

# Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 28th November, 1947.

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

## QUESTION.

### CROP DAMAGE.

#### *As to Granting of Relief.*

Mr. NALDER (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Will he consider granting relief to those farmers who have suffered total crop losses in the recent storms?

(2) If so, in cases where immediate relief appears necessary, will it be made available without delay?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

(1) Action has been taken to have a survey made of the damage done by the recent storms.

(2) This will be considered immediately survey has been completed.

### **BILL—SUPERANNUATION, SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS.**

Introduced by the Minister for Local Government and read a first time.

### **BILL—CO-OPERATIVE AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth) [2.19] in moving the second reading said: This small Bill seeks to amend the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act of 1903, which provides for the incorporation and regulation of co-operative and provident societies and makes it possible for communal effort to establish, on a co-operative basis, lawful business undertakings. Members of societies who contribute the necessary share capital under the Act are limited to a maximum holding of £200 each. The proposal in this Bill is to increase the permitted shareholding of a member to £750, and it arises out of a deputation, representing the Collie Industrial Co-operative Society, Ltd., which waited on me recently. At the deputation the society indicated that it proposed to engage in a scheme to assist its members to buy their own homes. The success of the scheme however, was prejudiced by the fact that each member could not contribute more than £200 capital, as set out in the Act, although the people concerned were prepared to do so.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Is the maximum £750?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is as far as this Bill proposes to go. The rules of the Collie Co-operative Society permit its members to engage in such a scheme and it is thought that, if it were to do so it would be advantageous to the people of Collie. At present the society is entirely owned by the people of Collie. There are 1,776 members and the turnover in connection with the existing business undertaking is approximately £170,000 a year. The Government is of the opinion that every encouragement should be given to assist the people to own their homes, and that the society's scheme is worthy of being encouraged. The proposal has been carefully considered, and there seems to be no objection to raising the limit to which any member in the society may contribute to its capital. It must be pointed out that the present limit of £200 was fixed in 1903 when the value of the Australian pound was very much greater than it is today. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. May, debate adjourned

# **BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).**

## *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT** (Hon. A. F. Watts—Kataning [2.24] in moving the second reading said: This Bill deals with two matters which, though they may be relatively unimportant from the point of view of the whole structure of local government, nevertheless have their important aspects as far as the operation of certain local authorities is concerned and, as far as persons desirous of building dwellings are concerned, which is dealt with in the second part of the Bill. The first amendment of the Road Districts Act proposed in the measure affects Section 134 which provides that—

No member shall vote upon or take part in the discussion of any matter before the board in which he has directly or indirectly, by himself or his partner, any interest, or in which any person of whom he is an employee has any interest, apart from any interest in common with the public, and any member who knowingly offends against this section shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds for every such offence.

That section deals with the right of members of road boards to vote on or take part in the discussion of business which comes before the board. It does not deal with the question of whether a man is eligible to hold a seat on the local authority or not. That is governed by Section 24, and therefore the exemption against disqualification from sitting as a road board member which occurs in Section 24, where it is provided that if a man is a member of an incorporated company of less than 20 members he may not take a seat on the board, does not come under Section 134; because, irrespective of whether he is a member of a company of more than 20 members, as I shall show later, and a member of a concern which has no profit-making interest whatever, he cannot vote and take part in a discussion of business before the board. This prevention of taking part in discussions because one is an interested party has been from time to time and to an increasing extent over recent years the subject of considerable difficulty to local authorities.

Only recently a local authority desired to expend some money, quite lawfully under the provisions of the Road Districts Act,

upon the local district agricultural society, and it found that when an objection or a point of order was taken at a board meeting every member except one was a member of the agricultural society. The point of order was taken that none of those members was eligible to vote because they had, in accordance with this section, an interest other than in common with the public. The matter was referred to the board's solicitor, and he ruled that the point of order was well taken. The board thereupon found itself in a difficult position and decided to hold a referendum of ratepayers, a rather cumbersome way of dealing with a project in which £50 or £60 was involved. The referendum was taken and paid for from the 3 per cents., and there was an overwhelming verdict in favour of the board's proposal, whereupon the work was carried out with no further resolution at all except that the verdict of the ratepayers be accepted.

In another case I am advised that a point of order was raised that the majority of the members of a board were members of the R.S.L. and, when a proposal was submitted that a donation be made to some R.S.L. memorial or amelioration or other fund out of the three per cents., a like objection was taken, and the chairman was in some difficulty as to whether he should allow the matter to proceed because there was not a quorum left who were not R.S.L. members. In other States, this difficulty appears to have arisen and has been eliminated by legislation. I find that in Victoria there is a provision in the Local Government Act of 1928, Section 101, which corresponds to Section 134 of our Road Districts Act, and reads as follows:—

Provided that if any such matter relates to any contract with an incorporated company consisting of more than 20 persons, and there are not sufficient councillors to form a quorum, who are not shareholders or members of such company, the Governor-in-Council, on the request of the Council may authorise the councillors who are shareholders or members of such company to vote upon or take part in the discussion of such matter.

In the Local Government Act, 1936, of Queensland, Subsection (4) of Section 14 provides—

The Minister, as respects a member of any local authority, may, subject to such conditions as the Minister may think fit to impose, remove any disability imposed by this subsection in any case in which the number of

members of the local authority so disabled at any one time would be so great a proportion of the whole as to impede the transaction of business, or in any other case in which it appears to the Minister that it is in the interests of the electors or inhabitants of the area that the disability should be removed.

So it will be found that in those two States of Australia, at least, a similar difficulty appears to have arisen and provision made to overcome it by legislation. It will be quite clear that as the years go by more and more institutions, in which public-spirited people take part, and which are certainly not directed at making any profit or pecuniary benefit for any member, are being established. The benefits that they confer on the areas they serve might cause them to be regarded as desirable institutions and such as ought to be encouraged by every citizen. The duties of the local authorities have substantially increased of recent years with the result that they have more and more to do. They are not now mere makers of roads—they are local health authorities, water board authorities, and, in many cases, they deal with building bylaws and the issue of permits for buildings, and many other matters. They are expected, moreover, to interweave themselves with the operations of the district more than they did in times past. In consequence it is more than likely that, quite apart from any profit-making companies, we will have the state of affairs where virtually every member of a board such as I have mentioned, will have an interest in some organisation, and if the point were raised those members would be prevented from voting or taking part in particular discussions, and, indeed, whether the point were raised or not, as I will indicate later, they would be offending against Section 134 of the Act if they did so.

Having ascertained the position here, and in the Eastern States, I submitted the matter to the Solicitor General for a review. I asked him whether he would be good enough to advise me if the situation was as indicated in the opinions given to these local authorities, and which had placed them in difficulty. A portion of the Solicitor General's opinion is as follows:—

Ever apart from the Act, the law is that a corporate body can only act by agents, and it is of course the duty of those agents so to act as best to protect the interests of the corporation whose affairs they are conducting. Such agents have duties to discharge of a

fiduciary nature towards their principal. And it is a rule of universal application that no one having such duties to discharge shall be allowed to enter into engagements in which he has or can have a personal interest conflicting or which possibly may conflict with the interests of those whom he is bound to protect. So strictly is this principle adhered to that no question is allowed to be raised as to the fairness or unfairness of a contract so entered into. It obviously is, or may be, impossible to demonstrate how far in any particular case the terms of such a contract have been the best for the interest of the cestui que trust which it is possible to obtain. It may sometimes happen that the terms on which a trustee has dealt or attempted to deal with the interests of those for whom he is a trustee have been as good as could have been obtained from any other person—they may even at the time have been better. But still, so inflexible is the rule, that no inquiry on that subject is permitted. The English authorities on this head are numerous and uniform . . . In truth, the doctrine rests on such obvious principles of good sense that it is difficult to suppose that there can be any system of law in which it would not be found.

In these circumstances, it appeared to the Government that it was its duty to submit to Parliament an amendment which, while not opening the door in any degree to improper practices, would give local authorities the opportunity where these difficulties arose, to function in a reasonable manner. It is therefore proposed to confer upon the Minister in charge certain powers, which are contained in this Bill, to say that the prohibition imposed by Section 134 shall not apply to any matter which may, by regulation, be declared exempt from the prohibition. That would be a general exemption which would apply to such matters as would affect agricultural societies and bodies of that nature, and the exemption would be made by regulation published in the "Government Gazette." I have provided for this to be done by regulation in order that Parliament shall have the opportunity of disallowing a general exemption in case it might be thought that at any time the reasonable mark had been overstepped, and the proper protection of the ratepayers overlooked, or not sufficiently safeguarded. That applies to a general exemption which would exempt all such matters from the provisions of Section 134 of the Act and it should, therefore, be the subject of Parliamentary supervision.

By the second provision, the Minister is empowered, subject to such conditions as he may think to impose, to declare an exemption

from the prohibition, where it appears to the Minister that the number of members affected by the prohibition would be so great a proportion of the whole as to impede the transaction of business, and where the board, by application in writing, to the Minister, setting out the nature and extent—so far as known or believed—of the interest in such matter of each member affected by the prohibition, requests the removal of the prohibition from such members in relation to such matter.

In this instance, a matter would come before the board which would find difficulty in obtaining a quorum to vote on it, and a request would be made to the Minister to exempt certain members. The board would, as far as possible, inform the Minister of the interest those members had in the matter. If the Minister thought fit to grant exemption on that one occasion and for the particular matter, to allow a quorum to be formed, then he would do so by a particular exemption. That is the method adopted both in Victoria and Queensland, but in neither of those States is provision made that any general exemption shall be subject to tabling in Parliament as is a regulation. That I think covers the first portion of the Bill, and I believe members will find in what I have said sufficient justification to support it.

The second part deals with amendments of the Second Schedule. First of all there is a minor amendment to delete the words "any two justices" in Regulation 25 and inserting in lieu the words "a stipendiary, police or resident magistrate." Regulation 25 is one of the building regulations under the Road Districts Act, and it provides—

When the board has incurred any costs or expenses in respect of any such building as is mentioned in regulation nineteen or twenty-three, and has not been paid the same, any two justices, on complaint by the board, may make an order fixing the amount of such costs and expenses and the cost of proceedings before them, and declaring that no part of the land upon which such building stands or stood shall be built upon.

It is proposed to give the power to adjudicate on that matter, which in the past has been in the hands of two justices of the peace, to a police, stipendiary or resident magistrate, partly because it is considered desirable that matters of that kind should be in the hands of a police, stipendiary or resident magistrate, trained in the law and

most unlikely to have any local interests, and also because it is desirable for the provision to be consistent with that next following in the Bill, which is also an amendment to the second schedule by inserting after Regulation 32 a new regulation as follows:—

32A. When a building intended for use as a dwelling-house has walls in which wood or other structural material is used and is in a district or portion of a district to which these regulations extend pursuant to section two hundred and eight subsection (1) of the Road Districts Act, 1919-1947, and is so dilapidated in appearance as to be out of conformity with the general standard of appearance of the other neighbouring dwelling-houses therein, a stipendiary, police or resident magistrate on complaint by on or behalf of the board may order the owner to cause the appearance of the building to conform with that general standard and the provisions of regulation twenty-three subsections (2), (3), (4) and (5) of these regulations, the appropriate alterations and adaptations being made, shall apply.

