

we have the same amount of tonnage, that will mean quite a considerable saving again not only to the industry but to the people in Carnarvon.

In the past, beans have been transported by road at the rate of £28 a ton, but the high cost was due mainly to the uncertainty of backloading. Now that backloading will be permitted, there is every reason to believe that a considerable reduction will be made in transporting beans south. One of the reasons why we should be able to expect a reduction to about £12 a ton for the transport of our perishables is that in New South Wales—I have this information on reliable authority—a trip of 580 miles by road would be charged at the rate of £11 a ton. So, an extra £1 a ton for the additional 20 miles would not be out of the way.

I might mention, too, that the price per ton mile in New South Wales for the cartage of bananas is 2.57d. which is lower than that charged between Geraldton and Perth. So, again New South Wales has slightly cheaper railway freights than we have here. But the freights on the railways will not be worrying us so long as we can get our fruit transported all the way by road. I trust that the Minister will see fit to bring in an alteration to the Act so that all perishables from the North-West or from that part of the State north of the 26th parallel may be transported to Perth without restriction and that any commodity for delivery north of the 26th parallel may be allowed to be carted there without restriction.

This will not in any way affect our natural mode of transport, which is shipping. As shipping becomes available, it is not unreasonable to expect that any supplies for Carnarvon or northward, would be carried by boat because people would not pay £12 a ton if they could get their cartage for £5. Therefore I consider it would in no way be detrimental to the natural mode of transport for the North-West if the Act were altered as I suggest.

One other aspect of the Transport Act and the North-West is the tonnage charge made by the Transport Board to people such as pastoralists who buy a new truck, and the bean carriers who take backloading. I have said a great deal about a tax-free North. We all agree that that is what should be the position, but let us start at home and clear away one of our own taxes. Let us remove the tonnage tax charged on these goods which are sent to the North.

Another question is that of vermin, which are increasing throughout the North. The dingo menace, particularly out towards Meekatharra, is now worse than it has ever been before. Whether that is due to the removal of the rabbit-proof fence, is hard to say. But some people are of the opinion that the dismantling of that fence has allowed a

number of dingoes to come through towards the coastal areas. Some stations have killed up to 50 or 60 dogs in the last 12 months, whereas previously, in a similar period, they would get only two or three.

It is debatable whether the aerial baiting is doing any good at all and those who are on the outskirts of the areas where it is taking place do not think its value is anything commensurate with the amount of money that is being spent on it. Apparently they consider that if the money spent on aerial baiting were expended on ground control, a much more effective result would be brought about.

Another matter in which the C.S.I.R.O. and the vermin control officers are active is the control of kangaroos which, since the development of the stations and the consequent easy access to water, have bred freely and continue to do so owing to the absence of shooters who now refuse to go out in view of the high cost of ammunition and transport and the low price they receive for the skins. Another menace that is gradually creeping into the North is the fox. Whether the fox does any damage in those areas is hotly debated by certain pastoralists but from the information I have gleaned, there is no doubt that this pest is claiming far more lambs than is evident and is thus keeping the sheep population of the North down to a minimum.

On motion by Mr. Jamieson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.35 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 17th August, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.**TIMBER.***Royalty on Fencing Posts.*

Hon. J. MURRAY asked the Chief Secretary:

What was the royalty paid by farmers for fencing posts obtained from Crown lands on—

(a) the 1st July, 1953;

(b) the 1st July, 1955?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(a) and (b) 1d. per post.

However, when settlers request good quality mill logs for splitting into posts, a royalty equivalent to the log royalty applying in the district is being charged.

SHARK BAY ROAD SECTION.*Construction, Transport, etc.*

Hon. N. E. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Does the 80-mile road section from Shark Bay townsite to the main Carnarvon Highway traverse private property?

(2) Is the road a fully formed one or merely a clay strip road, and by whom and how is it maintained?

(3) Would the Minister agree that better results in claying this 80-mile road would be obtained by watering and rolling to overcome much of the difficulty of transport over this section?

(4) Is the Minister aware that of the Birreda clay used on the road, one type is pure clay and the other contains gypsum; and some of the inferior clay containing gypsum has been used on the road by the Main Roads Department gang?

(5) Is the Minister aware that the Public Works Department let a contract for the cartage of piles, sleepers, rails and timber for the Shark Bay jetty, and that the vehicles used in the contract carried approximately 15 tons of material per load, over the 80-mile section of road during recent months?

