

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 4th September, 1951.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eleventh Day.

Debate resumed from the 30th August.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [4.34]: Firstly, Sir, to you I extend from the floor of the House my congratulations on the honour which His Majesty has seen fit to confer on you. I, with other colleagues, believe that this is a well-earned reward for your many years of faithful service to this House and to the State. To the two new members in this House I offer my own personal welcome and congratulations and trust that they will be with us for many years to come. Further, to the two staff members who have been promoted to higher positions in this House I offer my congratulations, at the same time remembering with regret the unhappy circumstances that brought about this change.

In dealing with matters affecting my province, I would first like to sound a note of appreciation of the development of the Esperance district in the few short years Hon. G. B. Wood has had control of the Agricultural Department. I do not say that all that we desired has been accomplished, but there is no doubt that the progress in that district has been almost in the nature of a revolution. For years and years, travellers passing through the Esperance district covered a distance of some 150 miles before they saw the slightest sign of any habitation. Now the whole picture has been changed. From the time one leaves Salmon Gums, there is definite evidence of increased activity throughout the whole of that area.

One of the most telling proofs of that is the fact that in the last few months a school bus-service has been introduced, warranted by the numbers of children now settled within two miles of the main road between Esperance and Salmon Gums. One school bus runs north to Salmon Gums, and another travels from roughly Gibson's Soak south of Esperance. The contractor conducting this service has put on that road what is undoubtedly the finest school bus in the

State today. It will carry 42 schoolchildren and is absolutely the last word in comfort and safety. At present, the children fill the bus to only one-third of its capacity, but the day will come when there will not be so much unoccupied space in the bus because the number of people already settled in the district will be greatly augmented in the future. From a few miles near Gibson's Soak, where the Minister established a new research station, the whole of the district through which that road passes is now fenced in with new holdings and many cottages have been built. Although quite a number of them are only makeshift residences, several new houses have been erected.

However, there is one note of warning which I think it is well to sound here, namely, that the optimism and enthusiasm that is being felt in the district at present may prove to be a little misleading to some people. Today, in opening up a new area for farming, a great deal of money must be expended. In some districts, the greatest portion of that money is spent on clearing, but at Esperance that is not the case. There, nothing more than a mere rolling is necessary, but there are far greater costs to be met from that stage onwards. Aside from the fencing that must be done, a great deal more work must be performed to eradicate the noxious weeds which all members know are present in great abundance in that area. Settlement, as yet, has not been particularly intense, but it must improve. In view of the fact that suitable fencing cannot be obtained, noxious weeds and pests must become a major problem in the future.

Amongst other things for which the Minister has been responsible and about which I am delighted, is the establishment of the research station. Recently, particulars and photographs were circulated of experiments with a crop of lupins on the station. At the time, they were about 4 ft. 3 in. high and now they are nearer to 5 ft. The growth has been almost unbelievable; they are certainly worth seeing. The second-year growth of clover is 6 in. or 7 in. high. I was recently on a good farm at York, and I heard the people there raving about the second-year clover, which was 3 in. or 4 in. high and which they considered to be remarkable. What I saw at Esperance recently, however, made it look very poor by comparison.

The Minister for Agriculture: I come from York.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I feel quite sure that what the Minister will see at Esperance at the forthcoming field day will lead him to agree that the growth there far exceeds anything in York.

HON. N. E. BAXTER: Would you say that it would have a better feed value?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I would not say that, but I shall refer to that aspect later. Another step taken has been the allocation of some £5,000 for water search in the Esperance district. Bores have been put down, but so far, I understand, without any great success. I contend that it will be useful to know if there is no water there, just as it will be useful to know if there is water. In parts, there are good flows, and if the search indicates where those flows exist, it will be of great value to the district. On the research stations, the indications are that there are not any great supplies of sub-soil water.

A further plan that has been put in hand is the afforestation of areas for pine plantations. As most members are aware, in the years 1926, 1927 and 1928, a private company was formed and undertook pine planting on a considerable scale. Unfortunately, it proved a miserable failure, and the area reverted to the Crown. The lessons learnt from the mistakes of that company, however, are being taken advantage of by the department, and it is intended to plant something like 6,000 pines for a start.

One of the problems that had to be solved was to find a suitable species of pine. I understand that a search was made in order to obtain the right species, and ultimately a suitable cluster pine was discovered on the shores of the Mediterranean, the best type having been found in Portugal. A considerable number of these pines were planted last year, more are being planted this year, and more will be planted next year. The department knows the full story of soil nutrition needed by the pines, and I feel that undoubted success will follow this planting and that the time will come when the members for that district will be asked by the Minister to support a move to acquire additional land.

At present the holdings are not sufficiently large to warrant undertaking this work in a big way. To make it worth while in such an isolated part of the State, the department will need to have a larger acreage under pines. Despite the fact that a great portion of that territory will be needed for agricultural purposes in the near future, I believe that there is a considerable acreage that is not and never will be suitable for agriculture by reason of distance and possibly the lack of suitable water supply and so on.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What about the soil texture? Is it too drifty, do you think?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not think so. We are aware that light soils can be made more compact by the addition of lime in suitable forms for a start. This is something that has been neglected in the last hundred years. I shall make further reference to this presently. Another point is that the pines must be

properly planted and cared for. This land is not heavily clothed with vegetation—in fact it is lightly clothed—and I believe that in planting the pines, there will be no need completely to destroy the actual native growth. It would not be like ploughing the whole area in order to grow a crop of wheat.

The seedlings are large and the undergrowth will be of great benefit in protecting the trees while they are small. When they grow and become stronger, there will be no need for concern about the undergrowth, which will probably die out through lack of sunlight. There is no need to worry about the possibility of soil erosion. I doubt whether that will occur.

A little while ago, I mentioned the use of lime. Almost from the time of the Romans and Egyptians, the use of lime in one form or another has been known and appreciated; but, in those times, no great tracts of land as we know them today were put under crop, and the method then employed for treating the land with lime would be expensive if adopted on the huge acreages cropped in this country. The method employed did not give the greatest benefit. A farmer had his own kiln in which he burnt chalk or lime and then placed it in small heaps on the ground to oxidise and afterwards spread it by hand. That method would be too cumbersome and unwieldy to employ today.

