years the basic wage in Western Australia has been higher than that in any other State, and I feel that that position should continue, because of some natural advantages which we have here as compared with the rest of the Commonwealth. On the very morning that "The West Australian" printed the determination of the Arbitration Court that the basic wage would not be increased, there appeared also in that newspaper a statement that General Motors Holdens Ltd. had made a profit of £7,250,200 in the previous 12 months; a profit, in effect, approximately double that made by the

company in the previous year. Is it logical to expect the workers to continue peacefully in industry when one company can make such a huge profit—

Mr. Court: Is it a Western Australian company?

Mr. BRADY: No, but I have no doubt that many of its shareholders are Western Australians, and a large number of that company's products are sold in this State. If members analyse the figures, they will find that the profit disclosed in "The West Australian" represents about £120 net profit per vehicle, after agent's commissions and other sales charges have been met. Do members think it is fair that this company should continue to sell its products at a price which allows it to make such profits from the people rather than that it should be forced to sell its products at a cheaper rate?

I would not be surprised if the member for Nedlands, who interjected just now, reads a journal called "Rydge's." If he does so, he will find that in America companies, when gauging their profits, adopt a practice different from that of General Motors Holdens Ltd. One of the leading business organisations, represented at the recent Geneva conference of the International Labour Organisation, said that one of the reasons for the great gains made by manufacturers in America was the small amount of profit made on each individual unit as against the large profits made by some countries on individual units. This reduced production and stepped-up profits instead of stepping-up production and reducing profits, as was being done by manufacturers in America.

Mr. Court: But General Motors Holdens Ltd. has stepped-up its production.

Mr. BRADY: That may be so, but the company has also increased its profits and that is the basis of my argument on this question.

Mr. Hutchinson: It has reduced prices.

Mr. BRADY: There is no justice in the Commonwealth and State Governments and business enterprises generally, allowing such conditions to continue. I am referring only in general terms to the various factors that have occurred to me and I am not mentioning them in detail. The most important question that seems to be worrying the Arbitration Court is the ability of the State to pay the extra £1,000,000 required from Government revenue to cover the adjustment in the basic wage and whether private industry can afford to pay £3,500,000, or a grand total of £4,500,000, for this increase.

Had the Arbitration Court granted the increase it would have meant, in the ultimate, the Commonwealth Government making certain payments to the State through the Loan Council and other avenues. As production from private industry amounts to over £100,000,000, and



the State Government handles general and loan revenues amounting to from £35,000,000 to £40,000,000 annually, it would have been possible for the Arbitration Court to grant an increase of 13s. 8d., which was the adjustment which should have been given for the last quarter.

If that had been granted, it would have meant that the workers of this State would have lost 6s. 3d., because, since the basic wage has been pegged, the workers of this State lose 19s. 11d. weekly. The Arbitration Court, which is supposed to give some sort of justice and equity, could have granted this 13s. 8d. increase without prejudicing the economic future of Western Australia. As I said before, the Commonwealth Government could quite easily have met some of the State Government's financial responsibility in this regard. Last year the Federal Treasurer budgeted for a surplus of £250,000 and finished the year with a surplus of £55,000,000. On the face of that alone, the Arbitration Court could have taken the risk—and I do not think there would be any risk having regard to the fact that human beings are concerned in the court's decision—and have granted the necessary increase.

The question of an increase has nothing to do with the building of a new House of Parliament, or new water schemes, railway projects or banking institutions. It is a matter of whether the workers and their dependants shall have extra food and clothing, extra amusements or recreation. The Commonwealth has gone through relatively prosperous times and the Arbitration Court could have agreed to the basic wage workers of Western Australia being paid an increase of 13s. 8d. a week. All loans floated in recent times have been over-subscribed—both loans for the State Electricity Commission and Commonwealth loans—by as much as £16,000,000.

We also know that the Commonwealth Government has paid back 12,000,000 dollars to the International Monetary Fund and that Government has also allowed the Defence Precautions Act to lapse and as a consequence the capital issues control regulations have also gone overboard. As a result dozens of industries have been established throughout the Commonwealth, including this State, for the manufacture of luxury goods. The fact that loans have been over-subscribed and that the Government has repaid the International Monetary Fund and has removed the capital issues control, indicates, that there is no shortage of money. Thus, the Commonwealth could well afford to pay an increased basic wage.

Another factor which affects this question is the industrial peace we have had in this State. During the last 12 to 18 months there has been more peace in industry than at any previous time in the history of the State. Yet the only benefit the worker gets from that is the failure

to be granted basic wage increases to which he is entitled. But what does industrial peace mean to the State? It means increased production, which we are told is required before basic wage increases can be paid. The workers of this State have responded 100 per cent. to the request for industrial peace and yet basic wage increases have not been granted. Does that encourage the workers to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion? Certainly not.

Because of efficient methods that have been adopted in this State, contractors are advertising in the papers that people can lodge their applications for houses which will be erected within eight weeks. That indicates the efficiency prevailing in that particular industry and indicates, too, that production has been stepped-up to such an extent, by both workers and management, that at least the workers in that industry are entitled to an increase in the basic wage. Another angle that occurs to me, too, is that although workers in essential industries are being denied increases in the basic wage we find large sums of money being spent in the flotation of doubtful companies which are seeking to discover oil and uranium.

In the last three or four months thousands of pounds have poured into these doubtful companies. It makes one wonder, as a responsible member of Parliament, whether the economics of the State have gone haywire, because, on the one hand, we see workers, who are doing an essential and important job for their State and country being denied social justice and, on the other hand, we see capital flowing into enterprises that perhaps will result in nothing. All it might mean is that they will continue to dig something out of a 9,000 foot hole. I have nothing against the man who desires to invest his money in that type of company. Every individual has the right to invest his money in any company he desires provided the fundamentals of life are not neglected.

Why should workers in industry be denied social justice and their just rights? What results might be obtained from oil and uranium? I feel, as a member of Parliament, that I should bring these matters before the House so that we can do some realistic thinking about the position.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How does this investing in oil companies affect the basic wage?

Mr. BRADY: If this money is available, it is not coming from the industrial workers. It will be coming from people such as business magnates, pastoralists, farmers and others. That money is being invested in doubtful ventures when it should be going to essential projects where there is something of real value being produced.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: If oil is produced, that will be real value, will it not?

Mr. BRADY: If it is. The point is: Are all these companies reliable? Is the money being placed in reliable hands? Are these people going to handle that money in the same manner as I and other members of this House would handle it?

Mr. Hearman: That is a question for the Government of the day.

Mr. BRADY: That is the point. That is why I am bringing the matter before the House so that the Government and the Parliament of the day shall have some regard to these features. When considering basic wage payments or adjustments, one of the major factors which the Commonwealth or State Arbitration Court considers is production. That is only right because I have some regard for it, too. If we are to progress sanely and in a way that all sections of the community—and I include business men, pastoralists and others—are to receive justice, together with the workers, we should ascertain where we are heading in regard to production. When we study the Arbitration Court figures on the question of whether industry can afford these basic wage increases, it appears that the problem is always considered from the monetary point of view. I am afraid that is where the workers, on the one hand, and possibly other sections of industry on the other hand, are losing.

For example, let me refer to the wheat industry. We, as a responsible Parliament or Government—in the same way as the previous Parliament and Government before us did—have allowed the position to continue whereby farmers are carrying on sowing their wheat not knowing from day to day whether they will be able to sell it; not knowing from day to day whether it will lie in wheat silos and other storage bins to be attacked by weevils and moths. Instead of that, we should be making some balanced decisions on these matters and ensuring that the money available will be spent in avenues where it will produce the best results.

If we do not do that, in a few years hence the Arbitration Court will say to the workers, "All right, we have spent £100,000,000 but you have produced no value." Yet the workers may have produced three or four times the output that they did ten years ago or are producing today. So if the Arbitration Court of the day is to continue granting basic wage increases on the basis of production and the effort of the workers, it is about time that we sat up and took notice of whether value is being produced; whether certain workers who are engaged in, say the search for oil, the search for uranium or the production of wheat are making their contribution to real production.

I point out that if the production of 29,000,000 bushels of wheat is to result in the farmers being paid 5s. or 6s. a bushel for it as against 17s. or £1 a bushel five or six years ago, there will be no value earned and therefore the harder the worker

labours the less he will receive from the production of the State. As a member of Parliament and of the Government party, I would like to see the position analysed by all those concerned and particularly by the more responsible members in this House so that we will not continue to spend money on plant and machinery for certain projects when such concerns are non-productive. In such instances the money is simply being poured down the well.

That is one angle that occurs to me. I do not know whether the other angle counts for anything with some people, but I think that when we come into this world we all hope to leave it in a better state than we found it. Therefore, I think it is the hope of us all that every young man and woman will be reared in decent circumstances; that they themselves will rear a family and will leave the State a little better and richer for their having been in it. In all seriousness, I ask this question: What encouragement is there today for the working man to get married? What encouragement is there for him to rear a family?

What encouragement is there for him to carry out the natural instincts of a human being or decent citizen if, on the one hand, he finds his wages are being whittled away and he is being denied by the Arbitration Court the margins to which he is entitled? So, with the staying of these basic wage increments, the vital statistics of the State will be seriously affected as far as the worker is concerned. About 1890 I think the population increase was about 25 or 40 per thousand. Today, in 1954, after all the so-called advances in civilisation, I think the figure per thousand would be about 9 or 10.

How will our population increase if this iniquitous system of basic wage fixing is to continue? The man and woman of today will say, "In justice to my family, I cannot have more than one child," or "I cannot afford to have any." That is the position which many people in this State today are faced with. I am astounded at the number of husbands and wives who both go out to work in order to give their children some semblance of a decent home life.

As a union secretary, when endeavouring to prepare a case to present before the Arbitration Court, I was astounded at the number of married women who are working, especially in recent years. Daily, one can see trainloads of such women travelling to the city to work in various offices and factories. In one or two particular departments of the Government in this State there are an outstanding number of married women working. That would lead one to believe that decent wages are not being paid to these people to enable them to do justice to their families.

Hon. D. Brand: They go out to work because they want to, not because they have to.

Mr. BRADY: They have to pay £3 or £4 a week as rent for homes out of a basic wage that allows £1 16s. for that purpose today. It does not even allow £1 16s., for although the figure in the basic wage is £1 16s., the court does not allow that. These people are paying £3 or £4 out of a basic wage figure of £1 5s. or £1 6s. It is easy to see that something is wrong and somebody is going short. Either the worker is going short or his family is going short.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do not hurry us too much! Ease up a little bit! We want to hear you.

Mr. BRADY: The member for Mt. Lawley need not be worried about my hurrying. If I am going too fast for him to understand the meaning of my remarks, he can very easily read them later. No doubt the hon. member will himself be able to make any special point that he desires to raise on this subject. The fact remains that today we see the wives of workers going to work in the shops and factories, because they are unable to meet the rental charges they are asked to pay today, and at the same time do justice to their families.

Hon. L. Thorn: That is not the reason; they go because the opportunity offers.

Mr. BRADY: The member for Toodyay will be able to give his reasons for their doing so later. I have tried to make the main points in connection with the motion. If I liked to pursue in detail each one of the matters raised it would take half an hour to discuss each point. I have not that time available to me tonight to give to each particular aspect. I have merely made the points that have occurred to me.

