

watched very carefully and guarded very jealously by the Government doctor, who inquired into everybody's medical history; and I can assure members that nobody who had a recent history of hepatitis was allowed to donate blood. It is very gratifying to feel that with the people we have in charge of our blood bank in Western Australia there is very little for us to worry about, because they are so fastidious.

As a matter of interest I would like to point out that there is one person in twenty in the metropolitan area who gives blood. There are 25,000 people on the State roll. We find there is a wastage of 1,000 a year as the result of deaths and of people reaching the age of 60, after which age blood is not accepted from them. I believe the blood bank receives just about sufficient blood for the State hospitals. An interesting fact is that in a heart operation 16 pints of blood are required to prime the machine. I feel that blood donors should be given more publicity, because they are very important people.

When a rare type of blood is needed—for example it may be required for an operation on a person in a particular group—the donors come in on a Friday when they are tested and briefed, and they come in again on the Monday, because the important thing in operations of this type is that the blood must be fresh.

These people could, or would, have to pay their own fares each way; and they also stand the financial loss of perhaps being off work. So it can be seen that they are very important people, and I regret that they do not get enough favourable publicity. I believe that on the roll of Western Australia there are six donors who have given 50 pints of blood and others who have given 25 pints. When a person has given 25 pints of blood he gets a special key ring; and when he has given 50 pints of blood he is given a party where a cake, etc., is provided. I do think these people should be given much more publicity and recognition; and if there is any function to be held they should be given pride of place, as they are very important.

In the metropolitan area there are 200,000 people between the ages of 18 and 60 who could become blood donors, but there are only 10,000 who are. I will conclude my remarks on that note, because the hour is growing late. I do, however, wish to pursue the question of private swimming pools further in the Committee stage.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. L. A. Logan (Minister for Local Government).

House adjourned at 10.43 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 19th September, 1962

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The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

WATER CONSERVATION

Gascoyne River Scheme: Second and Third Stages

1. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

What are the full details of the second and third stages of the water conservation scheme on the Gascoyne River, referred to in question No. 2 on Thursday, the 13th September?

Mr. WILD replied:

Stage 2 envisages tapping additional known water bearing sands over a 2½ mile section of the Gascoyne River upstream from the stage 1 area.

Small supplemental supplies would be available for 50 plantations on the south bank of the river. Estimated cost £85,000.

Stage 3 extends upstream from stage 2 area to tap additional water bearing sands which although not as yet positively located by trial boring are considered to exist from an examination of the physical and geological factors. This stage will provide a more useful augmenting supply to the 50 plantations referred to in stage 2 at an estimated cost of £72,000.

PETROL OUTLETS

Oil Companies' Monopoly

2. Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister for Labour:

- (1) Has he read a reprint from the April issue of *The Service Station and Motor Trader of W.A.*, entitled "Petrol, a decade of Monopoly Development"?

- (2) If the answer is "Yes," will he now answer my question No. 7 of Tuesday, the 11th September, in the form submitted on that date?

Mr. WILD replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes; but I can see no advantage in interfering in the existing arrangements.

PORT HEDLAND HARBOUR

Development and Improvement

3. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for the North-West:

What plan, if any, has the Government for the development and improvement of the harbour at Port Hedland?

Mr. COURT replied:

The immediate objective is to improve port access to permit ships of the size that trade in and out of Port Hedland to come and go without the present severe tidal problems related to the outer bar on the entrance to Port Hedland Harbour.

The proposal under consideration is to dredge a channel 300 feet in bottom width with a depth of water at high neaps of 24 feet.

The engineering difficulties are considerable and the reaction to dredging is hard to determine.

The plan is one of those under discussion with the Commonwealth Government.

ONSLOW HOSPITAL

Latest Developments

4. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Health:

What are the latest developments concerning the new Onslow hospital?

Mr. COURT (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

The tender submitted by J. R. McMullan and Co., Perth, is being accepted and the contract will be signed today.

ROEBOURNE HOSPITAL

Renovations

5. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Health:

Will he advise the latest position regarding renovations to the Roebourne hospital?

Mr. COURT (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

Tenders have been received and are at present being considered.

GOVERNMENT TRANSPORT SERVICES

Fare Concessions to War Widows

6. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:
- (1) Has he given any consideration to the granting of fare concessions to war widows using Government transport services?

- (2) If so, what is his decision?
- (3) If not, will he look into the matter?

Mr. NALDER (for Mr. Brand) replied:

- (1) to (3) Yes. This matter has been referred to an interdepartmental committee for examination. An early report is expected.

MUJA POWER HOUSE

Retrenchments

7. Mr. H. MAY asked the Minister for Electricity:

- (1) Will he inquire into the reason why six employees were retrenched at the Muja power house from the gang under the control of foreman Stubbs, whilst other men were engaged at the time by Mr. Rich, site engineer?
- (2) Why were the retrenched men not paid in accordance with the award rate for having worked on Foundation Day?
- (3) Does he not agree with the principle, "last on first off," which is the usual procedure on works of this nature?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) The only men engaged by the site engineer at Muja since the carpenter and labourers were retrenched were a fitter and a draftsman.
- (2) The men were paid for Foundation Day in accordance with the applicable industrial award or agreement as amended by general court order No. 62 of 1962.
- (3) Not relevant. See No. (1).

STIRLING ELECTORATE

Land Held by Private Settlers

8. Mr. MITCHELL asked the Minister for Lands:

- (1) What is the total area of land held by private settlers in the Stirling electorate?
- (2) What is the area cleared?
- (3) What area has been acquired since 1952?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) to (3) Lands Department records refer only to Crown land held under lease or conditional purchase and do not disclose the position in respect of any particular electoral district.

PARDELUP PRISON FARM

Area of Land, Acres Cleared, and Stock Carried

9. Mr. MITCHELL asked the Chief Secretary:

- (1) What is the total area of land in the Pardelup Prison Farm?
- (2) How many acres are cleared?
- (3) How many cattle are carried on the farm?
- (4) How many sheep can the farm carry?

Mr. COURT (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

- (1) 8,900 acres.
- (2) 1,814 acres.
- (3) 438 cattle.
- (4) In conjunction with cattle, 2,000; without cattle, 3,000.

STIRLING ELECTORATE

Land Held by War Service Land Settlers

10. Mr. MITCHELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) What is the total area of land held by war service land settlers in the Stirling electorate?
- (2) How much of such land has been cleared?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) Approximately 344,800 acres.
- (2) Approximately 181,100 acres cleared by the War Service Land Settlement Board.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

Operations, Reports, and Visits by Departmental Officers

11. Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) How many reports have been received from each of the 45 industrial development committees which were established some time ago in country towns?
- (2) How many of the committees are still operating actively?
- (3) How many of the committees have been visited by departmental officers during the present calendar year?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) These committees do not submit reports. They contact the Department of Industrial Development if they have any suggestions to make or seek advice and assistance from the department.
- (2) Eleven are in contact with the Department of Industrial Development. This does not mean that others are inactive because the main object was to get local activity using departmental services where requested.
- (3) Five. Others have been in direct contact with the department.

REGIONAL HOSPITAL FOR NORTHAM

Commencement of Construction

12. Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Health:

When is a commencement likely to be made with the construction of the proposed regional hospital at Northam?

Mr. COURT (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

Subject to the availability of loan funds, it is expected that a commencement will be made during the 1963-64 financial year.

WUNDOWIE PUBLIC HALL

Construction of Larger Premises

13. Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

As the public hall at Wundowie is now too small to meet the reasonable needs of the greatly increased population at Wundowie and as Wundowie is a Government owned and operated industry town, will he arrange with the board of management of the industry to give early consideration to the necessity to have steps taken in the reasonably near future to have a new and much larger hall constructed at Wundowie?

Mr. COURT replied:

The board of management of the industry has already considered the condition of the Wundowie public hall and agrees that it does not meet the present needs of the Wundowie district.

The town now serves a prosperous and fast developing agricultural area as well as the charcoal iron and steel industry and the board considers that the provision of a new and much larger hall is the responsibility and in the province of the local government authority. This appears a reasonable approach.

In this regard I understand the Northam Shire Council has the proposal under consideration for the construction of a new hall by loan funds in the near future.

MANNING ROAD AND ALBANY HIGHWAY JUNCTION

Improvement

14. Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Are there any proposals in hand for the improvement of the junction of Manning Road and Albany Highway?

(2) If so, would he supply a sketch plan of same?

Mr. BOVELL (for Mr. Craig) replied:

(1) The Main Roads Department has no plans for the improvement of the junction of Manning Road and Albany Highway.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

WATER SUPPLIES AT ALBANY

Connection with Denmark Scheme

15. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Have surveys been completed for the laying of a pipe line from Denmark water scheme to Albany?

(2) Is it still the intention of the Government to go ahead with laying the pipe line from Denmark to Albany?

(3) If so, when is it anticipated that work will commence on the project?

(4) What is the anticipated cost of the scheme to increase damming of water, and laying of water main from Denmark to Albany?

Mr. WILD replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) It is planned to augment existing supplies from south coast sources before proceeding with the Denmark supply scheme. When the limit from this source is in sight a decision will be taken regarding the Denmark supply scheme in the light of the demand for water in Albany.

(4) Firm estimates have not yet been prepared.

HOUSING FINANCE

Second Mortgage Advances by Government

16. Mr. HALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing: Does the Government intend to

extend its activities in housing finance by advancement of money on second mortgage?

Mr. COURT replied:

The Government has provided housing finance by advancing money on second mortgage for some years and has arranged for the allocation to be further increased for this purpose for the current financial year.

17. *This question was postponed.*

BOATING FATALITIES

Craft Involved, Location, and Power to Inspect

18. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Police:

- (1) How many drowning fatalities occurred in this State for the years 1958-59, 1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62, by way of boat accidents?
- (2) What were the types of boats involved in the tragedies, giving specific cases?
- (3) How many occurred on rivers, inlets, harbour, and open sea?
- (4) Is there any authority with the power to inspect the seaworthiness of small craft and the number of persons that such craft are permitted to carry?

Mr. BOVELL (for Mr. Craig) replied:

- (1) 1958-59—4.
1959-60—5.
1960-61—3.
1961-62—3.
- (2) 1958-59—2 dinghies at sea; 2 ships at sea.
1959-60—5 fishing boats at sea.
1960-61—3 fishing boats at sea.
1961-62—1 ship at sea; 1 sailing boat, Swan River; 1 14 ft. dinghy in Mandurah Estuary.
- (3) 1 on a river; 1 on an estuary; 13 at sea.
- (4) No.

RAILWAYS

Efficiency Experts

19. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Is it a fact that there are three railway officials in the role of "efficiency experts" touring the railway installations throughout the State?
- (2) What are the specific duties of these officials?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) See answer to No. (1).

Cost of Overseas Visit by Commissioner and Staff

20. Mr. D. G. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Will he advise the total cost (excluding normal salaries) of the recent overseas visit of the Commissioner of Railways and staff?

Cost of Relieving Staff

- (2) Will he indicate what relief arrangements were made in their absence and also what additional finance was incurred in connection with the relief?

Commissioner's and Deputy Commissioner's Salaries

- (3) Will he advise the commissioner's and deputy commissioner's salary as follows—

- (a) normally;
- (b) during overseas visit;
- (c) at present whilst commissioner is seconded to other duties?
- (4) In regard to No. (1), what proportion will be debited against the standard gauge project?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) Final figures for the total cost are not yet available. The estimate is £8,000.
- (2) In the absence of the Commissioner of Railways and other officers overseas, Mr. C. R. A. Stewart, Senior Administrator and Technical Adviser was appointed Deputy Commissioner—additional cost £281. An Assistant Chief Civil Engineer acted as Deputy Chief Civil Engineer in place of Mr. Horrigan—additional cost £208. An Assistant Works Manager acted as Works Manager in place of Mr. Britter—additional cost £89. An officer of the Secretary's Branch acted in place of Mr. Williams—additional cost £63.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| | p.a. |
| | £ |
| (3) (a) Commissioner | 5,660 |
| Senior Administrator | |
| & Technical Adviser | 4,716 |
| (b) Commissioner | 5,660 |
| Deputy Commissioner | 5,660 |
| (c) As in (b). | |
| (4) Approximately 50 per cent. | |

FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE

Date of Completion and Cause of Delay

21. Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) (a) What was the original anticipated date of completion of the Fremantle railway bridge?

(b) What is the current anticipated date of completion?

(2) What has been the cause of delay, if any?

Mr. COURT replied:

This question was wrongly directed to the Minister for Works, and if I have your permission, Sir, I will answer it as the Minister for Railways.

(1) (a) The original date for the completion of the bridge contract was the 1st March, 1963.

(b) It is anticipated that the bridge contract will be completed on the 30th April, 1963.

(2) Foundation conditions were found to be difficult, involving the driving of piles to a greater depth than could have been anticipated from bore hole information.

KOONGAMIA TOWNSITE

Drainage

22. Mr. BRADY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing:

(1) Are any plans prepared or being prepared for the proper drainage of Koongamia townsite?

(2) Will he state what plans are prepared regarding drainage at Koongamia?

Seepage

(3) Is the State Housing Commission taking any action to overcome seepage which is a recurring problem?

(4) Will he state what action is being taken?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) An engineering investigation is now in process, but the stage has not yet been reached for the preparation of plans.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Some drainage has already been completed and the engineering investigation as answered in No. (1) was arranged by the State Housing Commission.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

23. *This question was postponed.*

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AT KOORDA

Takeover by State Electricity Commission

24. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Electricity:

(1) Is any proposal in contemplation for the State Electricity Commission to take over the electricity supply at Koorda?

Inclusion in Extension Scheme

(2) If not, would it be possible to include Koorda in the scheme of extension recently announced in the Press by the State Electricity Commission?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Consideration will be given to Koorda after Goomalling, Wyalkatchem, and Dowerin are connected.

COMPREHENSIVE WATER SCHEME

Federal Assistance

25. Mr. CORNELL asked the Premier:

(1) Has the State Government made an official approach to the Federal Government for financial aid towards the cost of the revised comprehensive water scheme?