(6) Did the contractors who transported the material for the jetty have a permit, or permits, to carry over and above regulation loads?

(7) If the answer to No. (6) is "no," were the regulations enforced by officers of the State Transport Board?

(8) If the answer to No. (6) is "yes," what axle tonnage per load were the permits granted for and on what types of vehicles?

(9) Would the Minister advise the House of the number of permits granted to carry over regulation per ton axle loading, and to whom, during the years ended June, 1954 and 1955?

(10) What sections of the Traffic Act and regulations and the Road Transport Act and regulations applicable to this road are under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Works?

(11) Are there any regular shipping facilities available from Shark Bay for the transport of fish to the metropolitan area?

(12) Does the entire population of Shark Bay rely upon road transport for groceries, foodstuffs, bread, meat, fruit and vegetables?

(13) If the answer to No. (12) is "yes," could the Minister advise the approximate weekly total tonnage of the requirements mentioned which are transported by road?

(14) Is the fuel required for the fishing boats of Shark Bay transported by road or sea?

(15) What weekly tonnage of fuel for the fishing boats is transported—

(a) by road;

(b) by sea?

(16) Is wool from the Shark Bay area transported by road; and if so, what tonnage is carried by the vehicles used?

(17) Is the Minister aware that the State Housing Commission has acquired ten acres of land at Shark Bay, and proposes to erect homes on the site?

(18) Will the Minister inform the House whether the regulations governing tons per axle loading will be strictly applied to vehicles carting State Housing Commission materials between Geraldton and Shark Bay, particularly over the 80-mile clay road section?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) It is almost certain that the road traverses pastoral lease. A search of land titles over the 80 miles would require to be made to obtain a complete check.

(2) The type of road is clay strip constructed and maintained by the Main Roads Department.

(3) No.

(4) Materials available are of a complex and variable character. Materials containing gypsum are used in many places by the department in road building.

(5) Contractors normally operating in the area were engaged to cart material for the jetty. A multi-axled vehicle did carry approximately 15 tons of material. Another contractor engaged by the State Housing Commission also carted material in a multi-axled vehicle.

(6) Operators carrying out this cartage work did not have permits to carry over and above regulation loads, and it is not known that regulations were broken.

(7) Any permits issued by the State Transport Board are subject to traffic regulations being observed.

(8) Answered by No. (7).

(9) One only each year to the Northern Supply Co.

(10) None.

(11) No.

(12) Yes.

(13) Information not available.

- (14) By road.
 (15) (a) Information not available.
 (b) None.
 (16) Wool is transported by road, but information is not available as to the tonnage carted from season to season.
 (17) No; but the State Housing Commission has applied to the Lands and Surveys Department for three building lots at Shark Bay.
 (18) Yes.

DESTRUCTION OF KANGAROOS.

Measures Undertaken and Proposed.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is the Government aware of the increasing menace of the kangaroo to the pastoral industry; and that many stations are carrying more kangaroos than other stock?

(2) Has any research been done by the Agriculture Protection Board towards the scientific destruction of this pest?

(3) If any such trials have been held, will the Minister state where and with what results?

(4) If nothing has been done on these lines, has the Government any plans for a scientific campaign for the eradication of the kangaroo?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government is aware that the kangaroo is a serious problem in the pastoral areas.

(2) Yes.

(3) Trials were carried out in the Kimberleys and the North-West during the dry seasons of 1952, 1953 and 1954. Various baiting materials were tried to ascertain their suitability for wholesale poisoning. Bran and pollard baits with strychnine gave kills of up to 90 per cent when climatic conditions were suitable. The Department of Agriculture made accommodation available at Abydos-Woodstock Research Station for a research team from the Wild Life Division of the C.S. & I.R.O. to study the kangaroo problem.

(4) Plans have been made for co-operative work by the Agriculture Protection Board and C.S. & I.R.O. in the northern areas during the coming season. Efforts will be concentrated mainly on improved water poisoning methods.

EXPORT FRUIT CASES.

Supply by State Saw Mills.

Hon. J. MURRAY asked the Chief Secretary:

Has the State Saw Mills entered into a contract with the co-operative fruit packers for the supply of export fruit cases, thereby almost, if not completely, shutting out orders from individual growers packing their own fruit for export?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

For many years it has been the practice of the State Saw Mills to market the bulk of its production of fruit cases through wholesale distributors. Orders from one or two new buyers have been accepted this year. At present, the normal annual production has been fully booked.