It is my intention, when the Bill is at the committee stage, to suggest that the last few words of the last clause of the Bill be struck out, because I am not satisfied that the provisions of regulation 23 of the Schedule, with such alterations and adaptations as are required, will be appropriate wording to deal with this aspect in a reasonable and proper manner. I have, and will place on the notice paper by the next sitting day, an amendment that in my opinion will be much more in conformity with our ideas of how a matter of this kind should be treated, in that it sets out the procedure, instead of adapting it from a regulation that is difficult to adapt. The reason for the proposal that a magistrate should be called upon to order that a dilapidated building be renovated, is that the Government has under consideration the necessity of issuing a proclamation in certain districts, where brick areas have been declared, requiring that timber framed dwellings of suitable design and construction should be entertained by the local authorities.

The matter was represented to me first of all—though it has been represented many times since—by one of the members of another place, in relation to an application for the erection of a timber framed dwelling in the area of the Melville Road Board. A request was made by me to the Melville Road Board that it should agree

to the issuing of a proclamation in its district in order to enable timber-framed dwellings to be erected there. Not only was there a desire on the part of certain people to allow the erection of these timber framed dwellings, because they are cheaper in these days of rising costs—a proportion of the work can often be done by the proposed occupier—but because it is—and will be for some time to come—likely to be, I am advised, much easier to obtain permits for materials, from the Housing Commission, for timber framed dwellings than for brick dwellings.

Early in August I communicated with the Melville Road Board on this subject and the secretary, in reply, said first of all that if an amendment such as this were made to the Road Districts Act—which he stated had been asked for two years ago, and which the then Honorary Minister for Local Government had agreed to give them—the board might favourably consider a request for agreement—though agreement is not required by statute—to the issuing of the proclamation in question. I was able to reply to the board, giving assurance that an amendment would be offered to Parliament on the terms suggested, as agreed to by the previous Minister, but unfortunately the reply of the board was that it had decided that it could not give that agreement. Subsequently an investigation was conducted by the Housing Commission with a view to ascertaining how many people who had been obliged to ask for permits for brick dwellings owing to the incidence of brick areas in various parts of the metropolitan area, would be willing to accept timber-framed houses if permits could be made available to them.

A questionnaire was sent out, with a view to ascertaining the position, and it was found that a considerable number of people would be affected. Circulars were sent to those whose names had been placed on the priority list more recently. Four hundred were issued and 283 were returned, up to the 6th November, when the list was closed. One hundred and eighty-two replied that they did not wish to change from brick to timber. Ninety-five indicated that they wished to change over, and 117 have not as yet answered the circular.

Mr. May: A lot of people were afraid of that questionnaire.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: They had no reason to be afraid of it, and in answering it they committed themselves to nothing. I did hear that story but thought it was a rather foolish one, as they had nothing at all to fear. The idea of ascertaining the position regarding timber-framed dwellings in brick areas was to see whether it was worth while proceeding with this legislation, and to give an indication of the advisability of issuing proclamations to cover more than one district. On these figures it was considered by the Government that the matter should be submitted to Parliament for a verdict on this subject. The Government felt that it was not fair to permit the erection of timber-framed dwellings in a wholesale manner without giving local authorities—as suggested in the correspondence from the Melville Road Board, which I have mentioned—an opportunity to ensure that the premises were kept in a reasonable manner and not allowed to get too far out of conformity with the surrounding neighbourhood, where there might be a desirable type of dwelling, built when the brick area regulations were in operation. Therefore this amendment is suggested, giving a resident or stipendiary or police magistrate opportunity to hear the complaint of the road board—if it complains—and to adjudicate accordingly.

Subject to the amendment that I have mentioned, this in my opinion is a satisfactory way of dealing with a matter that is difficult. It offers an opportunity of enabling people to build timber framed dwellings of a suitable kind, which, in these days of high costs, must be considered where it is difficult—as in the case I have mentioned—for brick dwellings to be acquired in large numbers even if people are prepared to ignore the expense. For those reasons I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

*Second Reading.*

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [2.50] in moving the second reading said: To a considerable extent this Bill is a development from the Factories and Shops

Act Amendment Bill (No. 1) recently approved by this House. That Bill amended the Act to give authority for the alteration of the boundaries of any established shop district. This measure contains two principles. The first is that where the boundaries of an existing shop district are enlarged, the area that is included in the enlarged shop district shall come under the rule of the road applying to the enlarged district in regard to the afternoon in the week during which the shops generally shall close.

The Attorney General: Comes under the rule of the road?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: No, comes under the rule of the road operating in the enlarged district for the afternoon of the week on which shops shall close.

The Attorney General: I thought that phrase would refer more to traffic.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: In other words, if the Meckering area were to be taken from the shop district in which it is now situated and put into the Northam shop district, it would then automatically be subject to observing the same afternoon for the closing of shops generally as Northam now does. I think that is sound and democratic, and unless some provision of this kind were put into the Act, we would have conflicting rules of the road as it were, operating under the one shop district, which would be quite undesirable. The other principle dealt with in the Bill will wipe out a prohibition which exists in the Act against the taking of a poll in connection with the afternoon on which shops generally shall close in a district until a period of two years had elapsed from the time the previous poll was taken. If I might use the example of the Meckering area again, I think that will illustrate this second amendment very clearly.

Some weeks ago a poll was taken in the Meckering shop district, which includes the towns of Cunderdin, Tammin and Meckering. A substantial number in the Cunderdin and Tammin areas was in favour of Wednesday afternoon closing and a large majority in the Meckering area voted for Saturday afternoon closing. If, in future, the Meckering area, or any area similarly situated in any other part of the State, is established as a separate shop district, then obviously it would be most unfair to the

people concerned to inflict upon them the prohibition which would prevent them from taking a further poll until two years had elapsed from the date of the previous poll. No-one can tell at this stage whether the Meckering area will be established as a new shop district, but I think there would be every justification for that happening, and that the people in the new Meckering shop district should be given the opportunity of obtaining Saturday afternoon closing of shops generally. That is only fair because a considerable number of people in that area have desired Saturday afternoon closing, still desire, and will continue to desire it in the future.

I have mentioned the Meckering area because it is a practical example which supports strongly the two principles contained in this Bill. There are, however, a number of other areas similarly situated. I understand the member for Mt. Marshall will be able to place before the House an example which, although not on all fours with the Meckering experience, nevertheless illustrates the need for an amendment such as the Bill contains. The explanation I have given appears to me to be sufficient to enable members to obtain a clear understanding of what is sought by the introduction of this measure. To achieve that, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Labour, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

### *In Committee of Supply:*

Resumed from the 20th November; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £164,700* (partly considered).

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Rural and Industries Bank, £5—* agreed to.

*Vote—Agriculture, £197,070:*

### THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. L. Thörn-Toodyay) [2.56]: In introducing the Estimates of the Agricultural Department, I ask members to note that they provide for an increase of £37,993. The Department of Agriculture has been considerably understaffed for some years, and the present Estimates provide for the filling of a number of vacant positions on

both the technical and clerical staffs. Additional research officers are needed to enable urgent research work to be carried out, and veterinary surgeons, stock inspectors and technical officers are needed to deal with the routine advisory work of the department. A number of appointments were made during last year, and more will be made as suitable men are found. The demand for investigations into, and advice on, the handling of salt lands, has greatly increased. This is due partly to an increase in salt-affected country, but chiefly due to a greater interest by individuals and road boards.

A survey is in progress in the Lake Grace, Newdegate and Pingrup districts, embracing a large number of farms where salt lands occur to a greater or lesser extent. Just recently I visited this area and there is no doubt that the encroachment of salt on these lands is becoming very serious indeed. The unaffected area is in great heart. The crops were wonderful, the feed was plentiful and the stock were in good condition. But we cannot help being seriously concerned at the encroachment of salt, and a complete survey of that area, both as to the treatment of the salt country and to the re-establishment of farmers in that area is to be made. The Soil Conservation Service, established in 1946, has been enthusiastically welcomed by farmers, road boards, and district groups. The demand for advice and assistance is far beyond the capacity of the present staff, and provision for extra staff and equipment is necessary.

The newly constructed Animal Health and Nutrition Laboratories at Hollywood are now occupied. An estimate of £1,000 has been suggested to cover work in connection with the artificial insemination of cattle. This work could not be carried out to any extent last year as the necessary equipment was not procurable, but it is to be hoped that this very desirable service can be developed during the present year. Tuberculin testing of herds supplying milk for the metropolitan area is being pursued with the object of eliminating all tuberculous cows. Grace herd recording has been extended, and increasing numbers of cattle are being inoculated with Strain 19 vaccine, against contagious abortion.

Mr. May: Are you making any arrangements to increase the allowances to these men? They are very much underpaid.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They are; I will bear that in mind.

Mr. May: You are losing them.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have suffered in that direction and we are paying attention in all respects to our expert officers. We have been losing them and we cannot afford to do so because we cannot replace them. I fully recognise the need for watching the position. An outbreak of codlin moth was discovered at Collic, necessitating thorough inspection of all orchards and detailed attention to all trees in the infested area. A horticultural instructor has been stationed in the district and, with the assistance of two inspectors, is carrying out an intense programme of eradication.

Expenses on all agricultural research stations, and also on the maintenance of rabbit-proof fences by the Vermin Branch, must of course, be considerably higher than in former years. Recent substantial increases in the basic wage, together with increased prices for fertilisers, seed, bags, and twine, will have a material effect on working costs. Long-overdue repairs to farm buildings and essential sub-divisional fencing, which could not be attended to during the war years, will also affect the position.

Research work in the wheatbelt embraces plant-breeding and introduction, the establishment and maintenance of pastures, study of the sheep infertility problem, and soil conservation measures. In all this work, and particularly in relation to pastures and the infertility investigations, there is close co-operation with the C.S.I.R., and the Institute of Agriculture. Progress is now being made in the erection of buildings and the preparation of ground for experimental work at the Kimberley Research Station on the Ord River, and experiments with rice, cotton, peanuts and a variety of pasture species will commence almost immediately. The two sheep stations, "Abydos" and "Woodstock," in the Port Hedland area are now being renovated with a view to their operation on commercial lines. Heavy expenditure must be incurred in re-erecting fences, re-establishing windmills and wells, and providing machinery and equipment. Stock must also be obtained as paddocks become available for grazing.

I recently paid a visit to the Cowaramup district in the South-West on the occasion of a field day and examined the progress that is being made with various experiments carried out in the pastures. They were most interesting. What officers are available are undoubtedly applying themselves to their work with great interest. I feel that, as we can increase our staff, there is a tremendous field in which they can operate. The experiments they are carrying out are undoubtedly having very good effect. The field day was certainly most interesting and educational. I consider it is an excellent scheme for settlers to get together in this way and hold field days because they can learn quite a lot both from the officers and from the experiments being made.

Mr. Triat: What are your observations on the Kimberley experiments?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not wish to mislead the Committee, because I have not seen them, but I did remark that they are to be proceeded with.

Mr. Triat: They have been proceeded with for some time, have they not?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but progress is to be stepped-up and greater interest shown in them. We now have a definite programme with which we are going ahead.