(2) If so, on what date?

(3) If official approach has been so made, did the Government make its request top priority or was assistance preferred for other projects involving Federal aid?

Mr. NALDER (for Mr. Brand) replied:

(1) and (2) The last official approach to the Commonwealth for financial assistance towards the cost of an extension of the modified comprehensive water supply scheme was made in 1960. The Commonwealth Government refused to participate in any extension of the scheme.

(3) A further case is now being prepared for presentation to the Commonwealth as a top priority work which proposes to extend the area embraced by the 1960 submission.

RAILWAYS COMMISSION

Rental of Offices in T. & G. Building

26. Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What office accommodation in the new T. & G. building has been occupied by the W.A. Government Railways Commission?

(2) Which officers occupy or will occupy such accommodation?

(3) For what purpose was such accommodation rented?

(4) What is the rental of such accommodation?

(5) What is the cost of furnishing such accommodation?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) 536 square feet on the sixth floor, subdivided by partitions to form three rooms and an open area, has been acquired for a maximum period of three months.
- (2) The accommodation is occupied by the commissioner, first assistant budget section and special officer, and a stenographer. Other officers will occupy the accommodation as required by the commissioner.
- (3) To enable the Commissioner of Railways to concentrate at my request on special research duties and implementation of matters of vital importance to the economical and efficient running of the railways as well as planning future railway development.
- (4) £68 15s. per month (includes cleaning charge).
- (5) Approximately £465.

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Policy on Arrears of Rent

27. Mr. TOMS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing:

What is the present policy of the State Housing Commission re tenants of S.H.C. homes who fall into arrears of rent?

Mr. COURT replied:

The present policy dealing with tenancies in arrears of rent has been followed for many years.

Each case is individually assessed before action is taken with the aim of preventing the arrears accumulating to the stage where the tenant has little or no chance of clearing the debt. The commission's action is guided by the extent of the arrears, previous history, family income, and capacity to pay, and whether there are family circumstances to warrant compassionate consideration.

Eviction cannot be effected without commission authority.

Mr. Graham: The tenants have never had it so tough.

RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK

Category, and Number of Branches

28. Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Lands:

- (1) What number of branches of the R. and I. Bank are operating in W.A.?
- (2) Would it be correct to list and include the R. and I. Bank under the heading "Seven Small Commercial Banks"?

- (3) Is he aware that Leaving class students in economics prepare from a manual entitled "Descriptive Economics" by F. T. Nankervis, and that at page 159 a diagram shows that the R. and I. Bank has few or no branches operating?

- (4) If this is not correct, will he take steps to inform the author of the true position so that students are correctly informed?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) Forty branches.
- (2) Not on Western Australian standards and comparisons.
- (3) and (4) No; but if such be the case steps will be taken to inform the author of the true position.

29. *This question was postponed.*

TRANQUILLISER DRUGS

Sale Restriction or Control

30. Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is he acquainted with the article "Housewives Become Drug Addicts" which appeared in the *Weekend News* of the 15th September, 1962?

- (2) In view of the documented evidence contained in the article, will he have the possibility of restricting or controlling the sale of "tranquilliser" drugs investigated?

Mr. COURT (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Documentary evidence also discloses that over a five-year period, 1951-55, in the United Kingdom the tranquilliser drugs carbromal and bromvaletone were responsible for four accidental deaths and 10 suicides. During the same period aspirin was responsible for 164 accidental deaths and 590 suicides, while barbiturates restricted to prescription only were responsible for 2,492 deaths. Under the circumstances, it will be seen that many difficulties confront the matter of controlling drugs. However, the matter generally will be kept under review.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Policy on Arrears of Rent

1. Mr. TOMS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing:—
Further to my question No. 27 on today's notice paper, is he aware that there does seem to be

a change in policy inasmuch as people three weeks in arrears now are getting notice of eviction?

Mr. COURT replied:

I will refer the matter to the Minister for Housing and get his answer to the question.

GRAIN HARVEST

Effect of Dry Period

2. Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Agriculture:

I regret I was unable to make information available to the Minister earlier on the following question:—

- (1) Did he read the statement in this morning's issue of *The West Australian* by a representative of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. in which a prophecy of a record grain harvest was made?
- (2) In view of the present comparatively dry period, has he any comment to make?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) Yes, I saw the comment of the representative of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. that was published in this morning's issue of *The West Australian* in which I concur. He expressed the opinion that approximately 68,500,000 bushels of wheat could be expected provided that in the next few days we get sufficient finishing rains. I understand that that is the present position.
- (2) Throughout the whole of the agricultural areas the state of the crops at this stage is that they require rain very badly, and if that comes within the next few days I believe we can expect a record harvest.

TOTALISATOR AGENCY BOARD BETTING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr. Tonkin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), and read a first time.

METROPOLITAN MARKET ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

MR. NALDER (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [4.53 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

In the Committee stage of the Bill last evening, the member for Gascoyne asked a question with reference to identifying

cases of fruit that have passed through the fumigation chamber at West Perth. I indicated to him then that an identification mark was placed on the cases. Today I checked that information and I have been assured that that is the true position. I have in my hand several samples of the identification mark which is placed on both ends and both sides of each case that goes through the fumigation chamber. I ask your permission, Mr. Speaker, to allow these samples to be circulated among members so that those interested can peruse them.

The use of these marks on cases would indicate that wherever the cases are forwarded they represent a record showing that the cases have been through the fumigation chamber at West Perth.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2): THIRD READING

1. Bush Fires Act Amendment Bill.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Bovell (Minister for Lands), and transmitted to the Council.

2. Judges' Salaries and Pensions Act Amendment Bill.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Court (Minister for Industrial Development), and transmitted to the Council.

GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT

Repeal of Amendment to Section 73: Motion

Debate resumed, from the 5th September, on the following motion by Mr. W. Hegney:—

That in the opinion of this House the repeal of the amendment to section 73 of the Government Railways Act passed by the present Government in the 1960 session is most desirable because it has the effect of inflicting double punishment on railway employees as will be evident from the following extract from the subsection (2) of section 73 referred to:—

Subsection (2):

The Commission may

(a) in any case where an officer or servant has for any act or omission been suspended—

(I) fine;

(II) reduce to a lower class or grade;

(III) dismiss; or

(IV) transfer without payment of transfer expenses;

that officer or servant, notwithstanding and in addition to such suspension; and

- (b) in any case where the Commission considers the circumstances warrant by way of punishment for an act or omission reduce an officer or servant to a lower class or grade and also transfer him without payment of transfer expenses;

but except as provided in this subsection the Commission shall not inflict on any officer or servant more than one form of punishment for the same offence.

Postponement of Item

Mr. H. MAY: Would I be in order, Mr. Speaker, in asking that this motion be postponed?

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): That is something that could be arranged with the Government, because the motion is now in the Government's hands.

Mr. H. MAY: I move—

That item No. 4 be postponed until a later stage of the sitting.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): The item is on the notice paper and I must allow the discussion to go on.

Mr. H. MAY: I have now moved that the item be postponed until a later stage of the sitting.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Very well. I will put the question.

Mr. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development): Could I speak on the motion, Sir?

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Yes.

Mr. COURT: I would request that I be permitted to submit the Government's case in respect of this motion because, for reasons well known to the House, it is not convenient for the Government to proceed with the next item of business, and no notice that I know of was given to the Government of the Opposition's desire to postpone this item to a later stage of the sitting. Normally, I would have no objection to the motion for postponement, but I understand from the Deputy Premier that there are some difficulties associated with postponing this item at this moment.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): It has been moved that item No. 4 of the Notices and Orders of the Day be postponed until a later stage of the sitting.

Mr. H. MAY: Can I move for the adjournment of the debate, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): No; the honourable member may not do that. I will put the question to the House.

Question (postponement of item) put and negatived.

Debate Resumed on Motion

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [4.57 p.m.]: The motion moved by the member for Mt. Hawthorn is opposed by the Government for a very good reason. It is considered to be completely unrealistic; and, personally, I can only assume it has been moved by the Opposition for political window-dressing. If one has genuine regard for the interests of the railway workers it is difficult to take the motion seriously. The kindest remark that one can pass about it is that those responsible for moving it must have overlooked the real interests of the railway workers concerned; because, if their proposition were agreed to, I cannot see anything but disadvantage accruing to the railway workers.

In moving his motion, the member for Mt. Hawthorn accused me of having misled the House when I introduced the original amendment to the Act. He was quite pleasant about it. He did say that I had wittingly, or unwittingly, misled the House on the significance of the amendment when it was before the House in 1960.

Mr. W. Hegney: Unconsciously misled the House.

Mr. COURT: Yes; the honourable member said something like that. I think, if I read the appropriate passage from *Hansard* appearing on page 2299 of the *Parliamentary Debates* of Tuesday, the 1st November, 1960, it will place the position beyond any doubt. I think I gave a very clear and lucid explanation of the Government's objectives. The appropriate extracts are as follows:—

The amendment to section 73 is to clarify the position in respect of two forms of punishment for the one offence; and to place the relationship between this section and section 77 on a proper footing. This is being submitted to overcome an anomaly.

At this point the then member for Eyre interjected—

Two forms of punishment for the one offence?

—and I continued—

I want to explain why this provision is necessary. The present provisions of the Act, I think, were inserted on account of a drafting error. When the Railways Act was remodelled and amended by No. 78 of 1948, a new provision was added to section 68—now section 73—as follows:—

Provided that no fine shall be inflicted under this section for any act or omission for which

an officer or servant has been punished under section 31 or 32 of the Traffic Act, 1919-1947, and provided that the Commission shall not inflict on any such officer or servant more than one form of punishment for the same offence.

I am quite certain that when that was introduced the intention was good, but it has had an effect which could be detrimental to the employees. This provision is causing considerable difficulty in determining suitable punishment for employees who have committed offences.

If, for instance, an employee is drunk on duty or commits a serious breach of safe-working rules, it is inescapable that he should be immediately suspended from duty. Obviously the officer in charge would suspend him immediately, in the interest of his own and the public safety. Under this Act, this is a punishment; and with the provision quoted it is possible only to reinstate him without further punishment, or take the extreme course of summary dismissal. This is not warranted in all cases and it is desirable that the Act be amended so that an employee may, notwithstanding suspension, be fined, regressed, or transferred. In other cases it may be desired to regress and transfer an employee by way of punishment, but that cannot be done under the Act as it now reads.

Mr. Nulsen: It has been done. I know of one case not so very long ago.

Mr. COURT: At the present time the commissioner is in a very awkward position. A man might have a good record and then commit a breach—it could be quite a serious breach—but once a man has been suspended because of a danger which he was capable of creating the commissioner has the choice of either reinstating him without further punishment or of summarily dismissing him.

If this provision is brought in, it is the commissioner's view—and I concur in it—that it will enable the commissioner to take a sympathetic and more realistic approach to each particular case.

If that does not make it clear beyond doubt what we were trying to do, then I do not know what does. Subsequently there was a lot of by-play in the second reading and Committee stages.

Mr. W. Hegney: What do you mean by "by-play"?

Mr. COURT: From memory, I think the Leader of the Opposition and I indulged in cross-interjections.

Mr. J. Hegney: These are most disorderly.

Mr. COURT: Perhaps we were not in order. Subsequently I had this matter referred to both the legal people and officers who have had experience in the administration of the Act. I pointed out there seemed to be some doubt in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition, but that I was quite clear. I asked them to look at the matter and to let me know who was right and who was wrong.

The answer that I got was that if I separated the material and put it in the right context then we were both right, because we approached the matter on entirely different premises. I considered, as I do now, that the principle we were trying to achieve was achieved with the amendment we introduced in 1960. The position was very clearly stated and there was not one word to be detracted from what was said at that time.

The Government is firm in its resolve to retain this provision in the Act in its present form, because we consider it is basically sound; and the person who stands to gain most from the present provision is the railway worker, not the commissioner.

As section 73 stood, prior to the amendment being passed, the commissioner could not inflict on any officer or servant more than one form of punishment, and this practice could have been very detrimental to the officers and servants of the commission. It is of no great concern to the commissioner, because all he wants to do is the right and humane thing. If the Opposition had its way, it would make it well-nigh impossible in some instances for the commissioner to have any latitude in handling a case in a sympathetic way. We have to realise there is a work force of 12,000 persons in the railways, among whom are those who step out of line. In the interests of the system and of the workers themselves action has to be taken.

I do not think any member in this House denies the need for disciplinary action to be taken in certain instances in the system. If we do not allow a certain amount of elasticity in the administration of discipline we will bring about an iron-clad rule which will react to the detriment of the workers, and not—I repeat—so much to the detriment of the commissioner.

Section 77 provided—and still does provide—that should an employee be suspended from employment in such circumstances as to involve loss of pay, it was a ground upon which he could appeal to the railway appeal board, and this must therefore be regarded as a form of punishment. I think it was argued that suspension would not be a form of punishment; but that is not correct, because it is clearly laid down in the Act that it is a form of punishment, and one from which there is the right of appeal.

The significance is that it means that when an act of an officer or servant made it necessary for him to be suspended, the

commission could not subsequently impose one of these forms of punishment—fine, reduce to a lower grade or class, or transfer by way of punishment involving loss of transfer expenses. These forms of punishment are also regarded as grounds for appeal under section 77.

It was because of that situation that the commission previously was in the unfortunate position of having either to reinstate the man at the place where he was employed, and in the position which he occupied; or having to dismiss him. There was no middle course, in view of the fact that suspension with loss of pay was a form of punishment within the Act, and therefore it had to be taken into account by the commissioner.

The situation was this: Where dismissal followed suspension it was held by the chairman of the appeal board at the time that as notice of dismissal always gave the time of dismissal as the time of suspension, then the dismissal superseded the suspension. In other words, when the commissioner, as a result of considering the breach, decided there was no alternative but to dismiss the employee, the notice of dismissal used the date of suspension as the date of dismissal. Therefore, the person was dealt with on that basis.