Another form of treating the land with lime was by grinding up calcium carbonate. One of the reasons why the application of lime in its various forms fell into disuse was the introduction of superphosphate. The use of superphosphate to stimulate growth on land lacking in soil nutriment has the effect of leaching from the soil many of the vital elements which were present in the first instance but which cannot be replaced.

Again, it is known and accepted that, with repeated and heavy treatments of superphosphate, certain portions of the chemicals in the superphosphate combine with other chemicals and form compounds which are not then available to the plant in soluble form. They are spoken of as banks of super, or super, in fixed deposits, and no amount of treatment or extra supplies of super, will release the bank that is supposed to be in the soil. Only one thing will do it, and that is lime in one or other of its forms. The opposition that has grown to the use of lime from those who know is because our coast is fairly heavily supplied with limestone, in various forms, such as calcium carbonate of lime, and someone who has used a cracker of doubtful efficiency to crush the stone to an indefinite fineness, has then sold it as agricultural lime, irrespective of its actual calcium content. Possibly the greatest portion of the stuff sold is stone or powder of an inert form, and of little use to the soil.

Hon. L. Craig: Hundreds of experiments have been made.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I agree; but no scientific product has been made available to the farmer so as to guarantee to him that it has a reasonable percentage of the mineral element, calcium, which the plant needs so greatly. The farmer took in good faith what was supplied to him as calcium carbonate—lime suitable for agricultural purposes—but he had to put tremendous amounts of this product on his land to get any results at all. If it was not ground calcium carbonate which was supplied, it was a by-product of other lime processes, such as slaked lime, and even quick lime allowed to become slaked. The point is that such stuff often contains caustic and other corrosive elements which, in many instances, are dangerous and unsuitable to the land to which it is applied.

Latterly, however, there has been a re-awakening of awareness of the value of lime in its proper and correct form. No farmer would dream of purchasing superphosphate, or any other fertiliser, unless he had some assurance of its quality and percentage value. I understand that there is now a product on the market which is guaranteed to contain the full percentage of available and soluble calcium carbonate of lime. It also contains the necessary elements of copper and zinc.

I suggest that with the terrific shortage of super. experiments should be carried out, particularly in the areas that we are trying to develop. One such is that at Esperance, and another is Salmon Gums, where we have some heavy clay soils. Lime in heavy clay soil has the effect of loosening and freeing the particles of clay. In the case of light soils, it has the effect of allowing the soil or sand to retain its moisture by compacting the soil. I suggest that extensive experiments be undertaken by the Government to give some guide to the need for lime in the various areas we have. Many residents in the Esperance district are keen on lime, and have often requested that they be given some definite guide or lead on the question of the use of lime in their districts. Unfortunately, up to now, we have not been able to do that—at least I have not, and I have tried very hard.

I wish to read one or two extracts from authoritative sources. The people whose remarks I shall quote are Mr. A. B. Searle, Soil Technologist and Technical Adviser to the Lime and Allied Industries of Great Britain; and Dr. E. C. Hallsworth, Senior Lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry at the University of Sydney. These gentlemen are considered to be authorities on this subject. In particular, I draw the attention of the House to an extract from "The Australian Farm and Home," published in Melbourne, under date the 2nd April, 1951—

Property Transformation:

No superphosphate had been used on Melrose before the present owners began their plans of flock and property improvement in 1934. Perhaps this was based on the concept that had been held that pasture improvement and fine wool-growing did not mix. But quality of the flock was apparent even then, as indicated by the average cut of 8 lb. per head for fine and superfine sheep. The progressive Russell Brothers felt, however, that much more could be done.

An extensive programme of clearing, subdivision and pasture improvement was put into operation. Today there are 6,000 acres sown to subterranean clover and Clune's perennial rye, 200 tons of superphosphate being used annually now. There are 2,000 acres still in timber. The property is subdivided into 38 paddocks.

When superphosphate was severely rationed during the war years the brothers decided to use appropriate quantities of lime. This did not seem to bring any special response for two or three years, until it was noticed that sheep on the limed country had developed much better bone and horns were grown out better and had a much lower ratio of the ills experienced in any flock. It was concluded that lime was of definite value, so it took its place with super. in the development programme. Some 3,000 of the 6,000 acres of improved pastures have been limed.

The Minister for Agriculture: What district was that in?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: On the Melrose property in Victoria; but just where, I do not know.

Hon. A. L. Loton: How many dressings of lime did that country have; only one?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I shall continue to read—

Results Outstanding.

Results have been rather amazing. The total clip from the property has more than doubled, even though the stocking rate has been kept lighter than sound management requires. Without excluding the lambs, which averaged 4½ lb. at last shearing, the flock of 8,500 sheep averaged just over 12 lb. per head, compared with 8 lb. per head for mature sheep in 1934.

Whereas it has been the practice to lamb in May-June, it has been found with the top-dressing and additional body of feed available, ewes can be lambed very safely in March-April. The lambing percentage of 64 per cent in 1934 has been increased to an average of 82 per cent. for the last four years.

Breeding ewes are kept in the paddocks which have been both limed and supered, where the grasses are sweeter and more nourishing. From their good start as lambs, these fine and superfine wool sheep have achieved a size that compares well with that of the strong and medium wools of South Australia and New South Wales. It is in these respects that the story of Melrose is of special interest.

That is only one instance of the amazing results achieved by the use of lime in its correct proportions, and of a proved and suitable type. I was shown another article, similar to this, dealing with something that occurred in New South Wales. The results there were equally as amazing as the ones I have quoted. Earlier in my address, one member asked whether I had any idea whether a long length of staple growth of clover was more nutritious than a short one. Not being a farmer, I do not want to speak at any great length on this matter, but I know that, with the application of lime to soil that needs it, the length of staple of the growth would not be of any great consequence. Lime can be of considerable nutritional value to stock feeding on limed pastures.

The Minister for Agriculture: You need not worry about the bulk. That is all right.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Whether this calcium carbonate is used as a top-dressing, or ploughed and raked into the soil, it is beneficial. If it is used as a top-dressing and so eaten by beasts, it is still beneficial. I now want to refer to another point in this article. During the war years, the Government of the United Kingdom was faced with the need to increase the extraction rate for flour and on this question the article states—

This raised a problem for the Government of the United Kingdom when, during the war, it was faced with the need to increase the extraction rate for flour. That is to say, it was necessary to mill all flour in a manner that would include a greater proportion of these outer layers in order to reduce the grain imports. At the same time, the national diet was being drastically restricted by the severity of the rationing. A survey of the diet at this time showed that the calcium intake was probably going to be too low, and the Government very wisely decided to combat this by arranging to have a small proportion of carbonate of lime mixed with the flour by the millers before the bakers were allowed to use it.