An expanded programme is planned in connection with tobacco production. Research and demonstrational work at the Manjimup Research Station will be increased. In addition, a small sub-research station will be established at Karridale and large scale exploratory and demonstrational plots will be sown at Northcliffe. Expenditure on this work will be shared on a pound-for-pound basis with the Commonwealth Government.

Increased demands are being made upon the services of the department in relation to the supply of bacterial cultures for the inoculation of leguminous seeds and to the certification of clover seed. Officers of the department are assisting in valuations etc. of rural re-establishment loans and war service land settlement, and are responsible for the management of the Rural Training School at Harvey and the conducting of the courses, which will extend over a period of years. With all these in-

creased activities, there is a very big demand upon the officers available in the department. The giving of advice on soldier settlement is occupying a lot of the time of our officers, and naturally we feel the pinch and shortage more than ever.

MR. HILL (Albany) [3.13]: I am very pleased to see an increase in the Vote of the department for this year. My only regret is that the increase is so small. This is one of the most important departments in the State and it would be impossible to assess its value to the agricultural industry generally. The officers are enthusiasts, keen on their work, and I can say that, almost without exception, there is the closest co-operation between them and the men engaged in the industry.

I wish to make particular reference to the very great threat to the apple-growing industry; I refer to the outbreak of black spot and apple scab or, to give it its Latin name, *fuscaladium*. We have had pear scab in this State for many years, but so far have had only isolated outbreaks of black spot. This disease gets its name because it is a fungus that attacks the fruit and in appearance is like little clumps of soot. The fungus eats the skin of the apple and causes scab and malformation. To fight the disease we have to use Bordeaux mixture, which consists of lime and bluestone. The trouble with the mixture is that it russets the skin of the fruit. Whenever bluestone is used, the result is russeted fruit.

In the Eastern States orchardists find it necessary to spray up to eight times a year to combat this disease and in doing so they mark the fruit. The fact that we have been able to keep this disease out of Western Australia makes our State the only country in the world that produces cleanskin fruit. Of recent years, it has not been possible to obtain young trees from our nurseries and this year we imported no fewer than 80,000 trees from the Eastern States, a proportion of which were affected with black spot.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Cannot we propagate young apple trees in this State?

Mr. HILL: We have not been able to propagate enough. Already the black spot has been found at Kendenup, Denmark, Manjimup, Bridgetown and Harvey. The



closest co-operation exists between the fruit-growers and the Agricultural Department. My reason for bringing the matter before Parliament now is to ask Parliament to co-operate with the department and the growers. We also want the co-operation of the general public.

The Minister for Agriculture: We have mobilised all available officers.

Mr HILL: Yes. The department is doing everything possible. One very grave danger arises from the fact that large numbers of these trees have been sold over the counter in very small parcels for backyard orchards. Those trees constitute a real danger to the industry. In the small outbreaks that have occurred previously the fruitgrowers contributed from their own trust funds the sum of £1,200 to assist the growers whose orchards were infected. I have had personal experience of the disease, although my orchard was only a contact. A few years ago there was a small outbreak at the Kalgan River which we stamped out. I have no doubt that the department and the fruit-growers will be able to stamp out the disease, but I appeal to Parliament not to let the Government, for the sake of saving a few thousand pounds, run the risk of not eradicating the disease.

The codlin moth is an insect disease. We have had isolated outbreaks in this State, but again there has been close co-operation on the part of all concerned and we have succeeded in controlling it. The small outbreak at Collie is under control and I have every confidence that the department will, as it has done in the past, stamp it out. Another matter I wish to bring forward is the shortage of veterinary surgeons. These surgeons are urgently required in this State and if we are to obtain their services we must offer them a salary at least equal to what they could earn in private practice.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [3.13]: I join with the member for Albany in impressing on the Minister the necessity for taking action in regard to the apple-scab outbreak which was mentioned by the hon. member. The Minister will recall that a few weeks ago I asked some questions on this subject. That was when the disease was first discovered in the Manjimup district. The Minister replied that an investigation had been made, but

did not disclose the result. I have seen nothing in the Press since then to indicate the result of the investigation. The fruit-growers of Manjimup are of the opinion that somebody slipped badly over this matter.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes. I think you are right, too.

Mr. HOAR: The fruitgrowers want to know who it was and what steps are being taken to prevent a recurrence. I saw a reference in "The West Australian" some days ago to the effect that the Under Secretary for Agriculture had said that he had no idea what caused this outbreak of the disease, but that the Government intended to take steps to ensure that it did not occur again. That statement made me wonder whether the department is able to determine the cause of these outbreaks and what steps it can take to prevent a recurrence. Since then I have heard nothing from the Minister, either direct or through the Press, that would indicate whether he had any idea of the cause of this disastrous attack on our fruitgrowing industry. It commenced in a very small way at Manjimup, but now—as the member for Albany has said—it has spread far afield, to Denmark, Kendenup, Mt. Barker and Bridgetown. In fact, it can be said that the disease has penetrated into our most important fruitgrowing districts.

I assure the Minister—not that I think he needs any assurance from me—that this is a very real danger. In 1941 the apple scab disease was discovered at Manjimup. One grower was almost ruined by it. In 1939 he saw signs of the disease in his orchard and did his duty. He reported the disease. The departmental officer at that time treated the orchard and by the 12th November, 1940, declared it to be completely clean and free from the disease. Yet within six days of that declaration the disease was discovered again, with the result that the grower lost £3,000, and that put him right back on his heels for a good many years. Personally, I consider the Plant Diseases Act is likely to operate harshly in this connection, but nevertheless we must be prepared to take such steps as we deem advisable to stamp out the disease. Section 15 of the Plant Diseases Act reads—

15. (1) Whenever it shall appear to the Minister on the report of an inspector or the Under Secretary that any disease exists or has within the preceding three months existed

in any orchard, he may by notice published in the "Gazette," declare that such orchard, together with such area of land contiguous to or surrounding the same, as he thinks expedient, is infected.

(2) Such notice shall describe with reasonable particularity the situation and area of the orchard and other land to which such notice relates.

(3) From the date of the publication of such notice in the "Gazette," and until the Minister shall by notice published in the "Gazette" otherwise direct, such orchard and other land shall be deemed to be infected, and no plants or fruit shall be removed therefrom except with the permission of an inspector..

I understand from the fruitgrowers at Manjimup that the official interpretation of that section is that, where an inspector sees only one tree in an orchard infected with this disease, he may order that no fruit at all shall be sold from the whole of that orchard for that season. I do not know whether the member for Albany will agree with me—and naturally I am anxious to have his opinion—but the fruitgrowers at Manjimup have drawn my attention to the fact that if an infected tree is specially treated and if all the trees in an area of two acres in which the infected tree is situated are given severe chemical treatment, then one can expect a good crop of saleable and exportable fruit from the remainder of the orchard, provided that the remainder is also treated and sprayed at the spur burst stage. Therefore, it might be possible to interpret Section 15 more leniently and so save the growers many thousands of pounds.

I suggest this is a matter which the Minister might reasonably investigate, especially as today we are fighting a full-scale attack. It is limited not only to the Manjimup area, as I believe it was in 1941, but is spreading over the whole fruitgrowing areas of the State. The member for Albany has stated that the known effect of this attack extends to some 80,000 trees, but the unknown effect might be considerably more than that. We do not know what effect these infected trees are going to have on the remainder of the orchards in the State, and the loss incurred in future may be far more than we fear at the moment.

Now that we are to be under the Commonwealth compulsory acquisition scheme for at least another 12 months, I suggest that the Minister approach the Commonwealth on this special occasion to see whether it is possible to prevent any loss

to growers in connection with this sudden and unexpected attack. It should be possible under the present scheme whereas it might not be under the normal marketing arrangements existing prior to the war. As we are working nationally in the matter of the acquisition of fruit, I imagine that the losses could be borne to some extent by the Commonwealth rather than the individual growers being expected to bear the whole burden. If anybody should meet the loss, bearing in mind that somebody somewhere has blundered, it should be anybody but the fruitgrowers who depend on this industry for their livelihood. I understand that all trees imported into this State are not only supposed to be inspected but also treated before their export to Western Australia and also after their arrival here.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are supposed to be dipped before shipment and before distribution.

Mr. HOAR: From Fremantle?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes.

Mr. HOAR: I would like the Minister to say whether that was done in the case of these 80,000 trees. I am inclined to believe that somebody took a little too much for granted, in view of the fact that over the war years we had none of this disease confronting us, mainly because orchards had not been importing many varieties of fruit-trees in that period. I hope the Minister will look at the matter from the point of view of the growers and will try getting in touch with the Commonwealth Government as soon as his department ascertains the probable losses involved. I am wondering also whether it would be possible for some sort of compensation fund to be evolved whereby compensation for loss could be provided in connection with diseases of this kind in the future.

I am not sure, but I have an idea that some years ago, when apple-scab was limited to the Manjimup area, a conference of fruitgrowers was not at all enamoured of the idea of such a fund that might be of a contributory nature for the reason that growers in Mt. Barker, Bridgetown, Denmark and elsewhere, having no knowledge of the disease, felt they were not under an obligation to contribute to a fund in connection with a disease that had in no way affected them in the past. I do not

know whether that is so but I understand something of the kind did happen, and that no unanimity on the part of the growers with regard to a compensation fund could be secured.

I suggest that now this onslaught has become State-wide, the growers might view the matter in a more generous light and the Government, too, might realise, as I am sure it does, the importance of establishing this industry on a firm basis—on such a basis, in fact, that it will not permit growers in desperate times such as these and under such an unexpected attack, to suffer all the loss. The Government might easily consider getting in touch with the Fruitgrowers' Association immediately to ascertain how its executive feels about the matter of providing a compensation scheme to which the Government itself might make some reasonable contribution. I am told that Tasmania is the only place that grows the type of deep-rooted tree suitable for the Manjimup district. I do not know whether that is so or not, but I am told it is by those who should know something about it. If it is so, and bearing in mind the recent outbreak of apple-scab there in Tasmanian imported stock, it is about time we started developing nurseries of our own.

HON. A. H. PANTON: Hear, hear! Why not?

MR. HOARE: So far as I know, we are at present depending entirely for research, on what comes to us from the Eastern States, and, in some cases, from overseas. We have never made any real effort in this State, so far as I am aware, to undertake research ourselves to any great extent, and I think that the solution to the problem of avoiding importation of infected fruit lies in developing nurseries of our own, each district according to its particular kind of soil having some research station operating in conjunction with nurseries so that the problems associated with the industry might be tackled at their origin. In Pemberton at present we have such a nursery. This year, I understand, it has some 20,000 trees; and in 12 months' time the orchard can be extended to cater for 70,000 trees and, a short time after that, 100,000. In view of the great losses that can be incurred as a result of any infiltration of disease of this kind, I consider that the Government should be willing to encour-

age, by any means in its power, even financially if necessary, the establishment of such nurseries as that existing at Pemberton.