GERALDTON WATER SUPPLIES.

Basis of Revaluation and Method of Inspection.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What basis did the Water Supply Department officer use for the recent revaluations at Geraldton in respect of—

- (a) private premises;
- (b) business premises;
- (c) hotel premises?

(2) What was his method of inspection of private homes?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Net annual rental value, being a proportion of the fair rental value in accordance with the Water Boards Act—actually 60 per cent.

(2) Personal visit and, where possible, internal inspection.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [4.39]: In speaking to the Address-in-reply I would like to join with other members in congratulating you, Sir, and also the House Committee, on the work that has been done in this Chamber. The lighting has been much improved and a great deal of comfort added to the Chamber as a result of that work.

This year has been an exceptional one throughout the North. Good rains have fallen everywhere, with the exception of some places in the Gascoyne area. Much progress has been made with badly needed public works, and the system of roads in the North has been improved out of all knowledge. Great strides have also been made in giving homes to workers, many houses having been built throughout the North-West. I am glad to say that hospitals and equipment have improved, and much work has also been done in the schools. While all the people in the North appreciate the progress made by this Government, there is still much to be done. Ever since I have been in this House I have stressed the need for developing the North with a view to increasing the population there.

However, one of the first things about which I would like to speak is not developmental work but an industry which is already established, and for which I implore the Government to do something. I refer to the banana industry at Carnarvon,

which is threatened with insecurity and even with annihilation. While we are undertaking huge developmental works in the North, I think we should first guarantee this industry, which is already established, and see that it is secure. For, as I have said, it is threatened with annihilation through lack of water supplies. If something is not done soon, many of the banana-growers in the Carnarvon district will face ruin—indeed, they are facing it now. I think the Government is aware of these things; but I feel that all members in the House should also know the position as it stands, so that if any matter relating to this subject comes up they will be able to give it their support.

Year after year the position has worsened. As the industry has grown, so have water supplies become less, and the saline content of the water has increased. It is not everyone who would say that the shortage of water is caused by the increased acreage, even although a few years ago there were 60 banana-planters on the Gascoyne River and today there are 160. As the industry has been built up, so have water supplies become less and less; and, as I said before, it is not everyone who would say that it is the increased acreage that has made the position what it is today.

One man who has studied the river carefully over a long period seems to think that the rains and big floods of a few years ago washed out the clay barrier at the mouth of the river; and now, instead of the water being held in the natural reservoir and forced out into the sand ridges, it is flowing straight to the sea. There is evidence that the salt water flows upstream much more than it did in the past. We should do something about it. Mr. Ellis, the Government Geologist, in his report has recommended that clay barriers be placed across the river; and it is his firm belief that these clay barriers would hold the water and force it out into sand ridges and improve the position.

The Government has started work on this project by putting down bores and testing the clay bottom in the river. I hope we will have some real and rapid progress so that these people may be guaranteed a supply of water. If they do not get it they must walk off their properties. It is not possible to grow good quality bananas without plenty of fresh water. And it is only by growing good quality bananas that we can hold the markets we have at present, or capture new ones.

I would plead with the Government to get on with the job of putting in these clay barriers. They should be given a trial; if they are not what is wanted, they will have been tried, at any rate. If they do the job—and the Government Geologist thinks they will—a great service will have been rendered to the banana-growers at Carnarvon.

Hon. L. A. Logan: What about a series of barrages?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: In his recommendations, Mr. Ellis suggests that one clay barrier be put in as a trial; and if it proves successful, then a series could be put in further up or down the river according to the reactions and the data obtained on the first one. He is of the opinion it will work; and anything that is likely to work is surely worthy of a trial, regardless of the cost. This industry has been built up and is now worth in the vicinity of £500,000. It has built Carnarvon to what it is today.

Before we branch out into anything new in the North-West, we should look after that industry and see that it survives. Although new developmental work is urgent in the North, this matter should be given particular attention.

