

Mr. Graham: You are not making the Premier happy when you say that.

Mr. Jamieson: Do you think you will be able to walk by next session?

Mr. O'NEIL: The disturbing feature of the present legislation, as pointed out by the Royal Commissioner, is the fact that in the existing set-up there is a possibility of a very small group of people, by financial and other pressures, dictating as to who shall govern the State. I think that point should be borne in mind by all political parties, and the people of the State as a whole.

Mr. Hawke: Like the big traders who are crushing out the small businessmen.

Mr. O'NEIL: We must be prepared to accept the fact that the adoption of the recommendation to institute totalisators will, or could possibly, mean a reduction in revenue from the field of legalised betting. Personally I have little doubt as to the advisability and ethics of tying the State's economy, even in a very small way, to such a field.

MR. CRAIG (Toodyay) [4.2]: I formally second the motion.

On motion by Mr. Hawke, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT: SPECIAL

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Premier): I move—

That the House, at its rising, adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 2nd August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.4 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 2nd August, 1960

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

COST OF LIVING

Legislation to Prevent Increases

1. The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND asked the Minister for Mines:

Because statistics show that higher house rents and steep rises in charges for meat continue to grossly inflate the costs of living which justify increased wages and salaries, the Minister is requested to inform this House whether the Government intends to introduce legislation to prevent undue rises in the prices of essential services and goods?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

While it is difficult to form an appreciation as to the meaning of the word "undue" in the honourable member's question, I can say that the Government is giving consideration to the problem that appears to be implicit in his inquiry.

METROPOLITAN RAILWAY PASSENGER SERVICES

Curtailment, and Effect on Staff.

2. The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is it the intention of the Government to curtail metropolitan railway passenger services?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," will the Minister inform the House—

(a) the details of the proposed change;

(b) whether this will involve any reduction in railway staff; if so, how many employees will be affected and where are they employed at the present time?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) and (2) The metropolitan railway passenger service is being examined by the commissioner to see what re-organisation and economies are desirable and practicable, consistent with maintaining a satisfactory service.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT

Silicosis Provisions

The Hon. E. M. HEENAN asked the Minister for Mines:

What progress has been made by the committee appointed by the Government last year to inquire into the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act relating to silicosis?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

I am informed that the committee referred to by the honourable member has concluded its deliberations; is making recommendations to my colleague, the Minister for Labour; and, in the course of time, those recommendations will be presented to and considered by Cabinet.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Second Day

Debate resumed from the 28th July.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [4.39]: May I, firstly, congratulate you, Sir, on your election by the members of this House to the highest office in this Parliament? I think all members will agree with me that, after your eight years as a member of this Chamber, none of us will have any doubt as to your impartiality and tolerance towards members in the course of their speeches and actions in this Chamber. May you long be spared and be given the health and strength to exercise those very vital qualities.

To the new member for the South Province I offer my congratulations; and I also congratulate Mr. Baxter on his return as a member for the Central Province. Likewise, I congratulate all those who were returned as members of this House following the biennial elections on the 30th April last.

These elections resulted in a strong vote against the Government, and there were good reasons for the electors—a responsible section of the electors—adopting such a course. The day following the elections *The West Australian* headlined its Monday issue with the words "A.L.P. Halts Liberals' Advance." The editor of that paper would have been more factual had he headlined the report "Country Party Stems the Liberals' Advance," because, as we all know, in 1958 it was the Liberal Party which encroached on the Country Party at the biennial elections held that year. Labor members held their seats and the Country Party lost one to the Liberal Party in a straight-out contest between those two parties.

Therefore I think the editor of *The West Australian*, after analysing the results, would have been a little more factual had he used the words I have suggested instead of misleading the reading public into believing it was the Labor Party that halted the Liberal Party's advance when, in fact, it was the Country Party which did it. To go a little further, we know that although these Parties are twins in Government they battle with each other to see who shall be the mightiest of the twins.

The Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Strange bed-fellows.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: At the last elections there were two challenges from the Liberal Party in electorates held by Country Party members. In the 1958 elections there were also two direct challenges by the Liberal Party in Country Party-held electorates. Members will recall that there were last-minute nominations from the Liberal Party in those particular areas, and that Party did make progress as it unseated the then sitting member for the Central Province who, I am happy to say, has fought a comeback and is with us one more. We, as the Labor Party, have no interest in the Central or Southern Provinces, because we know they are provinces in which the seats are normally and essentially held by Country Party members.