Some system should be evolved, too, whereby a grower would be encouraged to purchase from our own nurseries, even though that might mean some limitation of imports to this State and perhaps their complete elimination. If we are going to be faced, year after year, with the danger with which we are now confronted in the fruitgrowing industry, it would pay us completely to cut ourselves adrift from Eastern States' supplies so long as we suspected that somebody somewhere was blundering and not seeing that imported trees were free from disease. I am certain that the answer to our problem is to develop our own nurseries, and I hope the Government will give every encouragement along those lines.

I also think there is a wonderful opportunity today to open an experimental orchard in the Manjimup district itself. I know there is one at Bridgetown, which is only a few miles away, but I know also that the soils of the two districts are in no way similar, and it is only a deep-rooted kind of stock that is suitable to the Manjimup soil. At present we have an efficient tobacco research station at Manjimup, and competent fruitgrowers who have examined the soils there consider the site would be most suitable for an experimental orchard to be worked in conjunction with tobacco. This was discussed some time ago, even during the regime of the previous Government, and something of the kind should be done at the appropriate time in the Manjimup district. The reason it is more or less imperative now is because by about 1950 there will be something like 500 acres of orchard planted in the Manjimup area. Because of the difference of the soil, from elsewhere, and the necessity of getting particular species of tree stock, I believe it is necessary that research should be carried out in the district.

The Government could well consider establishing a research station in conjunction with the research in tobacco there. It would not be very costly, apart from the initial stages, because after the trees came into bearing at seven years I believe they would more than pay their way; they would assist to keep the station running.

*Sitting suspended from 3.33 to 3.50 p.m.*

Mr. HOAR: I would impress on the Minister my fear that someone took too much for granted in the importation of stocks, and that an inquiry should be made to see whether anyone is culpable. If so, he should bear the responsibility—morally at all events—for the loss that will continue for some time to be incurred by the fruit-growers of this State. I was interested in the Minister's brief reference to the tobacco industry. I am pleased to know that both the Commonwealth Government and the State Government are to continue this co-operation, even to the extent of subsidising on a £ for £ basis, in order to ensure that the tobacco industry of this State is not only maintained at its present level, but expanded. With additional investigation and the opening up of a minor research station at Karridale, the tobacco growing potentialities of Western Australia will be increased.

I live at Manjimup, where most of this State's tobacco is grown, and from my inquiries I believe it to be very good leaf. In the 1940-41 season we grew the best leaf in the Commonwealth and received the top price for it, but since then there appears to have been a great deal of deterioration in the returns to growers, and recently the industry has been faced almost with annihilation. On a number of occasions the growers have been in touch with the Commonwealth Government, and with the State Government, to see whether it were possible to devise some more suitable system of payment, that would return to the growers each year an income sufficient to pay their normal expenses of planting and cropping, together with a margin sufficient to enable them to look after their families.

Many people have investigated the tobacco-growing industry of this State at different times, in an endeavour to determine what would be a fair price per pound for our tobacco leaf. The consensus of opinion is that it should not be less than 3s. per pound, if the grower is to continue his operations and have sufficient money to bring up his family on the lines considered essential in this country.

Mr. Leslie: Is that 3s. per pound for dry leaf?

Mr. HOAR: Yes, that is the appraisement price required on the floor. The grower considers approximately 3s. per pound a reason-

able return for his work and expenditure. In spite of all the past discussion on this subject with both the State Government and the Commonwealth Government, there was a case this year of a man who cultivated 12½ acres of tobacco and whose total expenditure for the year was £1,500, the return being only £900. He planted on land that was approved by a departmental officer, who subsequently examined the crop at intervals and appeared to be satisfied with it. The £900 return included the subsidy and the price increases authorised by the Commonwealth. This is a man of long experience in tobacco growing, who has failed through no fault of his own, and who is well nigh bankrupt as a result. There is every chance that he will have to go into some other form of industry.

Mr. Leslie: Is not any of the excise on tobacco paid to the growers?

Mr. HOAR: No.

Mr. Leslie: Then who gets all that revenue from tobacco?

Mr. HOAR: The Commonwealth gets the money raised by the excise on tobacco. Whatever percentage the growers receive from the Commonwealth Government comes, as far as I know, from consolidated revenue, having nothing whatever to do with the excise on tobacco. I disagree with that and believe that at least a portion of the income derived by the Commonwealth from the excise on tobacco could reasonably be used to compensate growers in difficult years, when, through no fault of their own, they are faced with crop failure. If this industry is to have any permanency we must so stabilise the price of tobacco as to enable the growers to remain on their holdings, growing tobacco year after year, and not only when the price is right.

If we continue along our present lines we will always be faced with the position where there is an abundant crop in one year, causing many others to grow tobacco in the succeeding year in an effort to ride on the crest of the wave, which is quite often followed by one or two years of disappointing returns. That causes a proportion of the growers to become disappointed. They kick up a fuss and go on strike. They have been on strike before today—and justifiably so—and have said they would grow no more tobacco unless there was a guaranteed price. When that matter was discussed the Com-

monwealth Government adopted the attitude that it would be unwise and uneconomic to guarantee a price for tobacco unless that price was definitely related to quality. I agree with that. We could not expect any Government to subsidise the growing of a bad quality leaf.

I noticed in the Press the other day the latest figures from the Commonwealth Government, which indicate that in future from all reasonable crops—having due regard to quality—the growers will derive sufficient income to keep them on the right side of the ledger. It must be remembered that, as past experience proves, there are only one or two seasons out of five in which a really good crop of tobacco is produced.

Mr. Leslie: How many Britishers are engaged in the industry in Western Australia?

Mr. HOAR: There were about 60 engaged in the industry last year, but I cannot say how many of them were Britishers. I do not think there will be more than 50 growers at most this year. In an article under the date of the 13th November, "The West Australian," published figures, from the Commonwealth Government, that might appreciably alter the situation. The article reads as follows:—

Australian tobacco growers are to receive a higher price for their leaf in an attempt to stimulate production and put the industry on a better basis. Announcing this yesterday, the Minister for Commerce (Mr. Pollard) said that premiums would be paid, not only to raise production but to reward the output of better quality leaf.

The present production of Australian leaf was far short of domestic requirements, and the recent restrictions on imports from dollar sources meant that further substantial quantities of local leaf could be absorbed. It was hoped that the increased payments would be an incentive for more growers to enter the industry.

Mr. Pollard said that the Prices Commissioner had approved increased prices for the new season's leaf. Premiums would be paid on the appraisal value on the basis of 9d. a lb. on all leaf valued at 27d. and over, 6d. a pound on leaf valued at 18d. to 26d. and 3d. on leaf valued at 15d. to 17d. A meeting of the Australian Tobacco Board next month would examine the central position of the industry and make other recommendations for its encouragement.

I think once that idea has become established, and operative in a normal season the grower could expect a reasonable return for his labour. I have mentioned on other occasions in this Chamber when dealing

with this and kindred subjects, that we have a very efficient research station at Manjimup, and its officers are doing an excellent job indeed. To my way of thinking there is not sufficient liaison between the officers of that station and the outside individual growers. We have a splendid opportunity to alter that state of affairs because at the present time, with the price schedule as it is, and the table of limits, the advantage to a grower of good quality leaf is obvious. If departmental officers had full power to enter a man's property and suggest most definitely to him that he should, or should not, grow his tobacco on a certain piece of land regarding which he had high ambitions, I think that would help considerably towards the right type of leaf being produced in the Manjimup area.

I am of the opinion that country which is considered by departmental officers to be inferior should be kept out of tobacco production. I also think it would be an advantage to the industry if more care were taken to encourage the right type of grower. In the past, when a good season has been experienced, it has generally encouraged men with no knowledge at all of tobacco growing to try their luck, and they might just as well buy a ticket in Tatts for all the chance they have of succeeding in the industry. Tobacco growing requires a high degree of skill and much experience before a man can become a successful grower. Unless a man has such qualifications, he will not build up a very good reputation or derive any benefit from the industry. He may be lucky temporarily, but we must adopt the long view and plan for the future.

If we are to establish any sort of reputation and gain benefit from the tobacco growing industry, there should be some sort of permit system, whereby the Government will have power to control the industry both from the point of view of the growers and from that of the type of land to be put into production. If we were to do that, we would develop over years of training a good class of grower, one that would be prepared to accept the advice of the departmental officers regarding the quality of land to be worked and the other difficulties that confront the industry today. It is time we did something about it rather than allow it to continue in the present haphazard manner. We will never make progress until we alter

the conditions in the industry as we now know it.

The dollar situation, as it affects our relations with the British Empire and the Empire's relations with the United States of America, is such as to cause a reduction in the very near future of imports of American tobacco. When that happens we shall be more or less thrown upon our own resources and if, in the interim, we have done nothing to establish, on a more permanent footing, our own tobacco industry, this State, and in fact the whole of the Commonwealth, will be confronted with a number of dissatisfied people, because nine out of every 10 individuals, including women, smoke these days. It only needs money to be spent on this industry in research work respecting the quality of leaf to be produced, the curing of it and the other finer points in the manufacture of tobacco.

If it costs us £5,000 a year in salary, providing we can get a man of the right type from America, one who understands all the difficulties associated with growing, curing and blending, it will be cheap in the end, considering the quality of the leaf that we can grow in Western Australia. I am much afraid that we are a bit too cheese-paring in our methods in this and other directions in which departmental expenditure is necessary. If we are prepared to spend money, and have the courage to do so, it will bring its own reward. I do not believe there is any other young industry that has more wonderful opportunity for exploitation and for the expenditure of money on research than the tobacco industry.

I know, as all members appreciate, that the legislation which controls the industry today, from the Commonwealth point of view, will cease on the 31st December next. It will then be necessary for the State Government to introduce legislation to govern the further progress of the industry. I feel sure that the Minister fully realises that unless he hurries up and brings down legislation in regard to this industry, next season's leaf for appraisement will reach the floor at Fremantle without the benefit of any Government control at all. That leaf will be ready for appraisement early in May and we are now within a few weeks of Christmas.

Unless something is done in this direction, the Commonwealth measure will cease and we will have nothing in its place to govern the production of tobacco leaf. I do not know whether the Minister has considered the matter from that angle, but I am rather concerned about it in view of the near approach of the Christmas recess. When the Government eventually brings down legislation, I hope it will provide for some of the matters that should be dealt with in the light of my experience, as a result of living in the heart of the tobacco-growing country around Manjimup. It is essential that there should be governmental control not only over the choice of land for cultivation for tobacco growing, but also to some extent over the individuals engaged in it.

It would be of great advantage to the industry if there were a central grading shed. At present all the growers grade their tobacco and cure it on their own farms. Sometimes there may be a tendency for the grower to take a risk, or he may not have full knowledge of the many different grades of leaf that are included in the schedule. Whichever it is, there is at certain times included on the floor at Fremantle tobacco which should not be there. As a result of that sort of thing, done maybe quite innocently, there is a tendency to bring down the average price. If a central grading shed were established at Manjimup, controlled by departmental officers, and individual growers, instead of grading on their own properties, worked together as a community in the central grading shed and graded their tobacco under the supervision of experienced men, nothing but the best leaf would result and therefore nothing but the best leaf would be offered on the appraisement floor at Fremantle.