I think it is crystal clear there was no middle course open to the commission. It had either to reinstate the employee in the same duties and at the location he was in before suspension, or go to the extreme and dismiss him. There are some cases in which, because of the past record of the employee and of various other circumstances, the senior officers of the Railways Department often try to assist in finding other employment for the employee. Under the old system that was unworkable.

For instance, we could have the situation where an employee was suspended for some breach of safe working conditions. He might have been under the influence of alcohol and done something which seriously affected the safety of his fellow workers, of the system, and of the public. The officer in charge would have no alternative but to suspend him, and suspend him immediately.

Subsequently, when the matter was decided by the commission, it might be considered there was no good reason for reinstating the person in the position and at the location where he was employed. Take the case of a guard who is directly associated with safe working; such an employee could be regressed to the position of porter. It could happen there was not a position of porter at the particular place where he was previously employed, and where he committed the offence. Therefore the commission has to have the right—as we wrote into the Act—not only to

regress that person, but—so as to enable him to remain in employment—to transfer him to some other location.

If we did not give this elasticity we would put the commission in an awkward situation. In some cases it would be untenable to reinstate a man in his present duties and at his present location. Take an employee who for some reasons—I will not go into detail, but I am sure members can visualise the reasons—did something wrong in his present location, and became dangerous to his fellow workers and to the public. If it were desired to reinstate him in the same job, the last place where he should be reinstated is the place where he committed the offence.

We should realise that the other employees would have to work with this person every day of the week, and it might be that the other workers would not want him back. They might not want him to be thrown on to the scrap heap, but certainly they would not want him to be reinstated in the same location or in his previous duties. Is it not more humane and commonsense for the commission to be able to say, "We cannot let you work at East Perth. You know what you have done there. You have worked for the railways for 30 years, and you have a good record. We will give you a job as porter at Northam, Bunbury, or Fremantle"?

Mr. Kelly: Will transfer expenses be paid?

Mr. COURT: According to the seriousness of the offence.

Mr. W. Hegney: There would be two forms of punishment.

Mr. COURT: I ask members opposite whether they want to sack such an employee in the circumstances I mentioned. In the interests of his fellow workers, of the employee himself, and of the commission it would not be fair for the commission to reinstate him at the duties he was undertaking.

In the case where the employee went on a "bender" thus "blotting his copy book," and some action had to be taken, would it not be better for the commission, instead of dismissing him, to exercise some discretion and give him a job in a lower grade in a different location? In some instances he might be given the same job, but transferred to another area without payment of transfer expenses. It might be the humane thing in such a case to allow two forms of punishment by the commission in the interests of keeping the employee in a job.

In the Railways Department there are certain jobs which are peculiar to the railways only. Some of the employees are getting on in years, and it would not be easy for them to obtain other employment in another industry. Take the case of a guard, a shunter, or a porter who has worked in

the railways all his life. He might do something wrong in the railways, but he has a good record. He might be between 55 to 58 years of age. Surely we should not deny the commissioner the right to exercise a little discretion. The employee would be deserving of severe punishment, and his fellow workers would want the punishment to be inflicted.

The experience in the railways is this: Generally the great majority of workers frown on breaches of safe working by their workmates. Such lapses are not only against the interest of the service, the security of the service, and the good reputation of the service, but are also dangerous to fellow workers. On reflection, members will realise that it is better to allow this discretionary power to remain in the hands of the commissioner subject to retaining the safeguard which is in the Act, and upon which the mover of the motion has not placed any emphasis at all. The fact is that all these punishments can be appealed against.

There is a well-established system of appeal under the Railways Act, and this is used very often. I think there is general confidence in the system of appeal. The chairman is a police, resident or a stipendiary magistrate, and as such is quite independent. He has built up a degree of knowledge and practical approach to the problems of appeals. With the magistrate sits the nominee of the workers, and the nominee of the commission. These men have to deal with some very touchy human problems, as well as practical problems, in the course of their duties.

I do not say the commissioner is always satisfied with the decisions of the appeal board; I do not say that the unions are always satisfied; but there is a degree of confidence in the board. Here is a board to which an employee can appeal, and before which he may appear or be represented by his union secretary or his union nominee; so that if a person is nervous and not experienced in the handling of appeal cases, somebody else with experience in such matters can put forward the case for him. I cannot see anything fairer than that.

If the men did not have any appeal, the position would be open to some criticism. It could be held that a comparatively minor offence might be used to do a bit of juggling with the staff to supplant somebody in the interests of somebody else. But in view of the fact that when the commissioner makes a decision he has to realise there is an appeal court, surely that in itself makes for a sense of responsibility and means that the powers of the commissioner will not be abused.

I could go on with a lot of detail, quoting, unquoting, and requoting from the speeches from the last debate. I must admit that when read they are pretty confusing; and the honourable member when

introducing his motion, read a lot of extracts which, if analysed, would get us nowhere. The basic principle is the same now as it was when I explained it during my second reading speech on the Bill in 1960.

I did not attempt in any way to disguise the fact that we were trying to introduce a position whereby the commissioner could overcome the original proviso which allowed for only the one punishment; but it is a peculiar situation in that unless the commissioner is allowed the right to have one of these other forms of punishment in a particular circumstance he has no alternative but to place the person concerned in the same location and in the same job, or dismiss him.

I think that on reflection members on the other side of the House will appreciate that the amendment as it now stands in the legislation is in the interests of railway workers and allows the necessary elasticity in the administration and discipline which was previously lacking. I oppose the motion.

MR. D. G. MAY (Canning) [5.17 p.m.] : It was not my intention to speak on this motion, but I feel I would be particularly remiss if I did not say something in connection with certain aspects. Despite the popular and erroneous belief of the majority of people, the staff of the Western Australian Government Railways are very mindful and conscious of the manner in which they carry out their duties.

One of the most disconcerting features about the amendment to the Act is the method of transfer of railway staff. The Minister has stated that in all probability there might be a position in, say Kalgoorlie, where the railwayman has been regressed due to some misdemeanour he may have committed and, as a consequence, there was no job available in that town and he would have to be transferred to another district. That may be all right, but we must realise that there is added suffering and inconvenience experienced by the staff every time a transfer is effected.

Even with regard to normal promotions within the railways, when it is necessary for a man to transfer to country areas he has to put up with a terrific amount of inconvenience. I think that just recently the Minister pointed out that he was endeavouring to obtain some suitable method of obviating delays in transfers. It is six months before some are effected because the railwaymen concerned have not been able to obtain housing; and they either have to make arrangements for their children to leave school and attend in the area where they are being transferred, or leave the children in the city. That is the sort of hardship which

is experienced when it is necessary for a railwayman to leave one district and go to another.

Sometimes it is necessary for an employee of the railways to keep two homes going. If a man at Kalgoorlie is transferred to Wagin because he has done some deed which is not in keeping with the commissioner's wishes, he goes to Wagin, but his wife and family stay at Kalgoorlie. As a consequence, indirectly quite a lot of suffering is occasioned. I would like to point out just one particular instance which I can vouch for, because it concerns my own case.

After the war was over I was transferred to Bridgetown as night stationmaster. I was there for approximately two to three years, and my duties were from midnight until 8 o'clock in the morning every day of the week. That was my shift for nearly three years. At the time of being transferred there I had only just been married and we were living on the verandah of a home in Bridgetown. For this accommodation we were paying £4 per week. But we did this so that I could gain promotion by staying in Bridgetown.

I was also under the Repatriation Department for a nervous disorder, for which I received a small pension. As a consequence, I was under drugs and was continually being treated by my doctor. On one occasion—and possibly this can occur in other industries—I happened to sleep in. After three years one is not always able to get up when the alarm clock rings. There are occasions when it is necessary to put the alarm clock in a kerosene tin to make sure that one gets up in the morning.

One morning I did sleep in for half an hour owing to the fact that I was taking these drugs and the result was that I delayed a train for, I think, about 20 minutes as I was not there to change the staff. I was written to by the district traffic superintendent in Bunbury and told that I was remiss in my duties and action would be taken. When I explained the position to the department it was very sympathetic towards me, but told me it would have to go further. I went further with the matter and eventually was able to produce a doctor's certificate which showed that I was under drugs.

I have spoken of this incident because, under the present system, I could have been transferred from Bridgetown because a night stationmaster was on a certain grade, and there was no other similar grade in that area to which I could have been transferred. It would have been necessary to transfer me to the metropolitan area where a suitable job would be available to me. As I said before, my wife and I were living on a verandah. We had been in Bridgetown some time, and my wife was expecting. Therefore, it

would have been necessary for me to try to obtain accommodation somewhere else; and one can easily see the anxiety which can be caused under the new amendment put forward by the Government.

There are certain cases where employees should be punished, because I do not say that all railwaymen do the right thing by the department; but whereas a person could originally be punished for being drunk, the Act was amended to include intoxicating liquor and drugs. I feel this could have far-reaching effects; and I related what happened to me in order to clarify the position.

Back in 1946 the Loco. Drivers' Union applied for certain provisions to be put in its award; and as a consequence the department counterclaimed with certain other proposals. One of the other proposals which the department counterclaimed was in connection with the transfer of railway employees as a punishment. Mr. Dunphy was on the bench and he made these remarks—

A worker who is transferred by way of punishment loses certain benefits which up to date have only been taken away from a worker who is transferred to suit himself. There is no express provision in the Act or in the Award to allow a worker to be transferred by way of punishment and I can see no reason why the Court should sponsor such a new method of dealing with workers.

There are ample existing methods available without the Court's creating a new one, and accordingly this particular counterclaim will be disallowed.

That expression of opinion was put forward by Mr. Dunphy when bringing down a judgment in connection with an award for loco. drivers. I feel that amplifies the difficulty, the anxiety, and the strife which is caused when railwaymen are transferred. I do not know of any other vocation where people are required to be transferred to the country in order to obtain promotion and in addition required to do shift work year after year from midnight to 8 o'clock in the morning.

At the present time we are talking about a great leap ahead which the railways are taking, and we are trying to keep the staff on our side to make sure the Railways Department will amount to something. In the past people have frowned upon anyone working in the railways. During the post-war years people were of the opinion that the ordinary working staff of the railways comprised men who could not obtain a job anywhere else.

During my Address-in-Reply speech I pointed out that no matter what country town one visits, a railwayman can be found in charge of the parents and citizens' association or as secretary of the progress association. Railwaymen play a

prominent part in all of the welfare activities of the district in which they are employed. Yet we are inflicting a dual punishment on them, just because certain people want it that way.

Mr. Court: You would not like them to be dismissed instead of being fined or other employment being made available for them?

Mr. D. G. MAY: Under the present Act an employee can be dismissed for a trivial speeding offence.

Mr. Court: He has the right of appeal.

Mr. D. G. MAY: I do not think he would be transferred or dismissed for such an offence; and if he were, I think the appeal board would do something about it. However, it could eventuate. I think the Minister mentioned that there could be some heads of branches or senior officers who might not feel well disposed towards certain railway employees and, as a consequence, they would be transferred to another district.

Mr. Hall: Do they keep a dossier of every employee?

Mr. D. G. MAY: The history of every employee is kept, and everything concerning him is brought under notice. I did not intend speaking at length on this matter, but as a former railway employee I felt most concerned about this amendment to the Act. Everywhere I have been where railwaymen have been congregated the topic of conversation has been the recent amendment to the Act. If we want to instill confidence into these men, they will have to be given some incentive from the higher-ups in order that they will feel their services are appreciated.

The men employed by the railways—and there are 13,000 of them—play a big part in the activities of this State. They are invariably called upon to perform tasks that would not be expected of men employed by private enterprise. Irrespective of what Government has been in office, I do not know of any occasion where the officers employed in the railways have caused unrest so far as their work is concerned. Time and time again they have worked understaffed; and again I would emphasise how easy it is for these employees to sleep in due to overwork or the taking of drugs on medical advice.

When an engine driver or a fireman comes off duty at five or six o'clock in the morning he has his breakfast and then does the chores around town. He could be living at Caron or Mullewa; and I do not think any member of this Chamber would like to reside in Mullewa. I say that with due respect to the Premier, who is absent at the moment. After lunch this man will decide to get some sleep; but what chance does he have when the temperature is about 120 degrees in the shade? In addition, men come in and out of the barracks at all hours of the night when

they come off duty. I am told that one cannot get any sleep whatsoever. These men have to be on duty again within 12 hours and perhaps be in charge of a train; and it is only reasonable to assume that some men will go to sleep and something may happen that is possibly beyond their control. I feel that we should give them some incentive to show that we appreciate what they are doing for the State and also that we should amend the Act so that the dual punishment can be abolished.

I realise that the Minister for Railways has in all good faith endeavoured to put over a story that may, on the surface, look quite good, but when one looks around and realises what the railwaymen have to put up with I think the members on both sides of this House will agree that they are a very underrated team of workers.

Another point which I would like to bring to the notice of the House is that in the previous legislation it was provided that the employee could not be punished by the commission if he had been punished under the Traffic Act. Under the present legislation, if the employee is fined under the Traffic Act, even for a minor speeding charge, he can also be punished by the commission, even to the extent of being dismissed from the service. I do not think that the commission would take that step; but it is there in the Act, and it could be put into effect by any person or officer who felt that he had some grievance against a particular employee.

Mr. Court: That particular provision could be of advantage to the worker if he has been driving a road vehicle for the railway service.

Mr. D. G. MAY: Yes; it could be. But how many drivers are there in the railway service compared with the number of ordinary railway employees?

Mr. Court: There are quite a number, and they have to be protected.

Mr. D. G. MAY: There are not that many at all. Compared with the rest of the railway service, the few men concerned do not justify this legislation.