I submit that as being an argument in favour of my contention that lime is needed more and more today in our agricultural activities. We know that mineral calcium is needed in every form of life in a greater proportion than any other mineral element known. If, year after year, ground is supered and crops taken from it, the farmer

must of necessity leach out many of the vital elements. Many of our growths of clover do not develop the necessary nodules, and it is suggested this is caused by the sourness of the soil, or the acidity; in other words, the p.H. value of the soil is too high. It has also been suggested that if lime in proper quantities were used, the result in the growth of clover and nodules would be far better.

In the Salmon Gums district, I have seen crops of clover showing little or no development of nodules, although those crops were supposed to have been planted from inoculated seed. I believe that the answer is a deficiency of lime, and I would like to see plots grown in that district to prove whether the argument I have advanced is right or wrong. I would remind the Minister that if no one else seems to be interested in this question, the same does not apply to people in the Esperance district. We are all vitally interested, because we cannot get the supplies of super. that we want. I know of at least one big farmer who had great plans for development in the Esperance district but who, because of his inability to obtain sufficient fertiliser, has greatly pruned down his plans for that district.

The lack of fertiliser is a big blow to many of us who are interested in Esperance, and this man was one who does things properly and in a big way. He took a great quantity of heavy plant and equipment to the district, and he is the type of man who would lend his plant to his neighbours. He even took a brick-making machine with him and intended to make it available to his neighbours for the manufacture of bricks. I would mention that that man has accepted one of the largest single clearing contracts ever to be undertaken. He and his sons are in a big way, and it is a pity that he has not proceeded with his plans in the Esperance district.

People in Esperance are most interested in this matter, and I want to ask the Minister whether it is possible for the department to do something about the question of applying lime. Settlers in the district want to know whether the soil has a deficiency of lime. If experiments are carried out, they will know what to do; and if there is a lime deficiency, at least they will realise that it can be overcome, since lime is available at a comparatively cheap rate.

I now want to touch upon the question of gold and its price. I have read with a good deal of interest the report of the delegation which attended Canberra on this matter. I cannot but confess to a feeling of despondency at the outcome of that deputation. From the Treasurer's reply, I can see that he appreciates the value of gold to the economy of our State and the nation. He agrees that the industry must carry on because we need the gold. However, the position is quite farcical. On the one hand, we

have the Commonwealth Government enjoying a monopoly over the purchase of all gold mined and produced in the country; and, on the other, the producer having no say as to where he will dispose of his product. The Commonwealth Government is the only outlet for the sale of his gold, and he must sell it at the price fixed in 1939. That price was determined by conditions ruling at that time, and those conditions in no way relate to today's values.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: There has been an increase since 1939.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That increase is most misleading and almost fictitious; it is an internal increase only. There was no alteration in the actual price of gold outside the Commonwealth; it is still sold at the same price as that fixed by the Commonwealth Government in 1939. The industry was committed without its say-so. Admittedly, the producers of gold get more in Australian currency—a little more than they did earlier—but costs have risen almost to the same point proportionately as they were before that fictitious price increase. There is a difference of about 8s. or 12s. between the cost of production and what the producers get for their product. Just imagine the chaotic condition of the industry if the Government decided to have parity with sterling! The industry would be finished; it would be so far behind the cost of production that for the producers to carry on would be impossible. That is the real danger.

There is talk of a possible increase of the basic wage by another £1 per week. Producers have already been belted to leg several times; and if this further increase is granted, I do not know what will happen. There is such a small margin between their costs and their incomes that it is only by virtue of unbelievable economy, and peak of efficiency, that the industry has been able to survive at all. If any other industry in Australia were running as efficiently as that concerned with the production of gold, tremendous profits would be made. If other industries could have kept their costs of production anywhere near what they were in 1939, their profits would be enormous. That is what the goldmining industry has had to do; but it has not been able to share in these enormous profits. What other industry in Australia today could operate without assistance if its income remained the same as it was in 1939? There is not one.

Hon. L. Craig: What about wool?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The hon. member is being facetious. I believe the mounting burden of costs is becoming impossible while the income of the industry is pegged. It is nothing more or less than an unparalleled example of vicious restraint of free trade. That is what it amounts to, and it is of a most savage

nature. Why should a man be permitted to produce an article and then not be able to sell it on the best market? Take wool. What would the position be if the producers of wool had to sell their product to the Commonwealth Government at a price fixed by the Government, knowing full well that outside the Commonwealth that wool was bringing at least three times the price received by them? The producers of wool are receiving about three or four times what it costs to produce the commodity. If the same type of restraint were put upon those engaged in the production of wool, there would be a revolution, and I would not blame them for it.

The Minister for Agriculture: The wheatgrowers are similarly affected with the price of their product.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is so; but they have the chance to take their goods elsewhere and pick up on other farm products.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Has not the price of gold risen since 1939?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No. That question was put to me earlier, and I said that the rise was merely internal; it was only because we devalued our £. That is the only increase that has been made in the price of gold. The price overseas has remained the same, and America will buy as much gold as we can produce, at the price granted in 1939.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And expressed in dollars.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is correct.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: At the sum of 35 dollars.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: And we want 50 dollars. I do not think I am adopting the wrong note when I say that I am rather surprised that there has not been a challenge in the High Court. We often see questions such as this challenged in the High Court, and with satisfactory results. I cannot understand how the industry and its leaders have been prepared to sit back and bide their time, hoping that the leaders of the Government would do something about the matter. The Government has done nothing. We believe that there is a clause in the international monetary fund agreement which gives the producers of gold the right to sell their product, newly mined, on the open free market. That is our firm belief. However, the leaders of the goldmining industry have not bucked too much about it, and they have tried to approach the question through the right channels.