I do not think this arrangement would be any more costly than the present method because the cost of central grading would be borne by the whole of the crop. There would be no danger of one man's crop getting mixed with that of another man: it would be an easy matter to keep them separate. These growers, under the direction of experienced officers, would then produce for the appraisement floor the very best type of leaf possible. That is an idea I offer to the Minister and hope he will give it some consideration. I think I have

said enough to indicate that, generally speaking, the tobacco growers around Manjimup have been dissatisfied for many years, not so much with the State Government, because they realise that the State Government has done everything possible in the past to assist them—

The Minister for Agriculture: There is a special panel inquiring into the interests of the tobacco growers.

Mr. HOAR: Today?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes.

Mr. HOAR: That is a move in the right direction and, if it produces results along the lines of which I have spoken, it will have done something worth while for the industry. What I have read in the newspaper is all I know of the Commonwealth point of view, and if the Commonwealth can be supported to the full by the State Government in its sphere of activity, I have no doubt that between them we shall be able to solve the problems of the tobacco growers and develop a permanent industry of considerable value.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.13]: There are a few matters upon which I think it necessary to address the Committee, and some are of such importance as to warrant my speaking at some length. Whilst the matter is fresh in the minds of members, I should like to tell the Minister that the panel to which he has just referred and which is inquiring into the tobacco industry had better get moving quick and lively; otherwise there will be no tobacco industry at all. It is not that the growers cannot produce leaf of the requisite quality. They can. The country is ideally suited to the production of tobacco, but unfortunately there seems to have grown up a practice under which from time to time when the leaf is being appraised those who are doing the appraising change their requirements or their desires. What was supposed to be a particularly desirable type of leaf one year no longer finds favour at a subsequent appraisalment.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The result is that the growers do not know where they are, and the fact has to be faced that the people engaged in the industry are not getting a

sufficient return for their labour to warrant their remaining in it.

The Minister for Agriculture: It seems to be a scheme to depreciate the price of the leaf.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It does. There can be only one result and that is that the growers will go out of the industry. I have been assured by business people at Manjimup—who are in a position to know because, in the early years, they gave considerable credit to growers and therefore those growers are doing their business with them and these people know from the amount of business now being done—that the growers are not getting the money they should for their labour. If the industry is to survive, steps will need to be taken that will ensure an adequate income for those people. They know the game of tobacco growing; they are not novices, and the country is suitable. It is quite certain that the return is not adequate today.

The recent announcements by the Commonwealth to which the member for Nelson referred showed clearly that the Commonwealth realises the possible extinction of the tobacco growing industry in Australia unless prices are increased to the growers. The panel should direct its attention to that aspect for the time being to ensure the continuance of the industry which we feel, in the interests of the State, should continue.

During the election campaign, according to the Premier and the Deputy Premier, nothing was right with any of the departments in this State and it so happened that the departments under my control came in for severe criticism. Speaking of the Department of Agriculture, the Deputy Premier said:—

In both land settlement and the problems of the wheat industry there is a dismal record of procrastination and failure

There is no equivocation about that; it is straight from the shoulder, "a dismal record of procrastination and failure." I have searched the Estimates in vain to find any suggested change of a revolutionary character which is proposed for the department and which will enable the Government during the present financial year to effect any great change in the policy—a policy which was one of "procrastination and failure."

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Of course, that was a lie.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Obviously it was a lie, because, if it were true, surely it would have called for immediate attention on the part of the Government and drastic changes in the personnel as well as drastic reorganisation. With the exception of the officers we have lost to other States, there has been scarcely any change in the personnel of the department; the same good work that was going on previously is continuing. If the record previously was one of "procrastination and failure," then this Government is simply perpetuating that state of affairs by allowing the same organisation, the same departments, and the same control to continue. Anybody viewing the matter fairly would say that the statement made at the election, like a lot of similar statements made at the time, had no foundation.

I believe that our Department of Agriculture has been a very progressive one. For this, very little thanks are due to me, because I was in control of the department for only a short period. Whatever credit is due—and there is plenty of it—must be given to my predecessors in office, of whom the present Leader of the Opposition was one. I think we would go a long way to find a more efficient Department of Agriculture and more efficient officers. If proof of that statement were needed, it is but necessary to point to the fact that the other States have been most anxious to entice away the officers of this department. We have followed a policy of getting graduates from the University and training them. Would a department, which had had officers like Dr. Teakle, Mr. Millington and Mr. Burvill in control of its sub-departments, be likely to be guilty of procrastination and dismal failure? Those officers, with an Australia-wide reputation, are now occupying posts in the Commonwealth not because they were slothful, but because of their competence and activity. So it is pure electioneering twaddle to make a statement such as that which I read and which was made by the Deputy Premier. Other statements were made during the election which should be a matter of far graver concern to the people of the State.

There was the statement made by the Deputy Premier about the need for vermin legislation. In 1945 this was regarded as a most urgent matter, so urgent that before I had been Minister for Agriculture for

three months, a motion was tabled to try to get me to speed up the introduction of legislation along the lines of the report of the Royal Commission. I tried to show at the time that it was expecting rather much of me to read the report, get a grip of its contents and have the necessary legislation prepared. But that was not regarded as a satisfactory explanation at all. The matter was of such great urgency that we had speech after speech from the Opposition benches. I propose to read extracts from some of them in order to refresh the memory of some hon. members.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I hope "The West Australian" is listening.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Remember, this was in 1945! Although I subsequently introduced a Bill to give effect to some of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Deputy Premier regarded that measure as being of very little value. He referred to it as being similar to a person getting a slice when he required a whole loaf. Therefore, it cannot be said that, if the Deputy Premier's view was the correct one, the legislation which the previous Government introduced removed the great urgency which was expressed in 1945, because the Deputy Premier as much as said it made no difference to the position. On the hustings he made a very deliberate promise to the people. He said that if his Party were returned, legislation would be introduced to give full effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Yet here we are nearing the end of the session.

Despite the great urgency in 1945, despite the fact that vermin are increasing in the country, not a word has so far this session been mentioned of a vermin Bill. Of course, there is a very good reason for that and I will give it to the Committee a little later. With regard to this making of promises and not keeping them, it is interesting to read what "The West Australian" had to say on the 8th September. I quote from the leading article headed, "A Breach of Confidence"—

The policy which a Party leader puts before the electors is, if that Party is elected, a contract between them.

With that I wholeheartedly agree. I said so earlier. Consequently, there is a contract between the Deputy Premier and his Party—I would say, the Government because the



National Party were in complete agreement with the Deputy Premier's Party at the time—and the people for the early introduction of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on vermin. But as yet we have seen nothing of that Bill. There has been no mention of it at all and I do not think we shall see anything of it during the life of the Government, because one of the proposals in the recommendations was that a tax should be levied on all the land of the State, including city blocks and land owned by workers in the city area.

A tax was to be imposed on all the land of the State so that money could be put into a central fund which would provide a tremendous scheme of mobile units. These units would travel throughout the State, at very great expense, to eradicate vermin from properties the owners of which refused to do so. That scheme would have required a substantial contribution from the Treasury. Now that the Deputy Premier is Assistant Treasurer, I suppose he finds it difficult to talk in thousands and to find those thousands. Therefore, I do not think we shall hear much more from the Government, if we hear anything at all, about the legislation which was so urgent in 1945. We might expect that the member for Mt. Marshall would have something to say on this subject, but he has been signally quiet about it this session. He was not quiet about it in 1945, however. He then said, to quote from "Hansard," 1945, page 985—

Therefore, if the recommendations of the Royal Commission in regard to those pests were given effect to immediately, we would at least be getting somewhere in the warfare against vermin. I repeat that this is a matter of urgency.

Mr. Leslie: It was then.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Why not now?

Mr. Leslie: There is not the same vermin.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No. They are dead.

Mr. Leslie: Precisely. You have answered the question yourself.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Their sons and daughters are in great numbers.

Mr. Leslie: No. They are not.

The Minister for Agriculture: They did not live long enough to have them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I now quote from page 986, where the member for Mt. Marshall says—

I hope the House will agree to the motion in order to indicate to the people that Parliament is fully impressed with the necessity for immediate action to solve the problem of vermin destruction.

Mr. Leslie: Immediate action was what was wanted and you let us down.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If I let you down, what is the present Government doing?

Mr. Leslie: Immediate action at that stage was necessary.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I had to study the report, but not so the Deputy Premier, who wrote it. He knew what was in it and what had to be done. If the matter were of such urgency, a vermin Bill could have been the first Bill brought down this session. Instead, it looks as if it will be the last. The present Premier had this to say in 1945; I quote again from "Hansard," 1945, page 1317—

I am sorry legislation will not be introduced this session, but I realise the magnitude of the task. If legislation is introduced early next session, after a careful study of the report of the Commission, I suppose that is the best we can expect.

The Premier apparently realised the need for action being taken to have this legislation introduced. Referring to the report of the Royal Commission, he said—

I hope they (that is, the members of the House) will read it and pay close attention to it as the questions with which it deals are of great importance to this State and undoubtedly should be tackled. The sooner they are tackled, the better it will be for all concerned.

He does not think that now. The Minister for Railways had this to say—and it will be found at page 1422 of "Hansard," 1945—

It was with a feeling of regret that I heard the Minister say he was not prepared to take any action this session to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission . . . The Minister ought to bear in mind that this matter is one of extreme importance and therefore it cannot be allowed to wait until somebody is ready to go on with it. While we are waiting, farmers are losing thousands of pounds, and that is the aspect we are concerned about.

Mr. Leslie: We were waiting.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That does not worry the hon. member much now.

Mr. Aekland: That was in 1945.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Would the hon. member say that the vermin were worse in 1945 than they are now?

Mr. Leslie: My word they were—some kinds!

The Minister for Railways: If you do not know that, you are very lacking in knowledge.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They are worse this year than last year.

The Minister for Railways: There is no comparison with 1945. You should look around the country a bit.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am speaking on information I have received from men in the country.

The Minister for Railways: A bad source!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister doubts it, I will refer him to a few paragraphs in "The West Australian" recently.

Mr. Ackland: Out on the Nullarbor Plains.

Mr. Triat: What about emus?

Mr. Rodoreda: It does not matter about the pastoralists!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The present Minister for Railways on that occasion said—

I hope the Minister will reconsider his attitude towards the proposal that he should bring down an amendment of the Vermin Act before the end of the session.

On page 1721 of "Hansard" of the same year, the member for Beverley had this to say—

I am sorry the Government is not going to give effect this session to the Royal Commission's report. . . . I appeal to the Government to give further consideration to it and bring down, before the House adjourns, at least some of the legislation recommended by the Commission.

Now we will hear what the present Deputy Premier had to say—and he was the chairman of the Royal Commission—

I did not suggest that it was necessary to introduce legislation in this regard before Christmas, Christmas being the time when this House is most likely to adjourn, after its usual custom, to a date to be fixed by Mr. Speaker. I say that the session can be made to last, or to re-start or go on, in April or May of next year. As it has done in the past, so it can do again, and in my view there would be ample opportunity for a decision to be reached by the Government in that time. . . . I feel that this House should take upon itself to say whether it thinks action should

be taken this session, "this session" meaning the period that comes between now and the end of May next year. . . . I do not think the Government needs any more than another five or six months in order to deal with this matter. . . . In the country districts of Western Australia, in the North-West of this State and in the outer pastoral areas there is no question of more importance than that of the eradication of vermin of one kind or another.