In connection with those points, I wish to say it is quite evident that there are certain factors operating over which the Arbitration Court has no control whatever, yet indirectly these factors have the effect of raising the standard of living. I refer particularly to the fact that in our midst we have such undertakings as cartels and monopolies operating, over which it would seem neither the Arbitration Court nor the Parliament of the day has any control. I shall touch only on the most flagrant of these cartels and monopolies in order to make my point clear. While there are several others, I will refer only to the oil companies. From time to time we are told that we should have free enterprise so that we may get the competition which the public requires in order to obtain the various articles at the cheapest price.

Yet we find today that industry is forced to pay a fixed price for petrol and oil, and all the industries and the manufacturing concerns that are operating in this State have to face up to the cartels or monopolies, whether they be operating in petrol or oil, or whether they be in matches or chlorine, or in any other

chemicals controlled by the monopolies. These prices must be paid, and the Arbitration Court has no jurisdiction over them.

In turn, however, these prices are reflected in the articles sold by the various firms and industries, manufacturers, butchers, bakers and so on, and in turn these price are passed on to the consumer and ultimately to the wage and salary-earner. He, of course, has no redress. So on the one hand the Government does not fix many of the prices that these people are made to pay, and, on the other hand, many of the goods required by the average housewife are not dealt with in the basic wage regimen, according to the figures provided by the Government Statistician.

We know that when the figures are provided by the statistician for the Arbitration Court—whether they be under the "C" series index or other series presented to the court from time to time—only certain products are dealt with. In consequence, workers who are using many other commodities apart from those that appear in the regimen, are paying these prices, which are not reflected in the basic wage. Here again, the wage and salary-earners are being sacrificed in the interests of the economic stability of the State and the Commonwealth, and this is being done in a most unfair manner.

As a matter of fact, while going through some of the figures today, I was reminded that such commodities as fresh fruit and vegetables are not referred to in the regimen as presented to the Arbitration Court for the fixing of the basic wage. Accordingly if workers desire to do justice to their families and provide them with fresh fruit and vegetables, it is necessary for them to deny themselves other items or articles that are dealt with in the basic wage regimen.

Mr. COURT: Have the employees' representatives applied for that regimen to be reviewed in recent years? There is machinery provided for them to apply for a regimen and the method of computing the wage.

Mr. BRADY: As a matter of fact, I have not been to the Arbitration Court to hear the case that the advocate for the unions has presented to the tribunal, though I do know something about the procedure of that court. I know that before the Arbitration Court would accept a statement or an address from the workers' advocate, it would want some factual evidence. No doubt the only factual evidence that would be acceptable to the Arbitration Court as a responsible body would be a witness sworn on oath who would, from the witness box, be able to go back over some years and prove that the prices being argued go to make up the basic wage.

That would take a great deal of arranging. I doubt whether any member in the House—and there are some very keen members in this House; maybe their wives are even keener than they—could go into the witness box and prove to the satisfaction of the Arbitration Court every detail of the 30-odd series of the basic wage, plus the hundred other articles that go to make the regimen of a worker's household. I doubt whether the employers' advocate could do it either. Accordingly it would appear that the advocate for the union has decided that probably the nearest approach we can get to the basic wage figures are those presented by the statistician, although those figures are not in the first instance arranged for basic wage purposes.

In their opinion, that might be the nearest they can get for the time being. However, as I said before, I am not in a position to prove whether the advocate has presented a case along those lines or not, but I am concerned with the effect brought about by the refusal of the court to award quarterly adjustments of the basic wage. Another point has occurred to me in regard to what will take place if the Arbitration Court continues to refuse these adjustments. What will happen to the average family and what will be the ultimate effect on some of the people of this State represented by members opposite.

If the basic wage adjustments continue to be neglected, the average working man will have to decide whether or not the amusements and pleasures enjoyed by himself and his family can be continued on the same scale; he has to decide whether or not to have his annual leave; whether the food requirements of his household are to be curtailed; whether their food is to be of a different class and of lesser calorific value, which may result in the undermining of his family's health; whether the clothing requirements of his family will have to be reduced; whether certain articles in respect of which he has pledged his credit on hire purchase will have to be forfeited.

The ultimate result is that the average working man will have to determine in one case or another whether certain things must go overboard. Instead of buying four or five pounds of beefsteak or mutton each week, he may have to purchase six extra loaves of bread. We have to ask ourselves what will be the effect on industry and the effect on the health of the children of the average working man, and whether the present set of circumstances will usher in, slowly but surely, another economic depression. It is quite obvious that, if the average worker does not possess the money to spend on the necessary articles, businessmen will not be able to maintain the same turnover. The latter will be compelled to reduce their overhead expenses, just as hundreds of businessmen

are now doing in the metropolitan area. They will be compelled to reduce their stocks, to sack their workers, and so bring about a downward spiral.

I bring this point forward deliberately so that members of the Opposition who are inclined to back up the determinations of the president of the Arbitration Court, may pause and consider the ultimate result if the present position continues. One of the main aspects to which attention must be paid in these days is human happiness, not human misery. If the position continues as it has for the last 12 months, a major disaster for the workers as a whole will be ushered in. I ask members in all seriousness to give consideration to the matters I have referred to.

Hon. D. BRADY: It might be ushered in if the price of wool continues to go down.

Mr. BRADY: The hon. member has given me another cue which I can probably take. From the report of the Tariff Board it will be noted that the wool industry today, as compared with 1938 and 1939, has increased by 500 per cent. in value. Many other industries have increased by 200 or 300 per cent. in value over the same period. I do not know what the future holds for those industries. The other night when dealing with the wheat position I expressed the opinion that many other industries, besides the wheat industry, are likely to suffer some economic recession. I also believe that the wool industry faces the same prospect.

I am wondering if wool growers in recent times have been investing their profits in the right channels so as to ensure stability for themselves and their families when the price of wool recedes. If they have not done this, then I am afraid the Government will not be in a position to assist them because of the help given earlier by the State to other industries. Some industries are already approaching the State Government for assistance. I hope that the wool-growers are making capital improvements and purchasing the right type of machinery so that they will be able to sell their wool at a lower price with roughly the same percentage of profit that is derived today. This can be brought about by reduced costs consequent on capital improvements and machinery purchase.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope that the hon. member is going to tie these comments up with his motion.

Mr. BRADY: I am coming to that right away. From time to time we have been told that the workers should produce more. I have already touched on the question of production when I referred to the values which are associated with production. In the case of wheat, a farmer working ultimately at a greater pace, can strain the economy by producing more wheat. Yet the productive value would be no

greater. The Arbitration Court has continually urged the worker to produce more, but I would like to refer to the Tariff Board report, page 7, paragraph 22.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What year?

Mr. BRADY: The member for Roe has referred to this report which is dated 30th June, 1953.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is that the latest Tariff Board report?

Mr. BRADY: I presume it is. There may be a later one, but it will not be printed as yet. The report says—

But the responsibility for high costs must be shared by management. While the management of many enterprises, within the limits of industrial and other conditions in Australia, is of a very high standard, there is still considerable room for improvement. On the other hand, there are companies which have been allowing various kinds of laxity to develop to an extent which would have been most unusual had there been greater competition during the past few years.

I hope that members opposite will note these remarks of the Tariff Board, which is a very responsible body, and suggest to the management of the various concerns in this State, to the directors and to others, to step up their efficiency in management with a view to bringing production costs down, so that when the Arbitration Court next considers the quarterly adjustment to the basic wage, it can make this comment, "Production has gone up as a consequence of efficiency in management and efficiency of employees."

I would like members also to consider what the Tariff Board had to say about the profit contribution. There is a modicum of sense in what the board states, and I feel that ultimately all Governments, irrespective of their political complexion, will have to pay regard to it. On page 7, paragraph 23, of the report, appears the following:—

Current bounty legislation provides broadly that industries (with one exception) assisted by bounty will not be paid bounty that will result in profits, before tax, exceeding 10 per cent. on funds employed; in the exception the rate is 5 per cent. This legislation provides a measure of control over the profits of assisted industry and is an indication of the view of Parliament on the question of profits in assisted or protected industries. It is not possible, however, in determining a rate of duty that will probably remain unchanged for a long time to fix a rate that will control the level of profit in the protected industry. The Board does not suggest that such a course is necessary or desirable. On the other

hand, it does not believe that protection should be at a level that will enable industries with little effort to obtain high levels of profit. The Board considers that an industry requiring a high level of protection and imposing on consumers a high excess cost should not be given the opportunity of increasing the cost to consumers by taking high profits; on the other hand, industries requiring relatively low duties and imposing on consumers a low excess cost should not be denied the incentive and encouragement of a reasonably high level of attainable profit.

I feel that the Tariff Board, in making a decision of that kind, and having regard for the fixing of profits in various industries where a bounty might be paid, is bringing about a position which I think it is desirable for all parties to production to have some regard for. The question that arises in my mind is whether Governments, irrespective of their political character, should not consider whether, before an industry is allowed to become established, it should be able to guarantee that it will produce certain commodities and will not require to have more than a certain profit therefrom. In that event we might get some stability in our economic set-up which does not exist at present.

It would seem, from what appears in "Ryde's," that there are some industries which are making quite excessive profits, having regard to what the basic-wage worker receives. I am not saying that they are obtaining high profits in comparison with what other branches of commerce and industry are securing; probably they are on a par. But, having regard to what the workers are taking from industry, it is questionable whether companies should be allowed to continue obtaining up to 15 per cent. profit. That 15 per cent. is being taken, in many industries in Australia, on the invested capital after stocks, in some cases, have been watered. I feel that there should be some regard for the position of the basic-wage earner and what some industries are deriving by way of profits. Take the company known as Wunderlich Ltd. There is a reference to that company in "Ryde's" of the 1st August, 1954, on page 63.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Where is the company operating?

Mr. BRADY: Mainly in New South Wales; but the products are sold in Western Australia.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What products?

Mr. BRADY: Steel metal products, and a number of other metals.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What steel metal products?

Mr. BRADY: Stamped ceilings and artificial machinery.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What do you mean by "artificial machinery"?

Mr. BRADY: There are certain products of stamped metal which show artificial stones.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Artificial stones? What are they used for?

The Minister for Works: Let the member for Mt. Lawley make a speech!

Mr. BRADY: I am not worried about the member for Mt. Lawley. I rather welcome his interjections, because it is obvious that the remarks I am making are not going down too easily with him.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I like to understand what is said.

Mr. BRADY: The hon. member likes to support these companies.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about those artificial stones?

Mr. BRADY: I do not mean artificial stones. I say that these companies produce stamped metal, which would indicate artificial stones as one of the products.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why?

Mr. BRADY: I would like to go into the details, but I will leave the member for Mt. Lawley to work it out in between the time he spends on other things.

Hon. L. Thorn: He should know what artificial stones are, anyway.

Mr. BRADY: I thank the member for Toodyay for his assistance. Another firm to which I would refer is the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. I do not think the hon. member will ask me whether that company sells its products in Western Australia. Not only does the company sell sugar in Western Australia, but everybody knows that recently it has established four or five subsidiary industries the products of which are being sold in this State through well-known firms.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But is not the price of sugar fixed, by arrangement between the Commonwealth and the Queensland Government?