I suggest that if there is not some semblance of a sound solution in the near future, the producers should take their case to the High Court to ascertain whether the Government is right in compelling them to sell their gold under an agreement entered into in 1939. To whom did the delegates go cap in hand to ask for assistance? They had to approach the same body that originally committed them to this agreement. At that time it was a Commonwealth Labour Government, but the fact still remains it was a Commonwealth Government, and it is from the Commonwealth Government to-day that they have to seek assistance. Furthermore, there is a suggestion now that a committee be appointed to approach the I.M.F. to reconsider the position. Of whom will that committee consist? I suggest that the Commonwealth Bank being what it is, and the Treasurer being so closely associated with its activities, it is the policy of the Commonwealth Bank that will dictate the terms and the form that that application will take when that committee goes to the I.M.F. In these circumstances, what hope will the industry have of getting what it needs and desires?

In all sincerity, I suggest to the Minister that a representative of the goldmining industry, selected by the industry, be included on that committee. Nothing less than that would, I believe, be fair to the State, to the industry or to the Commonwealth. It is vitally important that that side of the question be put, and there will be no one better able to submit it than a representative of the industry concerned. I therefore commend for the Minister's most serious consideration the suggestion that a representative of the goldmining industry be appointed to the committee when it goes to place our case before the I.M.F.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: I think you are right, but is it not a bit late? They meet very shortly.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not know when the I.M.F. meets; but though it may be meeting shortly, I believe this matter is of such vital importance that even if we had only 48 hours in which to do it, I would like the Minister to do everything in his power to make representations to the authorities and have appointed on that committee a representative of the goldmining industry to place our side of the case before the I.M.F., rather than leave it entirely to the Commonwealth Bank which, I believe, is anti-gold. The bank is not interested in the goldmining industry, despite the assurance the Treasurer gave us. He said he believed in it; but I am afraid I have not very much faith in the policy of the Commonwealth Bank in relation to the price of gold.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am of the same opinion in lots of other things.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Probably so, but I am not going to be drawn into an argument on that point. I will now leave the goldmining industry for the time being and say a very few guarded words on price-fixing. Unfortunately I left at home the information I had on this matter. Therefore I will be speaking from memory. I did have actual dockets and invoices to which to refer on the effect that price-fixing has had on the small businessman in Kalgoorlie. One item I have in mind is flour. A small purchaser who buys a 50-lb. bag of flour has to weigh it into 50 one-pound bags. After he has purchased the bags at a price of about 1s. or 2s. each, depending on the size, and has paid the wages of a junior girl at 2s. 6d. an hour to weigh the flour, he then has to sell it for the same price at which he purchased it. He is actually losing the value of the bag and the amount paid to the girl for weighing it out.

The same thing applies to sugar, currants, sultanas and so on. The shopkeeper is actually losing cold money by virtue of the fact that he buys at a certain price, and has to sell at the same figure. On top of this, he has to supply bags at his own cost and meet overhead expenses. I did have dockets to present to the House to substantiate my point, and I very much regret I left them at home. There is another instance of the retailer having his prices fixed, whereas the wholesaler has not. The recent increase of freights to Kalgoorlie within a week were adjusted by the wholesaler and was added to the price of his article. The retailer, however, is still trying to obtain that adjustment and cannot get it. The wholesaler has received it. He is being recouped, but the retailer is not. Take the case of a tin of jam of a special brand. The fixed retail price is 2s. 1½d., but the wholesaler's price to the storeman is 2s. 2½d. I suggest that when that sort of thing occurs, the position is impossible.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: That is 2s. 2d. freight paid.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not suggest it is entirely freight in that instance, but I believe it is mainly freight. I made a comment on a remark that the Minister passed early in the session to the effect that the increased freight on a tin of jam was about one-tenth of a penny. But, in actual fact, it turns out to be 2d. or 3d., because jam was moved from one group to another. It did not come into the planned percentage increase as the Minister implied. That is one actual instance. Unfortunately it looks as though we will probably have price-fixing again in a far more stringent form than we have at present. I always have been and am still emphatically opposed to it. I have yet to see where price-fixing has increased the production of one single article by

virtue of the fact that the price has been fixed. I do not believe that anywhere, in any form of manufacture, price-fixing has put one extra article on the market.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: On the contrary, it reduces the supply.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Thank you! The hon. member is quite right. If one goes down to the stores which sell plastic toys in the most attractive varieties, and quite sturdy and colourful, one finds that though, when they first came into use, they were selling at 4s. or 5s., sales have been so improved that the price has been halved. Because private enterprise has been permitted to go ahead and improve its goods, we can buy articles better in quality and at a reduced price. But if price-fixing has caused more articles to come on to the market, I have yet to see them. The money is not there for manufacturers to improve their articles. Another matter I should like to mention is the gazette that retailers have for their particular groceries.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Which gazette?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The price gazette which comes out regularly, showing the price of every article sold in the store. One can imagine the chaotic condition that exists when a small retailer receives three separate gazettes within one week each showing a different price for most articles on the shelves. This is probably affecting at least 50 per cent. of them. It is impossible for the most experienced retailer today to know the prices of the goods in his shop. He has to keep that price list before him and has to make it available to every assistant. The prices of these innumerable articles are perhaps changed within a few days and the shopkeeper is issued with another price list setting out the altered prices. It is impossible for him to mark his articles with the price he is going to charge for them.

Such a state of affairs cannot continue. It is going to be the cause of stable little businessmen going to the wall. This, more than any other factor, will be the cause. Some of these businessmen work very long hours—in some instances as many as 16 hours a day—and if they are forced to go to the wall, and are compelled to drift out of the business, they will no doubt be available to the labour market; but, on the other hand, we will not see around the country the thriving businesses that have existed. They will be all gone. It will be a great loss, and this nation will be the poorer for it.

Many people look with disdain on the shopkeeper. I can remember that when I was working for wages the aim was to obtain a little business of one's own. That does not apply today. I would remind the House that the greatest era of prosperity and advancement that England has known was when hostile and foreign nations referred to the British as a nation of shop-

keepers. That was when we had our greatest advancement. Today, unfortunately, the shopkeeper is the one being forced to the wall.