When the Government of which I was a member introduced legislation to deal with vermin, the present Deputy Premier said it was next door to useless; it did not do anything. So it must be, in his view, that nothing has been done since 1945, when this was a matter of great urgency. If the vermin have died out in the meantime, it shows that the Government was wise in not going ahead with the expensive proposals recommended by the Royal Commission, because so much money has been saved to the State and the vermin have been overcome. But if that is not the position and the vermin have not been overcome and are still there, the matter which was of urgency in 1945 must be of far greater urgency now.

But, whereas the Deputy Premier and those who follow him were trying to prod me into hasty action in the matter in 1945, they show no disposition whatever now to introduce legislation to deal with the matter, for the very obvious reason that there will be great difficulty in getting a decision in Cabinet on it because of the conflict of interests and also because the proposal would not be very acceptable to the electorate generally. The people would not view with any appreciation a proposal which would levy a land tax on everybody who owned land so that, in some instances, farmers who had no inclination to keep their property clean could have it done for them at the expense of other people—and that was the proposal of the Royal Commission. So it is an extraordinary thing that a matter that was regarded by members of the present Government as of such extreme urgency in 1945 should now not be a matter of urgency at all. I think there is something in that about which the Government should do some pretty sound thinking and make some explanation, unless it wants to remain condemned for inactivity on a subject upon which it holds such very strong views.

I also want to refer to bulk-handling of wheat. The action of the Government in this regard makes very sorry reading. I

cannot imagine that anywhere else in the Commonwealth there could occur what has happened here; that is, that assets which belong to the country could be with great haste handed over to a company without any agreement being signed in regard to responsibilities or obligations, or anything else. That is what happened, and against the advice of the Government's officers. That makes it worse. It was done against the advice of the Government's officers—responsible men who would know what was best to be done in connection with those assets. Before I give details regarding the Government's galleries, I want to refer to a statement made by the member for Irwin-Moore and also a statement made by the assistant Minister for Agriculture. When the Government's galleries were handed over to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. without any agreement or any understanding, the member for Irwin-Moore and the Honorary Minister made statements eulogising Co-operative Bulk-handling and trying to show what a marvellous job had been accomplished by them in the handling of wheat.

I propose to show just how little credit can be given to the company for what was achieved. The hospital silo, erected by the Australian Wheat Board, is capable of handling 600 tons per hour. So far it has not been possible to get a stevedore and his men to take that quantity of wheat into a ship. So, the speed at which a ship can be loaded is dependent upon the rate upon which the wheat can be trimmed in the ship. The efficiency of the stevedore and his men is the controlling factor. The spouts go into the ship's hold and the wheat is forced through those spouts and has to be trimmed by those working in the ship.

Mr. Ackland: What percentage of it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It means that they are not capable of trimming wheat beyond 300 tons an hour.

Mr. Ackland: What proportion of the wheat going into a ship's hold has to be trimmed?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would say about seven per cent. What would the hon. member say?

Mr. Ackland: A little more than that.

Mr. Rodoreda: You are both guessing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The member for Irwin-Moore got a surprise.

The Chief Secretary: It was a good guess.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Chief Secretary can ask me another question if he thinks it was a guess. The member for Irwin-Moore and other members who produce wheat, or who have anything to do with the loading of it, know full well that so long as the maintenance of the galleries is looked after, it does not matter who is in control of them, and the rate of loading ships cannot be expedited unless there is an improvement in the stevedoring. I say, to the credit of the stevedores and their men, that since these galleries have been in use, there has been progressive improvement as a result of their experience. Even so, the rate of loading must differ with the different types of ships. What would be a good rate of loading, with the facilities available, of one ship could not be accomplished with a ship of a different type. That factor has to be taken into consideration.

The improvement which occurred after the bulk-handling facilities were passed to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd., was not due to any particular efficiency on the part of Co-operative Bulk-handling; it would have occurred no matter who was operating the State galleries, because, the State galleries being capable of taking considerably more than 600 tons an hour, which the silo can handle, there was ample margin in connection with the delivery of wheat into the ship's hold, provided the stevedores could take it. It was solely due to the better performance of the stevedores and their men that an improvement was effected—and that has been a steady improvement following their experiences in the loading of wheat. So, to rush into print, as the Honorary Minister did, or to make a statement in the House as the member for Irwin-Moore has done, about the marvellous job that has been carried out by Co-operative Bulk-handling since getting the use of these facilities, is done just to pull the wool over the eyes of the people.

Mr. Ackland: The 35 per cent. improvement was an immediate and not a progressive improvement.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I want the hon. member to show in what way Co-operative Bulk-handling is responsible for it.

Mr. Ackland: I will.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have made a close investigation to see what happened, and the facts made available to me are quite contrary to what the hon. member is trying to make the Committee believe. A little thought on the subject will show that the controlling factor must be the speed at which the wheat can be taken into the ship, and not that at which it travels over the galleries or into the silo.

The Chief Secretary: Is not the main thing that the increase has taken place?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, and credit ought to be given where it is due.

The Chief Secretary: That might be wise, but it is not the main thing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not only wise, it is desirable.

The Chief Secretary: Well, desirable, too.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: With regard to the taking over of the galleries, formal application was made by the manager of Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. to the assistant Minister for Agriculture on the 21st April, as follows:—

I desire to make formal application to your Government that all bulk wheat handling at Fremantle together with the maintenance of machinery and running repairs be entrusted to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. An application of this nature was made to the previous Government some time ago but consideration of the request was delayed when Mr. J. T. Tonkin, then Minister for Agriculture, met with an accident.

I am sorry the Minister for Agriculture is not here.

The Attorney General: I think he will be back in a moment.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is a matter which vitally concerns him.

The Attorney General: In the meantime you can address me as a one-time wheat-grower.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That was the formal application, and I understand there had been verbal discussions between the Minister and Co-operative Bulk-handling before this letter was written. It was as a result of those discussions that this application was made, because the word "formal" is used. That indicates that some other application had already been made to the Government. Co-operative Bulk-handling did not lose much time in hopping in, believing that the change of circumstances due to the altera-

tion in the Government was propitious. On the 28th April, a meeting of the Bulk-handling Committee and the assistant Minister for Agriculture, to discuss the application, was held in the office of the Director of Works, he being the chairman of the Bulk-handling Committee. I quote from the notes taken at the meeting:—

Mr. Wood stated that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. had made a request to him to take over the State conveyor and shipping gallery either on lease or under licence. He did not think the question of the new scheme came into the picture. The matter had been submitted to Cabinet but the Premier suggested it should be discussed with the Bulk Handling Committee so that members might advance any reasons why C.B.H. should not have the handling of the wheat.

So, the Premier desired that this matter should be referred to the committee, and the committee subsequently reported against it. Despite that, the Government went on—in what manner we shall see—

Mr. Dumas explained that the Bulk Handling Committee was appointed by the Minister for Agriculture to advise him on these matters. The Committee had been in touch with C.B.H. for a long time and there were a good many points and matters to be considered. If Mr. Wood desired their considered opinion, they would have to see what the proposal actually was. Merely handing over would be a matter for the Minister to decide but the conditions under which C.B.H. would take over, the implications involved and various other matters would require consideration by the Committee, which would need to study the concrete scheme submitted by C.B.H. before tendering any advice to the Minister.

So the Director of Works indicated that it was by no means a simple proposition, but required careful consideration, which makes the decision given all the more important, as it was arrived at only after careful consideration. As this is such a vital matter to the State I will read the report that the Bulk-handling Committee subsequently made to the Minister, and in the face of which Cabinet came to its decision. The report is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, and reads as follows:—

The Bulk Handling Committee on the 1st instant gave consideration to the proposal and matters raised in Mr. Braine's memorandum of the 21st ultimo. The committee desires firstly to affirm that it recognises that the system of control to be adopted at Fremantle and possibly other ports is a matter of policy to be determined by the Government. It is proposed to comment on some of the points raised by Mr. Braine and to set out for the information of the Government its views on the future control of bulk handling

at Fremantle. The committee has not dealt with Mr. Braine's request concerning the hospital silo and its conveyor as these are the property of the Commonwealth Government, and are controlled by the Australian Wheat Board. The committee has been supplied with a copy of the legal opinions attached, given in 1944 by Mr.—now Mr. Justice—Walker, and yesterday by the Solicitor General Mr. Goode. These opinions indicate the limitation of the concessions granted to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. under the Bulk Handling Act of 1935-1943. The present charges on the State Government's section of the gantry are 1s. 3d. per ton, of which only 2.6d. per ton represents labour and electricity. All other charges are fixed such as interest, depreciation, etc. There is therefore no material avenue for reduction in cost. The Harbour Trust economically supervises the operation of the gantry with a minimum of overhead charges.

If the cost factor was something to be considered then, in the opinion of the committee set up to advise the Minister and the Government, there was no material avenue for a reduction of cost, and the Harbour Trust supervised the operation of the gantry with a minimum of overhead charges. The report continues—

The present system does not alter what has been in existence at Fremantle since the inception of bulk wheat—i.e., Bulk Handling Ltd. had loaded from country bin into railway wagon, the railways have transported the wheat, and the Fremantle Harbour Trust has unloaded from railway wagon, stored on wharf and loaded into ship—all in accordance with the Bulk Handling Act and the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act.

So long as the Australian Wheat Board, or any similar purchasing body operates, Bulk Handling Ltd. will have no actual responsibility for, or interest in the wheat once it has been loaded into railway wagons at the country siding.

Mr. Braine suggests that his company's staff would be more experienced and therefore more efficient. This would not be so, as the equipment and procedure are entirely different from anything operated by the company.

The committee considers that there is more involved in the proposal than the mere manning or control of the working of the wheat terminal. The committee has not been supplied with any details or plans of the proposals of Bulk Handling Ltd. but the following extract, dated 30/8/1946, indicates its intention if the company is given control:—

"The present equipment could be made a complete efficient and economic shipping unit, particularly if a small sum was expended to bring the capacity of the Australian Wheat Board section near to that of the Western Australian Government section. It would be difficult to justify any further capital expenditure which would considerably increase operating costs."

The continued use, as proposed by the company, of the hospital silo as the site for unloading railway wagons would involve the travelling of every wagon along the full length of the North Wharf to as far as the roof of the North Mole breakwind, and then back shunting the same distance again to the hospital silo. The empty trucks would have to re-travel the same route to go out. In addition each full truck is weighed en route, which is both costly and slows down the rate of travel of the trains.

The rate of intake at the hospital silo is 100 to 120 tons per hour. The maximum rate of loading to ships would be at the rate of 535 tons per hour for a day's work.

The system approved by the previous Government provided for the assembly of all full wheat trucks on an area between North Fremantle Station and the proposed work house section—i.e., clear of wharf frontages. The trucks would then run by capstans assisted by gravity through the work house where they would be emptied and automatically weighed at a rate up to 500 tons per hour. The maximum rate of loading to ships would be 1200 tons per hour. The work house would have included a silo storage capacity of 5,250 tons and would be connected to the hospital silo, giving a total storage capacity of 13,250 tons which, in the opinion of the committee, is the minimum necessary to deal with an average export programme of 14,000,000 bushels of wheat. (The average export from Fremantle 1930-1940 was 15,300,000 bushels.)