The Minister for the North-West: You know it is receiving attention.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, but I think the members of the House should know the position, so that if anything comes before this Chamber in relation to it they will be able to give the matter their support. Like every other primary producer, the banana-grower is suffering from high costs of production. The high cost of transport at present swamps most of the grower's profit. But now that the road from Geraldton to Carnarvon has been declared a main road, I think it will be only a matter of time when that road will be sealed, which in itself will do a tremendous amount of good for the banana industry. The lifting of the ban on carting bananas and other perishables straight through from and to Carnarvon must have a beneficial effect on the industry.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Government, on behalf of the banana-growers and others concerned for what it is doing. The average banana-grower receives approximately 1s. 1d. gross for his bananas, and out of that he has to pay all costs. We are all aware that bananas are selling in Perth at 2s. per lb. and over; and it seems to me that the retailer is getting more than the lion's share and the grower is not doing too well at all.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Bananas waste a good deal very quickly, you know.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: That may be so; but when the bananas are brought here they are usually in good condition and they are not kept very long. I do not believe that there is as big a waste as the hon. member would like to think. Somebody in between is getting more than he should, and I do not think that applies only to bananas. If we could have some form of controlled marketing, by means of which we could ensure the grower the full benefit of his labours, we would be assisting the industry. I think that applies not only to the banana industry but to other industries, particularly fishing. And I am not forgetting, either, the primary producers.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They are all the same. If they can get an extra 1d. or 2d. they do so!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: That is true. We find that the man who actually grows the produce gets the smallest share; and those who do the least towards producing it, and are mostly engaged in handling and selling it, get the lion's share. That seems to be the trend throughout industry.

Much has been said by me in the past, and by other members representing the North, concerning developmental work in that area, and about the need to populate it and allow its vast territory to be developed. Over the past 12 months, I think much ground has been gained, and now everyone is saying that we must populate and develop the North; that we must use the vast stretches of country to be found there; and begin agricultural work and other enterprises, and improve the beef industry.

When one realises that there are more people working in some of the departmental stores in Sydney than reside in the whole of the North, one cannot help thinking it is time something was done to put that valuable land into production. We do not want to grow there any of the things that are grown in the south, such as wheat, but rather to produce other commodities; and if assistance were given towards that end, we would find a market off our northern shores that could be explored with satisfactory results.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We will allow you to grow onions.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I wish that could be done. It has not been done yet. No land has been made available. It is not possible to get land for that purpose in the North.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is on account of the terrible Government that we have!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: How much did the hon. member release when he was Minister for Agriculture?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I was in office for only one year. Your Government has been in power for two years.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: If the hon. member had been in office longer, it would have been different! He has a big, soft heart!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I would like to satisfy you.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I know the hon. member would. The committee that went to Canberra to submit a case for the development of the North was well received by the Prime Minister, who was very much impressed by the facts put to him. I hope that he was so impressed that he will do something practical, and provide money to enable us to get on with the job of developing that part of our country. If

anyone thinks it is not the business of the Commonwealth Government to help us develop that country, I would ask him whether he has ever heard of the Snowy River project on which the Commonwealth Government is spending a considerable sum of money. That project will benefit several states. Surely the Commonwealth Government can similarly help us to develop the north of this State.

I do not think anyone can assert that the State Government is in a position to carry out a project like that envisaged for the Ord River from State resources alone. I believe that the development of the North should be tied up with defence or migration schemes, and any plans which the Commonwealth Government might have designed to foster better relations with the people of South-East Asia. It is a fact that there are still thousands of people in South-East Asia who want food such as rice, beef, vegetable oils, and a host of other things that we can produce in the Kimberleys.

When I was up there this year I stood on the black-soil plains of the Ord River and allowed some of the soil to run through my fingers; and I thought, "If this were gold, people would be running around with pegs pegging out claims before anyone else was able to do so." That soil is worth more than gold, yet we are not afraid of anyone coming to take it from us; nor are we afraid of anyone else developing it. We do nothing about it. All we do is to allow it to be wind-eroded and washed to the sea. For years the land has been heavily stocked and eaten out. The legumes have gone, and nothing is left but hard, fibrous grasses.

Year after year, ever since I have been here, I have tried to have development undertaken on a big scale; and now that an approach has been made to the Commonwealth Government, I am hoping that at last something will be done. The black and red soils of the North have great production potentialities. I think that if those who talk about developing the North—and this applies to the State Government and the Federal Government, too—are genuine, and really want to develop that vast area, it can be done; and I can tell them how to do it.

