

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 13th November, 1951.

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of attendance than I have. During the five years that I have been a member, I have missed two sittings. I understand no other member has a similar record of attendance. On Thursday, the 6th November, I accepted the invitation of the Dalwallinu Agricultural Society to open its annual show.

On four previous occasions I had refused a similar honour because of Parliamentary duties, but this time arrangements were made to allow me to open the show sufficiently early to enable me to return the 168 miles to Perth in time to take my seat in the House at 7.30 p.m., on the resumption after the tea suspension. However, on returning to the city I found that the House had risen before the tea suspension. On Thursday, the 27th September, I was kept in bed by order of my doctor.

These are the only two occasions during the past five years, from the commencement of the sittings of the House in 1947, when I have been absent and, further, I know of no member on either side of the House who is in his place during sitting hours more than I am, and yet we find the member for Warren interjecting—referring to myself—during the speech by the member for South Fremantle, "He is never here." This appears at page 329, and shortly after the member for Collie interjecting, referring to me, said, "He is in bed by now." This appears on page 333. As it happens, Mr. Speaker, I have not left the House on any sitting night until the House has risen.

I have no doubt that neither remark was passed with deliberate intent to harm me. I happened to be out of the House, relaxing, after having addressed the House on the Estimates for nearly an hour, but returned again soon after the last interjection was made, but the reader of "Hansard," unaware of records of attendances of members, would be quite justified in believing I was most neglectful of my duties as member for Moore.

With reference to the members for Warren and Collie, the fact that they are held in high repute by members on both sides of the House, and the knowledge that they have a reasonable sense of responsibility, makes the interjections even more harmful than perhaps they would have been if made from other sources. Mr. Speaker, I have taken this opportunity to refute the statements referred to, and I believe all members of this Chamber will recognise that they are without foundation and could not be otherwise than harmful to me.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I move—

That the apology of the member for Moore be accepted without any qualification.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Ackland and Effect of Interjections.

Mr. ACKLAND: I rise on a matter of personal explanation. This is in reference to interjections made in the House during the evening sitting of Thursday, the 25th October. I wish to object most emphatically to statements made by two members of this Chamber during a speech on the Estimates by the member for South Fremantle. Both statements were without a shred of justification, or foundation of truth and, even if they were said in jest, both remarks appear in "Hansard" No. 3 of the third session of this Parliament.

An outsider reading "Hansard," and not knowing that both statements were wholly untrue could not think otherwise than that I was unmindful of my Parliamentary duties. I claim that there is no member of this House with a better record

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I say the statement made by the member for Moore, that there is no member in the House with as good a record as his in the last five years, is not true. If he took the trouble to look up the records before making these statements he would find that there are others with better attendances.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: More effective anyway.

QUESTIONS.

EDUCATION.

As to High School for Midland Junction.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has he considered the claim of Midland Junction as being the location for the next high school as against Narrogin?

(2) Is it not a fact that the Education Department has recognised Midland Junction and districts' claims for a high school as being long overdue?

(3) Is he aware that, as far back as 1946, a previous Minister for Education promised the electorate of Midland Junction and surrounding electorates that the next high school would be built in Midland Junction?

(4) Is he aware that every school—State and private—in the Midland-Guildford electorate is full to capacity and various private halls are hired for school purposes?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The claims of Midland Junction have received consideration.

(2) High school facilities are available at Midland Junction, although it is recognised that better facilities are desirable as they are in other places, both metropolitan and rural.

(3) I am advised that there is nothing on the file to indicate that any such promise was given.

(4) Yes, and, in consequence of recent unprecedented increases in population, this is the case in approximately 80 other centres where such premises are in use.

STOCK FEED.

(a) As to Attendance at Deputation of Member for Canning.

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

In "The West Australian" on Saturday, the 10th November, 1951, under the heading of "Cabinet to Discuss Wheat on Tuesday", there appeared the following:—

The Premier (Mr. McLarty) told a deputation from the Farmers' Union yesterday that the future price of

wheat for stock-feed would be discussed at a meeting of the Cabinet on Tuesday. The Press was not admitted to the deputation, which was led by Mr. J. H. Ackland, M.L.A., of the Country Party. He is the representative of the biggest wheat-growing electorate in the State. The Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Wood) was with Mr. McLarty, and Mr. A. F. Griffith, the Liberal and Country League member for Canning, which contains a number of poultry-men and pig-raisers, was present as an observer.

Was the member for Canning in the spider's parlour voluntarily or by command of the keeper of the parlour?

The PREMIER replied:

I did receive this deputation from the Farmers' Union and the member for Canning was there. Apparently he arranged to accompany the deputation. He certainly did not ask me if he could attend, but he represents a considerable number of poultry-farmers and pig-breeders. He wanted to gain first-hand information as to the proposals in the Government's mind in regard to any legislation which may be introduced.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He must have been invited by the member for Moore.

The PREMIER: I do not know who invited him, but he was there.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He should get up and make an explanation in the House such as we heard this afternoon.

The PREMIER: I had no objection to the hon. member's being present.

(b) As to Shortage of Wheat and Mill Offal.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware that there has occurred an almost complete cessation of sales of wheat and mill offal in Western Australia with the result that poultry-farmers and other stock-feeders are in a parlous plight?

(2) Does he consider it to be in any way fair and reasonable that in a wheatgrowing State such as ours stock should be threatened with starvation because wheat is not being made available?

(3) Will he take immediate action to remedy the serious position?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, the matter has been brought under my notice by members of this Assembly and also by producers.

(2) The Government is co-operating with the Commonwealth Government with a view to relieving the position. We are doing everything possible to give the producers some relief in this matter.

(3) Answered by (1) and (2).

(c) As to Attendance at Deputation of Member for Mt. Marshall.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE (without notice) asked the member for Mt. Marshall:

Was he invited to accompany a deputation representing the Farmers' Union to the Premier?

Mr. CORNELL replied: Yes, but not by the Premier.

RENT LEGISLATION.

As to Introduction.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

As no notice was given in the House this afternoon of the intention of the Government to introduce a rent Bill, does the Chief Secretary still intend to introduce a Bill this week as he said last week he would do?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

As members may imagine, the Bill has not proved to be of quick and easy drafting.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is obvious to me, if not to the hon. member, but I have been informed by the Attorney General that I should be able to ask for leave to introduce the Bill tomorrow, and that is as far as I can go at the moment.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. May, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Needham (North Perth) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—EASTERN GOLDFIELDS TRANSPORT BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 8th November.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [4.45]: In supporting this measure I do not propose to delay the business of the House for any length of time, and I do not anticipate any difficulty in having this Bill passed. It is essentially one that concerns the Eastern Goldfields and, in view of its contents, I feel sure that every member representing that area will speak in favour of it.

Until 1946 the local transport system of the Eastern Goldfields was conducted by the Kalgoorlie Electric Tramway Company, which had the right to lay tram tracks and operate the system for a certain number of years with the usual proviso that at the expiration of that time the assets of the company, and the service, should revert to the local authority. However, when that period expired it was decided to grant an extension so that the company could continue its operations. At the end of the extended period the system was handed over to the local

authorities, but by that time the tracks and the vehicles had deteriorated to such an extent that the assets were considerably reduced in value.

In 1946 the Eastern Goldfields Transport Board Act was passed and this resulted in the setting up of a board consisting of a chairman appointed by the Governor, and six other representatives, three of whom had to be elected by the representative ratepayers of the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Municipal Councils and the Kalgoorlie Road Board. That board has operated the system since that time. During the last 12 months the track has deteriorated so rapidly that it is considered dangerous for the operation of trams. Frequent derailments have occurred and in some instances injury has been caused to passengers. Because of the deterioration of the track most of the minor tributaries to the main system have been closed down and those systems are operating with motor buses. On the main track between Kalgoorlie and Boulder the service is being conducted with both trams and motor buses.

The financial position of the board is not healthy and it is having difficulty in carrying on despite the fact that fares have been raised to such an extent that people are being discouraged from using the system. The position became so bad that recently the representatives of the board and the local authorities sent a deputation to Perth to interview the Minister for Transport in an endeavour to get some assistance to enable the board to carry on with the local system, even if it meant reducing the service. The local authorities and the Government came to an arrangement which is most satisfactory to the local authorities and generous on the part of the Government. They are now hopeful of being able to carry on with the local system. Under the Eastern Goldfields Transport Board Act provision is made that the local authorities shall participate in any profits made. Unfortunately those profits did not materialise and no provision is made for apportioning any losses which may accrue.

One of the clauses of the agreement between the Government and the Eastern Goldfields Transport Board is that the Government shall pay half of any loss that may take place, and that the local authorities shall pay the other half. The Bill is for the sole purpose of giving authority to the three local governing bodies to enable them to pay out of their funds the losses which may occur as far as the running of the service is concerned. That is practically the whole intention of the Bill and one that I think nobody can cavil at. I intend to support the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

**BILL—TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT
AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

**BILL—LAW REFORM (COMMON
EMPLOYMENT).**

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Yates in the Chair: the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—

Clause 3—Delete all words contained in the clause and substitute the following words:—"It shall not be a defence to an employer who is sued in respect of personal injuries caused by the negligence of a person employed by him, that that person was at the time the injuries were caused in common employment with the person injured."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was pointed out by Mr. Parker in another place that the intention aimed at was not realised in the proposed amendment as originally drafted by the Crown Law Department. With that contention the Crown Law Department, in consultation with me, agreed. On the other hand, it did not agree with the amendment proposed by Mr. Parker and, after a consultation with the Solicitor General, a further amendment has been placed on the notice paper. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all the words after the word "words" in line 2 and inserting the following in lieu:—

3. (1) It shall not be a defence to an employer who is sued in respect of any injury or damage caused by the wrongful act, neglect, or default of a person employed by him, that that person was at the time the injury or damage was caused in common employment with the person suffering that injury or damage.

(2) Any provision contained in a contract of service or apprenticeship, or in an agreement collateral thereto (including a contract or agreement entered into before the commencement of this Act), shall be void in so far as it would have the effect of excluding or limiting any liability of the employer in respect of personal injuries caused to the person employed

or apprenticed by the wrongful act, neglect, or default of any persons in common employment with him.

(3) This Act shall bind the Crown and instrumentalities of the Crown.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I take it for granted that the Attorney General has given us all the information he thinks we need on this matter.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I could have discussed it further, but I thought perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would have read carefully the amendment on the notice paper and that it would not be necessary for me to address the Committee at any length. In the circumstances, perhaps it would be advisable that I should do so.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Very advisable.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In the amendment suggested by the Legislative Council, which I am moving to amend, there is no provision for a claim for damage suffered by an employee insofar as it relates to his personal property. Insofar as it relates to himself he would have been protected by this amendment, and the doctrine of common employment would not have disturbed his position. But it did not apply to, say, his clothes or some article that belonged to him, because it was not particularly included in the amendment which dealt with personal injuries only. It did not deal with any damage suffered by him. In my proposed amendment, I have included the words "in respect of any injury or damage," and he would then be protected for any wrong suffered by him for which he would have a claim at common law but for the doctrine of common employment.

The proposed Subclause (2) is designed to prevent contracting out of this provision. A man might be employed by an air service that established an insurance fund to which the employer contributed with or without contributions by the employee. If, under the contract of employment, it was stipulated that in view of the fact that the employer was contributing to the insurance fund the man abrogated his claim, that undertaking would be void. The third subclause stipulates that the measure shall bind the Crown and instrumentalities of the Crown.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Attorney General has clearly explained the difference between the two amendments, but he has not explained the considerable difference between the Council's amendment and the provision in the Bill. The Bill contained the words "by reason of the negligence of his master," which, of course, means his employer.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is not the word used in these days.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: In the event of either of the amendments being accepted those words would be omitted, and yet there must have been a very good reason for their inclusion by the draftsman in the first place. The effect would be that the employee would be deprived of necessary protection if he suffered injury or damage as a result of the negligence of his employer. Does the Attorney General consider that those words are no longer of any importance? Is it not necessary for the employee to have this protection against the negligence of his master as well as against the negligence of his fellow-employees? Members should require assurances on this point before they approve of the Attorney General's amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: When the amendment was carried in another place, I consulted the Solicitor General, who said that the amendment did not give effect to that portion of my amendment covered by the proposed Sub-clause (2); in other words, it did not prevent an employee from contracting out of his rights. In the opinion of the Solicitor General, the Bill did not make that point clear. My proposal is based on the English Act, and has been carefully amended by a measure now before or recently passed by the Queensland Parliament. I doubt whether the English Act included more than personal injury whereas the Queensland measure included also the word "damage".

For this reason the language of the English Act as amended by the Queensland provision was adopted by the Solicitor General when drafting the amendment now under consideration. Nothing will be lost by omitting the words mentioned because they are not necessary. What we are trying to do is to abolish the principle of common employment.

Regarding the proposed Subclause (2), there was an English case where an air pilot had contracted out of the provisions of the Act for the consideration that his dependants were to receive under an insurance fund. It was held that the contract was void and that the dependants were entitled to claim even greater damage. This was not specifically set out in the Bill as originally drafted, but, in view of the English case, I thought that Subclause (2) should be included.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I do not feel assured by the Attorney General's statement. He did not touch at all upon the question why the words "by reason of the negligence of his master" included in the original draft of the Bill should not be retained. As the Bill is printed, a servant who suffered any personal injury or damage to his property in the course of his employment, would be pro-

tected in the event of such injury or damage being inflicted by any fellow employee or by the employer. The Attorney General's amendment would wipe out of the Bill all reference to any personal injury or damage to the servant or his property inflicted by reason of the negligence of the master or employer. There is no reference in the amendment to the ground covered in the Bill itself, where the employee is given protection not only against his fellow employees, but also against the master or the employer.

The Attorney General: He was always liable for the negligence of the master.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Who was?

The Attorney General: I mean the employee always had a claim on account of the negligence of the master.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Yes; but according to the measure as originally introduced, the master always had a very sure defence against such a claim inasmuch as he could take as his defence the common law doctrine of common employment.

The Attorney General: That is so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Bill proposed to take away that automatic defence.

The Attorney General: This does too.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It is no good the Attorney General shaking a bundle of papers at me and saying, "This does too." If he means that his own amendment does what the Bill proposed to do in that respect, I disagree with him. The amendment of the Legislative Council and that of the Attorney General propose to delete from the Bill altogether the reference which would make the master responsible to his servant for negligence.

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It is no good the Attorney General shaking his head, because those words are in the Bill.

The Attorney General: I know; but the amendment uses effectual language. The intention is more clearly expressed in the amendment than in the Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think we might arrive at a quicker decision on this matter if I were to ask the Attorney General whether there was a good and sufficient reason for the inclusion in the original Bill of the words, "by reason of the negligence of his master." Those are the words which the Legislative Council's amendment and the Attorney General's amendment would completely wipe out of the Bill.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is another aspect of this amendment by the Council to which the Minister proposes a further amendment. I agree with my leader that there must have been some real justification for the introduction of the Bill as it was worded, because an important measure of this sort would not be inspired by

impulse or imagination. The first four lines of Clause 3 of the Bill read as follows:—

The Common Law doctrine of Common Employment and any doctrine of the common law based on the assumption that the servant accepts the risks of employment are hereby abrogated

If that is taken out of the Bill, it means that the servant is under obligation to accept the responsibilities of employment or injury therein. I want the Minister to give a full explanation of what those words mean. It appears to me that the employer will escape any liability, even though he may be ever so negligent; and, if the employee is injured, he will have to prove conclusively that he did not take a risk.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The object of the Bill was to abolish the common law doctrine of common employment. I am not going to argue on the merits of the drafting of the Bill or the amendment on a personal basis, because at all times in this matter I have been acting on the advice of the Solicitor General. When the amendment was moved in another place, I did not approve of it and had it considered by the Solicitor General. If the Leader of the Opposition would like me to report progress for the purpose of his considering the opinion I have received from the Solicitor General, I shall be prepared to do so. It is a little difficult to argue a highly technical matter in Committee. I have here the opinion given to me by the Solicitor General and it is of some length.