Mr. Tydeman's report attached sets out his opinion as to the serious effect which the establishment of the company's proposals would have on the future development of the Port.

The company's proposal would mean that, bit by bit, more and more capital expenditure would be incurred around the hospital silo (the State Government would have to provide this unless the Act is amended)—

I would like to know whether any attention is being paid to that aspect in the agreement that is being drawn up. The report continues:—

—and more and more firmly the system involving the long railway back shunt would become established, and more and more expenditure in fitting in harbour development and working with this back shunt would be necessitated.

The committee has studied the problem over a number of years and has naturally had to give consideration to wider issues than those which concern the company only.

I should think so. Should not the Government also give consideration to those wider issues, and not just those that concern this company?

The Attorney General: That is just what it did.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, it is not. We will see to what extent the Government did that. The report continues:—

The committee is convinced that the right thing to do is to erect the work house and reorganise the railway layout to suit, at a total estimated cost of £270,000 and it strongly recommends the Government accordingly.

Has the Government sacked this committee that was appointed to advise the Minister and the Government? I have quoted the advice that was given. With the exception of an alteration in the chairmanship, the committee still remains the same, to advise the Government. The committee strongly recommended this proposal, but the Government took no notice of it. The report continues:—

The capital charges on this unit would amount to approximately £12,150 per annum.

The following savings would be made on a 14,000,000 bushel turnover:—

	£
Saving in weighing charges ..	1,800
Saving in charter rates ..	5,000
Saving in overtime rates ..	2,000
Saving to Railways—direct ..	2,500
Saving to Railways—indirect ..	2,500
	<hr/>
	£13,800

In addition, there would be the over-riding savings in the more efficient working of the Port.

The committee recommends that the views of the Fremantle Harbour Trust be obtained.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The Minister for Agriculture is looking worried.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To continue—

On the 12th December, 1946, Mr. Braine wrote to Mr. Tonkin suggesting that a bulk-handling permanent planning committee be formed and that Co-operative Bulk Handling be represented thereon. This proposal was discussed with Mr. Tonkin and was under consideration by him.

The committee considers that the Government should retain control of terminal elevator facilities at ports in order that it may implement its policy regarding port charges, etc., from time to time and be able, if it so desired, to equalise the charges per bushel for all the ports.

The committee also considers it possible that, if the Australian Wheat Board ceases to function, some other purchasing organisation or pool may be set up, which would nullify the bulk-handling Act.

The committee therefore recommends that a committee as asked for by Mr. Braine be appointed, and that control remain as it is for the present.

The committee's main objective is that the work house be constructed and the railway layout be re-organised accordingly.

(Sgd.) R. J. Dumas,  
Chairman, Bulk-Handling Committee.

That referred to a report by Mr. Tydeman, who is, as I have already stated, a very eminent engineer of high qualification and world-wide experience. His report, headed, "Proposed New Working House and Layout," reads as follows:—

In connection with the proposal to install a Government-owned bulk wheat depot (working-house first, and silos later) within the port area, I have the following remarks to offer which have already been made verbally on the site.

In 1939, an average example of pre-war working, some 60 wheat ships took away in full cargoes 347,020 tons of wheat, virtually the port's annual total. This averaged a berth turnround of 5.2 days per ship, 5,784 tons per cargo, and a loading rate of 1,110 tons per day. Most of this wheat was bulk shipped ex rail-wagon unloading direct at quay, and the existing rather obsolete railway system designed for operating bags was just able to manage it. Assuming this tonnage of wheat will be shipped in future (this year's tonnage is very much lower), conditions at the existing new bulk-handling plant need consideration. At present this is designed to operate two belts at 800 tons per hour total; ultimately it is expected to operate four belts at 1,600 tons per hour total. These tonnages can be whittled down for practical reasons of labour, etc., to 500 and 1000 tons per hour respectively, i.e., from five to 10 times greater handling speeds than in the past.

If there were no silo storage the rail system would have to handle wheat to the loading plant at this high rate. To do so, about 12 to 14 acres of land would be required for the rail system for change-over sidings etc., and wagon storage. Only three acres per berth is at present available at the North Quay, a serious deficiency already. Full rail system to the wheat berth would amplify the land shortage, at other berths to the detriment of their efficient operation. The actual extent of land area required for the rail system to feed the bulk wheat berth will depend on the amount of silo storage provided and the efficiency of the rail system. To preserve and operate the existing low efficiency shunt system to the hospital silo accommodation will always cause difficulties at other North Quay berths owing to the land deficiency.

That has particular reference to the proposal of Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. which has that control because its having taken over control affects the low efficiency shunt system.

The construction of a working house at a better site from the railway operating angle appears the only solution if the new plant is to operate as designed.

One of the recommendations I intend making in my report on Fremantle is the improvement of North Quay berths to handle both general cargo and bulk cargo, instead of bulk cargo only as at present. This will not only alleviate peak periods now at the general cargo, South Quay, but will provide additional berths to meet expansion of trade in the near future. This being so, and presuming the recommendation is adopted, the existing rail layout feeding the bulk wheat berth is detrimental to other North Quay berth development as referred to in the previous paragraph. In addition the whole of the existing rail sidings behind the quays must be moved further from the quay, to allow room for transit sheds and rear road and rail loading and operating facilities. This will render the long shunt operation to the existing wheat hospital very difficult if not impossible. Re-siting the wheat berth rail sidings as for the new proposal of working house may thus be imperative. Also if the standard gauge is introduced, the railways have stated that during the transition period it is their intention to freight bulk wheat by standard gauge to the North Quay. This will complicate matters, and amendment of layout and simplification of the existing slow back-shunt system to the wheat berth will doubtless be certain. Introduction of the standard gauge during the transition period, expected to be 10 years, will bring the matter of land deficiency at the North Quay still further to a head, and every means of economy of area, such as by improved rail layout as now proposed, will be necessary. I interpolate there that improved rail layout is impossible under the scheme now worked because Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. is in control.

One complete berth has been handed over to the Port Trust for bulk wheat working. Full use of this berth for wheat export, economically as regards ships turned round, must be made in order to justify this allocation. If the existing rail system and wheat intake impede ship loading and lengthen ship turn-round, i.e., inefficient usage of the berth, the port trust will be justified in busier times in utilising the berth for other cargoes to the detriment of its uninterrupted use for bulk wheat. This argues in favour of an efficient rail system and wheat intake, not now provided.

One of the drawbacks of the existing port and its operation, is the lack of adequate rail transport facilities, amongst which is rolling stock and locomotive power. If saving of these can be effected anywhere it will be to the betterment of port operation and external rail operation as a whole. The proposed new bulk wheat working-house and sidings permit rapid turn-round of wagons with minimised loco power, and were this installed, the whole port would not only feel the benefit now of this relief on use of wagons and locos, but would also benefit in the future as trade increases, and the port is worked more intensively.

Yet in the face of that, the Government takes action which renders this improvement impossible!

Mr. Triat: Unbelievable!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The report continues—

—To sum up, from my point of view of port improvement of existing facilities and ultimate development of the port, the bulk wheat berth must have adequate intake ex-rail, and silo storage, to guarantee rapid ship turn-round, and most efficient use of the one berth specially reserved for it. With existing land restriction at the North Quay it is doubtful if the existing hospital silo railway system will be able to operate when and if North Quay berths are converted for dual purpose cargo handling; it is even very doubtful if it will be able to feed the bulk wheat plant at the rate it is designed to handle. The existing new bulk-handling plant will certainly be able to operate if the new working-house layout is adopted, and from the ultimate development near future development of the port, would undoubtedly be a step in the right direction which the obsolete railway layout is certainly not.

Mr. Hill: Is that Mr. Tydeman's report?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. No-one would question Mr. Tydeman's qualifications or his sincerity. He is in the employ of the Government to give advice not only on conditions as they are but on what is desirable for future development in Western Australia. Yet, despite that report and the very sound evidence in support of it, the Government entirely disregards it and takes a step which makes it absolutely impossible to effect the improvement required at the port.

The Attorney General: In due course it could be.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It could not be done while Bulk-handling Ltd. remained in charge of the facilities.

The Attorney General: The company's Act expires in five years.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: As to the method by which this control was gained, I assume that when Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. made a request to the assistant Minister for Agriculture to be given control, he took that request to Cabinet. That is the usual thing.

Mr. Marshall: There is no guarantee that he did so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I assume that he would get information about it. He did not do that. When the matter was first referred to Cabinet, the Premier suggested that it be referred to the Bulk-handling Committee. This was done. We have the

Bulk-handling Committee's report against it, supported by the report of Mr. Tyde-man. I take it the matter then went back to Cabinet, and it seems that Cabinet decided to go on with the proposal, because the file shows the following Cabinet minute dated the 19th May, 1947:—

In reply to the Minister for Agriculture, Cabinet agrees to the control of the terminal facilities at Fremantle to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and further authorises the Assistant Minister for Agriculture to negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to hand over the wheat silo and annexes on licence to Co-operative Bulk Handling, and appoints the Attorney General and the Honorary Minister for Agriculture to negotiate the necessary agreements.

When Cabinet decides a matter of such importance, it is the usual practice to consider all the implications and to be perfectly clear in its mind as to the conditions under which a contract is to be made. One would expect that the various Ministers would have questions to ask about the different aspects of the proposal, and that everything involved would be thoroughly discussed before a decision was made. We can only imagine what happened and what did not happen.

The Chief Secretary: Why imagine?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But a letter I am about to read helps us to use our imagination. This is a letter from the Attorney General to the assistant Minister for Agriculture, the two men who were deputed by Cabinet to have the agreement arranged. This is a gem.

The Attorney General: It would be.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: The whole thing is a gem.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is a copy of a letter dated the 21st May, to the assistant Minister for Agriculture, Hon. G. B. Wood, from the Attorney General—

The draft letter to the Commonwealth Minister appears to be suitable to raise the matter initially. I observe no reference is made to any rental or licence fees being in contemplation either in the case of the State installation or the Commonwealth installation. Possibly you may think—

This is the assistant Minister for Agriculture, not the Government—

—that this can be raised at a later stage, or is it proposed by you that the State shall not charge any rental or fee for the use of its installation and the Commonwealth shall be asked to make its plant available on the same basis.

"Is it proposed by you," the assistant Minister for Agriculture, that £100,000 of State assets shall be given to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. free of cost?

The Attorney General: That is plainly ridiculous. It is playing with words.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have quoted what the letter says and that would seem to indicate that the terms upon which this proposition was based were not discussed at all by Cabinet. As a matter of fact, Ministers made up their minds to give control of £100,000 worth of State assets to Co-operative Bulk-handling without being concerned as a Cabinet whether any rental or license fee was to be charged. The Attorney General did not know. Yet he was deputed by the Cabinet to negotiate the agreements. Cabinet having agreed to the proposal, the Attorney General and assistant Minister for Agriculture were to consult with Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. and draw up an agreement on their own terms. That is an extraordinary happening.