I was impressed with the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver when opening this session of Parliament; I was also pleased when I heard His Excellency tell us of the progress that had been made with the large works initiated by the Hawke Government. When one looks through the copies of the Speech which His Excellency so kindly had distributed to us, one finds that if the large Government works, such as the Narrows Bridge, the Wyndham jetty, the Ord River project, the Port Hedland Harbour improvement extensions, and one or two minor works—not forgetting, of course, one other important public job, namely, the construction of the new vessel *Kangaroo*, which is to operate on the North-West run—are excluded, the Government has not initiated any large Government or public works, except the normal construction of schools, hospitals, and State houses.

It is a creditable report on the first year's activities of the Government; but its credit stems from the initiation of those large works by the previous Government. I do not say that that sort of thing should not be done, because Governments change—Governments come and Governments go—and it is only natural that works initiated by a previous Government should be carried on. But some works—and they are large undertakings which concern the development of the far North of this State—have been terminated. There is no need for me to mention all the details, or the reasons why these projects were inaugurated. Over the years all types of Governments have made successive approaches to the Commonwealth Government, and funds amounting to £5,000,000 have been granted by the Commonwealth to be spent on certain projects in the North—projects which had to be approved by the Commonwealth.

However, one cannot help but think it is fortunate that two of the projects—the Wyndham jetty job and that concerning the initial request to the Prime Minister to allow money to be spent on the

Ord River project—were set in motion before this Government took office, otherwise they might have been stopped. I say that, because there has been a hold-up in the building of the Black Rocks Jetty, a project for which all Governments over the last 10 or 15 years have fought, and for which they were eventually successful in obtaining the money required from the Commonwealth. The previous Government succeeded in obtaining the whole of the money from the Commonwealth, and not on a £ for £ basis as was requested by other Governments. But we find that the black hand has been placed on this work, and nothing further has been done about it. What the alternative is I do not know.

The works at Black Rocks have been stopped, or have been held up, and the present Government has engaged a firm of consulting engineers—the engineers who were the consultants for the Narrows Bridge project. This firm has submitted a report, which report, of course, is the very opposite to the general opinion—and this opinion has been expressed on more than one occasion in this Chamber—that a jetty should be built at Black Rocks to serve the Fitzroy Basin.

After being successful in relation to the weight of opinion in this Chamber and that in another place, which emanated from the motions moved by the Hon. A. R. Jones here, and the late Mr. Ackland in another place; after everybody in the State, including *The West Australian*, agreed that the project should proceed; after obtaining the money for it, and after the Hawke Government had prepared the road approaches to it, a change of Government ensued and the work stopped; and it is now condemned. Evidently two Governments were wrong; both these Chambers were wrong; but the consultants, on the other hand, are right, if the Government accepts their proposal.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you expect us to believe that Mr. Tonkin did not raise the red light?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Hawke Government would have completed the Black Rocks jetty and installed a deep-water jetty at Broome, which would have satisfied everybody as far afield as the North Kimberleys. But it has now been thrown into the melting pot; scrapped so to speak.

I remember saying 12 months ago that although we had the money; although we had the Press and every political shade of opinion behind the project, it was stopped. Prior to the 1959 general election—when the election date became publicly known—and the then Premier (Mr. Hawke) had written to the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) requesting that part of the second £2,500,000, which the Commonwealth Government had granted, be used

on the Ord River project, *The West Australian* started protesting under big headlines. It accused the then Government of fiddle-footing or fuddle-footing, or some such term, because that Government had asked to be permitted to spend the excess money on the Ord River project prior to the election.

Since then, 15 months have passed and a new Government is in power. The present Government has stopped the works that were championed by *The West Australian* for many years, and there has not been one word in that paper about fiddle-footing or fuddle-footing, or whatever the expression was that was used by these champions. That, however, is by the way; but it is well that the House should be acquainted with those facts; because it was this House that supported unanimously the motion moved by the Hon. A. R. Jones, here, in connection with the development of the North. Accordingly, I feel that should have been brought under notice.

Members will recall that the Bill authorising the Commonwealth grant to the Western Australian Government for those specific works contained a provision which prohibited the State Government from expending any of those funds on normal public works, such as roads, hospitals, and housing. The expenditure had to be on new works, and the works had first to be approved by the Commonwealth Government before any commencement could be made.

I do not know whether the present State Government proposes to spend money which it is not using in connection with approved projects, but I feel that if it wishes to spend money on other works, such as roads or some other project, it will need an amendment to the Act which the Commonwealth Government passed in connection with the Western Australian grant. It would be quite strange if the Commonwealth Government tied one type of State Government to certain spending and then, when the Government was changed, it turned a complete somersault and authorised the new State Government to spend that money on normal public works.