Mr. Marshall: The Solicitor General can make a mistake.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I agree. If the Leader of the Opposition would like me to read the opinion I will do so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: No. I think we should report progress, because it appears to me that the Solicitor General has lost sight altogether of the fact that the Legislative Council's amendment and the Attorney General's amendment would delete from the Bill the words to which I have made reference. My anxiety is to know whether those words should not be left in the Bill; and to enable the Attorney General to have something concrete to discuss with the Solicitor General, I move—

That the amendment on amendment be amended by inserting after the word "of" in line 4 of Subclause (1) the words "the employer or".

That would put into the Attorney General's amendment the reference to the employer which appeared in the printed Bill, and the Attorney General and the Solicitor General would then have before them in my amendment the vital

part of the Bill which I think should receive close consideration before a final decision is made.

Progress reported.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPER-ANNUATION AND PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th November.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [5.28]: This Bill provides for increased payments to certain classes of ex-Government employees. Three separate classes are involved. The first consists of those who receive superannuation rights under the 1871 Act; the second consists of those covered by the 1938 Act; and the third consists of those covered by the Act which was passed in 1948. As the Treasurer told the House, when explaining the provisions of this measure, the pension payments made by this State have increased by £420,000 in 10 years and will increase by a further £100,000 per annum in the event of the present Bill becoming law. There can be no argument against the proposed increased payments provided under the Bill.

With the rise in prices that has taken place since 1939, and which has intensified considerably since the end of 1946, those persons drawing the pensions with which the Bill deals have suffered a great deal of financial loss because each year the pension moneys paid to them have lost a considerable percentage of their purchasing value, thus inflicting worry and suffering on the pensioners concerned and particularly those receiving the lower payments.

I would like to know from the Treasurer whether he and other members of the Government have given consideration to the advisability of introducing, in connection with pension payments, an adjustment system having automatic relationship to the changes in the cost of living. It is hardly enough that Parliament, every year, or every second year, should decide that, pension payments having lost a further proportion of their monetary value owing to the increased cost of living, a Bill should be passed to increase the pension rates payable. It would be much more satisfactory to the pensioners concerned—at least in a time of rising prices—if provision were made for automatic adjustment of pension rates, scientifically based on alterations in the cost of living.

As members know, such a system operates in respect of the basic wage, where there is an automatic adjustment at the end of each quarter. If that system had been operating in regard to these pensions over the last four or five years the recipients would have been entitled to, and would have received, much more than they have in fact received under

the system, adopted by the Government, of bringing down legislation annually, or every two years, to raise the then existing rates of pensions.

It could, of course, be argued that two of the classes of pensioners with which we are dealing receive their payments entirely from the State; in other words, none of the persons in those two classes has made any financial contribution towards the pension now being received; and in regard to those two classes the Treasurer might argue that they would not be entitled to an adjustment such as I have suggested. That argument, if put forward, would not be wholly tenable, because if the rates originally decided upon for those non-contributory pensions were fair and just at that time, in terms of money, it would only be fair and just to preserve, in the terms of purchasing power, the rates of pension originally granted.

I come now to those pensioners covered by the 1938 Act, all of whom made some contribution towards their own pensions. It is true that a number of the more fortunate Government employees, who were able to retire soon after that Act came into operation, made very small contributions in comparison with the payments they have already received—if they are still living—and compared with the additional payments that they will draw in the future and for so long as they continue to live.

It seems to me that in the case of the person coming under the contributory scheme there could be a very solid obligation upon the Government and Parliament to ensure that the monetary value of the pension being drawn should be kept, as nearly as possible, up to the standard upon which the pension payments were based when the 1938 Act was passed and when it came into operation at the beginning of 1939. That appears to me to be a most important point.

I can hardly believe that the Treasurer and the Government have not given serious consideration to that phase of the matter. I and other members would therefore appreciate it if the Treasurer, when replying to the debate, could make available to the House the point of view of the Government in this regard. I know that an automatic adjustment such as I have envisaged could be a double-edged weapon and that if the cost of living started to come down next year—

Mr. W. Hegney: That is not likely.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:—and such an adjustment were in operation, pensioners coming under it would be the losers, as compared with what their position would have been had we allowed the prevailing system to continue.

I know it is not possible for me, as a private member, to move to have included in the measure provision for automatic adjustment in relation to the cost of living, but if the Treasurer can put before

the House any sound reason why such a principle should not be included in the Bill he may be able to convince members that the Government acted wisely in omitting such a provision from the legislation. If the Treasurer, however, has no good argument to justify the omission of this principle from the measure I think all members should, when the Bill is in Committee, press the Government to include machinery for such an automatic adjustment. I support the second reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray—in reply) [5.40]: The main point raised by the Leader of the Opposition was that there should be included in the Bill provision for an automatic adjustment of pensions in relation to the cost of living, just as is done in the case of the basic wage. The Government has already given consideration to that suggestion.

When introducing the measure I said that the Public Service Commissioner had examined the superannuation schemes in other States of the Commonwealth, and particularly those in operation in what are termed the claimant States, South Australia and Tasmania. I also informed members that, by means of this Bill, we were making a more generous provision than that made by either South Australia or Tasmania. As a claimant State we are, of course, subject to the Grants Commission, which takes into consideration our expenditure as compared with that of the standard or non-claimant States.

I know the principle of automatic adjustment of the basic wage is accepted throughout the Commonwealth and works fairly satisfactorily, but from our point of view, it would, if applied to pension payments, involve the State in heavy expenditure. We would be accepting a principle that none of the other States has accepted in regard to the payment of pensions. I know it could easily be said that this is an opportunity for us to set an example, but it is not as easy as all that. We can and probably would be penalised if we offered a more generous pension scheme than did any of the other States.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Even if it were fair and just?

The PREMIER: We are trying to be fair and just by making the increases that we have included in the Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Yes, but the increase loses part of its value within the three months.

The PREMIER: That is so, under present-day conditions, but I point out that this is the second adjustment that has been made since I have been Premier, and we have endeavoured to arrive at a percentage increase that would, in our opinion, be reasonably fair. If we find that pensions are lagging behind costs I sup-

pose we will again be faced with a similar proposal to increase pensions. As members know, the Government has to bear the whole of this added cost which will amount to £102,000 per year, making our pension bill, with this extra £102,000, £653,656 per annum. That is a fairly heavy bill for a State such as Western Australia to have to foot.

At this stage I cannot say what basic wage adjustments, if applied to pensions, might involve us in, but I repeat that it might put us into a difficult position so far as the Grants Commission is concerned. If we are to accept the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition I much doubt whether it could be carried out unless we conferred with the other two claimant States to see whether we could arrive at a satisfactory basis in regard to these adjustments, but I understand the pensions in the non-claimant States are not subjected to variations in the cost of living.

If the Leader of the Opposition wishes, I would be prepared to let the second reading go through tonight and have a look at his proposition tomorrow and, when we reach the Committee stage at some future date, I could supply any information which I was able to obtain; but I will tell him now that I am not at all hopeful that his suggestion can be accepted in present circumstances.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1951-52.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 1st November on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £4,955:

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [5.48]: I take this opportunity of the debate on the Estimates to bring before the Committee several matters, one of which I feel will be of great interest to members and will also be of considerable importance to the population of Western Australia. I refer to the necessity for international air services to be routed through Perth instead of Darwin or, alternatively, to Perth being made the first airport of entry into Australia. Recently a number of news reports on the Guildford airport, which is to attain the stature of an international airport, have been of interest to the public of the State. However, the tenor of these reports, with one or two exceptions to which I will refer later, has been to give prominence to the fact that Guildford will merely become an international airport.

Prominence, too, was given to the fact that the Commonwealth Government has made an allocation of approximately £50,000 to equip Guildford as an inter-

national airport. In passing, the Commonwealth Government, in an endeavour to economise at our expense, has neglected to provide for several matters, one of which is the construction at Guildford airport of a canteen or refreshment room which is regarded as an essential at any other airport that one can think of.

Mr. Marshall: Most of the others have through-traffic, whereas Guildford is a terminal airport.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: No, it is not a terminal. It is the first airport of entry of the air service coming through South Africa.

Mr. Marshall: I agree with you on that score.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: The reduction in the amount allocated may be dictated by Commonwealth policy, but I cannot help but feel that this general Eastern States policy on Western Australian affairs conforms to the usual line that it has always taken, which is to the effect, "That is good enough for Perth; that unimportant little place over there", and I consider we should protest strongly against that attitude.

I have allowed myself to become a little side-tracked and I will therefore return to my original point. I say emphatically that we should not be content with Guildford becoming (a) an international airport; or, (b) that we should not be content with the £50,000 allocated to build Guildford into an international airport with proper facilities; or, (c) that we should not be content that one international air service is to operate through Perth which links only two outposts of the British Commonwealth.

What we must ensure is that the United Kingdom and European air traffic is routed through Perth as the first airport of entry into Australia. This should be done for a variety of reasons which I will mention later but, among others, Perth should assume its rightful place in the international air map so that it may grow among other airports of the world. Let members consider the possibility of Fremantle, our principal sea-port, being by-passed because of certain Eastern States' interests or because some other port is considered to be of greater importance than our own.

One can imagine what our general feeling would be if our seaport were by-passed and our European trade taken from our principal port, and yet, in effect, that is what is happening with our air routes. Guildford is being by-passed by the air routes of the world, and it is my firm conviction that we must do all in our power to prevent that and do everything possible to ensure that we are placed on the international air map, and that the United Kingdom and European air services come through our city.

I will hark back a little in order to bring members a little abreast of events. The Guildford airport will become an in-

ternational airport next year following on the opening of the international air service, the route for which is shown on the map in the Chamber at which the member for Murchison is now looking. If members will direct their attention to the map it will be seen that Perth will be the first port of entry into Australia on the route from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Mauritius, Cocos Island and then on to Perth. It will be remembered that at present Cocos Island is being prepared as the stepping-stone in the air route between South Africa and Australia.

I agree with those who say that this is a most important step forward for Perth and, in passing, I pay tribute to all those men who have made this international air service possible. I consider that there has been a most meritorious job well done. However, the importance of this air port is entirely overshadowed by the importance, the necessity and the need for having Perth as the first port of entry for the United Kingdom and European air traffic. At this stage I will read extracts from two news reports which I consider will be of interest and which touch closely on the subject in hand. The first is taken from the "Daily News" of Friday, the 2nd November, 1951. It reads as follows:—

Now All is Clear for Guildford Airport.

Funds have been approved by Federal Cabinet for the construction of an international airport terminal at Guildford airport, a West Australian region spokesman for the Department of Civil Aviation said today.

This is the last move necessary before the Department of Works and Housing can begin the job. The airport terminal is necessary to handle the South African air service traffic and the believed—

Members note this, please!

—imminent beginning of U.K. air traffic.

I say unequivocally that there will be no beginning of the air traffic from the United Kingdom to be routed through our fair city if we do not press for it, and if we do not make the strongest representations to the Commonwealth Parliament. There is another report which was published in "The West Australian" which will prove of great interest in this debate because it summarises practically what I will have to say. This is a sub-leader under date of Saturday, the 3rd November, and it reads—

The facilities to be provided at the Guildford airport to equip it as a terminal for the new air service between Australia and South Africa (projected for next March) could be put with advantage to greater use. It was announced yesterday by the Regional Director of Civil Aviation (Mr. Ross) that the Commonwealth Government had approved of expenditure in excess of £50,000 at Guildford to meet the requirements of an international

airport, including the construction of a main terminal building with accommodation for customs, health and immigration services as well as airlines. Despite some economies compared with the original estimates, that is a very substantial sum to spend on facilities for what is expected to be a fortnightly service between Australia and South Africa.

But it has already been indicated in principle that it is only a matter of time before the existing trunk air service between Australia and Britain will be routed through Guildford instead of Darwin.

Whether or not that comes about is largely for this Chamber and the Premier himself to determine. The article goes on to state—

The airline distance from Singapore to Perth is not much longer than the distance from Singapore to Darwin—

On that point, more anon.

—and, in these uncertain times, the possibility of having to resort to an alternative route to Britain (for which Guildford would be most convenient) should be given attention. Now that the Guildford airport is being raised to international status, the Western Australian Government could usefully make representations in Canberra to speed up the diversion of the Australian-British service through Perth in view of the many local advantages which would thus be obtained.

Before the war, there was no alternative to Darwin for aircraft entering Australia from the United Kingdom or Europe. That was so because aeroplanes at that time did not carry sufficient fuel to enable them to make flights of any distance much in excess of 600 or 700 miles. A study of the air routes prior to the war would show that at no stage were their flights much in excess of 500 miles on the air route from England to Australia. The journey took about a week to complete, and sometimes eight or nine days.

Modern aircraft can now fly in stages of about 2,000 miles. I quote that distance because it is a very conservative estimate. The time of flight from Australia to England has been halved, and thus at this stage I can point out that the original need for aircraft entering Australia through Darwin has ceased. With the greatly extended flying range of modern aircraft, the necessity to enter Australia via that port no longer obtains. Apart from the distances involved, there are other relevant factors that I will mention, and these show that we would be well advised to see that the new airport of entry to Australia is Perth.

I desire to draw the attention of members to the chart hanging on the wall of the Chamber in order that I may point out the position regarding the distances in-

volved. From Singapore to Darwin—I leave out Batavia, or Djakarta as the city is now called, because it is common to both routes—and from Singapore to Perth, the distance is practically the same. Actually, it is about 150 miles further to Perth than to Darwin. On the other hand, the distance from Darwin to Sydney and from Perth to Sydney is practically the same, and the overall distance of flight is almost identical. Therefore, there is no advantage, from the standpoint of distance, in entering Australia via Darwin.

Mr. Marshall: Do not you think the extra distance of flight is responsible for making Darwin the port of entry?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: No. The determining factor was the limited range of aircraft which, at that time, were restricted to 500-mile hops. For the benefit of members who would like more precise figures, I should mention, for comparative purposes, that the distance between Singapore and Melbourne, via Darwin and Sydney, is 4,657 miles, while the distance from Singapore to Melbourne via Perth and Adelaide is 4,151 miles. Thus, there is a gain of 500 miles on the latter route. In considering a flight of such length, the routes, for all practical purposes, may be regarded as of the same distance.

Mr. Marshall: In the second instance you omit Sydney altogether.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Yes. If we include the flight to Sydney, it would mean another 400 miles, which would make the distance the same. Sydney, of course, is the operating centre for Qantas Airways. Aircraft operations through Perth instead of Darwin would have several very distinct advantages, which I shall point out. First and most important is the fact that weather conditions throughout the year are better. That is a very potent factor where flying is concerned. The weather conditions are undoubtedly much better on the route I am advocating to Perth. Furthermore, after leaving Singapore an aircraft flying to Perth upon leaving the tropics, quickly enters temperate regions. For that reason there would be greater comfort for the passengers and crews, which in itself constitutes an important reason why the route should be adopted.

Mr. Marshall: Then again, periodical monsoons are experienced on the run further east.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Yes. Another advantage over the Darwin route is that the flying conditions in Western Australia are ideal. I do not wish to bring my own experiences into the discussion, but I have flown in many parts of the world and I can say definitely that conditions in Western Australia are ideal for flying. Incidentally, Guildford Airport is easily one of the best in Australia.

Mr. Marshall: I'll say it is!

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Dealing further with the advantages that the route through Perth has over the Darwin run, I wish to point out to members that the cost of fuel, oil and, generally speaking, all supplies necessary would be far less in Perth than in Darwin, because all those consumable items have to be transported to the northern airport. That, in turn, adds considerably to the cost of fares and freights. The same applies to all materials used in the construction of buildings and for the housing of staff, the latter of whom, in addition to aircraft operational personnel, would include persons associated with health, customs, immigration and other departmental activities.

A fourth consideration is that the provision of staff in the tropics is most difficult. In addition to that, there is the fact that officers work with less efficiency in the tropics than they do in temperate areas. Fifthly, the cost of the transportation of personnel, with families and their maintenance in isolated places such as Darwin, is very high. In this connection we must remember the added cost of fares and freights. At this stage, it is pertinent to note that there are very great advantages applying to passengers and mails entering Australia.