Mr. BRADY: These companies are making quite a considerable profit and are putting away considerable reserves.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is not that done with the consent of the Queensland Government?

Mr. BRADY: If I may be allowed to make my speech as I would like to, I would point out that in 1954 the net profit of the company was £1,417,000, and the dividend was 9 per cent. As usual, that 9 per cent. was on watered stock. In addition, the company has reserves of £6,500,000. That is a company that is selling sugar to the grocers who, in turn, sell it to wage-earners and salary-earners; and sugar is one of the products in the basic wage regimen. It is one which retailers as a rule

keep to a minimum as regards price so that the basic wage will not go up too steeply and industry will not have to pay too high a wage. I would like to develop that argument, but time will not permit.

I would like to quote again from "Rydge's" to prove that the Arbitration Court could have permitted an increase in the basic wage. With regard to all commercial and industrial concerns, the indices on the Stock Exchange showed an upward tendency of share prices, which would indicate that the concerns were in a flourishing condition. I would quote figures appearing in the August issue of "Rydge's," as follows:—

#### Sydney Monthly Averages.

Average.	Banks Insurance Trustee.	Pastoral.	Retail Stores.	Industries.	34 Ordinary Shares.
June, 1953	154.24	134.83	153.21	161.22	158.97
June, 1954	173.38	156.77	187.28	172.40	172.61

The last named figures are for 34 ordinary share holding companies, and these might provide the surest indication as to whether there is prosperity. The figures show that in practically every industrial and commercial activity, there has been a decided upward tendency. The unfortunate fact is that the basic wage fixing tribunals, both Federal and State, have determined that the workers in those industries are not to be given social justice and economic security.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Most of those industries are operating outside of Western Australia. How could the court here deal with them?

Mr. BRADY: Speaking from 25 years association with the court, I know that it is permitted to inform itself on all aspects of industrial activity, apart from the information placed before it by employers and employees. The court consists of fairly learned gentlemen including the president, Mr. Justice Jackson, for whom I have a very high regard.

The Minister for Lands: Why?

Mr. BRADY: Because I believe he is doing what he considers to be the right thing. The president, however, is in a position similar to that of many other people. Members of Parliament would like to have weeks and even months available to them in order to study particular subjects and do justice to them, but they have not the time to devote to those studies. No doubt Mr. Justice Jackson is similarly situated and probably he has to accept the information that is handed to him. Evidently, for the time being, he has come to the conclusion that he should keep on the safe side and not take the risk of granting basic wage increases.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you read the judgment of the court?

Mr. BRADY: As members of Parliament, we should pay attention to the decision of the court and direct him to arrive at a fair

and equitable determination for all workers in industry. I am trying to influence Parliament, employers and employees, to face up to what will happen if the present position is allowed to continue. I should like every member to adopt a realistic attitude and note where we are heading in relation to our industrial affairs. If I succeed in doing nothing more than inducing members to pause and think and do a little more reading on the subject, I shall have accomplished my desire in moving the motion.

I do not wish to speak at greater length; members have been very indulgent and attentive to my remarks. Just before I left home today, I picked up a book entitled "Political Economy." It is a synopsis of a larger work, and I intend to quote a passage for whatever it may be worth to members of the House.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: By whom was the book written?

Mr. BRADY: It might benefit members to know. Here is the statement—

Ernest Ludlow Bogart, Ph.D., Educator. Born Yonkers, N.Y., March 16th, 1870. Son of Richard Walker and Mary (De Angelis) B.; graduated Princetown, 1890, A.M., 1896; University of Halle, 1896-7, Ph.D.; Columbia University, 1897-8. Teacher, Hillman Academy, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., 1891-3; Assistant Professor Economics and Social Science, Indiana University, 1898-1900; Professor Economics and Sociology, Oberlin College, 1900-1908. Member American Economic Association. Contributor to British and American economic journals.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why not quote Moses? He was one of the earliest political economists in history.

Mr. BRADY: We hear a lot of talk including a lot of rubbish.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRADY: On one occasion a member representing one of the Great Southern constituencies spoke of a speech as a diatribe, but that depends upon the point of view. Different people regard various problems from different angles. The quotation from "Political Economy" is as follows:—

The object of political economy is to point out the means by which the industry of man may be rendered most productive of those necessities, comforts, and enjoyments which constitute wealth; to ascertain the proportions in which this wealth is divided among the different classes of the community; and the mode in which it may be most advantageously consumed. The intimate connection of such a science with all the best interests of society is abundantly obvious. There is no other,

indeed, which comes so directly home to the every-day occupations and business of mankind.

The consumption of wealth is indispensable to existence; but the eternal law of Providence has decreed that wealth can only be procured by industry—that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. This two-fold necessity renders the production of wealth a constant and principal object of the exertions of the vast majority of the human race; has subdued the natural aversion of man from labour; given activity to indolence; and armed the patient hand of industry with zeal to undertake, and patience to overcome, the most irksome and disagreeable task.

But when wealth is thus necessary, when the desire to acquire it is sufficient to induce us to submit to the greatest privations, the science which teaches the means by which its acquisition may be most effectually promoted—by which we may be enabled to obtain the greatest possible amount of wealth with the least possible difficulty—must certainly deserve to be carefully studied and meditated. There is no class of persons to whom this knowledge can be considered as either extrinsic or superfluous. There are some, doubtless, to whom it may be of more advantage than to others; but it is of the utmost consequence to all. The prices of all sorts of commodities—the profits of the manufacturer and merchant, the rent of the landlord, the wages of the day-labourer, and the incidence and effect of taxes and regulations—all depend on principles which Political Economy can alone ascertain and elucidate.

Neither is the acquisition of wealth necessary only because it affords the means of subsistence: without it we should never be able to cultivate and improve our higher and nobler faculties. Where wealth has not been amassed, the mind being constantly occupied in providing for the immediate wants of the body, no time is left for its culture; and the views, sentiments, and feelings of the people become alike contracted, selfish and illiberal. The possession of a decent competence, or the being able to indulge in other pursuits, than those which directly tend to satisfy our animal wants and desires, is necessary to soften the selfish passions; to improve the moral and intellectual character, and to ensure any considerable proficiency in liberal studies and pursuits. Hence, the acquisition of wealth is not desirable merely as the means of procuring immediate and direct gratifications, but as being indispensably necessary to the advancement of society in civilisation and refinement.

The author's remarks continue, and they are more extensive and profound than those I have quoted, but I think I have said sufficient in regard to political economy to make even members of this House realise that they, as politicians, have some responsibility to society; that they should study political economy and learn what they as politicians, are supposed to do for society in general. I think I have sufficiently ventilated in this House my views in regard to the basic wage and the effect the president's decision may have on the future of the State, and on the industrial workers, in particular, whether they be salary or wage-earners; and what ultimately can be the result of the court's withholding of the basic wage fluctuations from people who are entitled to social justice and economic stability.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you read the judgment of Mr. Justice Jackson?

**HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY** (Murray) [6.10]: The member for Guildford-Midland, when opening his address, said that the Arbitration Court was a very responsible body. He went on to say that he had confidence in the personnel of the court, and I think he said that the court took certain factors into consideration before giving its judgment. We have been told that the Government estimated that if the 13s. 8d. had been granted it would have cost the State over £1,000,000; and the cost to private industry would be something over £3,000,000.

So, the court was faced with a great responsibility because had this amount of 13s. 8d. been granted, we can visualise what the cost would have been to both private industry and the Government. We can all claim credit for wanting to see the workers of the State fairly treated. I, for one, certainly do. I know this, that if the workers have not sufficient money to meet those needs which should be met, they suffer distress and, in addition, the distress is felt by all other sections of the community.

I can imagine what the court wanted to know, and the facts it would take into consideration. First, let us have a look at the additional cost to the Government—£1,000,000. Mr. Stannard, the Government representative, said it would cost the Government, generally, £750,000, and that the railways would have to find an additional £300,000. No doubt the court, in considering these factors, just wanted to know what effect these steeply increased costs would have on industry, generally, and on the Government as well. It is easy to visualise what this would mean to the Government. It would certainly mean that governmental costs would have to be considerably increased.

The Minister for Housing: The Public Service reclassification, as from the 1st January this year, had that effect.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: True; it would have that effect.

The Minister for Housing: It did have that effect.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Before tea I was leading up to what this increase of 13s. 8d. in the basic wage would mean to industry, and the responsibility of the court to take into consideration all factors relating to how industry generally would be affected. The member for Guildford-Midland went to some length to inform us that a number of large companies had substantially increased their profits and, consequently, were able to pay increased dividends. I would remind members that there are other industries of major importance to the economy of this State which have not made greater profits or increased their dividends, and yet it is to them that the State looks for its economic stability.

The Minister for Housing: But no one is asking for increased wages for the workers; only that the old standards be maintained.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I shall come to that in a few moments. I know what the Minister is driving at. The Minister implied that this 13s. 8d.—

The Minister for Housing: Plus the 6s. 3d.!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, but I think it was the 13s. 8d. that Mr. Chamberlain mentioned, because he regarded the 6s. 3d. as gone.

The Minister for Housing: That was in accordance with the view of the court.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister thinks that by right this 13s. 8d. should be given to the worker if justice is to be done. That is what his interjection meant.

The Minister for Housing: Unless there is any recession in the economic situation of the State.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The court did take all factors into consideration in deciding what effect the 13s. 8d. would have on the economic stability of Western Australia.

Mr. Johnson: When was that done?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: In the recent judgment.

Mr. Johnson: Did you read the judgment? They did not consider it. They said they had no evidence. Do you not know that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What I was leading up to was that the court did ask for evidence as to what effect on the economy of the State the additional 13s. 8d. would have but, as the member for Leederville has said, no evidence was forthcoming in that regard although the Government representative agreed that, in



considering the appeal that was made for an increase in the basic wage, the economic factors affecting the State should have been considered—

The Minister for Housing: Do you not think that the adjustment should have been automatic unless the employers were able to prove that the economy of the State could not afford it?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister is turning it around the other way.

The Minister for Housing: Why did the president turn it against the worker?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think he did. He was prepared to accept evidence on that point from either side, but the evidence was not forthcoming. The Government did agree that this extra 13s. 8d. should be paid, but it did not produce any evidence to show that that would not have a detrimental effect not only on Government instrumentalities but also upon the economic conditions of the State generally.

The Minister for Housing: Do you honestly think that at a time of unparalleled prosperity the standard of the workers should be reduced?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Is this a time of unparalleled prosperity?

The Minister for Lands: You know it is.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think there is a doubt about that.

The Minister for Works: Mr. Menzies said it was so.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He did say something to that effect several months ago when he was before the country.

Mr. Moir: Was there ever a period of greater prosperity than this?

The Minister for Works: Mr. Menzies said that there never was.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think that not long ago there was a period of greater prosperity when wool was at nearly double its present price.