I have no objection to the Government spending such money when it is successful in getting the Commonwealth Government to agree to sealing all roads in the Kimberleys. From my very first speech in this House I have always advocated that, if the roads were made good, and were sealed, the people would follow; and the country would be opened up in the same manner as it was when the railways, in the first instance, opened the southern part of the State.

But I do raise some objection to the intention of the present Government to seal roads which will be used purely for the purpose of the touring public; or roads specifically mentioned as tourist roads. I

have in mind the road between East and West, running from Norseman into South Australia.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think that would be purely for tourists?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I would reply to that interjection by saying the Premier has made a special feature of the tourist side of this aspect. We have read in the newspapers on more than one occasion the emphasis that has been placed on the value of the tourist trade. I am not sure whether these roads would bring tourists in, or let them out. I would like the Minister to give us an indication as to the Government's views on that angle—would this road help to bring tourists in or let more of them out? I have no objection to money being spent on the road I have mentioned after the industrial roads have been sealed, and after industry has been provided with adequate road facilities.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: And an adequate water supply.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I would raise no objection to this whatever; but when we see, year after year—under Governments of all political colours—cattle being driven 300 miles or 350 miles for slaughter, because the roads are not in a fit condition to carry the road trains, I feel the money is being misspent if it is spent on this tourist road; and particularly if it is spent on a road which is the length of the East-West road which, I understand, runs through some very barren country; or a lot of it does. The Premier anticipated that a good road would open up an area of pastoral country in that region, and I hope it will. But for goodness sake first let us have the industrial roads put in order. From Wittenoom Gorge alone there are some 24,000 to 25,000 tons of asbestos carried annually over dirt roads, and the cost of maintaining the vehicles is terrific.

I can remember when the Hawke Government promised to seal progressively the road connecting Geraldton with Carnarvon in order to aid the agricultural industry on the Gascoyne River. At the 1956 elections the Liberal Party's policy towards the North was to do much better than that. The Liberal Party said it would seal the road to Wyndham. Now that it has the opportunity to show some progress in that direction, we find that it, like many of its predecessors, is looking south and not north. The roads that the Premier proposes to seal would run from Western Australia to South Australia.

However, I feel that first things should come first; and if this Government is to enjoy the credit—it is in a position to, anyway—of opening up and developing the very good country and land which lies in east, west, and north Kimberley divisions, it should concentrate on that area first. The Government should not just tell the people, through the Press,

what it is doing about it. We read lots of headlines, but we do not see much action. It is action which will count eventually.

There are other items in the Governor's Speech which are very creditable. Work at the Serpentine Dam is advancing very well, and quite a number of Bills to amend legislation are to be placed before us. However, there are quite a few items in connection with legislation which we are not told about and which I should like to bring to the notice of members. We have had no information from the Minister for Mines, in his report, apart from the drilling results. His advice to His Excellency the Governor is to the effect that drilling results in relation to iron-ore deposits are most encouraging.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Government, and I think all members will, too, in regard to its efforts to secure an export license from the Commonwealth Government for the export of iron ore from this State. I do not think any of us will have any objection whatever to the Government's ambition in that direction. As far as the export license is concerned, I think it offers a wonderful opportunity for both the Federal and the State Governments to be sincere in their desire to open up the northern areas of this State.

The Kimberleys can be opened up from an agricultural point of view, and also because of their mineral resources, but that section of the North-West lying between Carnarvon and Broome can only attract a large number of people by the development of its mineral resources; and there are some very large iron-ore deposits right in the centre of that area. Large deposits of iron ore exist around the Roebourne, Port Hedland, Nullagine, and Marble Bar areas.

I am hoping that the Federal Government will agree to the export of 10,000,000 tons or upwards of iron ore, and that it will agree to give consideration—I think the Government should ask for this consideration—to declaring that area of Western Australia an export-free area for iron ore. Do not make any mistake in regard to the area of which I am speaking. It is that area which lies in the 8 inch to 10 inch spasmodic rainfall area. It gets, perhaps, 15 inches in two days, and then 2 inches over the next two or three years. Only the export of these huge deposits of iron ore can bring large numbers of people to that area. So, I am hoping the Government will put up a reasonable proposition to the Commonwealth Government and ask it to declare that area an export-free area for iron ore.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Could you define the area more clearly?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It spreads from the North West Cape up to east of Port Hedland. I cannot define the area clearly from memory, but the

Mines Department could advise exactly where the deposits lie and what their value is.