With regard to both passengers and mails for Perth, this is what happens at present: Passengers land at Darwin and then there are two courses open to them. They may continue their journey by the present route and fly to Sydney, which is the terminal point. Some time must elapse before the passengers and mails are flown across Australia to Perth. That involves an extra journey of 1,700 or 1,800 miles. The other alternative is to fly from Darwin round the coast of Western Australia in various hops. That would also involve further flights totalling 1,700 miles. I remind the Committee that the cost of the flight of 1,700 miles in such cases must be paid for by the people of Western Australia, who have to pay the additional fares and freights. That could very easily be avoided if only the Premier would get in touch with the Prime Minister and insist upon the new air port of entry to Australia being Perth.

Air mails from England to Sydney take four days for delivery and to Western Australia five or often six days, because the mails have to go the long way round. If they were to be delivered via Perth, it would take the same time for mails to reach Sydney but would save one or two days to Perth. That would also apply to passengers and would represent a considerable saving to them. The same situation would arise respecting passengers and mails for South Australia. They would have to proceed from Darwin to Sydney and back to Adelaide, or the flight could be made from Darwin south to the South

Australian capital. The route via Perth and on to Adelaide would save considerable time and money.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But what about if the passengers wanted to go to Brisbane?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: That would present no difficulty whatever.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It would mean a longer trip.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: No, because the distance from Singapore to Sydney is the same.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But if they came via Perth they would have to proceed via Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney to Brisbane.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: The route from Singapore to Sydney is direct and they would have to go to Brisbane by another flight. The advantages to Western Australia and South Australia would also apply in a lesser degree to Victoria and Tasmania. We must remember that any reduction in distance of flight and time means a great reduction in fares and freight charges.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: From the facts I have mentioned some persons may inquire, "Why is it that with all the advantages accruing to most of the southern parts of Australia the route has not been changed?" There are several replies that can be given and one presumably a reason that rates very high in importance in certain circles, is that Darwin is an important military base. Also, because civil air services pass through Darwin and flying amenities and facilities are provided there, its importance as an airport is further enhanced. Another reason, I would like to emphasise to the Premier, is that the Eastern States are not particularly interested in whether the route comes in via Darwin or Perth. As a matter of fact, it appears to me that they are not very interested in Perth at all.

Another reason is that there is, I suppose, a natural reluctance on the part of the powers-that-be to alter the existing arrangements. Unless pressure is brought to bear by us we shall continue in the same way and shall have to stand that anachronism for an airport at Darwin being the port of entry instead of Perth. Some international companies really desire to come through Perth. Qantas Empire Airways want to come through Perth, and so do Air Ceylon and K.L.M., but they have not been permitted to do so. Furthermore, some time ago—about August, 1950, I think—Qantas applied to the Department of Civil Aviation for permission to enter Australia through Perth. That permission was refused.

It was not long before Qantas applied for permission that the Federal Minister for Air—Mr. White at the time—gave an assurance that if any international airline desired to come through Perth, instead of Darwin, he would grant permission for it to do so, or see that permission was granted by the responsible authority. That would have raised Guildford to the status of an international airport almost instantly. Why then was Qantas refused permission to come through Perth? I suggest once again that those in the Eastern States could not care less about us in Western Australia. I say that, feeling in my own heart that it is perfectly true. They do not care what happens this side of the rabbitproof fence, or this side of the Western Australian border. It is high time, therefore, that we asserted ourselves in no mean fashion.

Let me say again that active preparations are in progress to establish Cocos as an international airport on the proposed air route linking Western Australia with South Africa. In the early part of next year, or perhaps getting on towards the middle of the year, Perth, I should say, will become an international airport. But this does not necessarily mean that every foreign air service will be routed through our fair city. Unless we put forward our claims, the Commonwealth will continue to have the services routed through Darwin. It can be expected that if Western Australia, as a partner in the Commonwealth, does not make strong representations in connection with its claims in this regard to the Commonwealth Parliament, we can expect nothing else but to remain an international air backwater for all time.

Perhaps at this stage I can point out some of the benefits that will accrue to Western Australia once Perth does become a port of entry for aircraft from the United Kingdom and Europe. In members' own minds there will probably be listed a number of advantages already, but I do not think it will harrow the subject too much to mention one or two. Firstly, the air distance from Perth to Batavia—now known as Djakarta—Singapore and all places west of there, would be reduced by about 1,700 or 1,800 miles, with a consequent reduction in fares and freights, and also a saving of time for airmails. Secondly, the importance of Perth would be most definitely enhanced as a port of entry for oversea aircraft, and there would be an increase of all that business which is associated with aircraft operations.

Then, too, the direct and comparatively short distance between Perth and the East Indies—Java, Singapore and Malaya—would tend to increase trade and commerce between the two countries with mutual benefits to both. Yet another reason is that European businessmen travelling to Australia would really see our State. It is quite likely they would stop off here for

a couple of days when passing through, just to have a look at the possibilities of Western Australia. What happens at the present time? These men are taken to the Eastern States, and when they are told about Western Australia being just a little place of no real importance—the old Eastern States angle—they naturally enough do not bother to travel the distance here to see us.

If Perth were the port of entry for aircraft, it is quite obvious that those men would be able to envisage some of the possibilities of the place, and we can imagine the benefits that could accrue to Western Australia by their so doing. Eastern States businessmen, too, both leaving and entering Australia, would be likely to explore their connections on this side of the Commonwealth, so there, also, we would have the advantage that air traffic should bring to a country such as ours. A further advantage is that notabilities travelling to Australia would probably spend a few days here, and we would be placed more on the international map. We would be spoken of more, and instead of being a backwater we would definitely be on the international air map.

I feel that Western Australia has a great deal to gain and nothing to lose by this proposed change of entry into Australia. It is essential, however, that this State, through the Premier, should make strong representations to the Commonwealth in an endeavour to ensure that our definite rights are maintained. So I hope that members, by and large, will be interested. This matter has no bearing on party politics: it is one that I personally feel will be of enormous benefit to the State, and I hope that other members will take it up and help persuade the Premier to make strong representations to the Prime Minister. I appeal to the Premier, on behalf of the people of the State, to make those representations, and I hope and trust that if they are made it will not be long before we have these international air services coming through our city.

Members, generally, would be disappointed if I did not mention the Surf Life Saving Association.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I am sure the Premier would.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I admit that I have represented its claims on a number of occasions, and I make no apology for so doing.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Get another advocate, judging by results.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I did have a speech prepared along certain lines and I intended to make yet another assault upon the citadels of the Treasury.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It was a miserable reduction.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: However, later events have obviated the necessity for so doing.

Mr. Hoar: What do you mean by that? Has the Premier come to heel?

Hon. A. H. Panton: A good argument was put up yesterday.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I think most people realise the worth of the Surf Life Saving Association and I am sure the Premier not least among them. But after the reduction had been made the Premier told me that it was done inadvertently and that a change would be considered. I believe him and wish to thank him for arranging an interview for me with the Under Treasurer so that the claims of the Surf Life Saving Association could be put forward. That interview took place with pleasing results to the association and myself. I can now announce to the Chamber that the sum has been increased to £400 annually. That news will be received with extreme gratification by everybody, particularly the members of the Surf Life Saving Association. Those people will now realise that the Government appreciates the work they are doing, and we should congratulate the association on the splendid work that it has done over the years and is doing again this season.

I have only one other small matter to mention and that concerns the jetty at Cottesloe. I intended to ask the Minister for Works to reconsider the decision made by the department to pull down the structure. As the jetty stands at present it is quite safe, or could be made quite safe by expending £15 to £20. The piles are in good order and the only danger to the public is occasioned by one or two cross-rails which have fallen down and have left gaps. That damage could be quickly repaired and the jetty used once more, as it is used at the moment by hundreds of people during the week and thousands of people every week-end.

Mr. Marshall: Who incurred the original expenditure for the construction of that jetty?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: The member for Murchison has raised a very interesting point. This project was initiated by members of the Cottesloe District Road Board which authority raised, I think, £500 of the capital involved, the project being subsidised £2 for £1 by the Government. The jetty was held as a Cottesloe district work, but since that time the Cottesloe Council, I believe, has asked the Government to take it over.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Cottesloe Council, in conjunction with the Government, prepared to expend any further money to repair that jetty?

The Minister for Works: It has not indicated that it is.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: With the expenditure of say £15 to £20 this jetty, which has given pleasure to a great number of people throughout this State, could be put into a safe state of repair. I understand

that the cost of destroying this structure will be somewhere in the vicinity of £200 to £300.

The Minister for Works: Who made the estimate that it would cost £20 to fix it up?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: A Mr. Harvey made the estimate and he was one of the originators of the scheme for the construction of the jetty. I had a look at the structure with him in order to satisfy myself as to the truth of his statement.

The Minister for Works: Is it not a reasonable thing to ask the local authority to spend £20 on it?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: But has not the jetty been taken over by the Government?

The Minister for Works: Even if the Government has taken it over, £20 is not very much to ask the local authority to spend to put it in order when it means so much to that particular area.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: If the local authority were prepared to do that, would the Minister reconsider the decision to pull it down?

The Minister for Works: We will consider any reasonable proposition put up by the local authority.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I thank the Minister for his interest. I shall now get in touch with the council and endeavour to ascertain whether it will be prepared to expend a sum necessary to put the jetty into good repair without having to take over the entire responsibility for the structure.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Tell him about the stagnant state of the river at Peppermint Grove.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I intended to speak on another matter but I will bring it forward at a later stage of the Estimates.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [7.51]: I wish to take advantage of the Budget debate to raise a number of matters. The first of these is one of great importance and urgency, so much so that I sought this afternoon the permission of Mr. Speaker to move the adjournment of the House to deal with the matter. But I realised at the time that the Estimates were on the notice paper and that some re-arrangement might make it possible for discussion of this matter during the debate on them. Had the notice paper not been re-arranged I am certain there would have been no opportunity to raise this matter this evening, nor would such opportunity have occurred tomorrow or Thursday, if I am any judge. So I appreciate the action of the Premier in altering his notice paper and bringing the Budget debate on earlier than was anticipated.

I feel that you, Mr. Speaker, and many other persons must have been greatly concerned in recent days over the very

grave position which has arisen in connection with the shortage of food for stock. My attention was drawn to it firstly by poultry farmers of whom I have a number in my electorate. They are very perturbed because their stock of feed is running particularly low and there seems to be no opportunity of replenishing it. A number of these poultry farmers have upwards of 2,000 birds which must be fed and there seems to be no opportunity of obtaining mill offal and now, unfortunately, very little opportunity of obtaining wheat. It is a most remarkable state of affairs that in a State like Western Australia, which invariably produces an abundance of wheat, and which at the present time has an abundance of wheat—

Hon. A. H. Panton: There are tons of wheat in the Moore district.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:—we have producers with large flocks of fowls who are in the position that they do not know for certain whether or not, before this week is out, they will have to sacrifice those birds because of the inability, the complete inability, to obtain feed for them. One member of this Assembly has told me that a poultry farmer informed him that he had 2,000 birds to feed and would not be able to carry them beyond Wednesday—that is tomorrow—of this week. A poultry farmer rang me yesterday and said that he had 3,000 birds and would not be able to carry them beyond this week-end because he could not buy wheat, nor could he buy mill offal.

A peculiar set of circumstances has arisen which has brought this position about; there was a premature announcement that the price of wheat for stock feed would shortly be very substantially increased. That meant that those persons who had wheat decided to hold it until the rise took place. This is a repetition of what we had in connection with sugar and to a lesser degree with butter; although I will say that, with regard to the butter position, it was made considerably worse by a certain amount of panic buying by consumers who went into the retail stores and bought larger quantities of butter than usual, and stored such butter in refrigerators and ice chests against the possibility of an impending rise. But that has not been the position with stock feed.

Mr. Ackland: Oh yes, it has.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, it has not.

Mr. Ackland: Some people in the metropolitan area have 12 months supply in their sheds.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If that had been so, then they would not be in the position that their birds are facing starvation. They would have enough to carry them over.

Mr. Ackland: I said that some people have.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then there are very few.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are not poultry farmers; they are profiteers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would be very surprised to learn that there are many poultry farmers or pig breeders who have large stocks of feed anywhere. Firstly, they have not the space where they could store it.

Mr. Brady: They have not been able to get it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Nor could they get it. It would be impossible to store any substantial quantity of mill offal because it has been under a rationing process for years. So it is idle for the member for Moore to suggest that it is stored up anywhere.

Mr. Nalder: Until a few weeks ago it had been off the ration list for some time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: A few months ago.

Mr. Nalder: Quite time enough to buy it if they wanted it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am quite sure that it would not be possible to store the tremendous quantities of feed that have been mentioned.

Mr. Hoar: There would not be enough.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There was no need for anybody to anticipate a rise in the price of stock feed wheat until a recent move was made to increase the price, and when that announcement was made wheat was not available for purchase.

Mr. Marshall: That is the point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So there are very few producers, if any, who have stored up large quantities of wheat, thus creating a shortage. I am not in a position to say whether merchants have bought it up and stored it away; that might be possible. I do not know about that, but probably the member for Moore could tell us. What I do know, however, is that the people who need the feed for stock have not got it and cannot get it, and their flocks of birds will be destroyed in a matter of days unless some action is taken to see that feed is made available.

Mr. Ackland: An announcement came over the air tonight that sufficient wheat is available.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Where? In the country?

Mr. Ackland: No, in Fremantle, Bunbury and Geraldton.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is surprising, if that explanation can be given, that the Minister for Lands did not give it this afternoon. Apparently the member for Moore is more au fait with what has been achieved with regard to the

position of stock feed than is the Minister or the Government. All the Minister could tell me this afternoon was that in collaboration with the Commonwealth all that was possible to be done was being done. But beyond that general statement the Minister gave no particulars at all. It will be good news if wheat is to be made available. It should never have been short—

Mr. Marshall: That is the point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:—because there are ample quantities of it in the State, and nobody has any right to withhold produce in anticipation of a rise in price because of a premature announcement. We saw it happen here with butter when storekeepers were selling it at the increased price before they were entitled to charge it, and no action was taken against them for doing so.

Mr. Ackland: There was sufficient wheat at each of the ports; some of them have been hoarding.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The member for Moore is talking without knowledge of the facts. I do not believe that these producers would get in touch with me in the panicky way they did if they had stored at their farms sufficient feed for their stock. I do not think they would deliberately try to create a stir if they were not short of stock feed.

Mr. Ackland: No-one suggests they are.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I find that very hard to believe. What I do know is that the great body of producers are at their wit's end to know how they are going to feed their stock, and they should not be in that position in a State that has not suffered drought and has had a bountiful harvest. If we had passed through a drought period and we could not get this commodity, and had to bring it from somewhere else, I could understand there being a shortage. But it is criminal to think that in a State like Western Australia, with the harvest that we obtained, we should have any section of our people in difficulty because they cannot buy the feed that is needed. I am afraid the situation has been brought about because some persons have been withholding wheat in anticipation of a rise.

Let us take the position in regard to mill offal. I understand that the millers have been placed in an impossible position with regard to their activities because they cannot dispose of the flour to time. They are afraid to sell the offal lest they be unable properly to account for the quantity of wheat that has been delivered which would mean they would be obliged to find the difference between the old price and the new.

Mr. Ackland: You are on safer ground now.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The other ground was safe enough, and if this is safer it only serves to accentuate the real problem and to show the need for immediate Government action. This is a matter that can be solved by resolute action. This is not something that is subject to the elements, or subject to an act of God; it can be remedied by resolute and definite action on the part of the Government, if it is prepared to take such action. For the life of me I cannot see how any self-respecting Government can avoid doing something immediately to ensure that these people will be able to carry on.

Just imagine what the situation will be in this State if our flocks of poultry are destroyed because of insufficient feed! We will then be faced with a shortage of eggs and a shortage of poultry meat, with corresponding increases in the prices of other commodities because of the intensified demand for them that will result from the absence of eggs and of poultry meat. So the Government has to look ahead in this matter, although it might mean doing something which might irk the member for Moore.