I believe that beef will always be the main product of the Kimberleys, but the beef produced must not be like that which we have been producing in the past. I consider that the day of the five-year-old and six-year-old bullock has gone forever. The public is demanding and getting better beef today, mainly baby beef. We were told only a few years ago that we would never catch up with beef supplies in our lifetime, but already we find ourselves in the position of looking for markets. I have been told that at Wyndham the first payment this year has been 35s. Last year, I think it was £7, but the type of beef being produced in the Kimberleys is now

very difficult to sell. I cannot see any market for it except Belgium, unless the quality is improved.

It is possible to reorganise the cattle industry in the North to enable us to produce the type of beef required in the world's markets today. That can be done in the Kimberleys. It has already been done to a certain extent at Mt. House. If there is one thing that Air Beef taught us it is that by having meatworks on the spot it is possible to clean up herds and improve them out of all knowledge. I believe that if we had such works scattered more evenly in the beef-producing areas, the same could be done in the Kimberleys as has been done at Mt. House. When I was there, three-year-old bullocks were being killed with a weight of 500 lb. and 600 lb. Some people say they are in the calf pen. If they are, I think they should be proud of it.

Hon. L. Craig: Those are poor weights for three-year-olds.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Did you not suggest two years ago that they were in the calf pen?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Not I. I have advocated the production of better-quality beef; and I think that if we do not produce baby beef, we will not sell our product.

Hon. L. Craig: Those weights were not good for three-year-olds.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: What was the general weight from Wyndham last year? I think it was 540 lb. and it was a lot less from Air Beef. They were five-year-olds and six-year-olds.

The Minister for the North-West: They were heavier.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: They were 540 lb.

The Minister for the North-West: One herd walked 300 miles.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I believe that what has been done at Glenroy can be done on the Fitzroy River, by moving the meatworks from Broome to Fitzroy Crossing and putting a freezer in at Derby if it is not intended to carry on with the Black Rocks project. If it is going to take years to get the Black Rocks project into operation then put it at Derby; and if the present owners of the meatworks at Broome need assistance to move the works, then let them have that assistance. The Kimberley cattle-growers realise that there has to be a reorganisation of the industry to meet the demands of the market today.

It would be a good idea if a conference at Government level were called; and if a co-operative, with the Government as a partner, were formed, and the meatworks moved to Fitzroy Crossing. Much

work would have to be done, such as fencing, water boring and the sowing of pastures; but this has all got to come, because there is no place today for the type of beef that we have been producing in the past. The Margaret River dam would be a wonderful scheme to tie in with the meatworks at Fitzroy Crossing. The engineers tell me that the site at Macdonald's Gorge is an engineer's dream. I have seen it myself; and even with the little knowledge I have of this type of work, it looks to me as though it would be quite an easy job.

The dam, when complete, is estimated to hold 400,000 acre-feet of water. Right in front of the wall there are thousands of acres of rich, red loam suitable for the production of lucerne, which has been grown experimentally in the North. As much as 16 tons of dry hay per acre has been produced in one season, and on the green lucerne up to three cattle per acre have been carried. That would be a good scheme to tie in with the meatworks at Fitzroy Crossing, and I am told that it is within the capacity of the State purse. This job would not cost such a fabulous sum as the Ord River project is expected to cost.

There is another scheme in the West Kimberleys which deserves every consideration by the Government—I feel sure it will get it—and that is the Liveringa rice project. Mr. Kim Durack, who has put in five to six years' experimental work on this project at a cost of many thousands of pounds, deserves every credit for what he has done. I believe that as a result of his experiments the State has benefited by the acquisition of knowledge worth thousands of pounds. Now that the experimental work has been brought to a successful conclusion, the company is prepared to extend its operations on a commercial basis. This year I saw a crop of rice of 80 acres, and it looked very well indeed. Last year's crop gave good results, too, so there is no reason to think that if this project were started it would fail.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What did they do with the grain from 80 acres?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: They sold most of it in the North.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: For household purposes?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Broome will take 100 tons.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Have they a cleaning machine there?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: They have a good machine mill and everything else. This is the first one of the secondary industries of the North. Mr. Rawlings, a retired chairman of the New South Wales Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission assures me that the country has every prospect of growing rice, and is equal to