There is not much restriction on the export of manganese from that area, and manganese is supposed to be in short supply throughout the world; even shorter than iron ore. But, for some reason or other, the export of iron ore is restricted although there are very large deposits in Western Australia alone. As a matter of fact, I have here a copy of the report of the Mines Department as at June, 1959, in regard to the deposits of iron ore on the mainland of Western Australia, and it states that they are reserved to the Crown. Therefore, this Government reserves all deposits of iron ore as from June, 1959.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: This Government continued the reservation which had been placed on iron ore for a considerable number of years.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The report states that as at June, 1959, all deposits of iron ore on the mainland of Western Australia are reserved to the Crown and, consequently, no deposit is available for pegging as a mining tenement under the Mining Act.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That is right.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The report goes on to say—

The deposits described in this Bulletin and on which qualified ore reserve deposits have been made along the lines mentioned above and in the text give an inferred reserve as follows:—

High grade ore (above plain level), 60 per cent. plus Metallic Iron: 275,000,000 long tons.

Low grade ore (above plain level), 30-45 per cent. Metallic Iron: 223,000,000 long tons.

Low grade ore under 30 per cent. Metallic Iron: Probably many hundreds of millions of tons.

The reserves are indeed very great throughout this State, and there are some very large reserves in the "dead North," if we could call it that. I refer to the dry northern areas of this State. One only has to look at what mining has done in two projects in the North. One is at Wittenoom Gorge, which has a population of around about 1,000 persons, taking in men, women, and children. A number of people are also dependent on the industry at Rocbourne, where it opened up an area in which previously there was nothing but sheep.

Cockatoo Island, which has been opened up by B.H.P., has a population of round about 300. A developmental programme is to cost something like £8,000,000. The population of Cockatoo and Koolan Islands is expected to reach something in the vicinity of 1,000 souls. So there are two projects alone—one iron ore and one

asbestos—that will be responsible for bringing 2,000 people and a lot of trade to the North.

I repeat that I advocate an export-free license for iron ore for the North so that the country may be opened up.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is not as easy as it sounds.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Commonwealth Government has only to say, "Yea." I know that the Minister would be concerned about how the iron ore may be shipped. I congratulate the Government on continuing to look into the possibility of turning Port Hedland into a deep-water port. However, that does not mean there is no other place. Even if Port Hedland proves impossible to deepen, it does not mean there are no other sites along that area. There are, along the coast line between Onslow and Broome, other deep-water sites which could be developed over a long term.

Cargoes of 3,500 to 4,000 tons of manganese are going out now through Port Hedland. The proposition would not be out of the way, providing that the cost of mining the ore and transporting it to ships did not make the project uneconomic. It is economic with respect to manganese which, in some instances, is being carted some 250 miles to port by truck. If the manganese exporters can operate economically, then I should imagine it would be economic for the iron ore exporters to operate over shorter distances—50 to 60 miles—with good roads over good country.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Not necessarily, but I can assure you that the Government is most anxious to obtain an export license for iron ore.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I hope so.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I am telling you that we are.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I hope the Government is anxious to domicile the export in the North-West and not through an already established deep-water port. Perhaps the Minister can tell us something about that later.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I will.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I know there will be those who would desire to export from the Murchison and through Geraldton. As I said in my opening remarks, this proposal, more than any other, if both Governments are sincere in their desire to develop the North-West, provides a wonderful opportunity to export the ore which lies in the driest part of the North—in the central North—where the sheep-man can do no more.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The desire to ship iron ore from various places is universal. Everyone wants it exported from their own neck of the woods.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We want to develop the North, so let us try. I am also intrigued, to some extent, by the reference in the Governor's Speech to the industrial committee which it is proposed to set up, and where it is likely to finish.

We read in the Press originally, and His Excellency told us, too, that the Minister for Industrial Development went looking for markets in Asian countries. It seems that we have come to a pretty pass if private enterprise is letting its own men or representatives down. I always understood that private enterprise was enterprising and would look to its own marketing schemes, and that there would be no need for a Minister of the Crown to do what a commercial traveller used to do, namely, look for someone to buy the goods produced by private enterprise.

However, I notice in the second portion of the Speech that the Minister went to Europe or America to encourage manufacturers to come to the State. That is a different question altogether. I think it is drawing a little bit on the public purse when the commercial and manufacturing interests of the State ask the public to send a commercial traveller away for them.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: Did he take that committee with him, too?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not know. We read in the paper that it could cost us £100,000 a year to set up commercial agents. We already have agents-general and trade commissioners established in all the principal countries throughout the world. But, according to the Minister for Industrial Development, they are either not doing, or are not capable of doing, this job. That appears to be the analysis of the Press reports. That being so, I say again that surely private enterprise is letting itself down and letting its own Government, or representatives, down. That is the position if it says, "We are not going to send our commercial travellers overseas again; let the public send them."