That is all I have to say on this matter. I do feel that members on both sides of the House should give it their earnest consideration because the railwayman for too many years has been the under-dog so far as employment is concerned. If we are going to have standardisation of gauge in Western Australia, connecting with the Eastern States, we will need to give the men some incentive to carry out their duties. They are not getting any at the moment, and everywhere one goes they are talking about this particular amendment. If that has not a detrimental effect on the railwaymen, I do not know what would. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. BRADY (Swan) [5.34 p.m.]: I feel I should support this motion briefly because at the time it was going through the House in 1960 I spoke at length. I opposed the various amendments which were passed at the time. I will not speak at length tonight because I feel that the honourable member who has just resumed his seat has put the position very plainly to the House concerning some of the disabilities railwaymen have to suffer. It might be educational to some people in this House to hear a man who can speak at first hand of his experience in the railways subsequent to the second world war.

I personally was a union secretary associated with the railways for about 20 years, and I know that what the honourable member said was 100 per cent. right. It is almost impossible for men in the railways, in certain parts of the State, to get their normal rest. Other people are able to get their rest in the quiet of their homes, but these men have to sleep in barracks. Trains are going backwards and forwards all day and night and different train crews are coming in and going out at all hours. The railway workers have to endure a lot of disabilities which the average worker does not have to put up with. It is only right and proper that the Commissioner of Railways and the Minister for Railways should have regard for some of those disabilities.

Recently I had to make an appeal on behalf of a man who was suspended. He had been in the railways for 30 years and members of his family had been in the railways for over 100 years. That man was on his way out after all his hard work and the disabilities he had suffered. However, commonsense prevailed and consequently the traffic manager allowed him to stay on.

This evening we are trying to get this House to pass a motion moved by the member for Mt. Hawthorn that the amendment to section 73 of the Government Railways Act passed in 1960, now be repealed. The member who has just resumed his seat said that there was now a dual penalty, but in actual fact there is a treble penalty. A man who is suspended loses his wages. If regressed he loses some margin or rating as a railway employee, and then he is transferred and loses again. And then, to top the lot, the family he is trying to maintain and support has also to suffer with him. I think that the railway worker who might have been involved in a minor accident or made a minor omission has a lot to put up with, and the commissioner should have some regard for the disabilities such a man suffers and have this clause repealed.

To enable members to understand this section of the Act, I am going to read the motion. It is as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House the repeal of the amendment to section 73 of the Government Railways Act

passed by the present Government in the 1960 Session is most desirable because it has the effect of inflicting double punishment on railway employees as will be evident from the following extract from subsection (2) of section 73 referred to:—

Subsection (2):

The Commission may

(a) in any case where an officer or servant has for any act or omission been suspended—

(I) fine;

(II) reduce to a lower class grade;

(III) dismiss; or

(IV) transfer without payment of transfer expenses;

that officer or servant, notwithstanding and in addition to such suspension; and

(b) in any case where the Commission considers the circumstances warrant, by way of punishment for an act or omission reduce an officer or servant to a lower class or grade and also transfer him without payment of transfer expenses:

but except as provided in this subsection the Commission shall not inflict on any officer or servant more than one form of punishment for the same offence.

Anybody reading the end of the last sentence would get the impression that there could be only one penalty imposed; but the start of the sentence says "but except as provided in this subsection". In fact, it really imposes what is tantamount to three penalties. I think it is British justice that one penalty is sufficient for any transgression that a servant may make. It would seem that even the Minister himself, when he was dealing with this particular amendment, and whilst trying to get it passed by the House, was not conversant with what was going on.

I opposed the amendment because it was, up to a point, making it almost impossible for some railwaymen to carry on their work without being in some way liable to a penalty. I will quote from *Hansard* of the 3rd November, 1960, at page 2418—

Mr. Brady: He is reduced in grade and he can be transferred to other depots.

Mr. COURT: The honourable member has misread the legislation.

Mr. Tonkin: Would he not be regressed?

Mr. COURT: If this amendment is passed an employee of the railways can be regressed and he can be transferred without the payment of transfer expenses. In the interests of the family of the employee, such a provision is infinitely better for him than to be summarily dismissed. If an employee had committed a serious offence—sufficiently serious to warrant these penalties—and the commissioner had to decide on reinstatement without any penalty, or summary dismissal, in all probability the person would be summarily dismissed.

Mr. Hawke: Under the present law he can be regressed.

Mr. COURT: No.

And tonight he has admitted that he can be regressed. To continue—

Mr. Hawke: I think he can be.

Mr. COURT: It is important that the commissioner should have this power to deal with the matter in accordance with a reasonable assessment of the situation.

Mr. J. Hegney: The commissioner can regress an employee. An engine driver can be regressed to a fireman.

Mr. Hawke: Can they or can they not be regressed?

Mr. COURT: Yes; they can.

Mr. Hawke: A moment ago you said they could not be regressed.

Mr. COURT: Not in these circumstances. We are dealing with a particular clause.

Mr. Hawke: We are dealing with a particular section of the Act.

Mr. Court: I did not get very far.

Mr. BRADY: It appears that the Minister who was putting through the amendments did not realise their importance.

Mr. Court: Yes he did.

Mr. BRADY: He did not realise the seriousness to the man who might be unfortunate enough to commit an offence which would make him liable for suspension. Subsequently it may be found that the breach was not serious enough to call for suspension; but the fact remains that he might have been suspended; and then, in addition, if he is found guilty he is regressed and transferred. So there are three penalties; and I do not think that we, as a Parliament, should allow such an injustice to take place. It was a strange thing to hear the Minister say, more or less, that the commissioner and the Minister were sympathetic to the railwaymen.

Mr. Court: So they are. They are prepared to help rather than hinder.

Mr. BRADY: I know of a man who had given 12 years to the railways and had been sacked because he had a 20 per cent. disability. I asked the Minister what number of employees had been sacked, and he said 15. That is how sympathetic the Minister for Railways and the Government are to a man who has worked and given his best to the railways. He is now out of work and has not been able to get a job for 12 months or longer.

We have only to look at a reply the Minister gave the other day to the case concerning 15 men out of the permanent way section—the hardest section of the railways, where there should be extra consideration given—to realise there is no sympathy at all. They are sacked with a 20 per cent. disability and with £500 compensation which they get through in a few months, and then they are finished. That is the sympathy that is given to these men of the permanent way.

Mr. Court: That has nothing to do with discipline; that is workers' compensation.

Mr. BRADY: It is all very well for the Minister to tell us, while shedding crocodile tears, that the Commissioner of Railways is thinking about these men; but even though he may be thinking about them a job cannot be found for them here, there, or somewhere else. I think there are 13,000 employees in the railways, and nobody can tell me that the Commissioner of Railways, if he wants to find suitable employment for certain men, could not find it without transferring them to Timbaktu where there are no educational facilities and no proper amenities for their wives and families. So as far as I am concerned the member for Mt. Hawthorn is on the right track.

I mentioned the other night that trouble is fermenting in earnest in industrial organisations in this State because of the over-all position regarding industrial conditions generally. This sort of legislation certainly does not help the position; it does not help the State; it does not help the employee; and in the long run it does not help the Government if it insists that this type of legislation be perpetuated. We on this side of the House are trying to have legislation such as this removed, and I hope the member for Mt. Hawthorn will be successful with his motion.

MR. TOMS (Bayswater) [5.46 p.m.]: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Mt. Hawthorn. I was amazed—although I suppose I should not be amazed at anything that comes from the Minister for Railways—

Mr. Court: Such is fame!

Mr. TOMS: —to hear of the sympathetic consideration which he says is being shown to workers in the railways. He may remember a case I referred to him just over

twelve months ago. I received a letter from a railway worker; and after I showed the letter to the Minister he suggested I send a copy of it to the commissioner, which I did. Up to date no notice has been taken of that letter; but, for the benefit of members, I think I should read the whole of it because it is necessary to read it in full to appreciate the position of this particular individual.

It does not have to be a serious case for a person to be penalised twice in the railways; and I believe this principle is getting right away from the ethics of British justice. No man should be penalised twice for one so-called crime. The letter I referred to is dated July, 1961; it was addressed to me and reads as follows:—

Dear Sir,

I have been wondering as to the correct procedure for trying to make an appointment with Mr. Court, the Minister for Railways, and I think it would be advisable to do this through you, my local member of Parliament.

I am a clerk employed by the Western Australian Government Railways, and while employed in the position of country booking clerk during the early part of this year I was very harshly and I think unjustly treated by being punished for a complaint of which my portion was very small and made in the interest of other members of the travelling public. I have attempted on two occasions to make an appointment with the Chief Traffic Manager to plead my case but to no avail.

In January of this year a complaint was lodged, not by the person herself concerned but by a second party, to the Minister for Railways, of the hours she and a companion had to wait in the interstate booking office for an intersystem booking. On the 5th January (Thursday) as I remember, they had to wait 1½ hours and when at last reaching the window were informed that as it was almost 5 p.m. it was too late to do anything about a ticket that day but to come early next day and she would be one of the first for attention. She arrived at the office next morning and after waiting another 1½ hours or so was called to the window but was then informed that the certificate which she presented to obtain a concession ticket had to be signed by the Commercial Agent at 306 Murray Street. The lady went away and had this form completed and when she and her friend returned and had waited a further hour or more before obtaining the ticket required it was then too late for them to go on the bus tour for which they were booked.

With regard to the foregoing I wish to make it clear that I was in no way responsible for the delay with regard to interstate bookings.

According to this lady's report, on the Friday evening (6th January) she rang up and made inquiries about the "Australind" for Saturday and was told to be at the booking office at 7 a.m. next day if she desired to book a seat on this train, but on her arrival at Perth station at the above time on Saturday (7th January) was informed by the clerk at the suburban window that the country office would not be open until 7.30 a.m. This clerk said she spoke to him for some time and then said she would go and have a cup of tea, and I do think this may have been the time she mentioned in her complaint about having to go and get her breakfast.

It was not her complaint, but it was made through another party. The letter continues—

I was on duty at 7 a.m. and would have opened my window at approximately 7.20 a.m., and if this lady had been there when I did so I most certainly would have sold her a ticket. Almost every morning we book some seats for the "Australind" to early arrivals who get to the office before the "Australind" window opens at 8.10 a.m. Quite often when bus bookings are heavy for the 8 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. buses, and it is getting towards 8 o'clock, it is necessary for "Australind" passengers to wait for the window to open at 8.10 a.m. while the bus passengers are attended to. This lady apparently came to my window at such a time and I had asked her if she would mind waiting until the other window opened. If this had been the case I would have requested her very politely, as we have been instructed to do, and always did in such cases.

Perhaps this lady had justification for being annoyed for the delays occasioned her in the Trans. office on the two previous days and this no doubt stimulated her complaint about having to wait again while I attended other people. I might add that any request made for a passenger to stand aside was quite voluntary on their part and during busy times they are very co-operative, but if any person does not wish to do so they are served their ticket with no comment.

I stated in my reply to the department on this complaint that I could not remember this person coming to my window. I did not deny that she had been there or that I had asked her to stand aside, but all I could say in my defence was the usual practice that it was necessary to adopt when

there was a queue of people at the window just before a bus or train was due to depart. From the beginning of December until the time of this incident on January 7th I booked, I should say, thousands of country tickets and except for one week early in December and daily between 8.10 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. when the "Australind" window was opened there were often continuous queues of passengers because there was only one country window open at all times for the issue of all 1st and 2nd class rail—"Australind"—rail and bus—and all bus tickets, and scores of times at some time or another I had to request people to stand aside and deal with other passengers whose conveyance was due out, and I think it would be almost impossible to remember one particular person.

The clerk who saw her at the suburban window said she was a very cheerful person and when he put her name on the "Australind" diagram towards 8 a.m. she was not complaining but only mentioned that she had been asked to wait until 8.10 a.m. When I asked him why he did not tell me about this lady, he said he came to see why she had to wait but as I was busy issuing bus tickets and had quite a few customers outside my window he did not disturb me but took the "Australind" diagrams away and placed her name on same. At no time he explained did she appear annoyed.

Although to my knowledge nothing was done about the bulk of this lady's complaint—

I might say that about 3½ hours were wasted on the two previous days, as has been indicated in the letter. The letter continues—

—I was fined £1 and my position of Country Booking Clerk taken from me and I had to be placed in a position where I would not be in contact with the public. I was told by the department's advocate in the Appeal Court when I appealed against my £1 fine that I had not been punished twice as I was given a position in the Trans. Diagram Room on the same grade, but owing to penalty rates etc. attached to my proper classified position I have lost approximately £50 to date in salary.

That was to the 31st July when the letter was written. He goes on—

I have quite a few commitments to keep up with in regard to my home and family etc. and I am finding this increasingly difficult to contend with and I would repeat that I consider this punishment very harsh, even had I been in the wrong, for my first offence.

I have been an employee of the W.A.G.R. for almost 27 years, and in all these years I have been in contact with the public at all times and to my knowledge I have had no trouble at any time. I have been very proud of my record with the department, one which I venture to say is almost as good as any traffic officer employed. In my 10 years in the Country Booking Office I have not had, that I can remember, any double booking or wrong connections and at no time have I given the department any cause to complain as to my ability. I have all the departmental qualifications required of me, including special exams. set by the Publicity Committee on public relations, salesmanship, etc.

I do hope that justice and fair play will prevail in this case, and I will be able to return to my position as country booking clerk, one which took me many years of service in the country to achieve.

As the penalty meted out to me appears to be for evermore and the avenue of approach to the department has been closed to me, I request your assistance to obtain an interview with the Minister for Railways.

Mr. Court: Did you say that he appealed?

Mr. TOMS: This is the case I mentioned to the Minister. I showed him the letter and the Minister told me to take it or forward it to the commissioner. But it is now over twelve months since this letter was received.

Mr. J. Hegney: Did he acknowledge it?

Mr. TOMS: I took it to the commissioner and handed it to him personally. There was no need to acknowledge it.

Mr. Court: This chap appealed against the decision and the Appeal Board upheld his punishment, did it?

Mr. TOMS: I thought the Minister heard that in the letter. This is a further letter I received from the same party—

Dear Sir,

Since my first letter to you I have had an interview with the Commissioner, Mr. Wayne, but I am sorry to say the outcome was not very favourable to me, but I must admit that this may have been my own fault for being overawed by the occasion and my plea therefore was not confident owing to my inability to express my opinions. I am taking a course of public speaking because of this to try to remedy my shortcomings.