anything in the whole of Australia. This same gentleman, who has vast experience, was responsible for the starting of rice-growing on the Murrumbidgee; and he is a director of this company, which is prepared to spend £500,000 of its own money if the Government is willing to spend a certain sum to ensure water supplies. I believe the project will cost the Government somewhere in the vicinity of £100,000 to £150,000.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Could they compete with the Darwin proposition?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Dr. E. Phillis of the C.S.I.R.O. told me that our proposition at Liveringa was away ahead of the one at Darwin. He explained to me that on the flats where the project is proposed for the Northern Territory, the controlling of the water will be too difficult; that the area is connected with a series of billabongs so that the water spreads right over it, making it difficult to arrange planting and harvesting times. The ground has to be workable at planting periods. It is no good if it is flooded, because then the rice cannot be planted with machinery. The country must also be dry before the rice can be harvested; otherwise there is nothing but cracked and broken grain.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You would have a job to harvest it.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: The Liveringa set-up is quite different and the results show great promise.

Hon. L. C. Diver: What about the marketing?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Mr. Rawlings informs me that marketing is the least of their worries; and he is a gentleman who is an expert in these affairs.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The world has caught up with rice production; that is why we cannot sell our wheat to the Eastern people as we used to.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: In South-East Asia, and other parts of Asia, there are thousands of people not properly fed. It is not over-production, but under-consumption that is the trouble.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They cannot buy the rice grown in their own country.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let the hon. member make his own speech.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: The rice-growing plots at Liveringa are situated on a creek known in the Lands Department as Snake Creek, but locally as Urella Creek. In the wet seasons, it makes from a series of small creeks at the southern end of Urella Creek and runs to the Fitzroy River, but it is generally too late for the planting of rice. It also makes from the Fitzroy. From the Fitzroy River end, it does not enter Urella Creek until there is 15ft. of water in it. The company wants to cut through a levee

bank to let the water go into Urella Creek when the Fitzroy River is at a depth of 5ft. This occurs at the right time of the year to enable the planting of rice to be carried out with every chance of success; and it would cost the Government only £150,000. It is difficult to explain exactly what is required, but I have a good map of the area which I shall be only too pleased to show to members at any time. All that is needed is for the Government to make a cutting through the levee bank, which is over a mile, to let the water into Urella Creek when the river is at a depth of 5ft. instead of 15ft. This would allow the planting to be done early and would remove any risk of failure. It would also put plenty of water into the creek.

On Liveringa there are some 40,000 acres of plain country suitable for rice-growing. The company has in mind the development of 20,000 acres for rice fields for itself. Many matters would have to be gone into before this proposition could become a fact. The company would need some security of tenure of the land, and the Government would have to agree to do the work I have mentioned. As I have said, the company is prepared to spend £500,000.

Some people might say, "What about the pastoralists in that area?" I said to one of them, "If the Government agrees to go ahead with this project, you know what will happen to all these plains." His reply was, "Firstly I am a pastoralist; but above all that, I am a West Australian. If the Government, or this company, can bring two or three thousand people here to grow rice, we will welcome them and help them all we can." I do not think we will hurt anybody. We have nothing to be afraid of. The experimental work has proved that rice can be grown there successfully. These people are so confident that they are prepared to spend £500,000. That being so, I am sure they have some idea of what they will do with the rice when it is grown.

The Minister for the North-West: What are they going to build with the £500,000?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: It takes a lot of money to get irrigated plots into operation. Already on the 80 acres, the company has spent more than £30,000 on the digging of drains and ditches and putting in pumping equipment, and everything else. Quarters and amenities will be needed for labour. To put 20,000 acres into production, £500,000 would perhaps not be enough. The company does not intend to grow only rice, but rice every three years, perhaps; and in the meantime it would irrigate the plots and grow legumes and grasses, and run stock. That is what is done in the Murrumbidgee area, and this country is not much different. As a matter of fact, the climatic conditions are much better for this type of agriculture.

I do not think the Government should have much hesitation in seeing that the company gets every encouragement possible. If it puts 2,000 or 3,000 people into the North, the number will represent one-third of the present population. If we are really genuine when we say we want to populate the North, here is an excellent opportunity of doing it at little cost. I only wish we had a lot more companies with £500,000 or more to invest in the North. I think there is not much encouragement at the present time for that to be done.

The Minister for the North-West: Why?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: There is no incentive for capital to be invested in the North. Would the Minister, or anyone else with capital, like to invest it in the North where the communications are poor; where the road systems are only now becoming good; where labour is difficult to get; and where all amenities are non-existent; when down here it is possible to get 12 per cent. by putting money into investment companies to finance time-payment purchases?