The broad issues of the welfare of the State are at stake in this, and we cannot sacrifice bodies of producers because they are numerically weaker than the wheat farmers, simply because it might be unpopular to take such action as is necessary to help them. These poultry farmers, these pig farmers and these dairy farmers who are short of stock feed will want something more than a statement from the member for Moore that there was ample wheat available, but the wrong persons bought it up. They will want adequate supplies of stock feed and they are entitled to get it because it is in the country.

I suggest to the Minister for Lands that he confer as quickly as possible in the morning with his colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, to see that the requisite steps are taken to guarantee an adequate supply of feed for those producers who require it, and let the legislation with regard to the price of stock feed take its course. I daresay there will be no such delay with regard to this legislation as there has been in connection with the rent legislation. It is a fair wager that it will not take five weeks to get a Bill drafted to deal with the stock feed position; but it has taken nearly that time to draft a Bill concerning rent legislation. It is a different matter when one's heart is in the job.

Mr. Graham: There is no heart on that side of the Chamber.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The people who got in touch with me about this stock feed position are most concerned; a number of members representing districts where there are producers short of feed are most concerned; and the people in the State generally will become concerned when they realise the full implication of

what is happening in connection with this matter. I repeat that although these producers are not large in number, comparatively speaking, they are nevertheless playing a very important part in the State's economy and are entitled to the utmost consideration.

Time is the essence of this contract because the birds will not continue to live on nothing whilst Governments are making up their minds what they will do in connection with the matter. So what we require straightaway is not assurances that feed will be made available; we want the feed, we want it quickly and we want it in sufficient quantities to ensure that these persons who desire to give it to their stock will be able to do so. If we do not take resolute action we will pay dearly for it before very long.

The Minister for Lands: Have you any suggestions of your own for dealing with the matter?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I definitely have. I know that the Minister for Agriculture has sufficient power to make it clear to those responsible for handling wheat in this State that the Government wants wheat made available. The Government also has sufficient power in other directions to come to a very satisfactory agreement in connection with the matter. I have not the slightest doubt about it either. I think I have said sufficient about that subject to impress upon the Government not only the great importance of the matter, but also of its very great urgency. The stock feeders throughout the State who are passing through a very worrying time will be anxiously waiting for some action to be taken to provide the stock feed which they so urgently need.

An important question that has already received attention in this Assembly is the economic situation in which the people of Australia find themselves today, and the effect of this inflationary spiral in which we appear to have been caught up. I remember quite well that this Government was elected on a promise to reduce prices. I remember the Premier stating in his Policy Speech that it would be his aim to see that the housewife could go into a shop and purchase what she wanted at a reasonable price. That was one of the aims of the Liberal Party and one of the promises which it made to the people. It was also one of the promises which secured its election. It said that the housewife would be able to go into a shop and buy what she wanted at a reasonable price.

After four years, the housewife is not able to go into a shop and buy what she wants. I have already indicated that she cannot buy wheat; nor can she buy anything at a reasonable price—not anything, because the prices have gone completely out of control. A little analysis will show that the system under which we operate makes it absolutely impossible for us to

get commodities at a reasonable price. The prices control officers in the various States refer to the small margin between wholesale costs and retail costs. For example, they say that the gross profit rate is only 25 per cent., giving a net profit rate after all expenses have been accounted for of a mere three per cent. So they point to the fact that large profits are not being made.

Figures have been shown to me which prove that some firms in a large way get more money from discounts than they get from net profit, and prices control officers do not pay very much attention to that item. In one case brought under my notice the company received £28,000 net profit from trading, but it received £31,000 in addition from discounts, and the prices control officer would be concerned with the £28,000 profit on turnover, disregarding the £31,000 obtained from discounts.

The Attorney General: That would not be correct.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, it is correct.

The Attorney General: Oh, no! You know that it is not.

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

The Attorney General: I am telling you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is of no use the Attorney General's telling me without producing something in support of his statement. He has told me quite a lot that has been wrong.

The Attorney General: No, I have not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, the Attorney General has. Does he remember the time when he told me there was something in a Bill that was not in it and, when I asked him to read the Bill, he found that it was not there? Does he remember that?

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, it is in "Hansard."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What an awful thing for the Minister to do!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So it is not sufficient for the Attorney General to make a mere statement; I want him to back it up.

The Attorney General: You know that all earnings are taken into consideration.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know that at all; my advice is to the contrary. I obtained my advice from a man who was managing director of one of the largest companies in Melbourne.

Mr. Marshall: He would know as much about that as does the Attorney General.

The Attorney General: No, he would not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He supplied me with these figures and so I suggest that the Attorney General should check up on the facts.

The Attorney General: Give me the name of the company and I shall do so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, I would not do anything like that because the gun would be put into him straight away. I am suggesting that the Attorney General might take advantage of the opportunity to tell the Chamber precisely how the prices control officer goes about his job when fixing profit margins.

The Attorney General: Do not wait for that! Come and see me tomorrow!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have no wish to see the Attorney General tomorrow. I should prefer that he spoke here and took members into his confidence, as he has a right to do.

The Attorney General: I have told you more than once.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Tell us how it is done.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: There will be a lot more profit made on tea as from today.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: My advice is that prices control officers are concerned with the amount of net profit, the amount of gross profit and the actual profit margin, not taking into consideration amounts received by way of discounts. A little thought will show that that must be the position. Is it not the practice to give a flat rate to all retailers of a certain percentage profit?

The Attorney General: On an industry basis, yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it not also a fact that some retailers, because of their buying methods, get bigger discounts than do others?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, if a flat rate of percentage profit is allowed, will not the firms that buy in a large way and get the benefit of discounts receive a larger return than those who do not trade in such a large way? Of course they will! That proves straight away that the statement of the Attorney General a minute or two ago was not correct.

The Attorney General: I have never stated that this Government approved of profit control, and I have told you many times that all price-fixing throughout the Commonwealth is done on an industry basis.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, that is not what the Attorney General said.

The Attorney General: It is.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General cannot switch it that way. I shall tell him what he said. He said that when the prices control officers were fixing the profit, they did take into consideration the discounts.

The Attorney General: They do—the discounts earned by the industry.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How can that be so if they allow the same percentage margin to all retailers and yet some retailers get more from discounts than do others?

The Attorney General: The profits earned by an industry are taken into consideration howsoever they are earned.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Surely the Attorney General knows that a short time ago the prices control officer in this State yielded to a request by retailers to put their profit margin back to what it was prewar! Does not the Attorney General remember that I said he had instructed the prices officer to do it? I had read such a statement in a publication issued by the Retail Grocers' Association and the Attorney General denied it.

I accepted the Attorney General's denial, but the fact remains that the prices control officer did restore the same profit margin to all retailers, and that made no allowance for the fact that some received larger discounts than did others. This goes to prove my point that it is the profit margin with which the prices control officer is concerned—the amount of net profit being made—and that he is disregarding the additional revenue obtained by certain firms by way of discounts.

The Attorney General: The same basis is taken as is adopted by the Taxation Department. You know very well that discounts are taken into consideration by the Taxation Department. Yours is a very weak argument.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The housewives think it a very strong argument. The sooner the member for Nedlands brings in his monopoly Bill again, the better.

Mr. Marshall: Oh where, oh where, has that little Bill gone?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Taxation has been increased, and taxation finds its way into prices so that the people generally pay the increased taxation for businesses. I have a publication entitled "The Federal Accountant", which is the official journal of the Federal Accountants of Australia. This article, which appeared in the issue for July, 1951, was written by an accountant and states—

All taxation is reflected in the cost of living. Is there adequate realisation of the inflationary effect of corporate taxation? In 1938-39, to pay a dividend of £1 net required a profit of £1 9s.

I may interpolate that, expressed in simple language, this means that for a firm to be able to pay £1 profit, it had to obtain from its customers—the great mass of the people—an actual profit of £1 9s., the 9s. being absorbed in a number of ways. That was in 1938-39. The article continued—

In 1950-51, to pay the same dividend requires £2 8s. 6d.

So a firm has to take from the people £2 8s. 6d. to pay a £1 dividend. If dividends today were only at the same level as they were in 1938-39, it would require £2 8s. 6d. from the public as against £1 9s.; but what makes the position infinitely worse is that dividends today are not what they were in 1938-39 because, in almost every instance, they are a long way above that level. Thus businesses, even to pay the same dividend as was paid in 1938-39, are obliged to take a tremendous amount of money from the general public by way of prices and so the members of the general public are placed in an almost impossible position. No wonder there is an inflationary spiral in which we are caught.

I have a very simple illustration of what a tremendous amount of money must be taken from the people in order to provide the high rates of profit that are being made on every hand. I make this very deliberate statement, for the ear of the Attorney General particularly, that profits have never been greater in the history of Australia than they are today. We can take balance-sheet after balance-sheet only to find that the profit has reached an all-time high level.

To have paid the same rate of profit as was paid in 1938-39 means an increase of 142 per cent. against 45 per cent., but the profits are very greatly increased over what they were in 1938-39, and so we can imagine what a tremendous amount of money has to be brought into the price structure to make these dividends possible. Now let me deal with the illustration. I quote from the Melbourne "Argus" of the 9th October of this year, the company concerned being Peters Ice Cream Company Ltd. The ice-cream companies have found it necessary to increase the price of ice-cream following upon action taken by the Commonwealth Government recently. Let us see whether there is any warrant for that action.

The profits for the year ended the 30th June, for this company rose from £43,690 of the previous year to £70,763 after the following things had been done.

Not before but after these things had been done! The profit remaining was £70,763 against £43,690 for the previous year and these were the things that had first been done—The provision for taxation the previous year was £16,450, but the provision for taxation for this year was £77,000, more than four times as much. That is not all. The previous year the amount of depreciation provided was £35,338; this year it was £65,017. So, after providing nearly double the depreciation and more than four times the tax provision, they still had nearly double the amount of net profit.

[Mr. Hill took the Chair.]

The Attorney General: What was the turnover? Had that increased, or would you not worry about that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would be concerned about the return on actual shareholders' funds employed in the business.

The Attorney General: In spite of the volume of business done?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Has the Attorney General ever thought how often a man can turn his labour over? That is the capital of the working man. How often does he turn his capital over?

The Attorney General: He turns it over twice as much, because he gets twice as much wages.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does he?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And every year the working man lives his capital becomes less. But every year money capital remains, it becomes more.

The Attorney General: We have only one life to live, whoever we are.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: See the difference in the point of view as to which capital is employed! The Attorney General wants velocity of turnover to justify an increased profit rate. Surely the actual return on the money invested should be the criterion and not the number of times the money is turned over.

The Attorney General: It is not a question of turnover but of the quantity of business.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Suppose a man invests £100 in a business. Should he be able to expect to extract from the general community in 12 months another £100 for it?

The Attorney General: If he is sufficiently efficient, yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Should he! No wonder we get inflationary spirals if that is the idea that is initiating a lot of these moves.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The general public has no chance under this Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is a wonderful scheme! No wonder we get such wretched results from price-fixing if the Minister in charge holds those views! It does not matter how much profit is made on the money invested so long as the money is being turned over a lot. That is the idea of the Attorney General. The volume of business, he says! There should be a limit to the amount of money which capital in industry can extract from the general public, the same as there is if money is put in the bank or into bonds.

The Attorney General: There should be a limit on wages and salaries.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We limit the return for work. We impose restrictions on the working man and we say, "We will

fix your wages by using a court, and we will not allow you in a time of shortage of labour to go and offer your services where you like to the highest bidder!"

The Attorney General: Of course we do!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, we do not!

The Attorney General: Yes. It is done every day in the week.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We fix wages.

The Attorney General: We fix the minimum.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh! So it is open to the lumpers on the Fremantle wharf to go to the stevedores tomorrow and say, "We want double wages?"

The Attorney General: Yes, so far as I know.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So far as you know! The Attorney General does not know very much.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is open for them to say that, but what does the other fellow say?

The Attorney General: So far as I know, the Arbitration Court only imposes a minimum wage.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General knows very well that there is a basic wage, with margins for various jobs.

The Attorney General: And I know that, in nine cases out of ten, they are getting more.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is a fine exaggeration!

The Attorney General: No, it is not; not today.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I know that some spec builders are paying more than the regulation wage.

The Attorney General: Yes, of course you do!

Mr. Griffith: Have you ever had a friend who wanted to get a thousand bricks laid at the week-end, and asked a bricklayer to do it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No; my friends do not do that.

Mr. Oldfield: You have not any friends.

Mr. Griffith: That is a pretty poor answer to give when you find yourself in a difficulty.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That will be the day, when I find myself in a difficulty with the member for Canning!

Mr. Griffith: That is the way you get out of it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it?

Mr. Griffith: Answer me then!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That will be the day, when I have to resort to that to get out of a difficulty with the member for Canning!

Mr. Griffith: Why do you not answer the question?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I did. The hon. member asked if I had a friend who did that sort of thing, and I said, "No, my friends do not do that."

Mr. Griffith: And I said that that is your way of getting out of a difficulty.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Let the hon. member put his question another way and I will answer it.

Mr. Griffith: Do you know what a bricklayer would charge you to lay a thousand bricks at the week-end?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No.

Mr. Griffith: Try, sometime, and you will find that the wages he will want may be very high.

Hon. A. H. Panton: A bricklayer has no right to work at the week-end.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To come back to the real problem: If those in authority believe that a limit should not be set to profits, there is no hope for us. That is what the Attorney General believes, and it is what the member for Canning believes: that it should be possible to extract as much as a person will pay.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: "Butcher the consumers": that is their slogan.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To return to this illustration: These figures are colossal and show the exploitation that takes place. They give the result after large sums have been set aside for depreciation, far larger than is necessary, creating a special reserve which later on will bring its own problems for the consumer. Besides doing all these things, this company paid a dividend of 15 per cent., which required only £33,000 of the £70,000, and then put £30,000 into a special building provision reserve. What will happen is this: In a year or two, this company will decide it does not need the money in that special building provision reserve, so it will issue bonus shares. It will probably give one bonus share for one share already held, and make no charge for it. Having distributed the undistributed profit in that way, it will then set out to pay 15 per cent. on the lot.

I have an illustration of that. I apologise for not having local examples; but, unfortunately, our papers do not give the details we sometimes get in the "Argus," and I find that balance sheets are published there in much more detail than we get in this State. I have some information here about the Ballarat Brewery. Last year it paid a dividend of 12½ per cent. and put a very large packet of money in

reserve. During the year, it doubled its capital by a bonus share issue of one free share for every share held, and the latest development is that it is only paying 10 per cent. Actually it is paying 20 per cent. on the original sum; 20 per cent. on the amount of money on which it previously paid 15 per cent., but by issuing out as capital money which was previously stored up out of profit it now pays profit upon profit. And so its dividend is 10 per cent. on the two shares which the investor obtained for the price of one.

In the first instance it appears that the rate of dividend has been reduced by 2½ per cent. People say, "Twelve and a half per cent. last year and only 10 per cent. this year," whereas actually it is 20 per cent. on the shareholder's capital. That is what goes on, and this snowballing effect is making it absolutely impossible for the price structure to bear the pressure. The poor old consumer must foot the bill all the time and these increased profits on watered capital must come out of the price structure. This process of watering capital is nothing new. It has been going on unchecked, with disastrous results to the consumers. At a time when there is a shortage of supply of commodities the opportunities for making these large profits on capital are tremendous.

We know there are very few philanthropists in business. They are admirable people, personally, but are out to make as much profit as possible and not to consider the needs of the individual. Let us take the position with regard to rice! I asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping questions as to why rice was in short supply in this State as compared with the other States. There is supposed to be in existence a committee whose job it is to allocate supplies of rice to the different States, but unfortunately that committee is influenced by the profits to be made in certain directions.

I was advised firsthand, by persons who had made purchases, that it was possible to buy rice over the counter, without difficulty, in retail stores in Melbourne at a time when it was practically unobtainable in W.A. The reason for that was that those in the Eastern States who had supplies of rice were just not interested in sending it to Western Australia because there would then have been less profit in the venture—and so the people here go without. We see that happening all round us in the case of various commodities. We have had shortages of dried milk in this State from time to time.