The Hon. H. K. Watson: For what did Mr. Tonkin go overseas?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He did not go to sell goods.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Just for a holiday!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He went to encourage overseas capital investment; and the present Minister for Industrial Development followed up many of his leads.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: What are you complaining about?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am talking about the first portion of the Speech. If the honourable member studies the Speech he will see that it says distinctly that the Minister went travelling in Asian countries looking for markets, not for capital. He was looking for markets

in which to sell the goods we already have; and I say that is the job of private industry, or private enterprise as it is called.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: No more than that of raising capital.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The trouble with the honourable member's people is that they are sort of half socialist and half private enterprise. They want to be independent and say, "We are private enterprise," but at the same time they want to plunder the public purse to carry out their private enterprise. I do not know where we will finish up with this muddle, but I am sure it is quite unfair when, as a result of this type of expenditure, the Government is forced to increase charges and taxes. The Premier himself says that he will have to increase charges and taxes.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think the Minister should go overseas and shut his eyes to the possibility of exports?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not know anything of what a Minister should do, but I think it is improper that he should take the part of a commercial traveller and sell goods for commercial interests and manufacturers.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I suppose Mr. Tonkin had his eyes shut when he was overseas.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There is quite a distinction, and the Minister knows it. The Minister also knows that the present Minister for Industrial Development went overseas. I have no argument with his following up the leads left by Mr. Tonkin and encouraging capital here; my argument is that public funds should not be used for commercial travellers' jobs. I object to my taxes being spent in that way. I feel it is not fair at all.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I think that is a view in your mind as to what a commercial traveller is.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Or what he is selling.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am stating exactly what happened; or what the Governor told us had happened. If the Minister reads the speech—

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I have read it.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He helped to write it.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I helped to write it.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Minister did offer some advice, but he did not look at that one very closely. As I said previously, the electors, on the 30th April, had good reason to show their lack of confidence in the present Government. Had not the Government by joint action with the Country Party—the Liberal-Country Party Government—completely thrown out rental controls? Admittedly there was not much control, but

what there was was thrown out and rendered useless. The restrictive trade practices legislation was rendered useless by this Government immediately disbanding the Commissioner and his staff during, I think, the very first week the Government was in office. Later it amended the legislation, but very few people can even understand it. I am sure I cannot.

The Government also, in its first year of office, removed the legislation which controlled the price of bread. This has meant, of course, that any baker can charge what he likes for bread. The Government also helped to increase the price of meat by allowing the Midland Junction Abattoir Board to increase its slaughtering charges. The Commonwealth Government also imposed a levy—I think it is 2s. a head—on beasts—beef—slaughtered, in order to encourage and promote the industry. If the beef industry needs any promoting, apart from forcing people to use land which they are not using, I have still to know the direction in which it requires promotion.

The Government also increased the land tax on business premises and residences—and increased it very highly, too. In one case that I know of—I have only seen one assessment—the increase amounted to 30 per cent.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We cannot be blamed for that.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am pleased that the honourable member has reminded me that when the Hawke Government introduced or increased land tax, and the Federal Government abolished it or let it go and handed it over to the States, there was criticism in this House by the Minister sitting opposite, and by others, of the terrible infliction upon the landholders in the State. And I remember that this House would not agree that the primary producers should pay their share of land tax. I think this is the only State in the Commonwealth where the primary producers are exempt from land tax.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Your memory is not very good in that case.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I think this is the only State.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Your memory is still not good.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There may be others; the Minister can tell us about the States—

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I will tell you about that one.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: —where primary producers do not pay any land tax.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: How long since they have not paid land tax in this State?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not know.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Obviously you do not know.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: They do not pay very much.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The metropolitan region pays a lot.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The metropolitan regional plan added 30 per cent. to one city assessment that I know of.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: I think—

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: When the honourable member gets his assessment I think it will be increased by 40 per cent. or 50 per cent.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: The Hawke Government initiated that proposal.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is so, but it never got the opportunity to implement its ideas; and if it had, perhaps its ideas would not have been the same as those of the honourable member. I will say that Mr. Watson was one of those who, in this Chamber, would not agree to exempt racehorse breeders, florists, and others close by, who would benefit from the regional tax.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He did not even support the halfpenny.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: I opposed it.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He stuck to his guns and opposed it right through. Even with the honourable member's assistance, the Opposition, unfortunately, did not have sufficient numbers to defeat the proposal.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: I opposed your sixpence and the Minister's halfpenny.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We did not have any sixpence.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It was much the same result.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Further to the charges I have mentioned, there is, of course, the revaluation for water rates which is in progress in various suburban areas. I have seen only one of these assessments—it was issued about a month ago—and it increased the water rate by something between 20 per cent. and 25 per cent. So we find that the public have to be taxed rather heavily to pay for some of the costs which are entailed—as Mr. Owens says in his article, and he is very close to the Government, it could cost us £100,000 a year—in doing a commercial traveller's act in selling for private enterprise.