This is a case in which I feel that the amendments passed permitted a double penalty to be inflicted; and it is one that has caused unnecessary hardship. From the wording of that letter it can be seen that

the man played a very small part in the over-all picture which led to the final complaint.

I must say now that I know the person who lodged the complaint. It was lodged by the headmaster of a private school. I wonder whether any action would have been taken had the complaint been lodged by the lady herself. Here we have a man who for 27 years has been a servant of the railways, and during all that time he has been in close contact with the public. For the last 10 years he has been serving as a country booking clerk, and in this capacity he has been in constant touch with the public. Yet, on his sheet and on his transfer there is a mark that he is to be put away in another part, and must not be allowed to come in contact with the public any more.

Mr. Hawke: Did the Minister refuse to see this man?

Mr. TOMS: No; he asked me to pass him on to the Commissioner of Railways who would consider the case. I say: Would he have done so had a complaint not been lodged by a second party? It is unfortunate that this punishment should have been meted out to the man in question: but it is typical of the punishment that could be given under the amendment made to the Act.

We all appreciate that the provisions of the Railways Act must be severe; but to inflict a double punishment on a man is out of tune and out of step with all the tenets of British justice. I do believe there is not a member on the other side of the House who, after hearing the case of the individual I have quoted, will not feel that it is about time the provision dealing with double punishment should be wiped out. If there is any justice at all in the Railways Department, and in the part played by the man concerned, then here is a worthy case for review. The man in question should be reinstated to the position he held previously.

MR. GRAYDEN (South Perth) [6.3 p.m.]: I will be extremely brief in my remarks, because I think the section of the Railways Act against which this motion is directed is self-explanatory, and so obvious in its intention to help the railwayman that little explanation is required in respect of it.

Mr. Toms: It is used the wrong way.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I have listened to the speeches made by the members of the Opposition, and I must say I have never heard such arrant nonsense in all my life. The provision in question was inserted by the present Government for one specific purpose—to help railwaymen. Yet here we have members of the Opposition opposing it. Let us consider what the amendment to the Act, introduced by the present Government, sets out to do. It sets out to

give the Commissioner of Railways power to transfer a man rather than sack him for a misdemeanour. Time and again the Commissioner of Railways has been placed in the position of having to sack a man.

Mr. Toms: This is a let-out.

Mr. GRAYDEN: The provision in question was incorporated in the Act at, I understand, the request of the Commissioner of Railways because, as I have said, he was time and again placed in the position of having to sack railway employees for misdemeanours which required punishment. The commissioner did not want to sack these employees, and he felt it would be sufficient punishment to demote them. In many cases when this occurs there are no vacancies in the particular section for those men, and accordingly they must be transferred. Yet we have the Opposition advocating that the provision in question be abolished: and that the commissioner should not have the power to transfer the individual, but that the employee concerned should be sacked. If the present position in the Act does not help railway employees, I do not know what does.

Mr. Toms: There are sufficient penalties without double penalties being inflicted.

Mr. GRAYDEN: That is all nonsense. There are other penalties which could also be inflicted. I could imagine circumstances where in addition to the double penalty a man could be tried for manslaughter or drunkenness, and so on.

Mr. H. May: You have a pretty good imagination.

Mr. GRAYDEN: To say that two penalties are contrary to British justice is all nonsense. In some cases it is more just to demote a person and transfer him, than to dismiss him; and the latter would be the case if the members of the Opposition had their way.

Mr. Toms: Not necessarily so.

Mr. GRAYDEN: As I have said, in some cases two penalties are better than outright dismissal.

Mr. Jamieson: It is about as beneficial as a hole in the head.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I have no doubt that the railwaymen in Western Australia will not be deceived by this motion. I have not heard of any mass meetings that have been held, or motions that have been passed, criticising the particular provision of the Act; and I know of no member of Parliament who has received a letter in respect of it. I am sure that if every man in the Midland Junction Workshops were tomorrow called to a meeting and the reason for the section of the Act explained to the meeting, those present would be wholly in support of that particular section of the Act. I am certain that not one individual in the Midland Junction Workshops would oppose it in such circumstances.

When, however, we have the members of the Opposition visiting the railwaymen and meeting them in the streets—on the odd occasions they do meet them—and saying to them, "Here is a section of the Act which imposes a double penalty," it is very natural that the railwaymen concerned, not having had an opportunity to consider the matter, will say, "I suppose you are right." But if every argument were put to these men and the real reason for the provision in the Act explained to them—namely, that it is to give the commissioner power to transfer a man for an offence rather than to sack him—then I am certain these employees would strongly advocate the retention of section 73 (2) of the Act. When members of the Opposition speak as they have done tonight, I am afraid I can only regard their remarks as arrant nonsense.

Earlier we had the member for Swan criticising the Government and the Commissioner of Railways, and saying that neither the commissioner nor the Government had any sympathy for the railway employees. We all know how wrong that is. We also know that in 1959 the morale of employees in the railway system was at its lowest ebb. The railways were being run inefficiently and there was no future at all for railway employees or their children. In the space of three years, however, we have seen the situation completely transformed.

Mr. Brady: A great deal of work has been given to Tomlinsons.

Mr. GRAYDEN: We will talk about that later. We all know that the Government reduced the annual deficit of the railways by over £2,250,000. In doing so it cut the number of railway employees by 1,000 men, but it is significant to remark that the Government did this without retrenching a single man. It waited until a man left the railways for some other employment, or until a man retired, and in that manner it cut down the expenses incurred by the railways. If any one requires a good illustration of a Government trying to bend over backwards to help railway employees, one only has to consider the activities of the present Government in that direction.

I know how this Government feels about railway employees in this State. The member for Swan has said that this particular section of the Act has resulted in 15 men being inconvenienced. But to say this is an indication that the Commissioner of Railways and the Government have no feelings for railway employees is, to my way of thinking, complete and utter nonsense. I repeat that the Act was amended to enable the commissioner to mete out British justice to railwaymen who had offended in some way or another.

Mr. Brady: What did the Commissioner of Railways do prior to the inclusion of this section?

Mr. GRAYDEN: This section was incorporated in the Act for the sole purpose of avoiding the necessity to sack individuals; and I am certain that every man in the railway system would be wholeheartedly in favour of its retention if it were explained to him. For that reason I oppose the motion.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) (6.12 p.m.): Enough has been said by members on this side of the House to indicate the thoughts of the Opposition on this motion. The member for South Perth, however, has a habit of bringing me to my feet when he speaks on such occasions as this. If the member for South Perth would like to listen to arrant nonsense I suggest he have a tape recorder installed the next time he speaks, and that he then play back the recording of his speech.

Mr. Court: You do not like what the member for South Perth said?

Mr. JAMIESON: I have not known men to be more incensed over anything that has been introduced into Parliament than over the inclusion of this particular section in the Railways Act. Any member who has been associated with any railway system has been pilloried by the officers of the union ever since the provision with which we are dealing was incorporated in the Act. The question has been asked time and again: Should Parliament incorporate a provision like this where there is a double or triple penalty?

The member for South Perth said that he had not known of any mass meetings or displays in connection with this matter; but I can assure the honourable member that if the men knew his views on the subject they would fill the public galleries tonight—particularly if they thought that was the only way they would be heard. But I do not think that such mass demonstrations help anybody; they only tend to upset working arrangements. These people have been given a pretty raw deal by the Minister, who is prepared to jackboot them into this position.

Mr. Court: Nonsense! This was for the benefit of the people.

Mr. JAMIESON: This provision in the Act was only another step forward in an endeavour to put the boots into the personnel of the Railways Department on every possible occasion. If railway employees were satisfied with the position, why are the unions trying to prevail on members on this side of the House to have attention given to this problem immediately? If the provision in question was inserted in the Act for their benefit, why should they be crying out in the way they are? As I said by way of interjection, it is about as beneficial to them as a hole in the head; and they want the section withdrawn.

This sort of thing would certainly not be countenanced if it were applied to the business community of the State by the member who was responsible for placing it on the statute book. I am certain it would be considered an affront and an offence to that section of the community. But because it is associated with, and refers to, a section of the community which has no other way of having its views heard than through its representatives, the Minister tells us that the section is justified; and that its provisions work for the benefit of the railway employees.

Mr. Court: Would you rather have them sacked?

Mr. Hawke: Do not put up that nonsense!

Mr. Court: It is a plain simple fact.

Mr. Hawke: It is subterfuge.

Mr. Court: It is nothing of the kind!

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Order!

Mr. JAMIESON: If the Minister for Railways is prepared to continue what he has done, it indicates beyond any shadow of doubt that he would be prepared to come at anything.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. JAMIESON: I was indicating very clearly that in my opinion it is not to me that the Minister for Railways and the member for South Perth have to justify their stand on this particular issue. They have to justify their stand to the people concerned.

We on this side of the House took a very strong stand on this issue last year when it was introduced. We indicated the reaction which would arise following the enactment of such a measure. However, the Minister was not prepared to take any notice of us; and now that the men who work in the railways realise the implications of this provision, they have made all manner of protests to members on this side.

If the member for South Perth and the Minister for Railways feel they can justify themselves, I would like them to address a flagpole meeting at the Midland Junction Workshops. The Minister and the member for South Perth would get plenty of opposition there. They would be told whether the Minister was justified in introducing it.

Mr. Grayden: Are you aware that quite a number of men have been saved dismissal by virtue of this section?

Mr. JAMIESON: That is a lot of nonsense. Before this section was placed in the Railways Act there were no instances of sacking. The workmen could have been sacked and could be sacked now for various reasons. But they were not dismissed. Therefore that is a lot of talk which does

not mean a thing. We know what transpired before. Why Mr. Wayne wanted this I do not know. I did not think him half the terrible person the Minister made him out to be.

Mr. Court: Who says I made him out to be terrible?

Mr. JAMIESON: I thought it was the Minister who wanted this section in the Act. I would have been happier had it been the Minister.

Mr. Court: The commissioner wanted it included in order that he might handle the situation in a more understanding way.

Mr. JAMIESON: The commissioner had the discretion to handle the matter in an understanding way and he always has had.

Mr. Court: He could either reinstate or sack. There was no intermediate course.

Mr. JAMIESON: There were no problems associated with this, as has been demonstrated by the many appeals in the railways before this section was inserted.

I have not much more to say, except that there has been a considerable reaction. If members of the present Government expect others to co-operate with them in their leap forward, they must provide reasonable conditions and be prepared to give, and not take all as they have done in the past. Unfortunately, the Minister for Railways seems only to believe in everything going his way and giving nothing to the workers. He has always been that way inclined, and this is a further typical example of his disregard for the individuals who make this State—not those who organise it, or disorganise it, as the Minister does, but the people who are the earning power and spending power of the State. They are the people to whom the Minister should be responsible but he is not, as he has proved by his actions in this Parliament. I support the motion.

Question put and negatived.

COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES

Increased Rate Assessments: Motion

Debate resumed, from the 5th September, on the following motion by Mr. Sewell:—

That in the opinion of this House the very steep rise in rate assessments issued by the Water Supply Department at Geraldton and other places outside the metropolitan area which have resulted from excessive increases in property valuations and in consequence impose a heavy financial burden on ratepayers in those areas, is entirely contrary to the often repeated assertions of a desire for decentralisation. Accordingly in the opinion of this House the Government deserves condemnation for its action, and the House requests that immediate steps be taken to relieve ratepayers in these areas of the unjust imposition that has been placed on them.

MR. WILD (Dale.—Minister for Water Supplies) [7.36 p.m.] : When moving this motion, the member for Geraldton made two of three points, one of the main ones being as follows:—

it is felt in Geraldton and other country towns outside the metropolitan area that the ratepayers are called upon to pay too much towards the funds of the State Treasury for various amenities they may enjoy.

I am pretty sure the honourable member could not have meant what he said on that occasion because I have found, on looking back in *Hansard* that on every occasion, from as far back as 1955, he has taken the opportunity on Estimates or on some other appropriate occasion, to mention this question of water supplies in Geraldton. He even mentioned it when he was sitting behind the Government. He said exactly the same to my predecessor about this problem although he did not indicate then that it was the Treasury which was receiving the monetary gain.

In 1954 he took strong exception to the increased valuations that had taken place, in exactly the same way in which he is taking exception to the increased valuations which occurred during the last financial year. It will be very interesting to first of all answer that one point before we proceed to a few of the others in order to see just how much the Treasury is benefiting from Geraldton. I cannot agree with him after having looked at the losses which have taken place over the past few years.

For instance, the operating losses on their own which have occurred in Geraldton over the past three years are £31,730, followed by £31,311, with £31,067 last year, which together with the costs of interest and sinking fund on loan fund repayments makes a total loss in 1956-57 of £82,569, followed by £85,524, and £93,082. Therefore it does not seem to me as though very much money could have been gained by the Treasury from Geraldton.

It is only fitting to say that Geraldton, in my opinion, with the rest of the country towns in Western Australia, is never ever going to be in a position to even pay its operating costs—and I do not think any Government would expect it to do so. It is very interesting to note that during the past 12 months we have lost in Western Australia on country water supplies a sum of £1,799,600. That is a fairly tidy sum of money; and, fortunately, the Grants Commission has not taken exception to it, regarding it as one of the necessities. I hope it always will do so. It assists, as the honourable member says, in decentralisation. I thought it pertinent to make that point because the honourable member opened his speech by saying that these people should not be penalised in the

country in order to bolster up the finances of the Treasury. We know we have heard that same story from other parts of the State and also from those who live closer in the metropolitan area.

The same thing has occurred in the metropolitan area. I do not care what party occupies the Treasury bench, it will always find this a problem. I will be very surprised if with increasing costs and the difficulties associated with obtaining water the day ever comes when it will be possible to obtain money by way of the metropolitan water supply department for the Treasury.