Mr. Marshall: We have it now, acutely.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, particularly on the Goldfields, and yet we find that large quantities of dried milk went to America to earn dollars. If we send our dried milk to the U.S.A. we cannot send it to Kalgoorlie, and that is just too bad. The Minister for Supply and Shipping gave, as her explanation, that shortage of dried

milk in this State resulted from a drought in New South Wales. If there is a drought in New South Wales we must suffer, not the U.S.A., because the dried milk earns dollars over there and it cannot earn them in Kalgoorlie. When there is a drought we must go without and the commodity is supplied to somebody else.

Of course we are a very good-hearted people. We do the same thing with a lot of other commodities. We invariably send our best apples overseas and eat the worst ourselves. It all comes back to the profit motive and the question of where we can earn the most money with the commodities we have to sell. That applies not only to things we eat, but to our wearing apparel and the very houses we live in. The idea seems to be, "Exploit the general public. Get as much as you can. Take advantage of the buying pressure because when it eases off you have to bring your price down; but in the meantime, while the pressure is strong because of shortage of commodities, keep putting the price up so that you can get as much as possible and pay out as much as you can."

The Attorney General says, "That is all right. It does not matter what profit you earn so long as the volume of business warrants it," and so if we can earn 20 per cent., 30 per cent., or even 100 per cent. and get our money back in 12 months, the Minister for Prices thinks that is all very well so long as the volume of business is sufficient to justify it. I do not think it is all right; in fact it is all wrong, and until we take the situation by the scruff of the neck and say, "This is as far as we shall allow it to go" we might just as well jump in the lake as expect to be able to control the inflationary spiral. The Menzies Government thinks it will control inflation by putting up the price of razor blades—

Mr. Marshall: And ice-cream and chocolates!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and women's cosmetics. Whoever heard of anything as puerile as that as action by a responsible Government to check inflation, instead of bold action to stop the inflationary spiral at its source and prevent this pressure from increasing profits all the time? It must force prices up. How can we take these large sums for depreciation, these inordinately large sums for repairs, these huge sums to reserves and tremendous amounts for dividends, and still expect to keep prices down? It just cannot happen, but that is what some people believe can be done.

I have made no mention so far of advertising costs, which are allowed as an expense in running a business. One has only to listen for a short while to some of the radio programmes to realise what tremendous sums are being spent by companies in this way. All that money has to come back through the price structure. If I had my way I would limit the extent

of advertising to one per cent. on sales turnover, and would provide that anything that a company desired to spend on advertising additional to that would have to come out of reserves and would not be allowed as a taxation deduction.

The Premier: Would that apply to all classes of advertising, including the Press?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, one per cent. on sales turnover, if they wanted to push their goods, as a legitimate charge against expenses, to come out of profits, and as a deduction for taxation purposes. But if any firm wishes to go beyond that it should be prepared to find that difference by financing it out of reserves and not obtain it as a taxation deduction. Why should these firms, at the public's expense, push their goods in this way, especially at a time when there are fewer goods than there are people desirous of buying them? Why should they be permitted to do that and get the cost back through the price structure? There should be a limit set to it.

It is a different proposition if competition is keen and there is a large supply of goods, and so for survival businesses have to push their wares. In such a position we could allow them to indulge in some special advertising campaigns for the purpose of improving their businesses, but now, when there is scarcely anything surplus, these large sums spent on advertising cannot be justified in the slightest degree. The Prices Commissioner is not worried about it at all. They go on from day to day—tremendous sums running into hundreds and thousands of pounds!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: If the goods were half as good as they are supposed to be they would not need to be advertised half as much.

The Minister for Lands: They would not require to give coupons either.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister for Lands should know something about coupons because he was the Minister responsible for checking the practice in this State. But he should not delude himself into believing that that cheapened the price of goods.

Mr. Marshall: He said it would, but it did not.

The Minister for Lands: No, I agree with you there.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They stop some firms from spending in one direction but the firms spend it in another direction.

The Minister for Lands: That is right. They defeated it by using the air.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, they defeated it all right but the cost of it still comes out of the pockets of the consumers. If one stops to consider calmly the price of certain commodities one is absolutely amazed. In a primary producing State like Western Australia, where there should not be any difficulty in rearing pigs or fowls,

and where it ought to be possible for a man to have bacon and eggs for breakfast, what do we find? Bacon and eggs are an absolute luxury, completely out of the reach of 90 per cent. of the people.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There are no such things as eggs; it is "egg"—singular.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is just too ridiculous. Bacon and eggs are completely out of the reach of the great mass of the people and yet years ago I suppose there were very few families who did not have, on some days of the week, bacon and eggs for breakfast. Now I have little doubt that some families have not seen bacon and eggs for breakfast for years. Unless the Government does something about the stock feed position, those families will never see them again.

Mr. Marshall: There will not be any eggs.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is something radically wrong with our economic system when such a basic commodity as the one I have mentioned is completely out of the reach of the people. If we were in famine-ridden India I could understand it, or if we had a tremendous population and could not work hard enough to produce sufficient to feed it there would be some excuse. But we are not an overcrowded population; we have very fertile soil and industrious farmers, but we cannot supply bacon and eggs or ham and eggs within reach of the people. That is typical of what is happening with all other things as well.

We talk about increases in the basic wage. The basic wage lags so far behind prices that although an increase in the wage gives the working man more money he is able to buy less than he could during the period before. But that is no argument for not giving him an increase; it is an argument for checking the rise in prices. There was a time when the Government of the day in Western Australia had to cope with a situation of falling prices. In those days the basic wage used to be fixed annually, and members can imagine what the representatives of big business thought about a situation where the wage was fixed and could not be altered for 12 months, and in the meantime prices kept coming down. They soon took action to deal with the situation.

Mr. Marshall: Too right they did!

Hon. A. H. Panton: An anti-Labour Government very quickly made it three months.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: First of all they made it a six-months declaration and in double-quick time made it a quarterly declaration so that wages could not be ahead of prices for too long; so that wages could not remain up while prices were falling. So the anti-Labour Governments altered the wage declaration to

provide for a speedier declaration to stop the lag. There is definite proof as to which comes first, wages or prices. Now the cycle has turned the other way and prices are rising upwards and wages are dragging behind. The basic wage that is fixed is not the wage which will allow the worker to live for the next three months at the prices which will rule, but it is a belated decision to cover what the prices have been during the previous three months.

Mr. Marshall: They are three months behind all the time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This argument that the worker should produce more and so solve the problem is just a lot of eye-wash. The Attorney General's idea is that the men should produce more. This will increase the turnover and so justify higher profits. When the captains of industry realise that they should set a limit to the amount that they should expect to extract from the general public, when they demonstrate that they will take a reasonable view of the matter, then they can expect greater co-operation from the great mass of the workers engaged in industry. Some employers realise that. Some years ago Lord Leverhulme demonstrated what could be done by properly understanding workers and giving them a fair go.

Mr. Marshall: So did Ford.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Lord Leverhulme introduced the 6-hour day. He did not say "Produce more and we will give you better conditions." He gave them better conditions and they produced more. He introduced the 6-hour day and made a success of it; he increased their wages over and above what was being paid elsewhere and made a success of it because the workers responded, realising that fair treatment to them merited fair treatment in return. But instead of that we get people here wanting to extract the last ounce out of the pockets of the general community by way of profit, and howling all the time because the workers are not producing more so that the employers can make greater profits.

The Premier: Are you suggesting that the 6-hour day would cure our ills in this State?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, I am not. But what I am suggesting is a better realisation of the value of labour and its importance. It is just as important as capital, although the Attorney General sees that differently to me. When they realise the importance of labour, and the desirability of proper co-operation they will get a better return. I have never yet seen it fail to give results. Take the builders who keep teams of workmen with them year after year—a team of bricklayers or a team of plasterers! They hold their men together because they treat them well and pay them well.

The Minister for Lands: And charge the worker who is seeking a home the extra they pay them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, do they? It does not always work out that way. Surely the Minister for Lands can appreciate the fact that if a builder has a team of expert workmen whom he pays well he is more likely to get the finished product completed much more cheaply than another builder who pays his workers only half as much. Efficiency certainly enters into this business—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Minister for Lands knows.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and any method that will obtain co-operation and proper response will achieve far better results than a method under which men are employed at a set wage, are kept down to a set time and are made to work without amenities or improved conditions.

The Premier: If we had a large number of firms adopting that idea what would happen to our arbitration system?

Hon. A. H. Panton: You would not want that arbitration system. We only have the Government to look after that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What would happen to it?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It would function in a much more efficient way than it does now because it would be specialised.

The Premier: I think it would be more likely to break down.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not. I think we would educate the people into the knowledge and belief that they are partners in a form of production instead of just cogs in a wheel, and once they realised that they were part of the show and that they benefited as the show progressed, better results would follow.

Mr. Griffith: I am sure the position becomes altered in the week-end when the worker becomes a contractor and charges accordingly for the work he does.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course he does that, in order to keep up with the rise in prices.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Brought about by the present Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Brought about by the present system.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Supported by the member for Canning.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When they have to pay through the nose for everything they buy, no wonder they want to earn extra money. They are forced to do so in order to pay for their purchases. What hope is there for the ordinary man and woman today—I am speaking now of the general run of people and not those who

are born with silver spoons in their mouths, but the sons and daughters of the working people—to buy their own homes?

Mr. Marshall: Owning their own home.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In my student days, when I first started off on accountancy, I was taught that no man should enter into the obligation to purchase a home at a price which exceeded two years' salary. He should not expect to give up over two full years of his working life in order to buy his home. That is to say, if he was on a salary of £400 a year he could expect to pay £800 for his house and be able to do it. If he was on a salary of £1,000 he could afford a house costing £2,000 and pay for it in his life-time. What do we find today? One cannot look at a house today under £3,000. The ready-made houses which Mr. Plunkett is building in my electorate are costing approximately £4,000 for the bare essentials.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: To the purchaser.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, to the purchaser. What young man and woman, starting off in life, can take on a proposition such as that?

Mr. May: He could not even pay the interest.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The thing becomes absolutely impossible and that is just where we have got. Surely every man ought to have the right to expect that if he works the normal hours, and plays his part in the community during the course of his life-time, he should be able to provide himself with a house which will accommodate his wife and family. Every working-man should be able to have that prospect in contemplation even though he starts off with no capital.

The Premier: Well, there are more people buying their homes today than ever before.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, but will they ever pay for them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It depends on what we mean by "buying" them.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The equity they have will disappear in 12 to 18 months.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It depends entirely upon what we mean by "buying." If the Premier means by "buying" that a man pays a deposit, and then starts to pay a rental which will just cover the interest and that by the time he dies he has paid nothing off the principal, I would agree with him. But that is not my view. I think a man ought to be able to say that the house will become his own in his life-time, and under existing conditions that is just not possible for the great mass of the people. So it shows that we are facing a very serious problem because that is basic to our civilisation, and this position will become worse and worse, in my view, unless we place some check on the return that capital has a right to expect. I do not know

whether the Premier gave any study to the figures which were quoted in "The West Australian" a short time ago regarding Woolworths showing what a large accretion of capital had been obtained by a very modest investment in Woolworths shares a few years ago.

The Premier: Those figures were quoted in this House.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If I remember rightly, that figure showed an increase of over 2,000 per cent. on each share in 20 years. Astronomical figures, actually! All that profit has to be obtained from the man in the street, who is making the ordinary purchases of things he needs in everyday life. If we are to expect to extract that toll from people generally, then there is no hope for the general mass of mankind because there must be a limit to that. One cannot go on squeezing the orange and expect to get juice.

The Premier: And yet Woolworths is one of the great chain stores which accumulated its wealth, because of the fact that it under-sold its products as compared with similar stores.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is true, but the fact remains that if a man was able to put £100 into Woolworths shares 20 years ago and has now turned that £100 into thousands of pounds, the people generally must have contributed a tremendous amount of profit, and if one multiplies that example by a number of firms and realises that all that money comes out of the price structure, it can readily be seen what a tremendous burden the people are carrying in regard to business. A working-man who only has his working capacity as capital is depreciating that capital as he becomes older. Take, for example, a man who starts work at, say, 20 years of age! Some start earlier and some start later. However, we will assume that he obtains his Junior and Leaving Certificates and then enters industry: he would be about the 20-year mark in round figures. We expect such a man to retire when he is 65. So he has got 45 years of working life. Every year that he works his capital becomes less and less; by the time he is past the 40 mark half his capital has gone. But with money we expect it to be many times increased in 20 years, and we expect it to go on increasing, and taking its toll from industry generally. We expect that people can continue to find the necessary money—which they earn through their labour—and that they can go on producing these larger profits in all directions. It just cannot be done.

No wonder we get to the stage where it becomes impossible for a man and his wife, starting off in life, to contemplate buying a home for themselves. That, I think, is our most pressing problem and it requires something more than putting a tax on razor blades to solve it; it requires getting down to the fundamentals of the position and placing a check on where the

increases are taking place. We should not start off by blaming the workers because they are not working fast enough, or because they are going slow in industry. That is an easy let-out for a lot of people who want to find an explanation for the present circumstances that exist. They say the workers are working too slowly and are not producing enough, and that that is why we are short of goods. I am not going to say that all the workers in industry are pulling their weight; not by any means. But what I am going to say is that they are not getting very much encouragement to do it better.

I was speaking to a man engaged in the plaster industry: a man who came back from the war and got a job with one of the monopoly firms in this State. He was a very conscientious workman, and he found that he got no more wages and no more encouragement than the man who worked beside him and did not have any interest in his job. So he thought he would like to get out and do something for himself, but that is as far as he got because "monopoly" would not supply him with the plaster. Here is a man who wanted to work harder for himself and produce more, but was not allowed to do it.

It did not pay certain business interests to foster that independent spirit even though they had to start that way themselves. There is too much of that, and if we got to work on that sort of business we would do something towards checking the inflationary spiral and keeping prices down. I have a number of matters with which I propose to deal when the appropriate departments are discussed, but before I resume my seat I want to say something of which I hope the Chief Secretary will take notice.

Mr. Marshall: He is very attentive at the moment anyhow.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think it is time we had some definite information as to what is going to happen with regard to the rent Bill. I hope I am not justified in doing so but I am slowly coming to the conclusion and I feel myself impelled to think, that the Government is not at all anxious to bring that Bill here.

The Chief Secretary: What makes you say that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, just a general impression!

Mr. Marshall: How long have you been framing the Bill?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: One of the things that makes me say what I have is that the Minister said more than a month ago—

The Chief Secretary: I gave you the reason this morning.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister gave me no reason at all.

The Chief Secretary: I gave you the reason.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister made a statement that it was proving a little difficult.

The Chief Secretary: Well, what about it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is not a reason.

The Chief Secretary: That is the reason all the same.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Because a job was proving a little difficult would be a reason, I should imagine, for spurring the Minister on. After all, we did start a new session of Parliament in a hurry—

Mr. Marshall: Especially for it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and for no other purpose than to enable a Bill to be introduced with expedition.

The Chief Secretary: We know all about that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then the Minister's subsequent behaviour becomes all the more inexplicable. This is a most urgent matter. Surely the Chief Secretary realises that every week's delay means a further crop of evictions which cannot and will not be prevented, no matter what shape the new legislation takes.

The Chief Secretary: Are you saying we are deliberately delaying the Bill?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I did not say that. I said that I was being slowly forced to the conclusion that the Government was not anxious to bring the Bill here.

The Chief Secretary: You are entitled to your opinion, of course.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And I have good grounds for forming that opinion, I think, in view of the fact that so little activity has been shown.

The Chief Secretary: We will leave it at that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am not unmindful of the fact that there did appear in "The West Australian" a statement showing the policy of the Liberal Party which was to do nothing with regard to the rent Bill.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think we are governed by it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think the Minister is influenced by it; I certainly do.

The Premier: We will bring down a good Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That all depends on what the Premier means by the word "good." I suppose he means it will be a Bill brought down by the Solicitor General, whose name is "Good"! If that is to be the Bill, I had better reserve comment.