The Minister for the North-West: Quite right!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Would the Minister do that; or would he, like many people in the North who have made their money there, bring it to Perth and invest it in blocks of flats? We cannot blame people for doing that. It is their money and they have earned it. But there is no incentive to invest capital in the North. Year after year we have tried to obtain taxation concessions to encourage the introduction of capital in that area. I am not going to labour the question of taxation, because I am sure every member in this House knows what we are seeking. The matter was taken up by the committee that went to Canberra recently, and I am hoping that this time we will get some taxation relief, to assist those people who reside in the North, and also to encourage the investment of more capital there. At present I cannot see anyone investing money in the North today when other opportunities are freely offering in the metropolitan area.

The most ambitious scheme that has been suggested for the North is the irrigation project at the Ord River. At the Kimberley Research Station one has to see the progress that has been made to believe it. This year I saw sugar of the Pindar variety with a production rate of 60 tons of cane to the acre, six tons of cane—when crushed—giving one ton of sugar. Such production is equal to any in the world. Dr. Phillis of the C.S.I.R.O., who was there at the time, informed me that if Western Australia's sugar requirements were grown in the Kimberleys, we would need approximately 20,000 acres of sugarcane. A sugar-mill would carry a population of 20,000 including all the people that depend on it. With 20,000 acres that

would mean one person to every acre. That is four times as many people as are in the North now.

There are many thousands of acres of fertile country which could be irrigated if the Ord River were dammed. Not only the growing of sugar, but also the growing of rice has been proved successful, together with the raising of pastures for the fattening of cattle; and these would all play a big part in such a scheme. Cotton can also be grown in the North, and I believe it would be a profitable crop. The dam site is a beautiful scenic spot. I was there this year, and its beauty has to be seen to be appreciated.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You could start a tourist trip.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: No, not a tourist trip, but a business trip on behalf of the people who elected me to this Parliament. When Mr. Dumas visited this dam, he said that when it was full it would hold 2,000,000 acre feet of water, but it is now estimated that it will hold 3,000,000 acre feet of water, or 810,000,000,000 gallons. It would create a man-made lake with a surface area of approximately 170 square miles. It would not only equal any man-made dam in Australia but also it would be larger than any body of dammed water in the Southern Hemisphere. The Ord River runs several times every year, and it could be guaranteed that the dam would be full each year. This scheme is of course beyond the State's finances, and to bring it to fruition would cost in the vicinity of £20,000,000 to £25,000,000. I am told that the dam would cost approximately £5,000,000 to £6,000,000, and the balance of the money would be spent on irrigation systems and related works.

The Minister for the North-West: That is half the Commonwealth surplus.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, and we could use it easily. I think that if the £200,000,000 which we are spending every year on defence were spent on such a project as this, it would be put to better purpose than for the building of aeroplanes, and the manufacture of guns, etc. because the only way that we can adequately defend this country is by encouraging more people to settle in Australia.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Do you not believe in being prepared to meet the enemy?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, but I believe in populating the country first. What is a handful of people going to do? What will the expenditure of £200,000,000 do to protect Australia? That £200,000,000 could be spent on industrial projects and other schemes to bring more people to the country by which means we could better defend Australia. I believe that more and more it is being brought home to us that if we want real defence and greater security we must have more people in this

country. We must have a population that will match our primary industry, and the sooner we get a population of 25,000,000 people, the greater our security will be.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Twenty-five million!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I am told that is the target for the near future, and the sooner we reach it the better. I think that, with the prospect of peace and with international affairs becoming easier, much of the money being spent on defence should be spent on developmental works. Not for a minute do I cry down the work that is being done by the Commonwealth Government with the Colombo plan, but I think that just as much could be done if we spent some of this money on the projects in the North which I have described to the House. This would prove to be of as much help to the people in South-East Asia as it would be to us.

To say that there are no markets for the produce we can grow in the North is wrong, because there are still thousands of people in the world who are looking for food. Various experimental stations, including Liveringa, have proved beyond doubt that we can grow these products successfully. I think it is high time we really got down to it and developed the country to its full capacity.