The question of how rates were arrived at in the country was also raised by the honourable member, and he indicated in his motion that it was the unfair way in which it was done that was responsible for the increases. It is pertinent, I believe, to read the section under which these valuations are made. The system was first adopted in 1902 and I cannot find any indication that the method has been altered since that year. The relevant section is section 48, which is as follows:—

The annual value, referred to in the next preceding section, may, at the option of the Minister be either—

- (a) the current valuation of the local authority in whose district the land is situated; or
- (b) the yearly rent at which the land might reasonably be expected to let on the assumption, if necessary to be made, that the letting is allowed by law free from all usual tenants' rates and taxes and deducting therefrom the probable annual average cost of insurance and other expenses necessary to maintain it in a state to command that rent; or
- (c) an amount not exceeding six pounds ten shillings per centum on the capital value of the land in fee simple.

For many years we have been following the same system, adopting (b)—the yearly rent at which the land may reasonably be expected to be let.

These valuations are not done by the Public Works Department but by the Commonwealth Taxation Department. They have increased from time to time. As a matter of fact, quite recently in connection with a small block of land I own not far from the city, the rates were lifted from £23 to £57, the latter amount being the rate for this financial year. I rang up the valuer at the Taxation Department to ascertain how this amount had been decided and he explained that because of certain services which had been brought adjacent to my property, the valuation of

my black had increased. I have to recognise that fact. If water, electricity, and a good road are provided to a block one must expect that the value will increase. It was a pretty steep rise, but I recognise the system under which we work.

One can look at practically every British-speaking country about which I have been able to make any research, apart from the other States of Australia, to discover that they all value by the same method. The valuation is made either on the unimproved capital value or the improved capital value. The valuers must pass an examination before they are appointed; and when they make their valuation of a property it is based, as we know, on the rent of that property less certain charges allowed in accordance with the Act. The valuers went along to Geraldton last year and did the revaluation—and it had not been done since 1954, so it is reasonable to assume that there would have been some special increases.

The valuers get nothing for saying that a property is worth more than its previous valuation; they are there to do a job and they make their valuation purely on the assumption of what a property will produce if it is let. So they made their valuations in Geraldton—there had been no revaluations for a number of years—and increases resulted.

The increases were steep in the total: the values rose from £262,924 to £438,763—an increase of 67 per cent. The department, in its wisdom, thought the increase was too steep and reduced the rate from 3s. to 2s. 6d. in order to give the people a bit of a breather in regard to the steep increase.

I do not think there is any argument against that. It has been the law since 1902; and no Government of this State—and I did indicate that I could not find any Commonwealth country where the system is different—has made any attempt to alter the system of valuing. Who am I at this stage to say, "The whole system is wrong; let us try something different"? It is not that we are not ready to listen to anyone who comes along with something constructive. If someone can come forward with a system that he thinks is more equitable I will be quite prepared to listen to him.

It is interesting to know what has been done for Geraldton in the way of trying to provide water supplies during the past four or five years. The honourable member might recall that about two and a half years ago, because of the complaints received about the poor pressure of water at Geraldton, the Public Works Department chartered a plane and took up probably the largest retinue of public servants to Geraldton ever to be taken in one plane load. That was done because I was dissatisfied with some of the answers I was getting. I do not say they were the answers

given by my officers, but they did not seem to line up with the allegations made by different people.

I took those officers up with me and we went out to Wicherina where we remained for some hours. As a result it was decided we would increase the size of the main serving the town. We have improved the supply successively over the last few years; so that whereas Geraldton was receiving only 4,000,000 gallons of water a week, it is now getting almost 10,000,000 gallons.

So I do not think anyone can say the Government has not done its level best to try to improve what was, without doubt, a difficult situation. Geraldton is an expanding town, as everyone knows; and each year we have a certain number of problems in connection with the tomato growers, because at a certain time of the year they want a lot of water. The amount they require varies according to the season, but we have to be in a position to give them the water they need.

If we look at the figures of three or four years ago we find that in 1958-59 some £21,000 was spent on the Geraldton water supply. In 1959-60 the amount rose to £48,563; in 1960-61 it was £65,091; and in 1961-62 it was £134,697. As a matter of fact, over the last 10 years, successive Governments have spent a total of £624,226 on the Geraldton water supply. That is an indication that Geraldton has received a pretty fair share of the money that is available to the engineering section of the Public Works Department. So I cannot for the life of me see how the member for Geraldton can say that the increases were savage and that we should reduce them; and I cannot understand how he can complain about the service.

I have endeavoured to show, firstly, that there is a heavy loss; and, secondly, that we have spent money in Geraldton; and I know I am right in saying we have spent a big proportion of the money that has been available. If it were not for the needs of Geraldton, it would not have received a larger share than it would under normal circumstances. Many people, when they come to pay their water rates or when they get their bills forget that water is the cheapest commodity we have and grizzle.

Mr. Rowberry: What about fresh air?

Mr. WILD: We can turn on a tap at any tick of the clock. Some may complain that occasionally that is not so; but that is possibly only at odd times of the year.

Mr. J. Hegney: Only a few years ago the department was trying to get us not to buy it.

Mr. WILD: That is so. Throughout Western Australia and the Commonwealth, the most valuable commodity we have is water; and I can only repeat what I have said on many occasions: that the day is

not far distant—not far beyond the turn of the century—when, if we do not do something about the economics of the desalination of water, or the bringing down of water from the Ord River or the Fitzroy River, the population of Perth will remain static.

The point I wish to make is this: It has been said that water is dear if we pay £5, £10, or £20 a year for it. If we work out the cost per week, I venture the opinion that the small amount we pay would be, to most people, the equivalent of a half dozen pots of beer, or two packets of Rothmans cigarettes. The difficulty is that when the bill comes along the weekly amount is multiplied many times and totals £10, £15, or some other amount, and so we get the grizzles. I repeat, however, that water is the cheapest commodity we have in Western Australia.

This morning I was looking over some records, and I found that the basic wage in 1938 as applying to the country areas was £4 13s. 3d., whereas today it is £14 11s. 6d.

Mr. W. Hegney: I bet it was not £4 13s. in 1938!

Mr. WILD: I am sorry, but my records show that in 1938 the basic wage for country towns was £4 13s. 3d., whilst today it is £14 11s. 6d. I know this is the honourable member's *forte*, and he can tell me if I am wrong, but I am quoting what my records show. Today's figure is more than three times what it was in 1938, yet we are not paying more per thousand gallons than we did then.

Another point I want to make is that there are many towns in the State—many small towns—where the people, unfortunately, are not able to do what the people in Geraldton do; namely, turn on a tap.

I was looking at some of the records of only about three years ago when water had to be carted from Three Springs to Carnamah; and the people in those towns and the settlers in those districts in 1958 had to pay £2 12s. for 1,000 gallons of water. In 1961 water again had to be carted between those two towns, and the cost was £1 18s. 9d. per thousand. Yet water generally costs 3s. a thousand gallons, and up to 4s. in some places; and I repeat that we get people who are grizzling all the time.

The Government has done a tremendous amount in respect of water supplies. For the purposes of record it would be as well to read to the member for Geraldton just what we have done for a few other towns some of which he may or may not be interested in. We have established new water supplies in the last three years as follows: 1959-1960, at Coorow and Donnybrook; 1960-61, Denmark, Milng. Port Denison, Borden, Point Samson; 1961-1962, Augusta, Bolgart, Calingiri, Darkan, Nanup; and Broome is about to be opened

next week. In two or three weeks' time—it might be a little more—I am hoping to go down into the territory of the member for Warren and open a water supply at Walpole; and there will be one at Greenbushes.

Mr. Kelly: What about my area?

Mr. WILD: I have no ideas at the moment about the honourable member's area. This is a water-conscious Government, and we have opened more water schemes in the last three years than have been opened in any previous 10 years.

The question at issue concerns the water supply at Geraldton. The people there are being treated as fairly as anybody else, and I would say they have been served better, financially, than the people in any other country town in Western Australia. I think it was quite ill-fitting of the honourable member to make some of the remarks he did.

Looking back over the years, I notice that he twitted the member for Melville—the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—for doing the same thing in 1955. The theme of his speech on the Estimates then was practically word for word with what he said the other evening; namely, that valuations had gone up and the people of Geraldton had been penalised and something had to be done about it.

With all the vehemence at my command I indicate to the House that Geraldton has had a very fair go in regard to water, and I strongly reject the motion.

MR. HALL (Albany) [7.57 p.m.]: I cannot agree with the Minister in the least. I think the member for Geraldton has moved in the right direction not only in the interests of his own electorate but also those of other country electorates. If one studies the motion one realises that it will be for the benefit of the whole State, including the metropolitan area. Rates and land taxes have been increased, and various other types of taxes are being increased. In speaking of the Government, one could justly use the old electoral slogan of "Taxus Raiders."

If something is not done to put a curb on the rising cost of commodities for the public in general, the economic position of Western Australia, and of Australia, will get well and truly out of balance. Water rates and land taxes have become very much affected as a result of the introduction of the N.A.V. valuation as against the unimproved capital valuation; and then in one fell swoop we get valuations which are much higher than the original ones.

The taxation valuations have affected many members of my electorate—the Albany electorate. Many weaknesses were shown to the Minister by the appeals that

were lodged, and one referred to—not to-night, but previously—concerned a pensioner whose rates on a condemned home were increased. His home was in a complete state of dilapidation.

I visited this pensioner and I lodged an appeal on his behalf requesting that his position be eased, not only because of the unjust rates served on him, but because of the limited means at his disposal to meet any increase, or even to meet the minimum. I believe the Minister did allow the appeal in that case, and the pensioner got some relief from the burden of the taxation which is hidden behind the water rating system as it applies to certain country areas.

I know, too, that a valuer in another instance valued a house at something like £15,000 to £20,000, and his valuation resulted in a reduction of water rates. The house which was built of granite rock stood on half an acre or three-quarters of an acre of land. There was a case of the water rate assessments on a house being reduced when the actual valuation of the property was greatly increased. One cannot help but feel for the man who rears a large family and because of this makes additions to his home; and then finds that after a few years, when his children have left him, he has a terrific burden placed on him overnight by this new method of taxation.

Many pensioners who own their own homes and who have reared their families are now forced to meet this additional cost, and they are finding it is a great burden. That is not hard to understand when one follows the economic trend of the past two or three years during which the economic recession and the unemployment throughout the State, has rendered them unable to supplement their incomes in order to support themselves more comfortably. As members are aware, pensioners are able to supplement their pensions up to a maximum of £7 10s. per week. However, when unemployment became rife they were not only unable to supplement their incomes, but they had forced upon them a further burden of increased water rates.

These increases are almost identical with the increase in land tax and other rates and taxes; and land tax, as a means of direct taxation, has been recently increased. That is borne out by the fact that all rates in country areas have been increased. In the electorate I represent, both the shire council and Municipality of Albany have increased their rates. All these increases stem from that first movement of increased charges by the Government, and the position is not as the Minister has stated; namely, that an increase in water rates is justified. We know that water supplies are the salvation of the State. I understand it has been estimated that approximately five gallons

per day should be allowed per head of the population. That is the figure that has been given to me.

It is no use taxing the people to the absolute limit when the economy of the State is thrown out of balance. We must look to that fact when it is realised we are over-taxing ourselves into a state of poverty. That is an aspect which could be seriously considered before any further increases in rates are envisaged. What might bring a stop to these increases is a change of Government, but it remains to be seen whether that will occur in the future.

To indicate how these increases in water rates have proved to be an imposition on the people, we find that when they were first made in Albany a public meeting was immediately called to protest against them. Although the rates were increased from 2s. 6d. to 3s., this increase was not discovered until the rate notices, which were based on the reassessed taxation values, were received. The ratepayers did not feel the impact of the increased rates until after they had received their notices of the increase in valuations. No-one is very pleased about these increases in rates and taxes, and we have to be very careful how far we can go before the economy of the State starts to be thrown out of balance as a result.

The other point is that we impose this tax on water on the basis of so much for every 1,000 gallons, but then the question arises as to how we can supply the water for which a charge is made. Certain people are rated for water when they are not using the amount that is allotted to them. Then we have the position of the rates being fixed on the unimproved capital value, by the local governing body.

The question is asked: Who pays the rates on the unimproved capital value when the water main goes past the block? Until a set water rate is struck it should be a site valuation. The footage of the block would be measured and it would be valued accordingly. That would be a more equitable method of rating, from my point of view. We do not need to look further than the Eastern States for a precedent for this method, because in those parts of the Commonwealth the authorities are trying to rate on the same basis.

Mr. O'Connor: You are saying that particular method should be exercised right throughout the State?

Mr. HALL: No; we could have a separate rate for the metropolitan area and a separate rate for rural areas. When the honourable member said the whole of the State I thought he meant the whole of the Commonwealth. Different States have different rating for different areas. At the present time council rates are based on the taxation values that are made in

the council's district. The people of Albany have been subject to another imposition by the shire council of Albany. They have had to pay increased rates for the drainage scheme that is being installed in Albany at present. Although many appeals have been made against this rating, some valuations have increased by 130 or 140 per cent. Some of the land was not even arable, which could be proved by the valuations made by this particular method. The people have been subjected to that increased taxation. There are certain parts of the area where the people have to pay these increases in water rates which the Minister should inspect.

I say again to the Minister that we should proceed steadily in regard to the increases made in various rates, because a halt must be made somewhere. We cannot keep on taxing the people until they reach that stage where, in effect, they are unable to even crawl because the burden is becoming too great. The Government should call a halt now and take stock of what it has done, in an endeavour to find a better method of water rating. The Minister does not deny that the Government is trying to find a better method of rating, and I believe he is sincere in his endeavour.

The following is the information that I was able to obtain as a result of questions I put to the Minister and the answers he gave:—

What amount of revenue was received by the P.W.D. Water Supply, Albany Municipality, for rates for the years 1956-57, 1957-58, 1958-59, 1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62?