I would like to refer briefly to some of the progress for which this Government has been responsible in the Kalgoorlie district. It is less than two years ago that Kalgoorlie was faced with a very serious water shortage. The position was dangerous. The Government very quickly had investigators up there to go into the matter thoroughly. It promised us it would put work in hand immediately to rectify the position, and it has done so. On the 6th of this month, the Minister for Works is going to Kalgoorlie to officially open the new 24,000,000-gallon reservoir in that town. There is another reservoir between Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie with a capacity of 12,000,000 gallons. That will more than double the holding capacity of the water storage between Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie. That has taken place in the space of two short years. The Minister and the Government are to be commended on their very thorough and prompt action in alleviating the danger that existed in Kalgoorlie owing to the greater draw of water from the pipeline. A new booster pump has also been installed between Coolgardie and Norseman to supply water to Norseman, which is a growing town. The line has now to be extended to Bullfinch where there will be full production next year. In 18 months that town has grown from a bush flat into a thriving community. New houses have been erected to a specified town plan. Anybody who had been there two years ago and visited the town today would find the progress made almost unbelievable.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is there any earning capacity there?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: For the workmen or the company?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It must have a backing. You are referring to houses and works.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: : Yes. The Western Mining Corporation took over the Bullfinch leases. At present the company has not started to produce, but it has spent money because it knew what was there. It is a very thorough company, which knows what it is after. Its plant is complete. Its shaft is down, its machinery is up and its power plant has been installed. About 100 new houses have been erected and another 100 are to be built in the next two years. All that has been done, and the company expects to be in production next year. Knowing the reputation of the company, we have no doubt that the earning capacity well and truly exists.

I want to touch on a subject which has been exercising the minds of members of the Cabinet for some two years. I refer to the production of pyrites for super. from

the Norseman deposits. Progress in that connection was being made until recently; but, strangely enough, America suddenly discovered that it had huge deposits of raw sulphur.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Not very huge.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: They were when the report came out.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes, when it first came out.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: However, the quantity available does not amount to a splash in the bucket so far as we are concerned; and I hope the Government will not cease its activities in the advancement of the pyrites industry in this State and the changeover of our superphosphate works from the burning of pyrites, in favour of imported sulphur. We do not know how the price of sulphur will jump. At present, America is paying more than it cares to pay for our wool, and it could easily decide to get a little back on its sulphur. That sulphur has to be carried oversea; and despite other figures to the contrary pyrites are produced here for half the cost of imported sulphur. Someone put it to me the other way round, but that is wrong. At present, the biggest producer of pyrites is Norseman, but the mine is running for only two to three days per week. If anyone can tell me that that is an economic proposition, I would like to have the reason explained very thoroughly to me. How can any industry run economically if it is in production for two or three days per week and then has to close down and later begin again?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Why do they only work two or three days?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Because in that time the works can produce all that is at present needed in Western Australia. If industry could use the product, the works could supply 10 times what it is producing at present and could be in operation for 24 hours a day. Under those conditions the article would be produced much more cheaply than is possible in present circumstances. That is common business logic. An article cannot be manufactured cheaply if the concern producing it is in operation for only two or three days a week.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is not freight the trouble?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. That is one of the things which is exercising the mind of Cabinet and is troubling other people. We feel that the railways cannot handle the proposed tonnage, which will be something in the nature of 150,000 tons a year. That is an enormous quantity of material to carry over a light, narrow gauge track. I cannot see how we can do it. I believe that 4,000 specially constructed trucks, or trucks suitable for such haulage, would be necessary in addition to those that are available today. Just consider what that would mean. It would mean

two trains per day ex Norseman and two empty trains returning to handle the material, and this is to be transported only as far as Bassendean, as I believe that available supplies of sulphur will go to super. works further away—to Geraldton, etc.

The Minister for Agriculture: Except Albany.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. It is said that freight is the retarding factor at present. I believe that that will be the case only while Bassendean is the sole centre to make use of pyrites. When the time comes that we haul pyrites to Geraldton, the emphasis will shift from distance to handling costs. When material is placed on a ship it does not matter whether it has to be taken 100 or 1,000 miles; but when the railways do the hauling, mileage counts heavily.

Recently, I asked the Minister why, if the Commonwealth Government intended to assist Tasmania to install facilities for the handling of pyrites, the same concession could not be advanced to our State. Let it not be forgotten that the sulphur content of our pyrites is amongst the highest in Australia. We could very easily send our pyrites east. No deposit elsewhere, even that at Mt. Morgan, is as rich as the one at Norseman.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do not suggest such a thing!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is a correct statement.

The Minister for Agriculture: We do not want to send it away.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No. But if we cannot use all that it is possible to produce, we should send the balance away. We do not want to export it if we can make use of it, but at the moment that is not possible. Let us get the enterprise under way and then forget about imported sulphur. That is what I want to see. We have deposits at Ravensthorpe, but we do not know their value. I believe the pyrites there are in a complicated form and much more costly to reduce to the sulphur percentage obtainable from the Norseman deposit. There are other deposits in Southern Cross. There is no dearth of supplies; but none of the pyrites elsewhere are in such a simple form as those in the Esperance district, so far as we know. All inquiries have brought us back to Norseman and that is where I think we shall finish.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Minister will make sulphuric acid there directly.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That presents a big problem. It has been suggested time and again that sulphuric acid should be produced at Norseman. The argument against it is that from every ton of pyrites produced, 1½ tons of sulphuric acid is obtained. That seems silly; but it is so. In addition, there is the almost insurmountable difficulty of transporting the

acid. The only answer is to take the pyrites away from Norseman. We are convinced of that, though we would like to see any new enterprise started in Norseman. Our job is to discover which is the best and most economical way to transport it. Carriage by the railways may be the cheapest in the long run; I do not know. If the difference in cost to take it through Esperance is very little, the expenditure would be justified because of what it would mean in the development of the Esperance district.

Turning now to the question of road-building, I would point out that for a long time we have been trying to get the Perth-Kalgoorlie road completed. Finally, the Government has agreed to leave the present crew on that work with a view to having it finished. I believe we shall have a black road by the end of the year. It will not be completely bituminised, but it will have a black and sealed surface, and will be of tremendous advantage to the traffic using it.