The Attorney General: Draw up an agreement on reasonable businesslike terms.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General did not know whether the assistant Minister wanted rental or license fee charged or not, and was prepared to do whatever the assistant Minister thought was right. A Minister without portfolio was to be given the opportunity to frame the conditions under which this important asset was to be taken over by Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd.

The Attorney General: That is complete nonsense.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is set down in the Attorney General's own words.

The Attorney General: Complete nonsense!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Attorney General deny what he himself wrote?

The Attorney General: I inquired about the terms and we considered the terms.

The Chief Secretary: What does it matter what was written? It is what was done.

Mr. Marshall: What right had they to rob the taxpayers of £100,000 worth of assets?

The Chief Secretary: Who has robbed the taxpayers?



Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is just what I expected. There is another member of the Cabinet interjecting and he says "What does it matter?" Neither he nor anyone else cared what happened—

The Chief Secretary: Do not misrepresent.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —so long as the asset was handed over to Co-operative Bulk-handling.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: If the Chief Secretary had only listened to what the hon. member has read, he would understand.

The Chief Secretary: I understand.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Has it ever happened in this State or elsewhere that Cabinet has given an assistant Minister a blank cheque to give away £100,000 worth of the State's assets on any terms he chose?

The Minister for Agriculture: That is nonsense, and you know it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is a fact.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not a fact.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What are the terms?

The Minister for Agriculture: The assistant Minister was to negotiate the terms and report back to Cabinet.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, he was not.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, he was.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister for Agriculture forgets that the file was made available to me.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have forgotten nothing of the sort because I made it available to you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Any occurrence of the sort would be minuted on the file.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is all right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But there is no subsequent note on the file regarding the matter. If the Attorney General was to report back to Cabinet, he did not do so, and how could he, because the agreement has not been finalised yet?

The Minister for Agriculture: Of course it has not been finalised. That is the point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There was undue haste to hand over to Co-operative Bulk-

handling within a few days this valuable State asset irrespective of terms, and Cabinet was not interested so long as Co-operative Bulk-handling got it.

The Minister for Agriculture: So that the wheatgrowers could get the benefit.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot claim that the position was not as I have stated it, because the documents prove conclusively that it was.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Appoint another Royal Commission.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: After the Attorney General and the assistant Minister had had their pow-wow and before the matter went back to Cabinet, the Minister for Agriculture sent a letter to the Superintendent of the Australian Wheat Board under date the 6th June, as follows:—

I beg to inform you that the Government has decided that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. will operate the transfer tower, overhead conveyor and shipping gallery owned by the State at North Fremantle.

For your information the agreement between the Government and the company will be in the form of a licence which is now being drafted by the Crown Law Department. The licence will provide:—

1. For the term of the licence to coincide with the term of the monopoly granted under the Bulk Handling Act and any extension thereof.

2. For the Government to retain ownership.

3. For the company to operate the plant and effect maintenance, repairs and adjustments.

It was being done on the 6th June and is not drafted yet! As regards maintenance, repairs and adjustments, the company has been anxious to secure some right over the Commonwealth property; but the Australian Wheat Board, having previously found it necessary to take certain work from Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd., is not anxious that the company should be charged with the responsibility of maintaining any of its assets. The Minister knows it is a fact that Co-operative Bulk-handling did at one time have the maintenance of the assets of the Australian Wheat Board, but the company made such a poor fist of it that the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, on the recommendation of the manager of the Australian Wheat Board in this State, took away from the company the maintenance of those installations. One can well imagine that the Commonwealth is not anxious to

permit the company to get into the position in which it was previously. This makes a very sad story so far as the State is concerned. Not only was it done against the advice of the officers whose duty it was to advise the Government—and their advice was very strong—but it was also done in haste by Cabinet without any discussion as to terms.

The Attorney General: No. You have no reason to say that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, I have. It is in the Attorney General's own letter. He himself did not know whether it was proposed to charge interest or not.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Don't you think we should have a Royal Commission to inquire into the matter?

Hon. A. H. Panton: There are no more commissioners available.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The engineers responsible for the design and construction of the gallery are deserving of the highest praise. It is a most efficient unit. I am of opinion, too, that in view of what Colonel Tydeman said, it is in the interests of the State that the workhouse should be erected so that the alterations can be made to provide for the railhead facilities. That is a matter which should greatly interest the Minister for Railways. It is essential that the work should be proceeded with at once if the State is to gain from the advice which has been tendered to it. While the existing arrangement continues that improvement is well nigh impossible. I desire to say a few words about the operation of the Milk Act. Here, again, there is much dissatisfaction.

Mr. Marshall: More cobwebs!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I asked some questions this session as to the number of licenses which have been issued and to whom they were issued. Month after month goes by without the board issuing licenses; it allows the various firms to operate without them. All the time this is going on, one company is buying up, as fast as it can, a number of other companies. We are therefore speedily reaching the stage where we will have a complete monopoly. And the Government does nothing about it. I read in the Press recently about a so-called scheme of amalgamation; an amalgamation between Pascomi, Masters Ltd., and two or three other dairy firms. There is no more amalga-

mation about that, Mr. Chairman, than there is amalgamation between the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. It is no amalgamation. Pascomi has bought the others and adopted the name of one of them. Its name is now Masters Proprietary Ltd. Pascomi bought out Masters, there is not a shadow of doubt about that, as it bought out the other firms. So it set up this bigger unit under the name of Masters.

The Attorney General: Is Pascomi part of Westralian Farmers?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is the same show. This has been going on, but the Minister says it is not a scheme or part of a scheme to improve production and distribution of milk. This reduction of licenses, this pushing out of the industry of the small man, is not a scheme to improve production and distribution, says the Minister; it is merely the exercise of the Milk Board's powers. That is what he told me several times in answer to my questions. If it is not for the purpose of introducing a scheme for the improvement of the production and distribution of milk what is the good of it? What on earth is the use of going on with it? It must be designed wholly and solely to benefit a few big firms, if it is not for the purpose of improving the city's milk supply.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you think that would be the policy of the Milk Board?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know what the policy of the Milk Board is. It seems that a number of things are happening at present which are far worse than what happened before these steps were being taken. I have had my attention drawn to the fact that some of the milk cans at present in use are being cleaned under steam pressure. That cleans only the inside of the cans, leaving the outside filthy. Stale milk is caked in the crevices underneath the cans and becomes a breeding place for germs which will contaminate the milk.

The Minister for Agriculture: Who is doing that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is being done under the altered arrangement.

The Minister for Agriculture: Who is responsible?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is the Minister's job to find out.

The Minister for Agriculture: You should know who is doing it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is occurring now. Small men for some years have been taking the greatest of care and working long hours to keep their utensils clean. Now they are obliged to take milk from other depots in containers which are in such a state as to contaminate the milk in them. It is time the Minister bestirred himself to ascertain whether there is a scheme to improve the milk supply. What seems to be happening at the present time is that a number of men are being frozen out of the industry, men who put their savings into it and who had every reason to believe that so long as they complied with the ordinary requirements of cleanliness and efficiency they could continue to carry on their business. Instead, we find this big octopus having the right of way and absorbing company after company.

There is another matter to which the Minister might direct his attention. I am not at all satisfied with what is happening in regard to the condemnation of cattle. I understand some cattle were condemned in a part of Fremantle about Show time. Two men had 10 animals condemned, another 28, and still another 31. Under somebody's direction, these cows cannot be removed from the properties until the 22nd December. In the meantime they must be fed, but their milk cannot be sold. Nor can the owners purchase other cattle in the meantime. This is wrong and it needs immediate attention. The Minister might inquire into that matter to see what is the reason for it and whether there can be any alteration in policy. So far as I can gather, there is nothing at all to recommend it.

I want to refer to the animal health laboratory mentioned briefly by the Minister. It is a good thing for the State that that laboratory has been erected. It was put up at a time when to erect buildings was difficult. My predecessor, recognising the great need in this State for such an establishment, took the necessary steps to have the building commenced, and it was completed before the previous Government left office although it had not been possible to obtain all the furnishings. Although the Deputy Premier said the record of the previous Government was one of procrastination and dismal failure, it has to be ad-

mitted by him and his supporters that he could find a number of instances, like that of the animal health laboratory, which prove conclusively that the record of that Government was not one of procrastination and dismal failure but, on the contrary, one of sound planning and achievement.

The Minister for Railways: It took many years of prodding to get it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, this prodding business! If that gets us anywhere, why have we not had the vermin Bill of which I spoke earlier? The Minister should talk about prodding! Someone should do some prodding over there, because I have seen little evidence so far of this vast improvement that the country was led to believe was going to take place. I read with great interest the financial proposals with regard to the Agricultural Department, and studied the figures to see whether there would be anything to justify what had been said about the activity in the department before. What I found will not encourage anybody to expect that there is going to be a transformation such as would have been necessary if the Deputy Premier's previous statement had any substance at all.

This department is one of which the State can very well be proud. Its work is known not only by farmers here and taken fullest advantage of by them but is known elsewhere also, and when our officers go to the Eastern States, frequently advantage is taken of their presence to get them to address officers in other departments, as well as farmers. It was a tribute to the department and its efficiency that the Under Secretary for Agriculture was invited by the Commonwealth to go to Europe to take part in discussions, with the Director General of Agriculture. With the whole field of Australia from which to choose, the head of the department here was regarded as the man who should be selected for the job, and he has had under him men of like character and quality; most efficient, most energetic and most enthusiastic. In the face of that, is it not a bit puerile to talk about the activities of the department and its accomplishments as being a dismal failure?

Mr. Leslie: Not everyone holds Mr. Baron Hay in as high esteem as you do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does not the hon. member?

Mr. Leslie: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then I have not much respect for the hon. member's judgment.

Mr. Leslie: He has good knowledge; admittedly.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There will be further opportunity to deal with some other matters I have listed for discussion. I have no desire to detain the Chamber any further at this stage, but as a final shot, I must say that I shall be anxiously waiting for the introduction of a vermin Bill, if it is proposed.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 2nd December, 1947.

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### ABSENCE OF PRESIDENT.

#### *Election of Deputy President.*

The CLERK: It is my duty to announce that the President, Hon. H. Seddon, is absent, and that it is therefore necessary for members to elect one of their number, now present, to fill the office, perform the duties and exercise the authority of the President during such absence.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I move—

That the Deputy President be elected by ballot.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken.

The CLERK. The ballot has resulted in the election of Hon. J. A. Dimmitt as Deputy President.

*[The Deputy President took the Chair.]*

### QUESTION.

#### ALBANY HARBOUR.

##### *As to Development Plans.*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE (for Hon. A. Thomson) (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House a copy of the plan submitted by the late Government, prior to the general elections, for the development of the port of Albany?

The MINISTER replied:

The plan is in use at present by the Consulting Engineer, but could be sighted by the hon. member if he so wishes.

#### RAILWAY OMNIBUSES PURCHASE AND DELIVERY SELECT COMMITTEE.

##### *Report Presented.*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE brought up the report of the Select Committee.

Ordered: That the report be received and read.

On motion by Hon. H. L. Roche, ordered: That the report, together with the evidence, be printed.