Mr. WILD replied:

The amount of revenue received by the Public Works Department for water rates in the Albany Municipality for the years 1956-57 to 1961-62 inclusive is as follows:—

	£
1956-57	31,800
1957-58	32,200
1958-59	34,500

Then we had a change of Government and the following increases in revenue can be seen:—

1959-60	36,500
1960-61	51,463
1961-62	52,952

My next question was as follows:—

What amount of revenue was received by the P.W.D. for the payment of sewerage rates, as separate from water rates, Albany Municipality, for the years 1956-57, 1957-58, 1958-59, 1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62?

The Minister replied—

The amount of revenue received by the Public Works Department for sewerage rates as separate

from water rates in the Albany Municipality for the years 1956-57 to 1961-62 inclusive is as follows:—

	£
1956-57	15,200
1957-58	17,900
1958-59	18,190
1959-60	19,340
1960-61	21,089
1961-62	22,845

I will now add the amounts received in revenue for water and that received for sewerage as near as I can for the information of members, as follows:—

Year	Total amount received from water and sewerage rates
	£
1956-57	46,800
1957-58	50,100
1958-59	52,690
1959-60	55,840
1960-61	72,552
1961-62	75,797

So from those tabulations members can realise that rates for sewerage and water have been increased to considerable proportions since this Government took office at the end of 1958.

Mr. J. Hegney: The increases have leaped ahead.

Mr. Lewis: What has been the increase in population since that time?

Mr. HALL: Surprisingly enough, the population has increased over the past six years, but the greatest movement took place in the early part of that period. The increase in population is gradually slowing down. Let us look at the number of connections that have been made. That would be the best way to approach the subject and to judge the movement of the population.

My next question to the Minister was—

How many buildings in the Albany municipality are connected with the P.W.D. sewerage scheme?

And the Minister replied, 1,398. I then asked—

What revenue is received by way of rates for water and service from buildings connected to the sewerage scheme?

And the Minister replied—

£19,012 levied for 1961-62.

My next questions were—

How many buildings in the Albany Municipality are adjacent to the sewerage main, but are not connected to same?

What revenue is received by way of rates from buildings not connected to the sewerage scheme?

To those questions the Minister replied—

312.
£2,872 levied for 1961-62.

My final question was as follows:—

How many pensioners have claimed exemptions from connection to sewerage scheme because of indigent circumstances?

And the Minister replied "None."

I can tell the Minister the reason why there were none. In many cases pensioners have their own septic tank systems, and recently I have been approached by them asking me what I can do in the matter. After making inquiries I advised them to continue with their septic tank systems for as long as they could until they were finally forced to dispense with them when their properties were connected with the sewerage main. I think I can eventually persuade the Minister to ease the rates that will have to be paid by these pensioners. The connection of their properties to the sewerage main would involve them in tremendous expense. Naturally, many of them are extremely aged, and to find the necessary finance for sewerage connections would place a terrific burden upon them.

I now come to my next question, which was as follows:—

How many buildings in the Albany Municipality are connected with the P.W.D. water scheme?

And the Minister replied, 3,152.

The next question was—

What revenue is received by way of rates for water supplied to buildings connected?

The answer was £49,236 levied for 1961-62.

The next question I asked was—

How many buildings in the Albany Municipality are adjacent to the P.W.D. water main but are not connected?

The answer was that 38 were not connected to the scheme. The fourth question was—

What revenue is received by way of rates from buildings not connected to the water scheme?

The reply was £579 levied for 1961-62. The fifth question was—

How many pensioners in the Albany Municipality have claimed exemption from payment of water rates because of indigent circumstances?

The reply given by the Minister was that 83 had claimed exemption under the Pensioners (Rates Exemption) Act. A big percentage of this number would not apply for exemption if they could find employment to supplement their income but that is impossible because of the employment situation which exists today.

For the enlightenment of the Minister I want to refer him to a pamphlet which sets out the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works rating system. It shows

the reasons why the rates should be changed to a site-value basis. Under the heading of "Majority Rule," it is stated—

Ratepayers in a substantial majority of the municipalities within the Board's rating area have said that they prefer to be rated on the site-value basis (i.e., Unimproved Capital Value).

By that means it is trying to relieve the burden on the person who has improved his property, raised a family, and has to find extra revenue to meet the additional taxation valuation on his property, which results in higher water rates being imposed. The second paragraph, under the heading of "Equity," states—

Water and sewerage charges under the site-value basis are more equitable. Under the net annual value system charges to neighbouring properties vary enormously.

There is plenty to be learned by undertaking research into any matter. When one makes a research into valuation of properties one will find a very good definition set out in the booklet "The Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Rating Basis." Under the heading of "Meaning of Terms Used" the following is stated:—

Net annual value means a value of property computed at the annual rent which the site and all improvements upon it might reasonably be expected to return, free of all tenants' usual rates and taxes, and deducting therefrom the probable annual average costs of insurance and other expenses, (if any), necessary to maintain such property in a state to command such rent. Provided that such valuation shall not represent less than five pounds per centum of the fair capital value of the fee-simple thereof.

The booklet then sets out the definition of "Unimproved Capital Value." It refers to an explanatory book dealing with public charges on land values; but that is not relevant to the motion, and I shall not quote from it. However, it does go to the basis of land valuation.

A further article which should interest the Minister deals with rating and meter charges. It outlines the reasons why it is not possible to assess water rating by direct charges through the meter, and sets out many grounds why such a system would not work. The article stresses that site valuation is a more equitable basis of rating. As was suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, more research should be undertaken to devise a means to overcome the ever-burdensome tax impositions, and thereby arrive at some equitable basis of rating.

The member for Geraldton should be complimented for bringing this matter to the notice of the House and for giving us the opportunity to vent our feelings.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are the people of Albany complaining about the increase in water rates?

Mr. HALL: We held many public meetings in Albany, and on one occasion the Minister was in Denmark when a meeting was held. He was a great diplomat because he did not show his face in Albany; but he did send Mr. Samuel from the department to attend the meeting. We received a good hearing from him, but we were not able to induce the taxation valuer to attend that meeting.

MR. NORTON (Gascoyne) [8.21 p.m.]: It is very necessary for me to support this motion, especially as the member for Geraldton has included the term "and other places outside the metropolitan area" in it. By his so doing every member in this House is given the opportunity to speak on the matter. It is a wonder that some Country Party members do not seem anxious to take part in the debate.

The Minister said that water was one of the cheapest commodities. I agree with him as far as the metropolitan area is concerned, but in the country one finds a very different proposition. I want to deal with the position in two towns within my electorate. The first is Shark Bay; in that town a terrific increase in water rates has been imposed, and it ranges from 150 to 200 per cent. It is interesting to note the quality of water that is supplied. It is water obtained from an artesian bore, and contains at least 200 grains of salt per gallon, as well as other minerals. This water is of no use for cooking or gardening, but it is a boon to the people living in that town for bathing, general household cleaning, and washing; because before this no water was reticulated to the houses and the people had to rely entirely on water from roof catchment and from rainwater tanks.

The average rainfall in that area is only 10 inches a year, so it will be realised there has to be a good storage and a large roof catchment for sufficient water to be conserved for the year. The water rating in country districts is 3s. per thousand gallons, and the rating is also assessed on the annual rental value at 3s.

I want to refer to four cases in Shark Bay, each being different from the other. The families concerned vary from two units to five units. One family has been rated at £23 a year, and there are two adults and one child in it. For most of the week the husband is at sea fishing, and he does not use a great deal of water in the household. With a rating of £23 a year the family is allowed 150,000 gallons of water. As this water cannot be used other than for washing and bathing purposes it would be unreasonable to expect that family to use even 40,000 gallons a year. Assuming the family uses the 40,000 gallons it would then be paying at the rate of 12s. per thousand gallons for this salt water.

The water rating on the next household is £11 14s. a year. This property is owned by an old-age pensioner, whose nephew is also a fisherman. The nephew is only home during week-ends. Under that rating this woman is allowed 78,000 gallons a year. Without a garden or lawn she cannot use anywhere near the 78,000 gallons. Assuming she used 20,000 gallons a year she is paying at the rate of 12s. per thousand gallons. As a matter of fact she pays more than that, because with rainwater storage and the 20,000 gallons which I have estimated she would have water far in excess of her needs.

Another house has been rated at £10 10s. a year. This property belongs to a pensioner, and her working son is only home at the week-ends. This person is allowed 70,000 gallons a year, and again not a quarter of the allocation would be used. Therefore the actual cost of the water is once more 12s. per thousand gallons. I wonder how the people living in the metropolitan area would feel if they had to pay for water at that rate!

In the fourth case the water rate is £13 19s. In this family there are two adults and three children, and the allocation is 93,000 gallons. I would be reasonable in assuming that this family uses approximately one-third of the allocation; in other words, it is paying 9s. per thousand gallons.

It is in a district such as Shark Bay that consideration should be given to water rating on the unimproved capital value, or on each thousand gallons used. Where the water is saline and can only be used for certain household requirements, then the rating should be based on each 1,000 gallons used. The Act only provides for the maximum gallonage which can be used for a particular rate; it does not provide that the water rate should be reduced in certain circumstances. Towns such as Shark Bay should be placed in a special category, and the rate on each 1,000 gallons should be reduced considerably to make water a cheap commodity. At present it is a very expensive one.

As water rates increase, so do rentals; and as rentals rise the taxation valuer decides that the properties are producing more rental, and so the rental value of properties is raised. This appears to be a case of the dog chasing its tail.

Mr. H. May: Then the balloon goes up.

Mr. NORTON: I agree. Then members of Parliament will receive queries and will demand to know the reason. In the case of State rental houses it is only natural for the State Housing Commission to pass on increases in water rates.

A rise in water rates again brings about an increase in rentals of those houses. Furthermore, the Housing Commission expects its tenants to keep the gardens in reasonable condition.

In the north, where we do not experience a true winter, it is necessary to water gardens all the year around to keep them in reasonable order. When one has to pay 3s. per thousand gallons for excess water, it does not take very long for people to get a large excess water bill. I understand it is not uncommon for many householders to receive an excess water bill in the vicinity of £14 a year. If one were to add that to the weekly rental of the house, it would mean in actual fact that the rental was being increased by 5s. a week. One's rent does not stop at what one is paying the housing commission. To it must be added the cost of excess water.

If we are going to encourage people to go to the north or the remote areas of our State we must not consider the cost of the water that is going to be supplied to those people. As this motion suggests, the higher rating is causing centralisation and not decentralisation, because when one goes to the outback where the climate is hot, water is one of the most essential commodities in order to make life bearable. Therefore, it is only by supplying water at a reasonable rate that we can expect men to take their wives and families into the remote areas which need to be developed.

In spite of what has been said in the past I feel a standard rating should be introduced throughout the State if we are to achieve the objectives we desire. By this means the people who enjoy the conveniences of city life will help to pay the expenses of the people in the country in respect of water. If this is done we will find that people will be more ready to go into the remote areas than they have been in the past. I also feel that the proportion allowed in respect of the annual rental value for maintenance, insurance, water rates, and road rates is not in proportion to the annual rental value of the house.

I would point out that the cost of maintenance of a house is increasing considerably. The insurance rate has increased; water rates are continuously going up; and with revaluations, road board rates and taxation are following the same trend. If one were to take all these various charges on a house into consideration, one would find that they represent more than 40 per cent. of the estimated rental value of any property. Therefore, I consider the amount of 40 per cent. for the annual rental should be increased so as to decrease the annual rental value which is assessed for the purpose of striking rates.

MR. H. MAY (Collie) [8.33 p.m.]: The other night, Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. W. A. Manning), you frowned on me in regard to some remarks I made in connection with another matter that was before the House. Tonight I am going to take the advantage of saying a few words in connection with this motion, which I intend to support.

At this point I would make the observation that the Minister mostly concerned in connection with this matter is absent from the Chamber. It could be that he has some other important business to attend to; but I would think the Minister who is being spoken to should be in his place. However, that is as it may be.

The whole system of rating both for rates on property and for water has gone haywire. If the present rate of increase is maintained it will not only be the old-age pensioners who will commit their property to the hereafter when they die because of rates not paid during their lifetime; other members of the community will be in this position, too. It has been proved that both the rates on property and for water have increased to such an extent that the position is now beyond the means of the ordinary individual.

I think it is time the powers that be provided some scheme whereby the payment for water was worked out on different lines. I am sure the Water Supply Department of this State—both country and metropolitan—knows for the ensuing 12 months what the cost will be in regard to maintenance, extensions, and all the rest of it. Therefore, a fairer way of imposing water rates would be to more or less equally divide the total cost between all consumers. I am of the opinion that the people who have the nerve and the heart to go into the country—wherever it might be—should be given some consideration over and above the people in the metropolitan area.

As the member for Gascoyne has said, unless we show these people some consideration, we will finish up with 90 per cent. of the people of the State living in the metropolitan area and taking in one another's washing, and the other 10 per cent. will be scattered throughout the rest of the State. I cannot see why a scheme such as I have suggested cannot be worked out by the department; and the department be under the control of the Government in power at the time. In my opinion there is no earthly reason why the whole of the cost of running the Water Supply Department—both country and metropolitan—cannot be estimated for 12 months, the cost of a gallon of water worked out, and the householder charged on that basis.

People in the State are not able to cope with the ever-increasing costs. In the country one has now to pay 3s. per thousand gallons of water. To this is added 3s. per thousand gallons for sewerage; so the total cost is 6s. Now that the Minister has resumed his seat and is looking very happy—I feel very far from happy in connection with the water supply position—

Mr. Wild: I am always happy when you are talking.

Mr. H. MAY: Thank goodness for that! I feel that people who are responsible for the supply of water throughout the State

should be capable of working out the cost of a gallon of water both in regard to country districts and the metropolitan area. Because valuations are continually being increased, and because the water rate is based on the valuation of a property, the whole thing has gone haywire.

Surely the Minister has engineers and accountants who could work out something more equitable than obtains at the present time. It is a position that does not seem to bother anybody—and I refer to the people in control. Perhaps, as someone has just suggested, it is because they do not have to pay it. As I said the other night, my property at Collie is worth about one-quarter the value of an ordinary house in South Perth or any other part of the metropolitan area, and my water rates were £23 8s. My shire council rates for the year were between £17 and £18. How can any worker on the basic wage meet a commitment like that? He would not be in the race, having regard to all the other things to which he is committed.