There is a suggestion I would like to make to the Government in connection with the subject of roads; namely, that the Main Roads Board be used to train young men in road-making. If the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council had on its staff a promising and energetic young man whom it wanted to appoint as a foreman on road work, the Main Roads Board could be asked to take charge of him for a period and train him in at least the rudiments of good, sound road-making by proper methods, different from those employed by some local authorities. Certain local governing bodies have good engineers, but others are less satisfactory, and the result is that some of the roads in our country towns are in a shocking condition. They are constructed of bitumen, but they break up in no time because they have not been laid correctly. To have laid them correctly would have cost no more. The trouble has been that the person responsible was one who did not know his job. I consider that if a local authority has in mind a young and stable man whom it wants to appoint to a foreman's job, the Main Roads Board should be requested to train him for the work.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They might take him then!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: He would still be a trained man, capable of doing a good job, whether he returned to the local governing authority or not. The Government pays local authorities a tremendous amount of money for road-making and should have some say as to how the roads are constructed.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do not road board secretary-engineers have that knowledge?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Not necessarily. In my province, we have a municipal secretary-engineer, but the

only knowledge he has is what he has gained on the job. He started as a boy and is still there.

Hon. L. Craig: They have not always suitable plant, either.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: We have suitable plant, but the man is not trained in road-making. We have bitumen roads, but they are breaking up. Recently we acquired a young man who had three years with the Main Roads Board in bituminising, road formation, and grader work, and who applied for the job of foreman with us. It is amazing to see the difference he has made already. Even the men engaged in the work can appreciate that he knows his job. Previously they were going about the work in an entirely incorrect manner, but now we will have good roads. I repeat my suggestion to the Minister that the Main Roads Board should be used as a training ground for men like that. Some who have been trained may not remain with the local authorities, but there will be others to take their place.

I could speak about many more matters concerning the district I represent, which is a very large one, but I will content myself with a reference to Merredin, a growing town. Merredin will become one of the biggest inland towns in this State. I make that assertion without fear of contradiction. It is one of the most progressive towns I have seen anywhere in this State. It has a road board which simply will not let the grass grow under its feet, and which, amongst other things, has been responsible for creating sufficient interest amongst the local residents to induce them to build a kindergarten for the district by virtue of busy-bees. The local school has the best little Oslo lunch centre in the State, including those at schools in Perth. Merredin also has its youth centre, one of the largest in Western Australia, which includes everything one can think of to encourage the youth of the town to spend their idle time in the best surroundings. That youth centre has the right atmosphere, and the Merredin Road Board has been responsible for it.

A hostel was required for schoolchildren at Merredin, so the road board purchased a big house in the town—one that originally belonged to the brewery—and turned it into a hostel. The result is that inquiries are coming from as far south as Bunbury and Busselton, and there is now a junior high school at Merredin. That is the type of town into which Merredin is growing. There is almost a complete new suburb north of the line, and it has expanded so swiftly that it has overtaken the rifle range, and a request has had to be made to the Government to allow the road board to take over the rifle range site and make provision for the range elsewhere.

The Minister for Agriculture: Are not houses being built for natives in Merredin, also?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not doubt for one minute that that is so, though I do not know of it.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Merredin is certainly an example of self-help which should be encouraged.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The road board will put into operation any worth-while suggestion that is found to be practicable. The school buses there are run by the local governing body.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Other people have tried that idea and have abandoned it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Send them to Merredin and they will be shown how to do it properly! There are two directions in which Merredin needs help, and the only source from which it can come is the Government. The first of these needs is the provision of a new wing at the school. At present, small halls are being utilised to accommodate some of the pupils and the Government will have to supply the necessary extra accommodation as there is no other school in the district to which the overflow of children could be sent.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Other places are in the same position in that regard.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, but one must give particular thought to the future in a place which is growing so fast.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Have you seen Collie and South Bunbury?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, and I still say that Merredin's need is more pressing than that of either of those centres. Another urgent requirement of Merredin is a swimming-pool. I know that the Government has already made offers and concessions to various local governing bodies with regard to the erection of swimming-pools. The present difficulty, of course, lies in obtaining the necessary materials, so I will not press that point too hard, though I do submit to the Minister that the Merredin district is badly in need of a suitable swimming-pool. I feel that, in view of the energy of the people of that centre and their ability to progress, consideration should be given them in this regard as soon as possible.

Recently, the Minister made an inspection of the railway barracks at Merredin and agreed that a new building is essential. He could not promise when it would be constructed, but simply said it would be the next on the list. If it does not turn out to be the next, he will find us on his back, because the position is so desperate. The men are living in what are almost pigsties with the engines blasting up and down alongside them. A great number of men pass through that

barracks which is the stopping-place almost half-way between Perth and Kalgoorlie, and one of the busiest in the State. I support the motion.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.50]: I desire to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the high honour that His Majesty has conferred upon you, and the two new members, Messrs. Henning and Murray, who are my colleagues, on their election to this House. I wish also to congratulate the two members of our staff who have been promoted. Personally I am not in agreement with the bestowing of honours upon legislators, as such, but my high regard for you, Mr. President, makes me feel delighted that you have gained this distinction. Honours should be given very sparingly to legislators and should, in my opinion, be granted only where sacrifice has been made for the public good. I do not think legislators make any such sacrifice. They are well paid for all they do and should not, save in the most exceptional circumstances, have honours conferred upon them. There are occasional exceptions, of course, but it is a rare thing for a legislator to make any sacrifice for the common good.

Hon. G. Fraser: Legislators are more entitled to honours than are those who buy them.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I agree that the granting of honours should be very closely guarded. I do not think there is such a thing as the buying of honours in Australia although, as we all know, it was once possible in the Old Country to buy a baronetcy, for instance. Such titles were sold to suitable people for a price agreed upon; but that does not say that we should approve of such a system. The conferring of an honour should be made such a distinction that it would be sought after by the best types of people in the country.

I was very impressed with some of the remarks of Professor Holford, the eminent town-planning authority who recently visited Perth, though I dare say one is always impressed with an expressed view if it happens to coincide with one's own. Professor Holford said that we have in this State hardwoods unequalled anywhere else in the world. He stated that nowhere else were there hardwood forests to compare with ours. That being so—I entirely agree with him—I hope the policy of the Government will be to accord every tree in our forests its true value. Of course, there have been and will be attempts made to use up our forests quickly, but the policy of the Government in this regard should look not 10 years but even 100 years ahead.