Train and bus fares have increased, and from recent reports in the paper I understand there is every possibility of further increases in these charges.

All of these things have caused the basic wage to rise. Yet we find in the Press that the Premier, the Employers'

Federation, and others, are harping on the same old theory that the basic wage causes prices to rise. That is an absolute fallacy. I do not know what came over *The West Australian* on this occasion, but on the 23rd January of this year, when there was no adjustment in the State basic wage following the December quarter, *The West Australian* had this headline—

Price Levels Keep Basic Wage Steady.

Yet, a day or two ago, *The West Australian* was telling us that the basic wage was forcing prices up. The basic wage does not force prices up at all.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: It is just the opposite.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The basic wage never catches up with prices; it is always behind. In the case of Victoria, South Australia, and the Federal Capital Territory, where the basic wage is pegged and has been pegged consistently for many years, prices still rise. In all those States prices do not remain static but rise almost to the same extent as they do in Western Australia.

In this State the two principal factors causing the last rise in the basic wage—I think these two factors also caused a rise in the basic wage during the October quarter of 1959—were meat and rentals. As to the price of meat, this can be controlled only if the farmers so desire. The farmers complain that rises in costs of production will ruin their industry, but in reply I say that, to some extent, the remedy in regard to meat prices is in their own hands. Last session, I think it was Mr. Jeffery who made some remark about a farmer moving at a branch meeting, a motion concerning the price of meat, which raised a complaint that the producer was not getting any increase as a result of rises in the price of meat, but that such increases took place after the product left the farmer. However, that motion was lost because one of the farmers present at the meeting voiced the opinion that it would be wrong to pass such a motion as it was unwise to let the public know too much.

Meat prices have been inflated as a result of America, Japan, and other countries competing in our meat markets. As far as the United States of America is concerned, I was rather amazed to hear, by way of a broadcast one evening last week, that, of the total exports of beef, 88,000 tons were shipped to the United States, and 82,000 to the United Kingdom which, of course, means that the United States is a larger customer than the United Kingdom. The same ratio of tonnages applied to mutton. There were 16,000 tons of mutton exported to the United States and 15,000 tons exported to the United Kingdom. With Japan and, no doubt,

other countries entering the market for meat, as their standard of living improves and enables them to purchase meat outside their own boundaries, so the prices of meat will continue to rise.

As to rents, the other factor which caused the rise in the basic wage, control over rents was in the hands of the Government. In my opinion any increase in rents has been caused by Government and semi-governmental activities.

Land tax has been increased and local government rates have risen sharply, and all of these increases have been passed on to the tenant. Despite these facts, we still have the Government complaining, and the Premier striving to convince the people, that increases in the basic wage cause prices to rise. There is no doubt that the last rise in the basic wage was caused by the activities of the Government, the farmers, and the butchers in the meat trade. It is interesting to examine the quarterly statistics showing the fluctuations and adjustments in the basic wage over recent years.

From 1947 to 1953, during the six years the McLarty-Watts Government was in office, the basic wage rose by £6 14s. 9d., or approximately 125.2 per cent. From 1953 to 1959, the six years that the Hawke Government was in office, the increase in the basic wage was only £1 13s. 3d., or an increase of 13.2 per cent. In the fifteen months during which the Brand-Watts Government has been in office and all controls have been thrown over, the basic wage has already risen by 17s. 2d. per week, which is equal to a rise of 6 per cent. in that short span.

With the lid off all controls as a result of the repeal of the anti-profiteering and unfair trading legislation, it is quite clear that the result has been an inflated economy and inflated costs. I am not sure whether that is good or bad, but it is certainly bad for anyone who is on a fixed salary because such a person has no way of countering the increase and, as we know, any adjustment in the basic wage that he receives is always behind any resultant rise in prices. The basic wage adjustments have never been made retrospective. A man on the basic wage is in a much different position to a salaried or professional officer because, as we all realise, civil servants or Government officers have any increases in salaries made retrospective. This is not so with the man on the basic wage. He obtains his increase in the next pay period and not during the ones in which the increased costs occur. Therefore, he is at a distinct disadvantage.

From all this has arisen a smoke signal as we term it in the North-West. Warnings such as I am about to mention have stemmed from all costs. On the 26th July,

1960, the day following the adjustment in the basic wage, the Premier was reported as having said—

The great danger was that a continuation of the rising wages spiral would price W.A. out of world markets.