The Minister for Housing: Greater inflation.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: At all events there was lots of money about then. There is no question about that. Let us examine what is happening to a number of our great primary industries at present. I refer to them because if they had to carry an increased burden, they would no doubt be detrimentally affected. Only the other afternoon we debated for several hours the position in relation to wheat, and almost every member who spoke expressed grave concern at the future of the wheat industry. Today we find that it is difficult to get rid of our wheat on the export market and one of the factors which is influencing the position there is the price of wheat. I take it that if the wheat industry

was involved in further high costs, it would have an even smaller chance of competing successfully on the world market.

Both the Minister for Agriculture and members generally know that there has been a recession on the world market for dairy produce. One could also mention dried fruits and wine. Recently there was a substantial drop in the price of pork owing to the steep fall in the export market. Eggs are yet another commodity the value of which has fallen to a considerable extent, and the outlook overseas for the fruit market is not bright at present. Whether the latest fall of about 7½ to 10 per cent. in the price of wool is going to be maintained or whether there will be a further drop, I do not know.

But I know, as we must all know, that the economy of this State at present is based largely on the price of wool and if there were any substantial fall in the price of that commodity, it would have an effect upon every other industry in Australia. Let us take another great industry in this State, in which some members opposite are personally interested—I refer to the gold-mining industry which today is working on a fixed price for its product. If that industry has to bear an additional impost, it will further reduce the chances of a number of our mines carrying on successfully.

Mr. Moir: Most of those companies have shown bigger profits over the past year than they have ever done before in their history.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: All I know is that strong representations are being made by the goldmining industry for a subsidy for certain mines. Only today I heard about one big mine—it is not in the electorate of the hon. member—which is likely to close down because it is unable to pay its way.

Mr. Moir: Even if gold were £35 an ounce, there would always be marginal mines.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If that is the case, it makes the position of a subsidy most difficult, does it not?

Mr. Moir: Yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: At least in regard to certain mines. But if the mining industry, among others, had to carry this additional impost, it would become even more difficult for a number of mines to carry on.

Mr. Moir: Possibly two.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know about that. The hon. member would have a better knowledge of the actual position of certain mines than I have. Previously I referred to what the increase in the basic wage would cost the Government—over £1,000,000. I noticed that the Government advocate said that this

£1,000,000 would be made good by the Government from loan moneys and, I think, from revenue as well. How this would come about, I do not know. Only recently I read that the Deputy Premier, in replying to a deputation from the Bas-sendean Road Board, said he was scratching to know which works he would be able to undertake and that he would have to cancel certain projects because he had not the necessary loan moneys.

Mr. Brady: Who said that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister for Works. If that is the case, and if the State had to find a further £1,000,000, the Minister for Works would have to decide, and think very carefully, what other public works he would have to cancel as well. The Government advocate also said that he thought this £1,000,000 would be made good by the Commonwealth Government—I think he said by way of the Grants Commission. I very much doubt that. When we take into consideration that the Commonwealth employees are on a fixed wage—their quarterly adjustments have been suspended—I cannot imagine that the Commonwealth Government would agree to provide an extra £1,000,000 for a State Government which had, through its Arbitration Court, imposed an additional £1,000,000 upon industry. If this sum of 13s. 8d. were paid, it would have a considerable effect upon Government undertakings.

As regards private industry, a sum of £3,500,000 would be involved if the increase were granted. The Commonwealth Government, through the Grants Commission, will not make that sum of money good to private industry; it could only be passed on to the consuming public and, of course, there would be a further considerable increase in the price level. So I think the court took this view: If it granted this increase, would the workers, or any section of industry, benefit? In addition, it could create a certain amount of unemployment and increase the cost of living. I will admit that today there is a tendency for prices to increase in a number of directions. But if this steep increase had been granted, it is certain there would have been a considerable rise in the price level all round, and we would have been in for a further bout of inflation.

The member for Guildford-Midland said that he fears we will be faced with an industrial upheaval. I do not think he meant that; I think he used extravagant language. I do not think the workers of this country would favour any industrial upheaval. I have not heard of any such likelihood during my travels, even though many of the workers might feel that they are suffering under an injustice. I think the average worker takes into consideration the fact that the Arbitration Court is there to see that justice is done, and I do not think

the average worker would come to the conclusion that the Arbitration Court, in giving this judgment, was setting out to do something to his detriment.

Mr. Lapham: It has done so.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Perhaps I have not been making myself clear. I ask the hon. member would it be in the interests of the worker to grant this steep increase? I think the member for North Perth will agree with me that if the increase had been granted, there would have been a substantial increase in the price level of all commodities. That would have been inevitable and, had the increase been granted, I do not think the average worker would have benefited to any extent.

Mr. Andrew: You did not worry about price increases when discussing tenancies.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I will say something about that as I move along. When the member for Guildford-Midland moved his motion he said that taxation had been reduced. There has been some reduction recently—or there will be as a result of the last Federal Budget—but I do not think that that can be advanced as a sound reason why there should be any increase in the basic wage. Does not this reduction in taxation apply to all sections of the community, including the workers? In fact, I think it can be said that the greatest decrease in taxation has been given to those in the lower income group.

Mr. Moir: That is not true.

Mr. Johnson: It is rot!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think the member for Boulder will find that that is so.

Mr. Johnson: It is not worth a penny a day.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As I said, I do not see how the argument advanced by the member for Guildford-Midland, regarding a reduction in taxation, could have any bearing on the question with the Arbitration Court. The hon. member also went to considerable length to say that money was flowing freely into public loans and into investments in companies. That may be so, and I would be surprised if it were not. In fact I was surprised when the hon. member said this was not desirable. I should imagine that any country would endeavour to develop its resources, and one way of doing so is by forming companies. Although some may not be sound, the individual himself must be the judge of whether they are or not. Some losses are bound to be made by the public generally, whether the money is invested in oil or any other concerns.

I could not follow the hon. member's line of argument when he said, because the Government had something like £30,000,000 in loans and revenue, that was a reason why the Arbitration Court should have agreed to an increase in the basic

wage. As I said a few minutes ago, this amount is already earmarked. If the suggestions made by the member for Guildford-Midland were carried out, the Government would have less public money to spend, and, as a result, a number of our public works would be seriously curtailed. This is not the first time, of course, that an Arbitration Court judge has not increased the basic wage. In 1942, the late Mr. Justice Dwyer on two occasions refused to adjust the basic wage on the quarterly index figures, and gave as his reason that it would add to costs and would not benefit the workers. To quote his own words, he said, "It would not be in the interests of the worker."

Mr. Johnson: What were the amounts on those occasions?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have not the figures available, but the hon member could get them, if he so desired. In 1950, the amending legislation provided that the economic capacity of industry and any other matters that the court deemed relevant should be taken into consideration, but not so as to reduce the basic wage below the needs of workers. I think it is necessary that needs should always be the consideration.

Mr. Moir: That must be the basic consideration.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, I agree with the hon. member. However, not only should the court consider the basic wage from a needs point of view, but also from the point of view of what industry can afford to pay. With regard to the needs phase, the report in "The West Australian" of the remarks of President Jackson in announcing the decision of the Arbitration Court on the wage issue included the following:—

At least since 1947, he said, the basic wage has been fixed at an amount in excess of "needs."

"If the basic wage is now to be increased," he said, "then it is for those who seek the increase to establish to the satisfaction of the court either that new standard of needs for the average worker should be adopted and that this standard in money terms requires a higher basic wage than the present, or that the economy of this State has the capacity to pay a greater basic wage than the present."

"It is open to those seeking the increase to establish one or the other of propositions directly before this court."

"Alternatively either of those propositions could be established to the satisfaction of the Commonwealth Court," said his Honour, "in which event the decision of the Commonwealth Court could no doubt be used as a persuasive precedent before us."

"But in the present instance, neither of these fundamental propositions has been established before us, nor has any attempt been made to do so."

In the report appearing in the "Daily News" dealing with the court's announcement the following appeared:—

Mr. Justice Jackson said that the State Government had asked the court to grant increases, but had supplied figures showing that the direct cost in wages to the Government would be just under £1,000,000 a year.

When the President had asked where this extra money would come from, he had been told that it was confidently expected that it would be made available by the Commonwealth—providing it was paid on the basis of an order by the State Arbitration Court.

It seemed that the court was being asked to increase the basic wage in the expectation that the general body of taxpayers throughout all Australia would, in the final analysis, pay the bill.

No similar means of reimbursement, however, could be suggested in the case of W.A.'s private employers, whose additional annual bill was estimated to be £3,250,000.

Mr. Johnson: That is not a quotation from the judgment.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have read from reports published in "The West Australian" and the "Daily News."

Mr. Johnson: You do not believe that, surely.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I believe it is a fair report of what His Honour said. I do not think the newspapers or the reporters would be so unscrupulous as to distort what he said.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you the judgment there?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: So have I. You should be able to read it better.

Mr. Johnson: I can read very well, and without glasses, too.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are lucky.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think that the Government has some responsibility in this matter and should accept some of the blame. Mention has been made by one hon. member of the increase in rents. In my opinion, if the Government had not played politics in the April session of Parliament held this year, and had compromised with the Legislative Council, the difficult position we are now faced with would never have arisen.

The Minister for Works: That is a beauty! You know that your Government was responsible for the increase in rents by its actions when it was on this side of the House.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister knows perfectly well that had the Government adopted a reasonable attitude with the Legislative Council during the April session of Parliament, it would not now be faced with the existing position with regard to rents. The Minister knows perfectly well that the Legislative Council—

The Minister for Works: Would not compromise at all!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It did compromise. It suggested to the Government that there should not be any evictions merely because an increase in rents was required.

The Minister for Works: But the Legislative Council showed no spirit of compromise at all.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Why did not the Minister's Government accept that?

The Minister for Works: That on its own was not worth very much.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It was a considerable step towards preventing the increase of rents.

The Minister for Works: The action your Government took was responsible for the increase in rents that occurred. The April session was held to remedy that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Even the Minister agreed that some increase in rents was due.

The Minister for Works: But not to the extent that your legislation permitted.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Even to the extent that our legislation permitted, it was not comparable with the increases in many other directions, including increases in wages and salaries.

Mr. Andrew: You were against courts fixing rents and now you are talking about the Arbitration Court in that connection.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I stick to my guns. I am convinced that we could have avoided a good deal of this rent racketeering to which members have referred if the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council had been agreed to.

The Minister for Works: Your statement is tantamount to admitting that the action your Government took is responsible for the racketeering.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not admit anything of the sort.

The Minister for Works: Of course you do.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister for Works may try to put those words into my mouth, but I do not admit anything of the kind. My Government took the attitude that landlords were entitled to some increase in rent, and I have heard members on that side of the House say that some increase of rent was justified.

Mr. Andrew: We agree with that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Legislative Council also suggested that the legislation should continue till the 31st August; Mr. Simpson suggested that in another place, but it was opposed by the Chief Secretary.

Mr. McCulloch: Mr. Watson was going to cut the Bill's throat.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No, he was not. There again was evidence of an attempt by the Legislative Council to try to do something to assist with regard to rents.

The Minister for Works: The Legislative Council elections changed the attitude of that Chamber.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As the Minister for Works knows, the members of the Legislative Council claimed that the Government was playing politics by not accepting any amendments or compromise in regard to this legislation.