Most of the schemes I have outlined are for the development of the Kimberleys; but, in addition, not only mining in the Pilbara goldfield should be fostered, but also the sheep and wool areas from Carnarvon down could be improved to carry three times as much stock as they are carrying today. The Government should give attention to carrying out an intensive campaign to eradicate the wild dogs.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And the dingoes.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: If the North country were entirely free of dingoes and wild dogs, which now take heavy toll of our sheep each year, primary production would be greatly increased. Yet this menace is getting worse and worse as the years go by, and in some places it is almost impossible for the pastoralists to carry on. I ask the Government to make some investigation on this subject with a view to carrying out an intensive campaign to rid the country of wild dogs.

I think, too, that experimental work should be conducted, aiming at conserving fodder which nature grows in abundance in the North in good years. This would mean the establishment of several experimental stations throughout the sheep country; but I consider that if this fodder were conserved in the form of hay and silage it would, to a great extent, prevent great losses during droughts.

I mentioned in this House before that kangaroos are causing a great deal of damage and becoming so numerous that

many of the stations are carrying more kangaroos than sheep. I was pleased to learn today, from an answer to a question I asked, that experimental work is being done in this direction; that some research work is being carried out; and that some success has been achieved. I hope that the Government will try to get together with pastoralists to conduct some campaign for the mass destruction of the kangaroos.

Hon. L. C. Diver: They have tried to do that for years.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, but they never had the co-operation of all the pastoralists. It is of no use one man trying to do all he can to destroy the kangaroos on his property when his neighbour does nothing. The only way that destruction of kangaroos can be carried out successfully is for the pastoralists to band together to prepare a plan for a simultaneous and mass attack on these pests. Only then do I think that any good would come of it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I noted recently that one station-owner had seen 350 donkeys on his property.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, donkeys are a menace. They come from the open country, but I think they could be eradicated if a big campaign were conducted against them. I would like to congratulate the Main Roads Department on the progress it has made this year. The North-West roads have improved out of all knowledge. The men who have worked under Mr. Leach and the Main Roads Department engineer also deserve every credit. Throughout the year we have obtained a bigger and better type of machinery. It is more evenly distributed throughout the country, and altogether we have had a more efficient organisation. One would never have believed that such a great volume of work could be done in so short a time. The allocations which this Government has made for the construction and maintenance of North-West roads have become bigger and bigger each year. Last year I think £500,000 was spent on roads in that area, and they are indeed much improved.

All the people in the North now agree with the axiom that Rome cannot be built in a day, but they are pleased and thankful for the work that has been carried out for their benefit. Also, I think that tribute should be paid to the Minister for Housing who has done much to build workers' homes in the North. Most of the workers right throughout that area now have nice-looking homes. They are, of course, built for tropical conditions. I think the Minister could be a little more generous sometimes, particularly in Port Hedland and Carnarvon. In many towns in the North, there is still room for more native homes to be built. The Minister for Supply and Shipping, too, has this

year done a wonderful job; and, with the prospect of two ships being added to the State shipping fleet, we can look forward to a brighter future.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I might get my ship returned to Esperance now!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I think this Government has done more during its term of office than any other Government has done in the past 20 years. It has done more for the North than any previous Government, regardless of its political colour. It has made the residents in the North realise that they are not entirely forgotten and that public works are being carried out, and not, as in the past, neglected. They realise that this Government is not living in the past.

The Public Works Department has made great progress in putting the sadly neglected public buildings into good repair. The Jetty and slipway at Shark Bay, which the people of the North have for so long tried to induce past Governments to build, are under way, as are several other undertakings. All around there is a better set-up today than ever before. With the Ord River Crossing, and another crossing erected across that river connecting Turkey Creek with Hall's Creek, people will be able to travel on the roads in the North for at least nine months of the year. Those who are aware of the bad roads which existed in the North only a few short years ago will realise how much good work has been done in this regard.

Before concluding, I wish to thank all members of this House who in the past year have been so kind as to render me assistance. That remark does not apply only to members on this side. Since I was elected to this House I have made many good friends, and I hope to keep them. I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for your tolerance towards me, and for the way you have looked after me throughout the year. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: (Hon. G. Fraser-West); I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 23rd August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.32 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 17th August, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

Marginal Increases.

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Did all skilled employees of the Government Printing Office receive marginal increases as per the Kelly formula?

(2) If not, what percentage of such employees have not received such increases?

(3) Referring to his remarks on the Address-in-reply debate on the 10th August, is it considered that the failure to pay all skilled employees of the office such marginal increases is "conducive to industrial peace"?

(4) Is it a fact that the printing office is short staffed at present?