No doubt, you, Mr. President, have heard such pronouncements for the last 40 years. I have, anyway. I can remember in 1920 or 1921 that there was a shearers' strike. The shearers asked for another shilling a hundred sheep, and the cry was that if such an increase were granted to the shearers it would ruin Australia. However, the shearers got their shilling increase, the strike ended, and the industry is still prospering. The Premier went on to say—

Wage and salary-earners must view with some alarm a situation which, under the present system, will mean further increases at each basic wage hearing.

It is only natural that they view the situation with some alarm because their wages are always trailing. Wage and salary-earners are very concerned indeed about the present accelerated inflationary spiral.

The Premier admitted that the increase in the price of meat was mainly responsible for the substantial basic wage rise, especially the high prices offered by countries overseas for our meat. We know that; it is elementary. What is required is a home-consumption price for meat on a fair basis. If the producer is sincerely afraid that rising costs are going to ruin his industry and depreciate his land—which I doubt—he should follow the suit of the banana-growers in the early years of establishing their industry. They fixed a ceiling price of 1s. a pound for bananas, which protected them against competition from the Eastern States for many years.

The Premier's statement was followed by a leading article in *The West Australian* dated the 27th July, 1960, which advocated the introduction of amending legislation to abolish quarterly basic wage adjustments. The following is another Press statement which anyone might oppose:—

Wages System "Out of Date"

Legislation to amend the basic wage adjustment system was urged strongly in this month's issue of *Industrial News*, official organ of the Eastern Australian Employers' Federation.

In the same Press article the following paragraph appeared:—

Legislation to increase the 1s. in the Act to 4s. would save Western Australia vast sums.

That is what the Employers' Federation is advocating. The reference to 1s. in the Act means that the Arbitration Court may take action to alter the basic wage when a variation in costs amounts to 1s. or more.

In this Press article the Employers' Federation is advocating that money values should be brought up to date and that there should be a variation of 4s. in costs before the Court has power to act. I feel that where there is smoke there is fire.

When one puts together the comments of the Premier, *The West Australian*, and the Employers' Federation, I think that members of this Parliament can expect to be engaged in some heated arguments concerning the rights of the workers in this State when such legislation is introduced.

There are other matters which are concerning not only members in this House, but also many people throughout the State. For instance, there are many qualified and highly-skilled tradesmen at present employed in the Midland Junction Workshops, who are not certain whether their employment is permanent. A wages worker can be subjected to no greater mental torture than the threat that his future employment is uncertain. The man who is not sure whether he can provide for his wife and family in the future is under continual mental stress.

Large numbers of men in the Midland Junction Workshops, and in the Railways Department generally, are extremely concerned about the action of the Government in taking away work from the workshops which rightly belongs to them. I am speaking of the work involved in the construction of rolling stock. As Minister for Railways, I had the pleasure of informing those men that they would be building a modern set of Westland carriages, and also a number of suburban railcars. The suburban railcars were built first and they were very good. With the change of Government there was a change of plans. I understand that the Westland trains are to be constructed outside the Midland workshops, by private enterprise. Ultimately the workshops will be reduced to a mere service station.

There is no encouragement for apprentices or tradesmen to remain in the workshops if they can find work elsewhere. The workshops have done a wonderful job over the years in training tradesmen of all kinds—electricians, engineers, and mechanics—but they were not all kept employed at the workshops when their indentures were terminated and their time was completed; the workshops could not retain them all. The workshops virtually became the training ground of tradesmen for private enterprise; they produced artisans for private manufacturers in the State. Nobody will or can deny that fact.

I have here a letter from the Railway Officers' Union in connection with the matter. It is dated the 11th April, 1960, and reads as follows:—

These workshops have the proven capacity to carry out the construction of railway rolling stock and, to the best of our knowledge, are the only

industrial undertaking in this State with the necessary equipment to do the work. The prospect of some of the construction being done outside the State is therefore very real.

It should be unnecessary to point out that at Midland Junction Workshops there are engineers and tradesmen who are skilled in this type of work. Not only does the Government's proposal seriously reflect upon these men, but it shows a complete lack of faith in the railway administration as a whole which must, in turn, reflect on the capacity of the Government to control the railways.

As it is believed there are already many thousands of pounds worth of material on hand and on order for the proposed trains, surely the Government's present proposals can only lead to delay, confusion and waste.

That is the opinion of the Railway Officers' Union and all other unions connected with the railways.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Can I have a look at that letter?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Minister is welcome to a copy of it if he wishes. One can understand the desires of the Government to assist those whom it represents, but surely no Government should be forced, coerced or allowed, of its own free will, to take away work of that nature from a very competent group of men who have the necessary machinery and who are capable of doing the job.