The Premier: I expect you to have something so say on it!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And the Premier will not be disappointed; I propose to have a good deal to say about it. Seeing that

the Government showed early in the previous session that it believed there were certain persons who ought to be protected, I think it should have taken steps in sufficient time to have those people protected. But since the 30th September evictions have been taking place which the Government previously wanted to prevent, in many cases, but which it is quite unable to prevent now. We will not be able to take any retrospective action with regard to this matter, so those unfortunate people will just be put out. The only thing that can be said in mitigation of this is that the magistrates have appreciated the situation, and have put a brake on it to the extent that they are dealing with rent cases on only one day a week, and there is a safeguard to that extent. If they were dealing with cases of eviction every day in the week, evictions would be taking place by the hundred and the Government not doing a thing to prevent it. By restricting the hearings to one day a week there is a limit to the number that can be dealt with each day, and this has imposed a brake upon the speed with which these people can be evicted and therefore has reduced the number.

But is it fair that some people should suffer when their case is exactly the same as that of others who most likely will be protected? If we are to get this legislation through by the end of November—and I say "if"—then no doubt we shall be able to protect quite a lot of tenants whose cases will be no worse than those of dozens of others who have been evicted since the 30th September.

When I raised this matter early in the year and asked that a special session be held, I was told that there was no hurry; there was plenty of time. The Deputy Premier stated in the House that the Government would bring legislation down in ample time to do what was necessary. Now, developments have shown that the Government did not take steps in ample time because we are still without the necessary legislation. I know that some Ministers believe that because, comparatively speaking, evictees are not in large numbers, the Government need not worry about the position. I believe that the Premier on one occasion quoted a percentage to show that all the tenants who might be evicted formed a very small proportion of the whole population of the State.

The Premier: I think I said less than 1 per cent.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But where does that line of reasoning lead us? If a man starts out on a journey into the centre of Australia and becomes lost, we do not say that because there is one-hundredth of 1 per cent. of the population lost, we need not worry about him. We spend thousands of pounds on aviation fuel and other means to rescue him.

The Premier: I did not say that we did not worry about it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But the action of the Government suggests that that is its attitude.

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It does. What about all the people who have been evicted and for whom nothing can and will be done? With every week that passes, more and more of them will be evicted—people whom the Government previously was prepared to protect, because the original legislation contained a provision to that end.

Take all the flat-dwellers who found themselves caught up by the provision relating to shared accommodation and who, because they happened to use a common doorway or a common stairway, could be put out with two months' notice! The Government realised that an injustice was being done, and set about effecting a remedy. Now it is too late; most of those people have gone; they have been pushed out. The same can be said of large numbers of others who have had to leave dwelling-houses and who the Government previously thought should be protected. We think they should be protected but, because of the Government's procrastination and delay, they cannot be protected.

I suppose we shall have this good Bill to which the Premier has referred brought down with a great flourish of trumpets. Probably we shall find that it was not worth the time taken to compile it.

The Premier: Let us describe it as a fair Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That remains to be seen.

Mr. Marshall: The Government can hardly justify the delay in view of its having called a new session to deal with the measure.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We cannot pass judgment on proposed legislation that we have not seen, but we can judge by straws which way the wind is blowing. I read a statement by one Mr. Watson who, I believe, works about here.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not here.

Mr. Marshall: He loafs about another place.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He seems to have considerable influence in the Liberal Party and with what it does.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is what he was elected for.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I read his views with considerable interest and I propose to see whether the Bill is indeed his Bill.

The Premier: Did he tell you what was in the Bill?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The newspapers went so far as to say that Mr. Watson had seen the Bill.

The Premier: I do not think he has; in fact, I am perfectly certain that he has not.

The Chief Secretary: Did anyone deliberately make the statement and say precisely that he had seen it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Did not the Minister read the statement in the newspaper?

The Chief Secretary: I have no idea what you read in the newspaper.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Did not the Minister read in the Press about what Mr. Watson had seen in the Bill?

The Chief Secretary: You do not necessarily believe everything you read in the newspaper.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, I do not.

The Chief Secretary: All you can say is that you read the statement in the newspaper, but you do not know whether it is a fact.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is too much interjecting.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know whether it is a fact, but I did not see any refutation of the statement by the Minister.

The Chief Secretary: No, and you will not, either.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then can I be blamed if I think there may be some basis of truth in the statement?

The Chief Secretary: No, you cannot be blamed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When "The West Australian" published something that the Deputy Premier was supposed to have said regarding the matter, he lost no time in refuting it.

The Chief Secretary: That is right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then a reasonable assumption is that, if a further statement appears affecting another Minister and he does nothing about it, at least there is some basis of truth in it. It would be extraordinary if Ministers were going to allow such statements to appear which, when inaccurate, were not corrected. I know that I would correct them.

The Chief Secretary: I would not say that I would not take any action of that sort.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would not allow the Press to put an inaccurate statement into my mouth without taking action to rectify it, and any Minister should adopt that attitude.

Mr. Marshall: As a member of Parliament is not permitted to see a Bill until the second reading is about to be moved, why did not the Chief Secretary refute the statement?

The Premier: He is refuting it now.

The Chief Secretary: I said so a little while ago.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I tell the Premier that there cannot be any justification for further delay in view of the fact that these evictions are taking place. A number of these people—not all—should not be evicted at all, but it will be impossible to give them any remedy because they have gone. Why delay the matter and keep so many people on tenterhooks? Let us have the Bill, for what it is worth, and see what steps the Government is prepared to take! Let the Government come into the open and indicate what it thinks! I do not expect members on the Government side to think as we do, because they represent different interests, but let us see what the Government thinks, so that we can get down to a basis and do something for these people who need protection.

The Chief Secretary: You will have an opportunity.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, provided I live long enough.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [9.30]: Mr. Deputy Chairman—

The Minister for Lands: I wanted to reply to the debate on wheat matters.

Mr. BRADY: I am sorry if I have upset the Minister for Lands, but some other members may wish to speak about primary products and stockfeed later on, and then the Minister will be able to reply to the whole discussion. Last week-end a man on the border of my own electorate rang me and said he was concerned about the wheat and offal position. He stated that he had 2,000 pullets, and if he was not able to get feed for them by the middle of next week he would have to get rid of the lot. I daresay that position obtains in other electorates as well, and I will be interested to hear the Ministers' reply to questions regarding stockfeed. I want to refer to a number of matters affecting my electorate. I am sorry the Minister for Education is not in his place because, putting first things first, educational facilities constitute the greatest problem in my electorate.

The Premier: Unfortunately the Minister will not be back this evening. Why not reserve your remarks on education until the Education Estimates are being discussed?

Mr. BRADY: That is a good suggestion, and I will take the Premier's advice. There are a number of educational matters I wish to discuss, covering the needs of Midland Junction, Midvale, South Guildford, Bassendean and Hazelmere. I was going to indicate how serious things are from an educational point of view, but I will postpone my remarks till later.

The Premier: I think that will give you greater satisfaction.

Mr. BRADY: Yes, and I think the Minister will appreciate the opportunity of hearing what I have to say. The next topic I wish to discuss is hospitalisation. I was pleased to hear the Minister for Health say earlier in the session that she hoped to have tenders called within three months for the midwifery section of the new hospital in the Midland Junction area. I hope members will not feel that the residents of Midland Junction are the only people who will benefit by that provision. I think it has been estimated that some 30,000 people in Midland and the surrounding areas will be served by the hospital.

I hope, however, that the Minister for Health will not feel that the establishment of the midwifery section will solve all our difficulties, because there is a crying demand for a general section as well. I read in the paper recently that it was expected that a hospital worth £17,000 would be built at Carnarvon, and I think a member in another place twitted the Government with the fact that that hospital was being built for the convenience of one doctor.

I would point out to the Minister that in the Guildford-Midland electorate and the surrounding electorates there are at least 14 doctors for whose patients there is no general hospital. There are two private hospitals in the district and they have been overcrowded for many years. I hope therefore, that the Minister will continue to keep in mind the difficulties of Midland Junction and surrounding electorates, because the general hospital position is most unsatisfactory.

An important point to be made in this connection is that the St. John Ambulance Association is confronted with a huge expense in providing ambulance facilities for people who have to be taken to Perth and to private hospitals at Midland Junction. I will not say anything more about that, but hope the Minister will keep my remarks in mind, and will try to help us with the establishment of a general hospital in Midland Junction as well as a new midwifery section.

I turn now to the question of the pollution of the Swan River. Last week I asked some questions as to whether the Minister for Works was aware of the discolouration of the water in the vicinity of the Guildford bridge, and the Minister gave me an undertaking that he would have an inspection made. I read in Friday's paper that two gentlemen, one of whom was Mr. Drake-Brockman, an engineer of the Public Works Department, had visited Guildford and had said there was no discolouration at all. They said certain weeds were in evidence along the banks of the river, but they had been able to see the bottom of the river during their visit to Guildford and to Barker's Bridge.

I doubt whether Mr. Drake-Brockman or his associate could see the bottom of the river. I frequent the river almost daily and have not been able to see the bottom, and I have tried doubly hard since that statement appeared in the paper. How those gentlemen can say they saw the bottom of the river I do not know. I venture the opinion that there are weeds to a depth of two ft. at the bottom of the river, and they would not be able to penetrate that growth however hard they tried.

Since those gentlemen said that they could not see any discolouration in the river I have actually spoken to a number of electors living on the river bank and have asked them whether they could see any discolouration. They assured me that two months ago the water in the river was discoloured. As a matter of fact, it was two months ago that I first observed the discolouration myself, and I assert that the water is definitely discoloured, despite what those gentlemen said. It will continue to be discoloured; and the discolouration has been occasioned by the silting of the river, by the considerable amount of debris that has fallen into the stream, and by the fact that there has been no dredging or removal of rubbish from the river for over a quarter of a century. That alone will have the effect of discolouring the water and possibly of bringing about its serious pollution.

I would also draw attention to the fact that now the catchment wall of the Mundaring Weir has been raised there will not be the flushing of the river that previously took place. There will be nowhere near the volume of water flowing along the Helena River and, as a consequence, that will slow down the flow of the stream and will cause a certain amount of pollution and discolouration. I feel it is my duty as member for the district to bring the matter to the attention of Parliament in the hope that the Minister will take note of it, and see that a serious attempt is made to clear away the silt and debris.

Reference was made by the member for Melville to the difficulties which poultry producers are facing in regard to feed-stuffs. Right along the line in primary production things are beginning to be very difficult. Frequently there has been a shortage of milk. Not only has powdered milk been in short supply, but even liquid milk is getting difficult to obtain at certain periods. Recently there was a shortage of butter, and in Parliament House we were told that cheese was not available for the diningroom because it was in short supply.

In the Hazelmere-Bushmead area there are about 30 or 40 primary producers, who for the last 25 to 30 years have been trying to make a living out of primary production. They are interested in stock-raising, poultry-raising, milk production,

apiaries and honey production generally. They are in need of water and electricity. I mentioned in this House previously that the women there have pointed to buckets in their backyards to show that they are carting water, the same as they did in Coolgardie 30 years ago. In the evenings they go from house to house with hurricane lamps, the same as they did in Coolgardie 30 years ago.

I mention these points so that the Minister for Works can make a note of the fact that these people are in urgent need of water. They have to draw water from underground with petrol pumps. Many of them are about to renew their pumps, and they do not want to enter into the extra expense if electricity and water supplies are to be provided in the area. I have made representations to the Under Secretary for Metropolitan Water Supplies in the hope that he will bring the matter to the notice of the Minister. I trust that the Minister will look into the request of these people. Two lots of requisitions have gone forward.

Transport is not improving in the Guildford-Midland electorate. I had occasion to read to the House, when speaking on the Address-in-reply debate, approximately three weeks ago when the new session commenced, a letter from one of my electors in connection with a very bad service in the metropolitan area. The Premier was annoyed that I should take up the time of the House to bring the matter to the notice of the Government. He said my approach was not the way to get over the difficulty. Well, despite the fact that the letter I read was sent to the Railway Department, and despite the fact that I brought the matter to the notice of the Government and a new timetable has been issued, that unsatisfactory morning service is still in existence. So the electors of Guildford-Midland are annoyed to think that the Government is ignoring their request for an improved railway service.

The service could be improved and economies effected. I spoke last year about the number of trains that run to Midland Junction, and which frequently arrive at their destination of Midland Junction or Bellevue with less than half a dozen passengers. The Minister for Works will recollect that about a fortnight ago he was in my electorate, and I pointed out to him that a full train of five coaches and an engine pulled into Bellevue station, and one passenger alighted. That train consisted of an engine worth about £40,000, a train crew averaging about 30s. per head and five coaches worth the best part of £60,000 or £70,000, and it had to run a distance of a mile and a half to convey one passenger to Bellevue. This has been going on for some years. I am not too sure that the member for South Perth did not ask me last year just how long it had been going on.

If the Government tackled the position properly, it could terminate the train that runs to Bellevue, at Midland Junction, and even if it had to hire a taxi and pay twice the existing rates for the three or four passengers to go to Bellevue it would save money. I am not suggesting that that be done, but some suitable arrangement could be made for a reduced fare. The Government, however, could engage a taxi rather than convey one or two passengers to Bellevue by train; or it could arrange to have the Bellevue passengers conveyed from Perth by the road transport that goes to Bellevue at various intervals during the day.

I have already complained of the unsatisfactory railway services, and I now wish to touch on road transport as it affects Bassendean. Here again, I complained in the House of the unsatisfactory road service operating to Bassendean, and I also read a letter to members, being the complaint of two electors about that service. I have received a letter from the Transport Board advising me that it has gone into my complaints, but feels there is no substance in them. I suggested that a bus which now runs to Bayswater should be extended to Bassendean. The board wrote to me on the 25th October and stated that it had gone into the matter but could not agree to my suggestion.

I have here the timetable for the Maylands-Bayswater bus service and, according to the timetable, there are 47 buses running from Perth to Bayswater between 6 a.m. and 12 noon daily, or an average of one every eight minutes. In the afternoon, 72 buses run to Bayswater between 12 noon and midnight, or an average of one every ten minutes. But the people in Bassendean get only 13 buses in six hours in the morning, and 26 in 12 hours in the afternoon, or approximately one every half hour in the morning and in the afternoon. I point out that the Government bus now running to Bayswater very often waits a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes at the terminus.

The Government is doing the wrong thing. It is trying, apparently, to give the private transport company, which is operating the service to Bassendean, an opportunity to pick up the passenger service there but, because the people living in Bassendean have had such a raw deal from the private transport companies, they are refusing to get on the buses. If the Government bus service ran right through instead of finishing, as it now does, at Bayswater, I believe the people of that area would again patronise the road transport service. At present they have an unsatisfactory service from both the Railway Department and the road transport people. If Government departments do read the speeches of members on the Estimates—as the Premier assures me they do—I hope they will pay some regard to

my comments and try to extend the service, which at present terminates at Bayswater, through to Bassendean.

In reply to representations by me, the Transport Board said it could not agree that the service was unsatisfactory or that the buses were running late, as I had stated in my letter, but on the same day a further letter appeared in the "Daily News" pointing out that the buses were not running to schedule and that the service was most unsatisfactory. In addition to people writing to me, as member for the district, complaining that the service is unsatisfactory—which the department denies—apparently there are also persons in my electorate who write to the "Daily News" in order to point out that the position is not satisfactory. It is about time the Government asked the Transport Board what such contradictions mean.

I do not think the electors of that area would write to me, as their member, and to the board, complaining about the service, just for the sake of writing, and I would like the Government to ask the board why these complaints continue. Until the position is remedied I will continue to ventilate the complaints in this Chamber and probably, in the opinion of some members on the Government side, waste the time of the Committee.

Mr. Hoar: You are not wasting the time of the Committee.

Mr. BRADY: I must continue to take up time on such matters until the position has been remedied, with regard to both rail and road services. I believe both services could be vastly improved if proper inquiries were made.