The Minister for Works: As one who knows, I can assure you there was no spirit of compromise at all.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the Leader of the Opposition had better get back to the motion.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am mentioning rents because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, it is one of the items responsible for the increase in the cost of living.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition must confine his remarks to the motion.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I will refer now to the other chief cause in the rise of the cost of living, namely, meat. As we all know meat has been a difficulty for years. It is a commodity that fluctuates and we have had difficulties in Western Australia both when the price of meat was controlled and when it was decontrolled.

Mr. Moir: More so when it was decontrolled.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know about that.

Mr. Moir: You would know if you were on the basic wage trying to rear a family.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You think the farmers are getting too much.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What has the Government done to try to remedy the position?

The Minister for Works: It has introduced price-fixing legislation.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: My Government was criticised because we stored meat. We set up a committee to advise us on the best means of securing as much meat as we could obtain, and we had to import a good deal from the Eastern States

because we could not get enough in Western Australia. As the member for Fremantle knows, there was a substantial drop in meat prices and we were left with this quantity of meat on our hands.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The poor old lions benefited.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am glad it proved of some benefit, although the object was for the public to benefit.

Hon. L. Thorn: It kept the price of meat down.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is quite right. A select committee was set up in 1950 to inquire into meat supplies and among its members were two of the Ministers of the present Government. I would like to read three of the recommendations made by the select committee. They are as follows:—

- (2) That action be taken by the State Government to ensure that sufficient stocks of frozen meat are built up, by private enterprise or if necessary by the Government itself, to augment meat supplies during any period of probable fresh meat shortage.
- (3) That such frozen meat stocks bought at slightly above export parity, available to the consumer during times of fresh meat shortage, be used as a check against unduly high fresh meat prices.
- (4) That sufficient freezer space be provided in Derby to enable Air Beef Limited to fill all available freezer space of ships on the Singapore-Fremantle run with beef for marketing in Perth.

I would like to ask if any of those recommendations have been carried out.

Mr. Jamieson: What did you do about that report?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I have already told the hon. member.

Hon. L. Thorn: He was asleep.

Mr. Jamieson: What happened to the meat you stored?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: In an attempt to keep meat prices down to a reasonable level, we stored more than we actually required, and the public did not want frozen meat. But that does not get away from the fact that we made a genuine attempt to keep the price of meat at a reasonable level. But this Government has not done anything of the kind. I repeat that this Government must take the responsibility not only for the increase in rents, but also for the steep increase in the price of meat. I move an amendment—

That all the words after the word "House" in line 2 be struck out with a view to inserting in lieu the words "the failure of the Government to accept the April 1954 proposition of the Legislative Council in

connection with rents and tenancies legislation and its failure to ensure ample supplies of meat has resulted in an unnecessary increase in the cost of living," be inserted in lieu.

On motion Mr. Moir, debate adjourned.

## MOTION—ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ACT.

### *As to Issuing Proclamation.*

Debate resumed from the 25th August on the following motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:—

That this House resolves that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 12 of the Electoral Districts Act, 1947, and in view of the fact that no less than 15 electoral districts fall short of, or exceed by 20 per cent., the quota for such districts under the said Act, the Governor should issue his proclamations as required by the said Act requiring Commissioners to be appointed under the Act, to perform and observe the several duties imposed on them by the Act.

to which the Premier had moved an amendment to strike out all words after the word "that" where it appears the second time in line 1 with a view to inserting other words in lieu.

MR. MOIR (Boulder—on amendment) [8.9]: This is a matter that must be given considerable attention. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition in putting forward his motion really wants the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act put into operation, or whether he took this means of placing the subject before the House for discussion.

Mr. Oldfield: He wants the law of the country carried out, that is all.

Mr. MOIR: I can hardly believe that the Leader of the Opposition would be of the opinion that the law as it stands should be carried out. I feel sure that when he looks closely at the position as it is today he must agree that some amendment of the Act is necessary. If the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act are carried out without amendment, the metropolitan area will gain further seats at the expense of the country. I do not know if Country Party members have looked at all the implications bound up with this Act, as it affects seats in the agricultural areas. Anyone looking at the figures of the different electoral districts will see that if redistribution is proceeded with at present, the country areas will suffer considerably in the number of representatives, and the metropolitan area will gain.

For many many years country districts have been given special consideration as to representation in Parliament. Even when the Act was last amended in 1947, special provision was included respecting the North-West seats. Where previously

there were four North-West Assembly seats, the number was reduced to three. A proviso was inserted at the same time that those three seats should remain, irrespective of the number of electors residing in that area. Section 5 of the 1947 Act states—

(a) The number of electors in the metropolitan area, every two electors in such area being reckoned as one elector, and the number of electors in the agricultural, mining and pastoral area, every one elector in such area being reckoned as one elector, shall, in the aggregate, be divided by forty-seven, and a quota be thereby obtained.

If that section is not amended before a redistribution takes place, it will inevitably mean that with the very large growth of population in the metropolitan area, as against the slow growth in most parts, and the decline in some parts of the country districts, more Assembly seats will be allotted to the metropolitan area and fewer to the country areas. The main area to suffer would be the Goldfields, because under the Act one seat at least, and possibly two, would cease to exist. Some readjustment of seats would have to take place in the farming areas, with the possible loss of one seat in the wheatbelt and a possible gain in another country area nearer the coast.

When redistribution last took place the Goldfields lost two seats, Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and Mt. Magnet. The disabilities in some of the outer areas are so great that some provision should be made along the lines applicable to the North-West seats. I am not claiming that all the goldfields seats should be treated in that manner, but at least two seats should be treated with that reservation. The electorate of Murchison is probably the largest in the State.

The Minister for Justice: It is the largest Assembly electorate in Australia.

Mr. MOIR: It has an area of some 322,000 square miles and measures approximately 800 miles from east to west, and about 600 miles north to south, that is, taking two lines through it. There are, of course, variations in the measurements at other points. In that electorate people live over a large area and at widely separated points. For instance, north of Kalgoorlie, where the southern boundary of that electorate was fixed, somewhere around Goongarrie, to some 400 miles north of Laverton, it might surprise members to know that quite a few people live on pastoral properties and in small scattered communities. The member for that electorate has to cover a vast area.

We have to look at his problems in the light of what he has to do in his electorate. So as to understand their needs and their problems, he has to travel over a large

area of country in which the people live in small communities spread over scattered areas. To do justice to his constituents, he has to visit them occasionally because even people living in the outback have a right to expect representation. To conduct business on their behalf, the member for Murchison has to travel over a tremendous distance every twelve months. He can speak for himself on this matter. I know that he is very diligent in his duties and travels frequently over his electorate.

The Minister for Justice: His electorate is bigger than the whole of New South Wales.

Mr. MOIR: It has been said that railways serve the electorate and the member can travel by this means. If he does, he will see only some of the people living in his constituency because the railway line runs north from Kalgoorlie to Laverton. It does not touch Mt. Ida, which is 85 miles by road off that line, nor does it touch Lynden, which is some 100 miles east. True there are not a great many people at Lynden, but there are a few, and those electors have a right to see their member occasionally. At Mt. Ida, there is a fair-sized mining community. Sandstone is 130 miles west of Mt. Ida and 220 miles from Menzies. Even if the member travelled on the Wiluna line and got off the train at Mt. Magnet, he would have a similar distance to cover in order to reach those two parts of his electorate.

Again, take Peak Hill, which is a mining centre, with pastoral country further north for a distance of 250 miles. Peak Hill is 104 miles from Meekatharra. If the member wishes to contact electors north of Yalgoo, he has to travel 500 miles.

Mr. Hearman: Is this a debate on a redistribution of seats?

Mr. MOIR: The hon. member can make his speech afterwards. I am making mine now.

Mr. Ackland: Are you speaking to the motion or the amendment?

Mr. MOIR: That is one electorate which should be treated the same as are the North-West seats. True, there are 3,021 electors in that area, although there are various centres where the population is increasing. Quite a number of people are not enrolled because of the way they move about. Although there are only 3,021 electors on the roll, there are many more who claim the time and attention of the member for the district. That applies not only to that electorate, but to others as well; it would apply to the metropolitan area. I refer to new arrivals in this country, who have not had time to be naturalised and do not appear on electoral rolls, but live in various districts.

I would like to point out that the difference between people residing in the metropolitan area and those living in outback

districts is that the former are right alongside the source of government. They are handy to the various Government departments with which they have to do business. They can go along and smooth out their troubles. On the other hand, electors in the country have to rely almost entirely on their member to carry out any business they require to be done with the Government departments.

It is true that in the goldfields areas, members do not have the problem facing those in the metropolitan area, such as those connected with housing. But they do get all sorts of other problems, because every electorate has its own particular troubles. There are plenty of people prepared to go into outer areas—thousands are living there now—but if we expect them to live in those parts, they must be allowed reasonable representation.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the hon. member will tie up his remarks with reasons why the words proposed to be deleted from the motion should be deleted. That is the amendment, and the question before the House. The House has no idea of what is to be inserted in place of the words proposed to be deleted, and cannot anticipate.

Mr. MOIR: I will tie up my remarks very shortly. I say that a principle has been recognised and the amendment to the motion says—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It does not say anything.

Mr. MOIR: It says—

In order to provide a more equitable basis of parliamentary representation the quotas provided for in the Electoral Districts Act, 1947, should be altered to give less voting strength per elector in electorates bordering on metropolitan electorates, and greater voting strength per elector in electorates in the more remote areas of the State.

I believe my remarks are pertinent to that proposed amendment.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: When was that amendment moved?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss words proposed to be added. We are discussing the deletion of words that are in the motion. When the Premier moves that other words be inserted in place of those struck out, the hon. member will be in order in discussing them.

Mr. MOIR: Very well, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, the goldfields areas have suffered previously under the Electoral Districts Act, and will suffer again. To put this machinery in motion at present, without exploring the avenues in which the Act could be amended, would be doing an injustice to quite a large number of people in the outer areas of the State.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How would you like to see proportional representation introduced into this State?

Mr. MOIR: I do not know that proportional representation has been successful where it has been introduced. I think it leaves quite a lot to be desired.

Mr. Oldfield: Dr. Evatt said it was good when he introduced it.

Mr. MOIR: I feel that under it people with whom the electors in the main are not very concerned, are elected as their representatives. I do not deny that, on figures, the metropolitan area is entitled to more representation; but that could be quite easily effected without taking representatives away from the country electorates. I am quite sure that people in the country do not desire less representation than they have at present. As a matter of fact, they would probably desire more. I am quite sure that they must be satisfied with the representation they have had. I know that the work coming to members—at least it applies in my area—is quite sufficient to keep them fully occupied. In view of what I have stated, I am in favour of the motion being amended.

MR. OLDFIELD (Maylands—on amendment) [8.29]: I was rather surprised last Wednesday evening at the line adopted by the Premier when speaking to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. He seemed to take the view that the Act was unfair; and that, because it was unfair—in his opinion and the opinion of his supporters—its provisions should not be carried out. But the Leader of the Opposition moved the motion in all sincerity because of an earnest desire to see that the law of the land was adhered to. I would go so far as to say that, if the Government fails to carry out the provisions laid down in the Electoral Districts Act, it will be guilty of a grave dereliction of duty.