It is their job to build railway rolling stock—and they could build locomotives—yet that work is to be taken from them. There are others in this House who know more about the workshops than I, so I shall not enlarge on that angle except to say that this matter is a very disturbing factor to the skilled tradesmen of Western Australia, and to the parents who desire their children to become skilled tradesmen and who do not want their children to leave the State.

There are, of course, other matters which give us a lot of concern. One, which is of grave concern to members of Parliament, is the failure of the Government to carry out its obligations under the Electoral Districts Act. We are aware that legislation was introduced and passed through both Houses of Parliament at a special session summoned for the purpose of revoking a proclamation which was in line with the law.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It was brought down in the last days of the previous Government's term of office.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The law is the law. I shall not address this remark to the Minister individually, but his Government hanged a man so that the law should take its course. He must be consistent and agree with me that here the law should take its course. Parliament

agreed to the revocation with conditions not expressly written into the Act. The conditions, provisions, and assurances were given by the Attorney-General when he introduced the legislation in another place. He told Parliament that the sole purpose of revoking the proclamation under the Electoral Districts Act was to amend that Act; that if Parliament did not agree to the Act being amended then the law would take its course and a proclamation would be issued; and that if Parliament did agree to the legislation, the law would still take its course, but under the new legislation.

However, the Act was not amended nor was the Bill proceeded with for some reason or other. Now the Government is taking the attitude that Parliament had agreed that the law should not be implemented, and that it should sit down on its laurels and do nothing about the matter. We are very concerned with the Government's adoption of that attitude. We think the Attorney-General misled Parliament, and that he broke his promise and faith with Parliament by not carrying out the provisions of the law. That aspect will be enlarged on at a later stage.

There is also much concern over the possibility of the town of Collie being badly and sadly affected by the Government's indecision in connection with the type of fuel it will use in the future. None of us is aware of the possible costs which the new tenders have posed for the Government, because they have not been made public. We read in the Press of the Government's threat to use oil instead of coal. It is hoped that the Government will use the local product; it is hoped the Government will not use imported oil at a much higher cost than our native coal; it is hoped the Government will be sincere in its utterances when it states that it believes in decentralisation and in the development of country areas. If, however, it decides to replace coal with oil that will be a retrograde step not only to the miners in Collie, but also to the mine-owners and business people there.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Who is giving voice to the fact that the Government proposes this change?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I did not say the Government proposed it. We have seen it reported in the Press.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Who is giving voice to this suggestion?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I have the Press cuttings.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You ought to be fair. The people giving voice to this expression are those in the union itself; it is made without any foundation whatever.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is in the Press.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is pure conjecture to make the people of Collie as unhappy as possible.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am sorry I touched the Minister on a sore spot.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: All I want is to get the facts.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The change will affect not only the mining community in Collie, but also the mine-owners and business people.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I am as mindful of the mining community as you are.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am sorry the Minister is upset.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I am not. You stick to the facts.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I read about this matter in the newspapers, as have thousands of people.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I have read many pamphlets from the Collie Miners' Union about me. Those were also pure conjecture.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Minister is holding the floor on his own. I know that coal is a burning question with him. If the present Government is capable of reducing the price of coal to the same extent as the previous Government, I shall lift my hat to the Minister.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I hope this Government does not fool the Collie Miners' Union and mineowners for months on end, like the previous Government, which did not know where it was going, did.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Minister can tell us all about this in due course. Apparently the spot on him is getting more painful. When we sum up the performances of the Government since it has been in office we can only come to the conclusion that if anyone or anything is threatening the economy of the State it is the present Government by its actions and performances. It is the Government which keeps telling us that the economy is in danger, but it is the same Government which is initiating and accelerating that very danger, if it is a real danger.

In order to assert our undoubted right I now move an amendment to this motion—

That the following words be added to the Address-in-reply:—

We wish to protest strongly against the Government's failure to honour the promise given by the Attorney-General last year to issue a fresh proclamation under the Electoral Districts Act of 1947, and against the Government's failure to take or propose any effective action to bring the prices of essential commodities under reasonable restraint.

We wish also to protest strongly against the Government's policy of undermining the manufacturing capacity of the Government's own

railway workshops at Midland Junction by refusing to even allow the management to tender for large-scale jobs, such as the building of the new Westland trains, and against the policy of disposing of State trading concerns.

Furthermore, we would protest strongly against the Government's mishandling of the finances of the Metropolitan Water Supply, and recent severe increases in water rates.

On motion by the Hon. A. F. Griffith (Minister for Mines), debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 2nd August, 1960

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