I come now to deal with the quality of the coal supplied to our railways. I have here a letter dated the 1st August, 1951, from the secretary of the Loco. Drivers' Union. I will read it in order that members may know some of the difficulties under which railwaymen work, particularly with regard to the quality of the coal. I think this is a matter on which the Government could save a considerable amount of money. I might mention that I, personally, made inquiries into this matter for nearly a month and eventually decided that I should mention it here tonight. The letter, which is addressed to me, reads as follows:—

Dear Sir,

Regarding complaint of the members of the Midland Branch of above Union. That bad quality coal is being supplied to locomotives and the difficulty of trying to maintain section running, owing to engines not steaming sufficiently free, due to inferior coal supplied. Open-cut coal has a large percentage of slate which will not burn, and makes clinker and ash, which prevents air from being drawn through the fire-bars. It is

often necessary to clean the fire several times during a shift, on locomotives fitted with ash-pan slides. Some engines are not fitted with slides, and the only means of cleaning the fire is over a pit, in order to go underneath the engine, to rake out the ash pan. As it is not always possible to go over a pit, the men have to battle for the whole shift with a dirty fire. This sample of coal I am sending to you is some of the inferior coal picked from tenders of locomotives and you will see what would be the result if a large quantity is mixed with coal, which is not a great deal better.

Yours faithfully,
J. F. Griffin.

I have here the sample of coal that was sent to me. We hear complaints that trains do not run on time and that railway-men are losing time, and I think coal of this quality is largely responsible. The piece of coal I have in my hand is about 6 inches square and 2 inches deep, but it is as light as a feather and is what is referred to as slate. It will not burn in the fire. When the grate gets half-full of this stuff the fire will not draw, and there is a consequent loss of steam and loss of time. The result is that the railways lose money in overtime, the public are dissatisfied with the service, and there is a general economic upset. This slate comes in the coal that is supplied to the engine-men and with it they are supposed to do their job. I have here a further sample of coal. It is about the same size as that which I previously had in my hand but it is about 50 times as heavy, weighing nearly 40 lb.

Mr. Hoar: I could not lift 40 lb. as easily as that with one hand.

Mr. BRADY: The hon. member does not know my strength. That is what is known as slag and will not make any fire at all. I asked the loco drivers how much of this slag they got, and one man assured me that on one occasion he had 50 per cent. of his tender full of it. That is bad enough, from the point of view of the economic aspect and the delay, but I believe we get thousands of tons of this material from Collie. It costs £3 8s. 9d. a ton at Perth and £3 9s. 7d. at Midland Junction. I asked the Minister some questions about the quantities and he said that at two of the three open-cut mines at Collie the coal is passed through the screens and loaded with deep mine coal.

The actual quantity of open-cut coal purchased cannot be accurately determined, but of the total production of coal for the year ended the 30th June, 1951, which amounted to 835,000 tons, approximately 37 per cent. was represented by open-cut coal, and locomotive coal

purchased would be in approximately the same ratio, so it would appear that we get huge quantities of this material. It would not take very much coal of this nature to cost the railways a small fortune, with no beneficial result at all. In fact it would heighten the cost of running the railways, apart from breaking the hearts of the engine crews who have to use this coal both summer and winter. I believe this is an avenue through which the Minister representing the Minister for Railways could make the position easier for the railway-men. Their difficulties are numerous enough without having to work their engines under bad conditions.

Another disability suffered by the railway-men is the lack of conveniences in the running sheds. At the moment the department is advertising for boys between the ages of 15 and 16 years to learn cleaning. Huge wages are being offered—up to £6 5s. a week—and most business houses in the metropolitan area are complaining about it. Even though these huge wages are offered, there are not sufficient boys applying for jobs and those that do offer leave the railways very quickly because the amenities in the loco sheds are so bad. I am told that up to five and six lads are using one locker between them at the depot. So if a boy goes to work in a decent suit of clothes, or if he wishes to lock up any valuables or equipment for his bike, he has to share one locker with five or six other lads. Those are the conditions which determine whether or not young men will take up railway work. I have already ventilated in this House the disabilities being suffered by railway-men.

I also brought up in the Chamber the question of spark-arresters and I intend to mention them again tonight. I think this is a question that is involving the Government in a considerable amount of compensation. According to a reply I got last week from the Minister representing the Minister for Railways, the Railway Commission intends fitting the master mechanic type spark-arresters to all locomotives in the railway service at a cost of £136 for each arrester. Members can imagine how much that will cost the department. But the worst feature about it is that this particular class of spark-arrester was tried out as far back as 1947 and was found to be unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact, an engine man told me that last year 25 fires were caused in 24 miles of line between Narrogin and Wagin. The engine was fitted with a master mechanic spark-arrester. Despite all that, the department intends to fit this type of equipment to all locomotives.

I enter a protest against public money being utilised in that fashion. If a spark-arrester has been investigated and found unsatisfactory, why should the Commission proceed to fit the type to all locomotives in the service? All Country Party

members would be wise to investigate this fact, particularly if any fires occur in their districts. I have been told that a "P.R." class engine which left Midland Junction last week caused three fires between there and Chidlow. That locomotive, too, was fitted with a master mechanic type spark-arrester. I believe the Commission is now trying to use all sorts of arguments to try to justify the use of this type of equipment.

There is another aspect of railway administration that needs investigation. The dandy of the lot, and probably the classic in regard to expenditure, concerns the new timekeeper's office which I mentioned in a question last week. I asked the Minister, representing the Minister for Railways, whether a new timekeeper's office was being built, whether a contract had been let and, if so, what was the tender. The Minister replied that a contract had been let, and a new timekeeper's office of 12½ squares was being built at a cost of over £4,000. There are very few internal fittings in a timekeeper's office and I think most members have seen them at some time or other.

Is it right that railway money should be squandered in that fashion? Should a contractor get £4,050 for erecting a building of 12½ squares? Members might wonder why I raise this question, but I do so because quite a number of railway-men from the various departments have asked me whether I have seen this building. Apparently this structure has been in the course of erection for some time, and because I have been asked so many questions about it I decided to go and see the building for myself. I drove past and it was quite obvious to me why there had been so many complaints about it. It was brought to my notice because railway-men are so disgusted with this sort of thing.

I want members to realise the moral effect this has on conscientious workmen. When those men see public money being squandered in that fashion they say, "If it is good enough for the top and tall poppies to throw away money at the rate of £4,000 for a 12½ square building, it is good enough for Bill Jones to sit down on his tail in the workshops and do nothing."

Mr. Perkins resumed the Chair.

The Minister for Lands: That is great leadership, that is!

Mr. BRADY: That is the way the leaders are carrying on.

The Minister for Lands: You should be giving a lead yourself.

Mr. BRADY: I said that that is the way Bill Jones looks at the position. The men see this sort of thing going on, and it is being condoned and supported by the heads of the departments who are paid huge salaries. It is about time that the Government and the Minister for Railways asked some questions about it and took some remedial action. They do not

want to get any idea that this is an exaggeration of the member for Guildford-Midland. The Minister representing the Minister for Railways gave me the information when I asked a question in this Chamber, and that information is available for all members to see. I hope the Government will not blame the rank and file of the railways for all these difficulties. That is the invariable practice, but during the last five minutes I have pointed out the disabilities under which the railway-men are forced to work, while on the other hand the men see the bosses throwing away public money. So I hope the Minister will do something to clear up the position.

I now want to touch on the question of infant health centres. I do not intend to criticise because the nurses and the sisters, under Dr. Stang, are doing a remarkably good job even though they are faced with many difficulties. In my electorate there is a sister who is trying to look after five different districts. Midland Junction is the centre and from there the sister has to go to Midvale. Somebody has been kind enough to hire out a garage at a sum of 2s. 6d. a week so that the sister can attend to the cream of the nation. From there she goes to the Bellevue Hall where the local people have been good enough to hire a room in front of the hall. Then she goes on to Millendon, or Herne Hill, where the C.W.A. have been kind enough to let her have a room. After that the sister travels to South Guildford camp where, if the mothers are interested and sufficient babies are brought along, the sister uses a front verandah or a storage shed. The sister is paid £11 10s. or £12 a week, but a considerable amount of her time is wasted in travelling.

I suggest to the Minister in charge of this department that a motorcar be made available to the Infant Health Section so that the sisters can be taken to these various districts. It is not necessary to have one car for each centre, but a car could be made available so that the sister, in my electorate for instance, could visit the various centres. The other alternative is the establishment of a mobile infant health clinic so that, in addition to attending the four or five districts I have mentioned, the sister could attend to other centres as well. I think I have said enough about that problem for the Minister to realise that there is something to be said for a review of the infant health position.

There is the matter of traffic fees, petrol tax and omnibus fees that are being received by the various local governing bodies. I understand from the Bassen-dean Road Board that it will get approximately £5,000 from traffic fees, but £1,000 of that is earmarked and must be spent on a specific road. It receives nothing from the petrol tax or the tax imposed on commercial vehicles which are using its roads. Therefore, I hope the Minister adminis-

tering the Transport Board will inquire into the matter with a view to ascertaining whether road boards can be given more money, either from the traffic fees or, if possible, from the petrol tax, if such a method can be evolved. I think it was last year that the members for Maylands and Middle Swan, representatives from several of the local authorities, and myself waited on the Minister for Works and pointed out that the main road that goes through from Guildford to Perth via Bassendean and Maylands was deteriorating into a deplorable condition, and the deputation wanted the Minister to provide some revenue to do the road up.

The Minister said that he was not in a position to do anything for them but that he was to attend a conference in the Eastern States where the petrol tax was to be discussed, and that after the conference he would let them know what resulted. As far as I know, the Bassendean Road Board has heard nothing further. The warning I want to issue tonight is that the Government will have to accept some responsibility for these main roads and the huge cost involved in maintaining them, which roads pass through the territories of these local authorities. I hope the Government will be able to obtain something from the petrol tax to ease their burden. They get nothing from the fees charged on commercial vehicles, which are paid at the Transport Board, and the Minister may be able to look into that aspect, with a view to providing the local road board with some extra revenue.

I now wish to raise the matter of the police station and the police quarters at Midland Junction, and the possibility of making the Midland Junction area into a magisterial district. At the moment, and as has been the case for many years, if there are any matters to be dealt with in the local court, the magistrate must come from Perth to Midland Junction. Recently the Midland Junction Municipal Council carried a resolution stating that it considered that Midland Junction should be turned into a magisterial district and a magistrate stationed at that centre. The district embraces a huge area extending as far as Moora and Wongan Hills. I am therefore certain that it is large enough to warrant the appointment of a magistrate. The police station at Midland Junction is not nearly adequate for the work performed. It is a very small structure and, although certain improvements have been promised, so far as I know nothing has been done. It is time the department went into the question of erecting a new police station and new quarters for the policemen stationed in that area.

The sergeant has told me that he is in the precarious position that if a riot broke out, or any emergency occurred, he would have to go as far afield as six miles to get two or three policemen to-

gether, because of the difficulty of obtaining accommodation for his men. I know one of them is living at Bayswater and another did live at Darlington, and where the others are living I do not know. I think the Attorney General should give consideration to building an up-to-date police station and police quarters in the district as well as considering the appointment of a magistrate.

I now wish to refer to sewerage and drainage. The whole of Midland Junction is unsewered, and drainage constitutes a grave problem. The Health Department has had some very keen health officers visiting the district recently, and they have pointed the gun, as it were, at the municipal council and said that it had to do certain things. One of them included the enforcing of the regulation that people were not permitted to run their waste water into the street, and also that it had to ensure that the health of the community was generally protected.

Over the years, it has been common practise for people to run waste water into the street, and they are now being threatened with fines by the municipal council and are in a dilemma as to what they should do with the waste. If they run it into their backyards it will not drain away, and children are then playing in unhygienic surroundings. They are also faced with the prospect of being fined by the municipal council for disposing of it in this manner. I want the Minister to give regard to the proposal of sewerage the whole of the town. The Minister is fully aware of the position because he met a deputation recently on the subject. The position in regard to stormwater drainage is equally bad, and something should be done urgently. I hope the Minister will take steps to improve the position.

As to superannuation, the Premier said he was going to reply to the Leader of the Opposition on this matter tomorrow night. So that I shall not take the Premier unawares, I want to acquaint him with a small section of railway employees who constitute a difficult problem in regard to superannuation. Although it may seem incredible, there were a large number of employees who had joined the department in 1901 and who were still with it in 1938.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member is getting on to something that is the subject of a Bill before the House.

Mr. BRADY: Probably I am, but I just wanted to bring this matter before the Premier—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member cannot proceed with that; it is against the Standing Orders.

Mr. BRADY: If I cannot, I will have to speak on the third reading, which is something I wished to avoid.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.20]: The member for Melville brought to the notice of the Chamber this evening the question of wheat for stock feed. He introduced it as an urgent matter and I would like to assure him that the Government is treating it as such. I have had numerous requests in regard to the question both from members of this Assembly and from several organisations. As a matter of fact I have a bundle of telegrams with me now concerning the subject.

Mr. Graham: What are you doing about it?

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: If the hon. member will keep quiet I will tell him.

Mr. Marshall: Cannot you be civil? The hon. gentleman is entitled to make a perfectly ordinary interjection.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: This morning one of the first interviews the Premier and I had was with Senator McLeay to bring the matter under his notice. I was also present this morning when the Premier put through a telephone call to the Minister, Mr. McEwen, stressing the concern we felt over the stock feed question. Of course we are undoubtedly living in very troublesome times.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I have been waiting five years for that admission.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: I would say that we are living in a very vicious circle. Members will agree that when there was an indication of a shortage of butter people began to stock their ice chests with large quantities of that commodity; and the same also applied to tea. Undoubtedly some of those people requiring wheat for stock feed have also stocked up.

Mr. Marshall: No.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: I feel they have stocked up to the disadvantage of other stock feeders. The week before last I was at a conference of Ministers at Melbourne, and I showed quite a keen interest in the breakfast table of the worker, as the hon. member put it to-night. We agreed that the wheatgrower should not be called upon to subsidise other primary industries, if his wheat is worth 16s. 1d. and if that is world parity he should get it. We endeavoured to get the Commonwealth Government to agree further to subsidise wheat for stock feed, because we believed that if it did so it would be of great advantage in keeping down the basic wage and other costs. I am informed that there was quite an amount of wheat at Fremantle until yesterday. But I believe the wheat available there for stock feed was depleted yesterday. I heard the hon. member say there was still wheat at Fremantle.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You heard the member for Moore say that.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: That is correct, but I understand it is wheat that is committed to export and that contract will have to be carried out. There is, however, wheat available in Bunbury; there are 3,000 tons of wheat there which amounts to 111,000 bushels, and this is available for those that require it for stock feed. Any man that lodges his usual order with those in authority, through his agent that has supplied him in the past, will be supplied and receive his normal needs. I am also informed that there is sufficient wheat held back in Western Australia for our stock feeders. The member for Melville suggested that I confer with my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, with a view to dealing with the matter urgently. I appreciate the urgency of the situation and that will be done tomorrow.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What hope is there for bran and pollard?

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: The hon. member may think that the millers appear to be holding back bran and pollard.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: They are ceasing operations and paying off their staff.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: We know that in some mills there is bran and pollard. The conditions applying to bran and pollard place the miller in a position in which it is difficult for him to release that bran and pollard, because the arrangement with the Australian Wheat Board is that the miller may grist wheat for wheat flour, and this applies particularly to oversea flour. But the price he will pay for the wheat is not decided until he ships the flour and, I understand, he cannot arrive at the price of the bran and pollard. The member for Moore can correct me—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is quite correct, but surely that is not an insuperable obstacle. Some arrangement should be possible.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: I believe that it holds up the release of bran and pollard.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Surely some means can be devised to solve the situation!

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: We are treating it as a very urgent matter and we will devise some means. These times are very difficult and very often the producers—and I say this with due regard to them—create the position themselves by over-buying as they have already done in Fremantle, where wheat that was available for stock feed was cleaned up yesterday. If producers would take their normal requirements the position would, I feel sure, be much easier today. I am very concerned about the matter for the reason that I concur to a large extent in what the member for Melville has had to say.

I am concerned because I represent a big proportion of the poultry farmers in this State, and also of pig raisers. I do not represent, as other members do, a great many of the wheatgrowers. If I were to take a personal and perhaps a parochial outlook of the matter I would be more concerned about the poultry farmers and the pig-raisers than I would be about the wheatgrowers. Nevertheless at the conference we agreed—and I think it was the right attitude to adopt—that the wheatgrower was entitled to world parity.