I suggest that the Government take this matter seriously. I know it is necessary to cover the cost of the supply of water to people in this State, but it should be worked out on a more equitable basis than the existing one. I have raised my voice before in this Chamber in connection with this matter and I shall continue to do so until such time as a remedy is found whereby people can be relieved of this heavy burden.

I am sure that all of us in this Chamber wish the people we represent to be contented and to live happily. But how can families in our country districts be happy about the cost of water to which they are committed? The whole thing has gone completely haywire. However, I hope that as a result of this motion, and what has been said in this Chamber today, some notice will be taken of the complaints made, and that relief, no matter in what shape or form it may be, will be granted to lift this burden from the people of this State who are suffering as a result of the terrific rate they are charged for water.

Some people have said to me that water is the cheapest thing one can buy. I ask anybody to go into the country, set up a home, and see whether it is the cheapest thing he can buy. If something is not done about the position very soon it will be the cause of people leaving the country to crowd the metropolitan area, which is already overcrowded. Unless some individual has enough initiative and enough sense and feeling for the people concerned and devises ways and means whereby those people can be relieved of the heavy burden from which they are now suffering, the metropolitan area will be crowded with about 90 per cent. of the people of the State because they will not be able to tolerate the conditions which pertain in the country. I support the motion.

MR. MOIR (Boulder-Eyre) [8.43 p.m.]: I rise to support this motion. I listened with interest to what the Minister had to say in reply to the mover of the motion, and I think he should realise that as far as the value of water is concerned the people I represent would be among the foremost of those in the State to recognise this. Many of them were there in the early days when water was indeed a scarce commodity. It was not piped in those days; and they had to pay high prices for water that was obtained by a process of boiling salt water and condensing the steam.

Over the years in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and indeed other parts of the goldfields, we have found that water was regarded as a very precious commodity and was used very sparingly. It was not a very usual sight to see much greenery around a person's home because water was too scarce. However, as time went on, people became imbued with the idea that they should beautify their homes with gardens. They did this; and when visitors from the metropolitan area, the Eastern States, and other parts of the world visit Kalgoorlie, they are surprised, because of the good displays of gardens, lawns, trees, and so on.

The question of valuations is a vexed one. With the present system, even the very act of making a place look more homelike by providing gardens and lawns places a higher value on to one's property, and consequently one is rated higher. The goldfields climate, especially during the summer, can be harsh on buildings, and buildings deteriorate. If repairs and renovations are not kept up to date the buildings quickly slip into a state of bad disrepair.

When we examine the present system of valuing properties we find there is a lot left to be desired. I have never known of a case where a valuator went inside a home in order to obtain a valuation for taxation purposes. Evidently valutors value properties by examining them from the outside and saying, "That does not look a bad sort of home and the valuation should be so much." It would be just too bad if someone freshly renovated his house, painted it all over and painted the fences, making the whole property look very nice, and then a valuator came along and valued that property for water rate purposes. No doubt the owner would get a much higher valuation than he would if the valuator had seen the property before it was renovated and repainted.

It seems to me that we have to decide upon a different system in striking these charges. The system of valuation is something in the nature of a vicious circle. Before the last increase in valuations, the local authority valuations and the Water Supply Department's valuations were on a par. As a matter of fact, I understand

the Water Supply Department used the local government authorities' valuation. I would have thought that local government authorities would have a fair idea of what should be the correct valuations in a town.

We find that the Water Supply Department departed from that practice and sent its own valuers to Kalgoorlie and Boulder, the result being that there was a fairly steep increase in the valuations there. The next thing that happened was that the local authority adopted the Water Supply Department's valuations. I suppose that if, in the future, there is a revaluation by the Water Supply Department the poor old citizen will be confronted by the fact that the local authority adopts the newer valuations; and so the vicious circle goes on, and his rates and taxes keep on increasing.

The question of valuations is a very important one because rates are struck on valuations, which vary considerably. The present system is very hard to follow. My neighbour owns a house which is, I suppose, better than mine; but strangely enough he has a lower valuation than I have. On the other side of me there is a house which has exactly the same valuation as mine; and we all know that valuations are based on the probable return that an owner will have if he rents his property. The house next door has been vacant for 12 months; and although efforts have been made to let the property, there have been no tenants for the house. Yet the owner is rated on a valuation which is based on what would be the economic return from renting that house.

I think a lot of thought has to be given to these matters, and I am quite sure that not a lot of thought has been given to them. Two years ago the Country Areas Water Supply Act was amended to provide for a 50 per cent. increase in the charges to be levied in certain towns which were supplied by the goldfields pipeline. Sufficient attention is not given to these matters.

The matter to which I have referred was argued very strongly in this House. Members on both sides opposed the increases very vigorously; and I venture to say that the contribution to the debate made by the goldfields members on this side must have been fairly reasonable and must have contained a lot of sound commonsense, because the Minister for Water Supplies, in replying to the debate, congratulated the Labor members from the goldfields who had contributed to the debate.

However, he pointed out that they did not support the Bill; and he said, "I suppose that if I represented the goldfields electorate, I would speak in exactly the same vein." He then went on to say why he did not speak in the same vein on that occasion.

I am quite sure there are members in this House who participate in making the laws of this State, but who do not know what is going on. I think it is a very serious matter indeed when it affects quite a lot of people; when it affects people's pockets; when we make people pay more for commodities than they feel they have a right to pay. When we do that, we are affecting their standards of living.

I was astonished to read the following article which appeared in *The Kalgoorlie Miner* on Thursday, the 13th September, 1962, and which is headed, "Water Rates Increase." A subheading says, "Brings Kalgoorlie Up To Country Centres." The article reads—

GRIFFITH EXPLAINS MATTER TO BURT

Last year Parliament agreed to an amendment of the Country Areas Water Supply Act to increase the maximum rate to 3s. in the £1 in country districts.

The Minister for Water Supplies, Mr. Griffith,

I did not know there had been any change in the ministerial appointments, but this is what the paper says—

recently told this to the member for Murchison, Mr. R. P. Burt, who approached the Minister about the increased water rates in Kalgoorlie.

"Prior to this amendment Kalgoorlie had been enjoying for a number of years a maximum rate of 2s. in the £1 while other country areas had been rated at 3s. in the £1," the Minister told Mr. Burt.

The financial aspect of the country areas supplied from Mundaring Weir showed an operating loss of £378,000 for 1960-61. This operating loss justified the full increase being levied immediately.

"However, I considered the increase from 2s. in the £1 to 3s. in the £1 too steep for one year and consequently only increased the rate from 2s. to 2s. 6d. in the £1 for 1961-62," the Minister said.

The Minister pointed out to Mr. Burt that the cost of supplying water to Kalgoorlie was much higher than any of the present charges levied. Even with the present charges an operating loss would be sustained, he said.

"Practically every country water supply which shows an operating loss is levied the maximum of 3s. in the £1 and I regret that I can find no justification for making a special case as far as the Kalgoorlie area is concerned," the Minister added.

As far as I know the Minister in another place, who is mentioned in the article, has never been Minister for Water Supplies. Another misstatement in the article is to the effect that last year Parliament agreed to an amendment. It was the previous year that an amendment came before this Parliament, and it was strongly resisted by the Opposition. I am rather surprised that a member representing the goldfields should have to write to a Minister to find out what goes on in this House, because at that time there was strong opposition to the amended charges which were being imposed on people in the goldfields.

A division was taken during the second reading stage and the same thing happened in Committee. Also, there was a division called during the third reading stage of the Bill, and on each of those divisions the member for Murchison voted for the increased charges. Members will therefore understand my astonishment. It leads me to believe that some members do not fully understand some of the decisions which are made in this House and which seriously affect members of the public in certain parts of Western Australia. This state of affairs destroys confidence in the proper working of democracy, when a member votes for something and does not know what he is voting for.

The increased charges have raised indignation on the goldfields. It is not a matter of members protesting about the increases—the public is protesting about them. I think every goldfields member has been circularised by one of the local authorities at least. The local authority complains bitterly about the matter and asks goldfields members to do their best to have the increases removed and the charges restored to what they were before.

We should look at the state of affairs not only from the point of view of people in the goldfields but of people in all country areas. They do not have the amenities which people in the metropolitan area have. Can we wonder that people would rather live in the metropolitan area than in country areas? People who live in the metropolitan area have all the amenities they require; they have everything which goes to make life easy; while people in country areas of necessity, although they do their best, have not got the amenities or the resources for leisure and enjoyment which exist in the city.

Governments, not only of this State but of all States—as well as the Federal Government—should have a good look at the situation to see what can be done to assist those people who live in outback areas away from large cities or even reasonably large cities. Such people provide the wealth of this State. If they were not prepared to live in those areas we would have no need for a metropolitan area, and Perth would not be the capital of this

State. If people were not prepared to live in country areas and in the outback and to raise their families there, and to put up with inconveniences, we would not have the same amount of progress in this State and there would be no reason to have a metropolitan area.

I do not want anyone to get the idea that I have an antipathy towards the metropolitan area. I believe that the people in the metropolitan area play quite a substantial part in enabling people in the country to stay there. They provide them with supplies and other necessities. However, I do not think the people in the country districts are getting a fair deal as far as these amenities are concerned.

When one looks at the various quantities of water allowed one finds that with the average house in Kalgoorlie the water allowed for the rates charged is about 26,000 gallons. That does not go very far in a hot climate such as is experienced in the inland. Also, in the latter years, those towns have been sewered and now all the houses in Kalgoorlie, Boulder, and Norseman are sewered; and that, of course, increases considerably the quantity of water used, and the people have to pay for it.

People in country areas know that they have to pay for their amenities, but I think far more consideration should be given to them, and a far more equitable basis could be arrived at in working out the valuations, and the people in those areas should not be charged as much as they are for the water they use. I support the motion.

MR. SEWELL (Geraldton). [9.1 p.m.]: I thank members who have contributed to the debate on this motion, and the Minister for the information he has given to the House in a general way tonight. I appeal particularly to country members on the Government side of the House to support the motion, because I think it is worth while. I have no doubt that the House in general, and the Minister in particular, have been impressed by the arguments that have been put forward by the various speakers to the motion, and particularly on the system of rating. I think the valuations, and the system of using the annual rental value is the main cause of complaint today, and I am sure the Minister will agree that something will have to be done to alter the system to bring the whole State on to a more equitable basis.

As the Minister has said, since as far back as 1954 I have been making certain suggestions in this House and have brought this matter forward on many occasions. It is my intention to continue to bring the matter forward until something worth while has been accomplished in regard to water supplies, not only for Geraldton but also for all other parts of the State.

The Minister also said that about £1,250,000 per annum is being spent by the Treasury in more or less subsidising country water supplies, and that to date the Grants Commission has not objected to that amount of money being spent in that direction. I would not be worried if we spent an additional £1,500,000 per annum on the subsidisation of country water supplies, because if we are to make the progress in this country that we wish, and we are always saying we intend to do, we certainly must provide more water and at a cheaper price for country districts.

Mr. Wild: Last year it was £1,760,000.

Mr. SEWELL: At various times in this Chamber I have complained at the lack of interest by the Federal Government in this matter. I repeat: I think this is a question of national importance, and the Commonwealth Government should do everything possible to assist the State Government to see that we get more water, and better water, at a cheaper rate. We know that the progress of this State depends on its population, and the population, of course, depends upon the water that is available. Unless we get the necessary finance I am afraid we will never be able to get the water necessary to enable our population to increase at the rate we wish it to increase.

The Minister mentioned that properties in Geraldton were revalued in 1954, and the only revaluation since then was made at the latter end of last year, and those new valuations came into force this year. They meant an increase of 60 per cent. in the rates, and that is why I moved the motion. I consider that if we continue with this stupid method of rating that we have adopted in this State the valuation of properties should be reduced because an increase of 60 per cent. in the rates is far too great for ordinary people to bear.

I was also interested in the remarks of the Minister in connection with the plant for the desalination of water. This is a question that has been discussed many times in this House, and outside it, and particularly in Geraldton. The member for Melville, when Minister for Water Supplies, was the first to initiate some sort of scheme to install a plant for the desalination of water, and I only hope that the present Minister will be able to make an announcement before long that something is being done about a desalination plant to augment the Geraldton supply.

Over the years various Ministers in various Governments have endeavoured to do their best, and the department generally has done a particularly good job in Geraldton in keeping up the supply as well as it has done. As the Minister said, in 1953, 4,000,000 gallons were used weekly

and that has increased to 10,000,000 gallons only because the department is using water from the bores on the Wicherina sandplain.

I repeat: Something must be done, and done quickly, to make more money available for water supplies in this State, particularly in the country districts. We know the Commonwealth Government is spending £2,000,000 on an artificial lake at Canberra, and it seems to me to be a very lopsided policy when something like that can happen and yet we hear various country members speaking in this House tonight and complaining about the shortage of water and the high cost of it in their districts.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes—20		(Teller.)	
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. W. Hegney		
Mr. Brady	Mr. Jamieson		
Mr. Curran	Mr. Kelly		
Mr. Davies	Mr. Moir		
Mr. Evans	Mr. Norton		
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rowberry		
Mr. Graham	Mr. Sewell		
Mr. Hall	Mr. Toms		
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Tonkin		
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. H. May		
Noes—21		(Teller.)	
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Lewis		
Mr. Burt	Mr. W. A. Manning		
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Mitchell		
Mr. Court	Mr. Nalder		
Mr. Dunn	Mr. Nimmo		
Mr. Gayfer	Mr. O'Connor		
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Runciman		
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Wild		
Mr. Hart	Mr. Williams		
Dr. Henn	Mr. O'Neill		
Mr. Hutchinson			

Ayes		Noes	
Mr. Heal	Mr. Brand		
Mr. D. G. May	Mr. Craig		
Mr. Rhatigan	Mr. I. W. Manning		
Mr. Oldfield	Mr. Crommelin		

Majority against—1.

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 9.12 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 20th September, 1962

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