Mr. Johnson: You mean that all laws should be carried out?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Whether right or wrong, a law should be carried out. In the opinion of certain people, a law may be unwise or wrong, but it must be observed because, in the opinion of other people, it may be correct. Therefore I say the law must be observed whether it is considered to be right or wrong. Most people in the Fremantle gaol are there because they disobeyed a law which they believe is wrong. People imprisoned for larceny consider that there should not be a law against taking the goods belonging to other people. The whole point is whether the law is going to be carried out or not. If the House decides to support the deletion of the words and later on to insert the amendment, it will amount to an indication to the people by Ministers that for their own purposes or for individual selfishness they will not give effect to the law.

When the Leader of the Opposition was moving the motion, the Premier asked by way of interjection several times, "Why did not you have a redistribution of seats in 1952?" The Premier, as well as his colleagues, knows quite well that two years ago there were five seats under or over the quota—the number necessary to lead to the issuing of a certificate by the Chief Electoral Officer, but it was not issued. Members were aware of that fact because they keep an eye on these things. To do so is in their interests. It was within four months of a general election and members, if they have read the Act relating to the redistribution of seats, know that a period of more than 12 months is necessary from the time the certificate is issued until the boundaries are redefined and the rolls put in order.

The Act provides for the appointment of a commission and for a period of so many months to elapse while the redistribution is open to objection and after the boundaries have been defined, the department has a couple of months' work in preparing the new rolls. So it was useless for the Premier to ask why the previous Government did not have a redistribution four months before a general election. Had it been possible to have a redistribution at that time, and had the then Government attempted to put it into effect, there would have been howls from the Labour Opposition who would have charged the Government members with jerrymandering to save their seats.

The Minister for Works: They gave it a lot of thought, but decided not to proceed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Minister for Works does not know that.

The Minister for Works: I do.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I do not think so, though the Minister is pretty good at getting information.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Reference was made by the Premier to the shifting population of the State. He said he did not think the present was a favourable time to have a redistribution because Western Australia, in the matter of population, was in a state of flux. I believe that that has been the position throughout the history of this State, and probably it applies throughout Australia and in other countries of the world. The shifting of population results from new industries being opened up and from the general expansion of population. I read recently that the population of the world has increased 400 or 500 per cent. since the seventeenth century, showing that population is always in a state of flux.

If this is not the time for a redistribution, when will be the time? Who will be the one to say that population does not look like shifting for some time and so, being static for a considerable period, we shall have a redistribution? I cannot see any merit in the argument that, because population is increasing, new areas are being

opened up, and new development is taking place, the law of the land should not be carried out.

The Minister for Works: Are you anxious for a redistribution?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I am anxious to see that the law of the State is obeyed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Minister asked for it and got it.

The Minister for Works: I just wanted to know.

Mr. OLDFIELD: When the Leader of the Opposition was speaking I asked the Premier whether he agreed or not with the Labour Party's policy, that being the party he leads in this House. I doubt whether some members sitting behind the Government know what that policy is.

Mr. O'Brien: On a point of order, is not the hon. member getting off the beaten track entirely?

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Maylands may proceed.

The Minister for Works: He thought the member for Maylands wanted a bit of a spell.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I asked the Premier by way of interjection whether he disagreed with the Labour Party's policy and, by way of evasion, he said he thought I might be the only member with 100 per cent. belief in the policy of the party I supported. That was an admission on his part of disagreement with the policy of the party he leads. Be that as it may, quite often Government members take refuge behind the fact that they support measures simply because they are part of the policy of the party. The policy of the Labour Party—I say this for the benefit of Government supporters who may not have read the pledge they signed—is, I consider, a democratic one in respect of electoral boundaries.

Mr. Moir: What is your policy?

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is democratic as regards electoral boundaries. The Labour Party stands for the principle of one man one vote, the principle that operates in the Federal sphere. Yet the member for Boulder extolled the virtues of having the State so zoned that in one area 1,000 electors would have the same voting strength as 16,000 electors in another area. The policy of the Labour Party is one man, one vote, and it is a very democratic system, but members are elected to this House not for area, or number of kangaroos or emus, but the number of people they are to represent. Whilst I agree with the Labour Party policy in that respect, I am wise enough to concede that there must be some deviation from it in Western Australia because of our vast areas in the North. The Act, as it stands, makes allowances for the fact that these areas require special consideration.



In the north of this State, we have a population of 3,500 people who are represented by three members in this Chamber and three in another place, which gives them six representatives. But where are we going to draw the line? If we act upon what was foreshadowed by the member for Boulder, when speaking earlier this afternoon, we shall have various areas of the State drawn up and we are going to say to candidates, "Because you live there, you will represent that area and 1,000 people; because you represent this area, you will have an electorate of 5,000 people." To other members we are going to say, "Because you live adjacent to Perth, you will represent 20,000 electors."

How this will be satisfactorily carried out, and where the line is to be drawn, God knows! We heard the Premier speak about the unfairness of the people in Gosnells having double the voting strength of the people in Cannington. That is the position, and when we put it that way, it does seem unfair. Why should the people of Safety Bay have double the voting strength of the people of Rockingham?

Why should the people of Gascoyne have five times the voting strength of those in Geraldton, which is an adjoining electorate; and why should the people of the Kimberley electorate have 16 times the voting strength of the people of Canning? Whatever system we adopt, if we are to have a line of demarcation such as is provided at present, which is drawn purely and simply between metropolitan and country, with the three North-West seats being separate and distinct, we shall have people in one electorate with more voting strength than those in another.

Mr. McCulloch: Who passed that law?

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is no argument to say that Gosnells should not have double the voting strength of Cannington, because no matter where the line is drawn, we shall have that state of affairs. The boundaries were not drawn by the present Opposition, which was the then Government, because the Government of the day did not define the metropolitan area and the country. That was done by the commissioners who were set up under the Act. They were most honourable personages, namely, the Chief Justice, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor General—people untainted by politics and unbiased in their views, who were able to sit down with a clear conscience and a clear mind and decide what they considered was the most honourable and suitable form of new divisions.

Mr. May: Did they alter any of them?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I understand that objections were made in one or two cases. Those commissioners took into consideration the local government boundaries, community of interest and everything else

that was mentioned in the Act, and I believe an alteration was sought between Cannings and Guildford-Midland. Another, slight alteration was sought between Middle Swan and Mt. Hawthorn, but I do not think it affected any of the voters.

Mr. Jamieson: Why did they alter Murray?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Listening to the member for Boulder this evening, it appears that members opposite are more concerned with the duties of members of Parliament with respect to attending to the individual needs of their electors than they are in attending to the requirements of their districts, as a whole, and to the needs of the State. The member for Boulder mentioned the extra work that the outback members do, and he went on to describe the duties of the metropolitan members in regard to attending to such services as water supplies, sewerage and gas. He also spoke of the duties of country members in attending to the needs of individuals.

But under the Constitution of Western Australia, members are not elected to Parliament purely and simply for what they will do as secretaries to the electorates; as errand boys to the electors; or, as a Labour member of the Federal House said, as social service agents. The people of Western Australia do not elect a member, but a Government. They do not return a member to this House because they think he is the type of chap who will run around and attend to their individual little wants, but because he belongs to the party that they want in power. The people of Western Australia go to the poll to return a Government; and the people throughout the world do that.

Mr. Hutchinson: I hope they do not return this one.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I have my doubts about that; I do not think they will. I think the present Government is very worried about the position. People do not go to the poll to elect individual members. Is it fair for members in this Chamber to say that the people in the metropolitan area have to be deprived of a lot of their voting strength because the people of the outback expect more work to be done by their members?

Mr. Moir: You think electorates ought to be on the same basis?

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the hon. member had been listening earlier, he would have heard me say that I believed in that part of the Labour Party's policy. I consider it is the most democratic system of returning members to Parliament; that is, that we arrange our electoral boundaries according to the number of electors.

Mr. Moir: It does not say that.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I said earlier that I agreed with that portion of the hon. member's policy.

The **SPEAKER**: Order! Will the member for Maylands resume his seat? I pointed out to the member for Boulder that he was discussing the proposed insertion of words. The member for Maylands started off on the amendment, which was to delete words from the motion, but he has now got on to the words that are proposed to be inserted. I hope he will stick to the amendment before the Chair.

Mr. **OLDFIELD**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologise. Furthermore, in opposing the motion as moved by the Leader of the Opposition the member for Boulder seemed to be concerned at the fact that if the Act were carried out as it stands at present, there would be a loss of seats in the goldfields area. He went further and said there would be a loss of seats from the wheatbelt area, but I do not know where all those seats would go. The answer given in this Chamber to a question asked about a fortnight ago by the Leader of the Country Party clearly indicated that any redistribution made now under the present Act would mean a loss of one seat from the country areas to the metropolitan area.

On a hypothetical case at the present moment the calculation would give 21 metropolitan seats of 9,478 electors each and 26 agricultural, mining and pastoral seats with 5,098 electors each. That would mean that the country areas would lose one seat to the metropolitan area. The member for Boulder may be correct in saying that the Kalgoorlie area would lose two seats, but they would probably go to the wheatbelt, mining or pastoral areas. At all events, that is the job of the commissioners as defined under the Act and when individual members start worrying about what seats will be transferred and what new seats created, all feeling of democracy disappears.

It is just a form of jerrymandering and if we did a thing like that, our attitude would have to be that we did not care what the representation was or whether the people were able to elect a Government democratically, so long as the seats were such that we who hold them at present could continue to do so. I am amazed that some who are supposed to be responsible members of the community—leaders of the community, elected to Parliament to govern this country—should rise in this Chamber and put forward as one reason for opposing the motion, the purpose of which is to ensure that the Government carries out its duty, their fear of what might happen to individual seats.

When that type of attitude is adopted in this Chamber, I wonder what is in store for the people of this State in the future should the present Government continue in power. I oppose the amendment because I realise that the Act as it stands is fair and I believe its provisions should be enforced, no matter how they

affect individuals. I would like to see the motion carried so that the Government would no longer be in a position to defy the law of Western Australia.

Mr. **HEARMAN** (Blackwood—on amendment) [8.54]: I oppose the amendment. The debate seems to have wandered all over the place and almost to have developed into a discussion on the redistribution of seats. I realise that you, Mr. Speaker, have been lenient in this regard. Government members, including the Premier, have set a rather bad example in this connection. The object of the motion was to endeavour to make the Government state its position in relation to the redistribution of seats.

It is known that the present Act imposes on the Government a legal obligation to redistribute and Opposition members, both last year and this year, have, by dint of questioning, endeavoured to find out what is the Government's intention in this matter. The answers given have, to say the least of it, been most unsatisfactory. The object of the motion, I repeat, is to try to get the Government to declare itself on this question, and I think the Leader of the Opposition was completely justified in expecting that the Government would state its position.

The Minister for Works: His attitude was, "Do not do as I do, but as I say."

Mr. May: He got the same answer as he gave us.

Mr. **HEARMAN**: There is a difference in spite of the fact that the Minister for Works is endeavouring to sidetrack me. The present Government is the first since the Act was introduced that has been under a legal obligation to do something in this matter. The Minister for Works knows that perfectly well and is aware also that there was no legal obligation on the previous Government to take any such action. Had that not been so, he would have been the first to have demanded that something be done, because no one can suggest that he was ever backward in criticising the McLarty-Watts Government.