Before very long, we will have a population of 1,000,000 people, and our exports of hardwoods will then probably be negligible. No matter what pressure is brought to bear on Governments for the releasing of forest land for agriculture, they should be resisted. It is easy for people with farms to ask for a little more good jarrah land,

but it should not be granted to them. Were they in any other part of the world, our natural hardwood forests would be valued almost by the pound, as there is no other timber anywhere comparable with jarrah. I hope we will learn soon to value it at its true worth. I was interested to hear Mr. Cunningham speak on the subject of prices, because what he said was true. I do not think price-control has the effect it is supposed to have.

Hon. G. Fraser: Not in the way in which it is carried out here.

Hon. L. CRAIG: How would the hon. member like to see it carried out here? Has it been successful anywhere?

Hon. G. Fraser: Yes.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Of course!

Hon. L. CRAIG: It has not been successful anywhere.

Hon. A. L. Loton: No, except to create blackmarkets.

Hon. L. CRAIG: For price-control to be successful, complete control of production and distribution would be necessary, together with the Labour Party policy of exchange. If one had controls such as that, and big-stick methods by which to enforce them, it could be done. It is possible to have effective price control by using Soviet methods, but in no other way. No amount of legislation can eliminate from human nature the characteristic that if a person does not receive a profit from his efforts he will cease making those efforts. If we were to say to a storekeeper, "You must sell this article at a loss," we would soon find that he would not sell it at all.

If a producer is asked to produce something without making a profit, he will refuse to continue production, as we have seen time and time again. As an example, the producers of butter agreed to a fixed price for that commodity, but in the end it turned out to be the worst thing they ever did. Had butter always remained a free product—do not think I am against the pooling of products, because I believe a central selling authority is necessary—the present position would not have arisen. Producers in our rural industries are particularly apt to rush in and accept a fixed-price scheme when prices are low, because it helps them, as has been the case with wheat and butter. In times of low prices, the producers appeal to the Government for a fixed price but, in the end, it inevitably leads them up the garden path. Had butter been left to find its own economic value, it would long ago have reached a higher price. The wheat producers, when they were in the doldrums during the depression, appealed to the Government for a fixed price to get them out of their troubles.

The Minister for Agriculture: This State is losing £8,000,000 per year through the farmers having gone into that scheme.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The producers of our primary products have a very short-term outlook and it always leads them into trouble.

Hon. G. Fraser: They would not have survived without those schemes.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, they would. The whole story of agriculture proves that it will survive where every other industry fails. Butter costs a lot to produce, and any such commodity will eventually find its own price level if there is no interference. People are not willing to go into the dairying industry owing to the long hours and the arduous nature of the work and therefore, if there is no interference, the price of the product will in the end find its true economic level. That is the case with all commodities that are difficult to produce.

The only control that it is advisable to have in the marketing of primary products is the setting up of a central selling organisation or pool in order to provide one authority to sell overseas. The idea is to have one bargaining authority instead of a thousand individuals because, if each individual is selling his own product, some are bound to break away from the others with the result that the price is forced down. Government control and fixed prices will always lead the producer into trouble in the end.

I come now to the question of money. The history of money throughout the ages has shown that its purchasing value becomes less all the time. The value of money has always been possible of illustration by a declining graph, as its purchasing power has lessened throughout the ages. Those members who know Salisbury Cathedral will also know that there is a street running alongside it which was built in all probability about a thousand years ago. That street is called Penny-st., because that was the wage of workers in those days—a penny a day.

Hon. G. Fraser: Them were the days!

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but a penny had some purchasing power then.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I think there is also a story in the Bible about that, too.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member suggests, by his interjection, that he knows more about the Bible than I do, but I doubt it. However, my point is that money becomes nominally less and less through the ages. During the last war particularly, goods were produced entirely for war purposes, and consumer and capital goods for ordinary use were greatly reduced. By "capital goods" I mean houses, machinery and so on. Members know, of course, what I mean by consumer goods. In order to encourage production for war, the issue of money was increased, and still further increased. A greater amount of money was put on the market, with the result that goods became less and the issue of money became greater.

After the war, with the payment of gratuities and the provision of social services; and, with a greater demand for goods occasioned by the war, money became more plentiful, and goods were not being produced in proportion because of the 40-hour week, for one reason. The introduction of the 40-hour week was a very important factor because it not only meant a shorter working week for the worker, but it also had a psychological effect on him. He became used to more leisure and did not do as much work in a 40-hour week as he had done in 40 hours when he was working a 44-hour week. That is definitely known, because production figures have dropped considerably.

Whatever laws are passed by Governments, money will still find its level and will chase goods. If there is an unbalanced economy, there must be inflation, inasmuch as there are few goods and plenty of money available to purchase them, whether it be capital or consumer goods. No laws can alter that state of affairs. Governments have tried and are still trying in every possible way to stop this flow of money towards the purchase of goods, and they find it cannot be done. The flow of money is chasing capital goods in the form of houses. But let any Government try to stop it!

Hon. N. E. Baxter: We are catching up a bit now.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Governments can curb it, but in the end it beats them. Diamonds have multiplied in value five times compared with their prewar value and so the value of all goods goes up and up. The point I am coming to is: Who is responsible for our being in the middle of this inflationary spiral? I say that Governments, State and Commonwealth, are mainly responsible. When goods are short and money is plentiful, what is the normal thing to do? The first step is to produce more goods. All Governments have done their best to increase the production of goods to bring them nearer to the amount of money available; but if goods cannot be produced quickly enough—and we are not producing quickly enough—then the only alternative is to reduce the amount of money available; because, I repeat, goods and money will, in spite of all laws, balance themselves. I have no faith in laws in relation to economics, because they do not work out.

Having failed to produce goods quickly enough, the next thing to do is to reduce the amount of money in circulation; but the Commonwealth Government is doing exactly the reverse. It is spending huge sums of money on Governments works, on social services, on free this and free that, which should be spent when times are hard. That is when Governments should make these things available to the people: when they cannot afford them.

Free milk is another of those services which should be provided only when people are going through hard times. But all these social services and free gifts are being granted at a time when money is plentiful.

The Government is embarking upon a huge public works scheme. I agree with Mr. Watson when he says that the Snowy River scheme, desirable as it is, is not a project to embark upon now, but one which should be commenced when goods are plentiful and money is fairly scarce. These works are depriving private enterprise of key personnel and skilled labour, because the Government is offering those men security from the cradle to the grave. It is taking men away from the production of goods to work on a huge venture which will take years to complete. I agree that a good plan is to tax the people heavily; but the Government should put the money away and not distribute it among the people to increase the inflationary spiral, which it is, in fact, doing today. The duty of the Government should be to place the money in reserve because the pressure of money will always catch up with it.