Mr. Marshall: There has not been much activity by this Government in regard to world parity for the gold producer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is another question. What I am discussing tonight is wheat for stock and poultry feeders. I do not know that I can add very much to what I have already said. I do treat the matter as urgent.

Mr. Marshall: You have been stirred into action at last.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not a question of being stirred into action; the Government has been well aware of the position and is fully apprised of what may be the outcome. We have ever present in our minds the difficulties we encountered over the butterfat position, and in that instance we acted from the word "go." We were in constant touch with the Commonwealth and did everything in our power to overcome the difficulty. We took similar action with regard to wheat for stock feed. The wheat is available, and knowledge of that fact should give the stock feeders some feeling of security. As I have already stated, there are 3,000 tons or 111,000 bushels of wheat available at Bunbury, but those who require it will have to pay the freight from Bunbury.

Mr. Rodoreda: How has this position developed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It has developed as a result of the indication that the price of wheat for stock feed would be increased.

Mr. Rodoreda: You would not have thought that users could have bought up so much in so short a space of time.

Mr. Ackland: The normal supplies were at Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so, but some people undoubtedly overbought and cleaned out the stock at Fremantle. I have the assurance of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and of the Australian Wheat Board that wheat is available at Bunbury, and some is also available at Geraldton. I cannot see that we can do anything more at present, but I shall discuss the matter again tomorrow and pursue it with all possible energy with a view to ensuring that poultry-farmers and pig-raisers get the supplies they need.

MR. RODOREDA (Pilbara) [10.32]: Very seldom do I intrude into the general debate on the Estimates, but there are some matters that I cannot conveniently discuss under the departmental Votes and so I am taking this opportunity to mention them. I was interested to hear the speech of the member for Gascoyne, which was not very complimentary of the Government's efforts in the interests of the North. I trust that he will continue his advocacy and give us a hand in the hope of getting from the Government some consideration for and attention to the North as a whole.

It appals me to realise the lack of interest, the absolute apathy and indifference displayed by nearly all Ministers towards anything pertaining to the North. Complaints that I make to various Ministers are just side-tracked or ignored, or else the usual excuses are given by the departmental head. It is amazing to find that we have not a departmental head who ever makes a mistake. Every action taken can be justified and is justified by him. The member for the district is just brushed aside and treated as if he were merely making complaints for the sake of making them. Everything is happy and correct, according to the departmental head.

I am astonished that Ministers should be fobbed off with this sort of thing. When members make serious complaints they are brushed aside, and the departmental head is believed in preference to the members. This has been the experience ever since I have been in Parliament. I have heard the member for Murchison complain of the same thing on various occasions. Another point is that the member for the district generally knows more about the area concerned than do all the civil servants, and yet he is never consulted before an important decision affecting his electorate is made.

As an indication of the apathy and indifference displayed towards the North, I shall quote an instance or two and shall probably enlarge upon them when the departmental Estimates are being discussed. It has taken just on three years to build 120 miles of road from Port Hedland to Marble Bar, 100 miles of which was of the best possible surface that merely needed grading. There was supposed to be some urgency about this work, but the construction of the road is nowhere near finished yet and I want to know the reason why. This is utterly fantastic in view of the fact that there is no heavy work on the road, except on the last 20 miles leading into Marble Bar.

In the middle of 1948, the Premier promised a water supply for Port Hedland and undertook that the money would be provided for the purpose. That was nearly four years ago, and the people of Port Hedland are still waiting for the water supply and I daresay they will be waiting for it this time next year.

Another matter is the housing position. The Minister for Housing knows how deplorable it is. Over four years have elapsed since the Housing Commission promised to build six homes at Roebourne, and not one of them has yet been finished. But nobody cares; nobody seems to worry! The question of roads and road construction is another matter on which I could enlarge and will probably do so at a later stage.

The procedure in connection with the closure of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway is one of the greatest moment to me. Whilst I agree that the Government had no course open to it other than to close the line, I cannot find words strong enough to disagree with and protest against the method adopted by the Government in giving effect to its decision. I would not have brought this subject up in the Chamber had it not been for the unsatisfactory reply given by the Premier in answer to some questions asked by me last week.

I have never heard of a Government decision being made with so little regard to the conditions existing in the district as in this instance. I fully expected that the line would be closed about the end of this year. That was my summing up of the position, knowing the local conditions but, towards the end of last April, I wrote to the Minister for Railways asking him whether any date had been fixed for the closing of the line and I was informed that it would be closed early in May.

I arrived in the district towards the end of May and, for some reason unknown to me, no publicity had been given to the letter I had forwarded giving the people at most three weeks' notice of the closing of the line. I found that there was no transport available to cope with the goods that were offering. Sufficient trucks were not available and no organisation was ready. The first knowledge the stationmaster had of the closing of the line was gleaned from a statement in the Press less than a fortnight before the actual closing, and he had to wire to the Commissioners to ascertain whether it was correct. He received a wire in reply, a bald statement—"Yes." So the manager of the whole concern is given ten days' notice and immediately the district is in an uproar, and I do not blame it. There was a meeting between the two road boards, and word was sent to the Railway Department asking for the closure to be deferred until the end of June.

After I had made some investigations into the whole position, which should have been made beforehand by someone in an official capacity, I found there was no possibility of water being conveyed to Port Hedland by that date or of the road being finished as the Premier had promised. At that time the Premier was in England, so I immediately sent a wire to the Deputy Premier, suggesting that the railway should not be closed before

the end of August. Within three or four days, the Deputy Premier replied that that would be arranged, so there were three different dates of closure up till that time.

When I arrived in Perth, I saw the Minister for Transport and told him what the position was, and he said, "The Railway Commissioners should know of this. We will have to go down and see them." Of course they should have known about it before they made any decision at all! If those people had been given four, five or six months' notice of the date of closure there would not have been half the uproar. But it came like a bomb-shell to them.

The Minister for Transport tried to defend himself. He said the people knew the line was going to be closed because they had been told that once a road was provided it would be closed. I said, "That is why they knew it was not to be closed, because there is no road there yet." Then we had a meeting with the Commissioners who, of course, as a deliberate policy in the last three or four years—they had been carrying out Government policy—had neglected all maintenance on that railway and did not worry about getting any traffic for it, so that a very good case could be made for its closure. No-one can tell me that it was not a deliberate policy.

The Chief Commissioner said, "We have not carted a bale of wool on that railway this year." I said, "No, Mr. Hall, but you could have carted every bale of wool, not only this year but the years before. You have the Transport Board and the Transport Act to safeguard your railways if you so desire." And the Commissioner said, "The Transport Board has no power in that area." Our Railway Commissioners are about six or seven years behind the times. They do not know the Acts under which they are working.

After we had thoroughly threshed the matter out at that conference, it was agreed that the closure must take place about the end of September at the earliest. That was another date. I was promised that a further conference would be held before that. Another matter I brought to their notice was the sale of rails. I wanted to know who had fixed the price. No-one seemed to know; but they were sold for about half the price that could have been obtained. Had I been consulted, I could have stated what price rails were bringing 20 years ago. It was far more than was wanted for these particular rails, and those others were in a far worse condition.

The Commissioners doubted my word, so I told them to wait till tenders closed. When that happened, it was found that there were tenders for 10 more miles of rails than were available, for the simple reason that they were a gift at the price. But the member for the district was never consulted. No-one worries about his ideas or his knowledge of the district.

We had another conference in September, attended by engineers, the Commissioner for Main Roads, the Railway Commissioners, and the managers of the State Shipping Service and the Harbour and Light Department, and every conceivable civil servant who had the slightest bearing on transport matters. At that conference, promises were made which I knew at the time could not be fulfilled, and which I asked for in writing from the engineers concerned and from the deputy for the Commissioner for Main Roads. They would not give them to me in writing, and of course those promises have not yet been carried out.

Then I received a letter from the Minister for Transport, saying that the 31st October was the final date fixed for the closure of the line because it had become too dangerous to carry any further traffic. So now we have the spectacle of something that I tried to avoid and which I suggested to the Minister could be avoided—the running of a train, with a loco. driver, fireman and guard, 60 miles out to cart water to Port Hedland. What is that going to cost per 1,000 gallons? I would be sorry to have to pay it, ashamed to be responsible for it. Imagine running a train 60 miles out to cart water to Port Hedland and for that purpose alone, when the line could have been kept in order to Marble Bar and traffic run right through as I suggested to the Minister for Transport!

That line could at least have paid running expenses by carrying cargo and using water for back-loading. But now, for some months, that train will have to run out 60 miles a couple of times a week to cart water to Port Hedland, because the promises made by Government engineers and the Main Roads Department have not been kept and could not possibly have been kept, as I knew when they were made. I want to utter a very strong protest against that sort of thing going on. It is no wonder there was an uproar in the district when the news was made known, and people had only a fortnight's notice that the line was going to be closed.

Mr. Marshall: About all this Commission is doing is to close railway lines.

The Premier: Some of them want closing, too.

Mr. RODOREDA: Unfortunately I have to stand all the backwash.

The Premier: Your late leader advocated closing some.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Our ex-leader.

The Premier: Yes, I am glad he is not your late leader.

Mr. Marshall: It does not matter what anyone else says—that is my opinion of the Railways Commission.

Mr. RODOREDA: Another matter I want to refer to in connection with this uproar, which I am positive was caused solely by

the inefficiency of Ministers and the Railway Commissioners who had charge of this business, came to a focal point when the line was actually closed and the incident concerning which a photograph appeared in "The West Australian" last week occurred. I cannot find any words strong enough to express my contempt for "The West Australian" in joining the pack of dingoes there in the sport of baiting members of Parliament. I thought "The West Australian" had a certain amount of dignity. I did not think up till now that it had joined the gutter Press.

The Premier: I think that must have been the first time you had been caricatured. You get used to it.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am not worrying about that. Let me go further and explain my attitude in this matter. I would have nothing to complain about if it were a joke, but I know who was responsible and I know it was no joke. I know it was deadly serious. This savours of Ku Klux Klan methods, and of witch-hunting; and "The West Australian" gladly joins in this ridiculing and vilifying of a member of Parliament in connection with something which he did not do. I wonder whether the Premier would have enjoyed it so much if it had been his effigy.

The Premier: I have seen a few of them.

Mr. RODOREDA: Of course; but the Premier was responsible. If we condone this sort of thing in relation to public men, I shall be sorry for Parliament. We have lost whatever dignity we had, I suppose largely through our own actions these last 20 or 30 years, because we have been satisfied with a measly salary and to lower ourselves in the public eye by being wood and water jorneys all the time. Now we have the leading newspaper joining in the great sport of vilifying members of Parliament. I do not think we deserve this—any of us—simply because we happen to disagree on an important point with some small section of our electors.

Parliament as a whole should take exception to this sort of thing, which could happen to any of us. As "The West Australian" approves of it, it will continue to approve of any section of electors getting up and threatening all sorts of things against their member because he happens to disagree with them. That is the attitude I take; it may be the wrong one. If this were a joke in Marble Bar I would not be worried about it, but I have had this for six months now and I know what is behind it, and so I am taking exception to it. This is the only reason I got on my feet tonight, because I could not speak on this matter under a departmental vote. If the Premier had been willing to stand up to what he had done, and had given me decent, solid and unequivocal answers to the questions I asked last week, there would not have been any of this.

Progress reported.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 8th November.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [10.52]: When we amended the Vermin Act last year we were not careful enough with the phraseology. A number of mistakes were made that now have to be rectified, and the Bill before us proposes to do this, by removing certain superfluous words, and generally straightening up the phraseology. The Bill, however, is not confined to that, but contains one or two other amendments. If we except the one dealing with the provision for the increase in tax, we can say that the amendments are of a minor nature. There is provision that instead of the minister collecting the tax, and deciding what it shall be, the protection board will do that. I see no objection to this because it is in conformity with the provision already made in another Act. I thought at the time the rate was fixed it would not be adequate. I think if the relevant "Hansard" were looked at, it would be found that when I spoke on this matter I expressed the opinion that the amount of money required to do the job would need to be larger than was being provided for.

The Minister for Lands: That is right. You did mention that.

HON. J. T. TONKIN: Circumstances have proved that I was right in that surmise, and is now necessary to increase the tax. I notice that the matter has been referred to the various organisations that would naturally be concerned with an increase in the tax, and they agree that it is necessary. So, there should be very little complaint about it. After all, if a job is to be undertaken we must have the necessary finance for it; and there is a real job to be done under this vermin legislation, so adequate funds must be provided for the purpose. Beyond this, the Bill does not propose to do very much, so it can be truthfully said that not a great deal is involved in it. What is being done is necessary, and I take it, because of the need to increase the tax to raise more money, the opportunity is being taken to correct the language which was not quite right because it was overlooked when the amendment was made last year. We have no objection to the Bill from this side of the House and agree to its passage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Section 103 amended:

HON. J. T. TONKIN: In studying the amendment and the Act, I was not altogether clear as to what really brought about the position where certain lands belonging to churches and the like became ratable. I would be glad if the Minister would state exactly what happened so that I will be clear on the meaning of the amendment. It seemed to me that the trouble arose because we had taken out of the Act specific mention of these organisations, and had provided for these lands in municipalities that were not greater in area than 10 acres. It seemed to me that that brought about the difficulty, but I am not sure on the point and I would like to be.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Taxation Department has found that many properties owned by public institutions such as the University of Western Australia, and public parks, reserves, cemeteries, etc., are at present taxable. In order to remove this anomaly, an amendment is necessary to bring the rating provisions into line with those in force for the land tax, and so exclude such places as I have mentioned from the vermin tax.

HON. J. T. Tonkin: What made them taxable?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Evidently an anomaly in the Act.

HON. J. T. Tonkin: That is not good enough.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I shall endeavour to get the correct answer. This is not a point by which the hon. member is seeking to hold up the Bill?

HON. J. T. Tonkin: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will get the information for the hon. member, as I desire to give the correct answer.

HON. J. T. TONKIN: I endeavoured to find out how, though we did not intend to rate these lands, what we did had that effect. There has been nothing in either the Minister's speech or the amendment to suggest what the true position is. The amendment is an entirely new provision but it does not indicate what was wrong with the existing provision, or how it resulted in these lands being taxable. I am wondering whether it resulted because we took out specific mention of these bodies and instead provided that land not exceeding 10 acres in extent should be rated. I would like it explained before the Bill is passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In framing the amendment of last year, the advice of the Taxation Department was sought and accepted because it had the machinery necessary to perform this duty for the State but, when the actual assessing was commenced, the anomaly was revealed.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: They might be wrong this time and might have been right last time.

The Premier: I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I had the chief officer here in order to be able to give the exact information.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I know, and I am sorry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wanted to be in a position to answer any questions.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I assured the Minister that I would not raise any point that would require him to keep his officer here, but subsequently I became worried as I could not see what had occurred. It must have been carelessness on the part of the department in advising the Minister in the first place, which resulted in placing in the legislation something that had an effect opposite to that intended. We should be told what was wrong on that occasion in order to avoid the same trap again.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is new legislation and we are having plenty of trouble in getting it into working order. The three Bills to amend the Acts which relate to the Agriculture Protection Board have been necessary to correct anomalies that have arisen.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

SELECT COMMITTEE—THE PERPETUAL EXECUTORS, TRUSTEES AND AGENCY COMPANY (W.A.) ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE) BILL.

Adoption of Report.

Order of the Day read for the consideration of the report of the Select Committee.

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Perkins): I report that the Bill contains the several provisions required by the Standing Orders.

Mr. TOTTERDELL (West Perth): I move—

That the report of the Select Committee be adopted.

Question put and passed; the report adopted.

SELECT COMMITTEE—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR AND AGENCY COMPANY LIMITED ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE) BILL.

Adoption of Report.

Order of the Day read for the consideration of the report of the Select Committee.

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Perkins): I report that the Bill contains the several provisions required by the Standing Orders.

Mr. TOTTERDELL (West Perth): I move—

That the report of the Select Committee be adopted.

Question put and passed; the report adopted.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 14th November, 1951.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Bunbury (Roman Catholic Old Cemetery) Lands Revestment.
- 2, Real Property (Foreign Governments).

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

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