The Minister for Works: This respect for the law appears to have been discovered only recently by members opposite.

Mr. **HEARMAN**: That is not so at all. We have been asking questions in this connection for nearly two years; certainly for the last three sessions of Parliament. The member for Vasse was one who consistently asked questions in this regard.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why not say what you intend to do?

The Minister for Works: I will.

Mr. **HEARMAN**: This is not only a recent interest on our part and the Minister for Works knows that reference to "Hansard" will bear me out in that.

The Minister for Works: Why were the seats of Mt. Marshall and Middle Swan kept vacant for several months?

Mr. HEARMAN: I was not a member of the Government of that day and so I cannot be expected to be informed of the facts or to be responsible for what took place. It is all very fine for the Minister for Works to endeavour to lead me away from my point, which is that the object of this motion is to flush the Government into the open and to get it to declare itself, a result which through the normal parliamentary means of questioning and so on, has proved unattainable. Had that not been so, the attitude of the Opposition during this debate would have been vastly different. Last week the Premier, after a dissertation on redistribution and on what he thought should take place or might happen if the present law were implemented, moved to delete certain words, without telling us with what other words he intended to replace them.

The Minister for Works: They are on the notice paper.

Mr. HEARMAN: That was an unusual procedure, inasmuch as members cannot be expected to agree to delete words without knowing what is intended to be substituted for them. A week after the motion was first moved, the Premier did put the words in question on the notice paper and the very fact of his having done that has made public, I presume, the Government's intention, but it would have been a much franker and simpler procedure on the part of the Premier to have said straightaway what the Government's intentions were, thus cleaning the position up immediately in a frank and open manner.

Now that the Premier's intentions have at last been brought into the open—he left it till the last minute—I feel that the object of the motion has been attained and for that reason I do not think there is any need to go on amending it or deleting words from it. The public and this House now know where they stand and I therefore feel that the motion has been successful. Of course, the Government has two courses open to it. It can either observe the law or amend it, and both are quite proper courses to follow. If the Government intended to amend the law, I suggest that last year was the proper time to do it as I believe that a redistribution of seats should take place reasonably soon after an election because at that stage jerrymandering, string-pulling and other unpleasant and undesirable aspects that can arise are not so likely to be prominent as they will be when the next election comes closer.

Mr. Jamieson: That is when they do take place.

Mr. HEARMAN: Surely the hon. member will not argue that we should leave it till the last minute, because I think that

would be a most undesirable procedure. I do not think a matter such as this should be argued too much on the hustings, if it can be avoided. As the member for Maylands pointed out, everybody knew after the last election that a redistribution was required under the law. If the Government intended to introduce amending legislation, that would have been the fair, proper and decent time to have told the public of Western Australia of its intentions instead of adopting this hole-in-the-corner amendment and evading answers to questions.

If this motion had been moved last session we might have been that much further ahead. Opposition members were getting a little perturbed as to the Government's intentions in this matter. We do not always see eye to eye with the Government regarding its method of upholding our laws. This time last year we had a debate about two-up which was brought about because the Minister for Justice apparently did not wish to amend the gaming law. He thought that two-up should be connived at in certain areas. That might be his approach to the upholding of our laws but at least it is an unusual one.

The Minister for Justice: I do not retract one iota from the statement I made.

Mr. HEARMAN: The Minister might not wish to retract his statement but that is beside the point. The Minister had a most peculiar idea of upholding our laws. So I think Opposition members were entitled to wonder about the Government's intention of upholding the law in connection with a redistribution of seats.

Opposition members have not always seen eye to eye with Government members regarding the right to strike. We have arbitration laws which do not concede any right to strike and we have argued with the Government in that connection. The fact that the Government has evaded this issue so long seems to indicate to us—and to a lot of people outside this Chamber—that the Government's attitude regarding upholding our laws is rather peculiar.

I think the Leader of the Opposition was completely justified in moving this motion and now that the Premier, even though it is at the twelfth hour, has given some indication of his intention, the motion can be regarded as having succeeded, and as a result, the amendment becomes pointless. The simple way would be to agree to the original motion. The Premier could have given us some indication of his intentions last week and the matter could have been cleaned up immediately. I think the Premier could have been a little more frank than he has been, even though he has now given us an outline, in general terms, of what he thinks should be in the amending Bill. I think he might also have outlined to the House any previous approaches he

might have made to the Leader of the Opposition and to the Leader of the Country Party to indicate what his previous intentions may have been because it seems to me that that is necessary to put the matter in order.

If the Premier would prefer to see an amendment made to the Act, obviously he must get the goodwill of the Opposition in order to have the amendment passed because it requires a constitutional majority, and I would be most interested to hear from the Premier what his intentions are. Does he suggest that we set up an all-party committee, or something like that? In that way we would have an amendment which would be generally acceptable. Or, alternatively, does he intend to implement the position as outlined in his amendment?

I think it is a fair thing to ask the Premier to tell us of any previous attempts and approaches he has made and what he envisaged and how he expected to get the support of members on this side of the Chamber for any amendments he might propose to bring forward. I think the Premier could do that in winding up the debate. It is of little consequence now whether the words are struck out or not. But I think the Premier has an opportunity to be a little more open about it. To my mind, there has been a good deal of irrelevant discussion in this debate and I do not wish to transgress. I reiterate that I oppose the striking out of the words for the reason that the purpose of the original motion has now been achieved. The Premier has given us a little more information but, as I said before, he could have done that last week.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville—on amendment) [9.5]: This strong and suddenly developed idea on the part of the Leader of the Opposition to have the law carried out is really amusing.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you think that is ever amusing? That is a silly expression.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will show the hon. member.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It is not at all amusing.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is amusing to me.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: To a responsible Minister, it should not be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member will listen, I will show him why it is amusing.

Mr. Jamieson: He will be laughing, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition includes the words "that Section 12 of the Electoral Districts Act should be carried into effect." That is most desirable, of course.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am glad you think so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course, the Electoral Districts Act should be carried into effect; but not necessarily in its present form.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why not?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is quibbling, is it not?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You cannot carry an Act out in any other form.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It can be amended. If the law as it stands is obviously crying out for amendment, then before any responsible Government puts it into effect it should endeavour to have it amended.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is what many criminals have said, but it did not prevent juries from convicting them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Fancy the hon. member getting out of hand so early!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not like you arguing against the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am very glad the hon. member said that because I have something here which will pin him down very strongly. The Leader of the Opposition said that effect should be given to the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And with which you agree.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: My word! And I agreed with that several years ago when the hon. member did not.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Maybe, but we agree on it now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition, because of his previous attitude—which I will detail shortly—is hardly one to criticise the Government because it has not yet—and there is still time—put into effect the machinery provided under Section 12 of the Electoral Districts Act. I wish to refer to a set of circumstances which occurred here some years ago when the McLarty-Watts Government had a very slender majority.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The one you have today is pretty slender, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, but yours was in no stronger position.

The Premier: Weaker.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The Premier: That Government depended upon a reed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As the Premier says, that Government was in a weaker position.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I know that you have a well disciplined team.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On that occasion, because two members supporting the Government were aspiring to Federal politics they held their seats as long as they could under the requirements of the Constitution and then resigned. One of them, Mr. Grayden, who was the member for Middle Swan at that time, resigned on the 29th October and Mr. Leslie, who was the member for Mt. Marshall, resigned on the 30th October, but the Government of the day took no action to have those seats filled.

Mr. Heal: Who was the Minister responsible for that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The then Attorney General, the member for Mt. Lawley.

Mr. Heal: Not the member for Mt. Lawley!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is generally recognised, under the British Constitution, which we follow very closely, that the most important thing in a democracy is to see that the people are not deprived of representation. That is the very basis of democracy! The people must have a voice and if they are deprived of their member, they lose their voice. The present Opposition, which was then the Government, in order to preserve its own safety, deliberately deprived the electors in those electoral districts of their representation, even though the law required that action should be taken forthwith.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But you would not say that that was correct?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was absolutely correct.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But you would not say that that was the right thing to do?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, it was the wrong thing to do. It was very wrong!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Well, now, don't you follow the same example. Your argument is very weak.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is it? We will see how weak it is as I proceed. Now, the reason why it is laid down in the book of rules which we follow—I refer to "May"—that an election shall be held forthwith, is this—

In order that a representative may be chosen without loss of time by the place that is deprived of its member.

That is the reason why an election should be held quickly. Yet the McLarty-Watts Government took no action for five months and therefore left those two districts, each of which should have had a representative without loss of time, deprived of their members for five months. Why?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Because a general election was near at hand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Because it feared that if a by-election were held, it would lose one or both of those seats and so lose its majority and be forced to relinquish office.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No, because a general election was right at hand and it was to save the country unnecessary expense.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the Leader of the Opposition was not afraid of losing those seats, would he not have held a by-election?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Did we lose the seats?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government of the day lost one of them. When the then Premier, the present Leader of the Opposition, had his attention drawn to this state of affairs, does the House know what he said in order to justify what he was doing? He did not say that he wanted to save expense. All he said was "It does not matter. Nobody is suffering."

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Neither they were. Who was suffering?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Who is suffering now because the Electoral Districts Act is not being put into operation?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The whole country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So the whole country is suffering if we do not redistribute the boundaries now, but if two seats are left without representatives by a Government which would not hold a by-election so as to keep itself in office, then the country does not suffer.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not so. We did not lose any seats.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The then Government, headed by the Leader of the Opposition, lost Middle Swan. That would have put that Government out of office. The Government of the day would not take the risk of holding a by-election. It was not so concerned then about carrying out the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you being actuated by those motives now? Are you afraid of going out of office?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am telling a story in accordance with the facts.

Mr. Manning: That is no reason for evading the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Very weak! The Minister's argument is very weak.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, I know. See how weak it is when I have finished with the hon. member.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Very weak!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So anxious was the previous Government to carry out the law—

The Premier: Especially the member for Mt. Lawley.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. So anxious was it to carry out the law, that it directed a certain question to the Solicitor General.

The Premier: It was a beaut!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There were two vacancies and the Government knew the law. So anxious was the then Attorney General, the present member for Mt. Lawley, to carry out the law that one would have assumed he would have lost no time in trying to find out what he should do to carry that desire into effect.

The Premier: As if he did not know!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The then Attorney General was so anxious to carry out the law that this is the question he directed to the Solicitor General—

An opinion is sought as to whether the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly has any power to delay or withhold his warrant.

Not whether there was any power to carry out of the law, but whether there was any power to avoid carrying out the law. That is what the then Attorney General, the member for Mt. Lawley, wanted to know.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I wanted to know what the law was.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh, no, the hon. member did not. He wanted to know if there was any possibility of avoiding carrying it out.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But I could not avoid it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But we acted within the law. Tell us where we did not!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, the hon. member did not. That is why I query this new-found desire on the part of the Opposition to carry out the law, because when the Leader of the Opposition was on this side of the House, he did not have the same desire.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Well, you tell us the reason why.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will tell it in my own way. I am first of all dealing with the attitude adopted by the then Attorney General. It is not a question of whether he did the right thing or not, but it is a question of adopting the attitude of "Don't do as I do but do as I say." That is the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. He stood up in this House the other night and adopted a righteous attitude and said, "Carry out the law."

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Exactly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But when he was on this side of the House, it was a case of "Do as I suggest."

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is only what you say.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is what I can prove. If the member for Mt. Lawley and the Leader of the Opposition

were so anxious to carry out the law, they would not have asked the Solicitor General to find a loophole in the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I did not. I asked him what was the correct thing to do.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member did not. This is what the then Attorney General asked him. I got this from the file that the then Attorney General, the member for Mt. Lawley, made available to me. This is the question that was directed to the Solicitor General—

An opinion is sought as to whether the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly has any power to delay or withhold the warrant for the issue of writs for a by-election to fill two vacancies because of resignations.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Without disobeying the law.

The Premier: Evading it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is a strange thing that the Speaker did not find that out because he was the one who had to issue the writ.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Probably he did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He did not.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you know?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member found it out for him.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I found it out for myself.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would assume that the Speaker wanted to carry out the law and issue the writ, but the Government of the day said, "You are going to put us into the wilderness if you do that, so we will see if there is a way to avoid doing it" and forthwith the Attorney General of the day asked the Solicitor General to advise him if there was any power to delay or even withhold the warrant.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Within the law.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He did not ask him to evade the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What he should have asked him was, "What steps do we require to immediately obey the law and put it into operation?"

Mr. Manning: That is the question you are asking.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But he did not ask that; he was looking for a way to avoid putting the law into operation, and he found it.

Mr. Hutchinson: It was legal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Solicitor General said—in my opinion quite wrongfully—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He is still advising you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He can be wrong in some things, but not in all. Do not let the hon. member forget that a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse, and that when this question was put to him—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Now, now! You know he cannot be influenced.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is what the Solicitor General said, and I say that on his advice, the hon. member was entitled to take the course he did. The advice given by the Solicitor General was as follows—

It would seem to be the general intention of the section that warrants shall be issued for writs to supply vacancies as soon as they occur.

That is what he said.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Read on.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Hold on, I cannot read it all at once! Let that sink in first.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition wants you to get away from that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Solicitor General's advice was that it would seem to be the general intention of the section that warrants should be issued for writs to supply vacancies as soon as they occurred. That is the general intention of the section.

The Premier. There is no doubt about that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not a shadow of doubt.

The Premier: The member for Mt. Lawley knew that before he put up this question.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is all this a reason for you to evade the law?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition is supplying a lot of reasons for what I am doing. After a lot of verbiage which has no bearing on this argument, the Solicitor General continued—

The Speaker, therefore, in my opinion, has discretion to delay or withhold his warrant if he is satisfied that he is acting as the House would wish him to act.

In other words, if he is doing what the Government wants him to do.

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

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is that, because the Government of the day—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We are not entirely subordinate to the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —has a majority in the House; it would not continue to be the Government if it did not have a majority.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Members can cross the floor of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They would not cross the floor on that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Our supporters would not stand any trickery.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition never tested it; he assumed what the opinion of the House would be and never tested it. That is my complaint. The Speaker had to be satisfied that he was acting as the House would wish him to act. How can he find that out without an expression of opinion from the House? Accordingly he interprets it that he must act as the Government wishes him to act. Because the Government wanted to save its skin, it communicated that idea to the Speaker who did not carry out the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is assumption.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not at all; it is actual fact.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you know that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Because the hon. member wanted the Government to hang on.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you know?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You were just as anxious to get us out as we were to hang on.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That has nothing to do with the issue. The issue is the obeying of the law. When the Leader of the Opposition was on this side of the House and it was a question of obeying the law, he said it did not matter and that nobody was hurt.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We obeyed the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member did not obey the law at all. That is what the Leader of the Opposition said at the time when he was told that he should have this by-election, because he was not carrying out the intention of the Constitution and was depriving people of representation. He said it did not matter; nobody was being hurt. He did not want to carry out the law then because it did not suit him. But now it suits him to have it carried out.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It might; I do not know.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know it is a bit of a gamble.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I am glad you admit that; it puts a different construction on it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But the Leader of the Opposition must realise that criticism is much stronger if it comes from a person who, when he has

the opportunity himself, does what he is asking somebody else to do. That is not the position of the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Mt. Lawley.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We only believe that you should carry out the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Why did not the hon. member do so when he had the chance.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member did not; he asked for a reason to evade the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are not game enough to get the Solicitor General's opinion on this.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We do not want it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course you do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But there is nothing in this Act which says it has to be carried out on the 2nd September.

The Premier: Nothing even about "forth-with."

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It says "a reasonable time."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will be the judges as to what is a reasonable time, and we are better judges of that than members opposite.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course, you have the last say.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You will carry out the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We always do, but members opposite do not. We believe in carrying out the law, but members opposite only believe in doing so when they are over there.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Oh no; that is not fair.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh yes, it is. The proof is here. The hon. member had his chance, and instead of looking for a way in which he could carry out the law, he asked for reasons to enable him to evade it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He acted entirely on the advice of the Crown Law Department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That advice was that "it would seem to be the general intention of the section that warrants should be issued for writs to supply vacancies as soon as they occur—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: After which is added the word "but" and something else follows.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —but if the Speaker thinks it is the wish of the House—or "Government" in parenthesis—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He did not mention the word "Government."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I did. It is the same thing.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I disagree with you. There is a difference between our discipline and yours.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If there is a difference between the discipline of the Opposition and ours, it is to our credit.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Perhaps it is.

Mr. Jamieson: What happened to the member for Nedlands? There is a difference in discipline.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Having, I think, very plainly established that members opposite are only keen to have the law carried into effect when they are in office, I shall deal with some of the arguments in relation to the Electoral Districts Act. The member for Maylands made a rather remarkable statement regarding the persons who were set up as a commission. He said it was left to the commission to determine which shall be the metropolitan seats, the country seats and the North-West seats. Of course, it was nothing of the sort. The method of determination was defined in the Act, so the member for Maylands did not know what he was talking about.

The Premier: No comment!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So that argument completely falls to the ground because the Second Schedule of the Act sets out which shall be the metropolitan seats, and which shall be the country, mining, goldfields and North-West seats. So the matter was handed over to the commission, together with a formula upon which it was to work. It was given directions as to how the quota should be arrived at and how that quota was to be applied in order to determine the number of seats in the metropolitan, country, goldfields and North-West areas.

It is therefore foolish to attempt to argue that all this was left to the commission to decide, and we should not now alter it. Members on this side of the House disagree with the basic formula on which seats are determined. We think it is unfair to people living in country districts. We believe that it cannot be satisfactorily supported to determine that a person who lives in Kenwick should have greater voting power, or should have a greater proportion of representation, than a person living in the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you think that the metropolitan area as defined should be pegged with the number of seats it should have?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I prefer to put it another way. I think that electors living in country areas where there is a low density of population and large area



to be covered by a representative, are entitled to a greater proportion of representation than people living in the metropolitan area who live closer together.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is provided for under the existing Act.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, but I do not want to take seats from the country and give them to the metropolitan area, because the electorates in the metropolitan area are comparatively small. The large increase in population in the metropolitan area which has brought additional work and problems, cannot be compared with the country districts where there is a small increase in population and development. My complaint is that a person who lives in Kenwick should be in exactly the same position as a person living in Melville but, under the Act, the former is supposed to be living in the country because he is in the electorate of Dale.

Mr. Manning: That will always happen, wherever a line is drawn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That will not always happen because the formula can be altered to correct such a situation. It is possible to run out to Kenwick in a few minutes. The residents have all the amenities of the metropolitan area. It is a short ride into town, yet the basis of representation for Kenwick is the same as for Sussex or Wiluna. Where is the justification for that? The present Government believes that before the boundaries are altered again, such a situation ought to be corrected, in the interests not only of the Government, but of the State as a whole so that there will be proper representation. That is why up to the present, no steps have been taken to put the machinery in operation under this Act.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: So you are going to try to amend the law?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: If you fail to amend the law, will you carry it out?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then the law, as it stands, will be carried out.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will there be a redistribution before the next general elections?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly.

Mr. Hutchinson: That would be impossible within the time available.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member says it is impossible, but the Government will do it. So this Government is capable of doing something impossible; therefore, it should be returned to office.

Mr. Hutchinson: You always do the impossible?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will always do it.

Hon. C. F. J. North: You were telling us about the two seats in the metropolitan area. Will you restore them?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There will always be a Claremont.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government's attitude is quite clear and, in my opinion, quite sound. It believes that the existing law requires amendment in the interests of proper representation of the people in the State. It desires to correct the situation and will attempt to do so.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It is finding great difficulty in making up its mind what to do.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh, no!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Taking just about 12 months.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member ought to talk about taking 12 months. If ever there was a Government in Western Australia which could not make up its mind, it was the McLarty-Watts Government.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We expected you to say that. It was the best Government the State had.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Self praise is no recommendation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Look at its record.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have made up our minds.

The Premier: How does the Leader of the Opposition spell the first syllable of "record"?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government has made up its mind.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you frightened to disclose it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We on this side are frightened of nothing.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why do you not carry out the provisions of the Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will please ourselves. We are in a position to determine the time.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have the numbers and can do what you like. Justice does not matter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh, no! That is what Opposition members thought when they were on this side of the House. They said then, "What does it matter? Nobody is suffering". Members opposite are still thinking along the same lines. We will observe the law.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Under the Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is nothing in this Act which says the provisions should be put into operation before the 2nd September.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It says they must be put into operation within a reasonable time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are the best judges of what is a reasonable time.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Oh no, you are not!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, we are.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Oh no, you are not!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, we are, and a reasonable time depends on the circumstances.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You think 12 months is a reasonable time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In some circumstances, 12 months would be unreasonable; under other circumstances, two years would be reasonable. It depends entirely on the circumstances.

Mr. Hutchinson: It depends on your point of view.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: If you were sitting on this side of the House, you would not say 12 months was reasonable.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is the middle of the present session of Parliament. There is plenty of time if the law is amended during this session to put it into operation before the next general elections. The Leader of the Opposition knows that full well.

Mr. Court: Are you in a position to indicate the formula you have in mind for grading these zones?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not the practice of Governments to tell beforehand what is to be contained in their Bills. When the measure is brought down, the hon. member will know what it contains, the same as everybody else.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: When is the Bill to be brought down? Or don't you know?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not here in a quiz session, and I have no intention of answering questions on those lines. Let the hon. member be patient.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He will have to be, won't he?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; he will. I make two points in connection with this matter. The first is that the attitude of the Opposition is quite different now from what it was when the Opposition had the responsibility of carrying out the intention of the legislature. The second point is that this Government has not done anything at all yet which can be taken as an indication that it is not observing the law. There is ample time in which to put this law into operation, to give effect to it. In the meantime the Government is perfectly justified, if it thinks that the

basis of representation should be altered, in making an attempt to effect that alteration. I hope the House will agree to the deletion of the words which the Premier desires to strike out, in order that we shall get an expression of opinion from this House that steps should be taken to amend the law.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.42 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Thursday, September 2nd, 1954.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### HOUSING.

(a) *As to Number and Locality of Commission's Blocks.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many vacant blocks of land are owned by the State Housing Commission in the metropolitan area?

(2) In what districts are they located and how many are there in each?