State Governments are just as bad as or even worse than the Commonwealth Government. When the States lost their taxing rights they also lost their desire to economise. State Governments have become nothing more than virtual road boards. Today they are clamouring for as much money as they can get and not one of their representatives goes to Canberra with the idea of economising. They visit the national capital with the sole idea of squeezing as much money as they can get out of the Commonwealth Government, in much the same manner as road boards do.

The Minister for Agriculture: What is wrong with that? We must have it for urgent public works.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I think the Government must have some responsibility for the economy of the country. If the State Governments had the responsibility of imposing taxation, they would not be so keen and hungry to obtain as much money as they can get from the Commonwealth Government. I would suggest that the Commonwealth Government should not vacate the field of income taxation but that it should limit that field to a lower amount and throw the responsibility on to the States to impose their own taxation to fulfil some of their own respective requirements.

It is easy for one who has not, shall I say, the odium of imposing taxation to enjoy the popularity of spending plenty of money. Members know, as I do, that the same applies to road boards. No matter what it costs the country, local authorities, which are not obliged to impose rates, are after as much money as

they can get. I know of one road board which has received a £15,000 grant this year. By how much have those road boards increased their rates since the war, in relation to everything else?

Hon. A. R. Jones: Double, in some cases.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, they have not.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You come and live where I live!

Hon. L. CRAIG: The point I am making is that they are clamouring for all they can get. The responsibility of the Government is to ensure that the economy of the country is preserved and stabilised. Unless the Government does something towards that end, I do not know where we are heading.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Have we not schools and other facilities to provide?

Hon. L. CRAIG: What are we getting for our money today? Do not let members think I am opposed to these developmental schemes. In fact, I am in favour of them; but I am not in favour of embarking upon them in times when there is a surplus of money, as there is now, and when Governments and road boards are competing for the same men and materials. That is what is happening, with the result that men are claiming the highest rates obtainable, and getting them. Members know what is happening to the rates of pay for bulldozer operators. They were being paid £3 an hour, and they are now on £6 an hour for the same work. That is brought about only by the competition for labour between the Government, local authorities, and private enterprise.

The Minister for Agriculture: Have not the costs which a bulldozer contractor has to meet been increased accordingly?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Not to the same extent.

The Minister for Agriculture: What about his wages, fuel and other items?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The cost of those has increased in no way commensurate with the present rate being paid to them, which is £48 a day. The cause of that, of course, is that there are not enough bulldozer operators available, and everybody wants them because the money is available to pay for their services.

The Minister for Agriculture: What about the dairy-farmers?

Hon. L. CRAIG: If the dairy-farmers had been on a better basis, they would have received a much higher price for their product long ago.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are using a number of bulldozers.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I know they are; and a great many of them are being financed to meet the cost. I blame Governments

more than anyone else for this inflationary spiral. The Commonwealth has not shown economy in its public works programme. It has been absolutely lavish with its money.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Wait till you see the new Budget!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I know it is going to budget for increased taxation, but that should have been done two years ago. What has it been doing with all this money?

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Investing it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It has been throwing it away in payment of social services and other gifts. A typical example is the thousands of pounds which are being spent on the Department of Information. What do members do with the booklets they receive from that department? They throw them in the wastepaper basket. Because of the amount of money people are earning today, I think the free milk scheme is utterly stupid. Some people I have spoken to are insulted by it, and they are not well-to-do, either. Some of them are working people. A few of them have said to me, "I can afford the 1½d. a day for my kid to buy milk."

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is the man who buys beer.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Would the hon. member give him beer? Is it necessary?

Hon. E. H. Gray: The free milk scheme will pay for itself by saving hospital expenses.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member is an idealist. He has a heart of gold and it is as soft as putty.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: As soft as what?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Putty! And he lets his heart rule his brain. Let us consider it as any normal human being would. Is it not rather stupid? Two or three mothers have said to me, "I think it is rather insulting. I am capable of looking after my own child." Mr. Gray will probably ask about the poor, underfed child. If there are any such children, let us provide for them by way of subsidy.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You will see the results in 12 month's time.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If we are going to prepare for war, and the Prime Minister has said that the necessity for preparation is greater now than it was in 1938, let us do without these things and prepare for war. But we cannot do that and stockpile all the goods needed. We see the word "Save" written all over hoardings and walls, and everybody is clamouring for what he wants, and Governments by their lavish expenditure are encouraging such things. I support the motion.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [7.30]: With other members, I wish to offer you, Mr. President, congratulations upon the high honour His Majesty the King has bestowed on you and express the hope that you will be long spared to enjoy that honour. I also extend a welcome to the two new members. We used to expect to have a couple of new members after a biennial election, but it seldom happens that we lose two by death during the recess, and I think the occurrence is unique. I wish to pay a tribute of the highest respect to the two members who have passed away. They displayed keen interest in the primary producers of this State, no matter whether they were engaged in production in their own province or elsewhere in the State, and I cannot adequately express my regret at their passing.

I wish to speak briefly of primary production in this State. I have everything good to say about it, especially in regard to the things we eat. When one goes to the Eastern States, particularly to Sydney, one is faced with all sorts of shortages. The people there are short of milk, which is down 33-1/3 per cent.; eggs are rationed; they have no potatoes, and they seem to be short of almost everything. A similar state of affairs prevails in other States, though to a lesser degree than in New South Wales; but I can say with authority that we in Western Australia stand alone in the matter of food production.

I attribute this happy state of affairs to what some people term orderly marketing, by regulating the marketing through boards, and to the co-operation that has been forthcoming from the producers themselves. I believe that we, too, might have been short of potatoes but for the regulating of supplies by the Potato Board. There was a time when we had a surplus of potatoes and some people would not grow them. Now, however, the production is regulated and the grower has a fair idea of what he will receive for his produce. The same applies to eggs and to other forms of primary production.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Will there not be some shortage here?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not very much. There is a period when we cannot grow potatoes, and we are trying to bridge that period so that there may be an overall production. We produce more potatoes for export than does any other State of the Commonwealth with the exception of Tasmania.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You have not mentioned the shortage of onions.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a commodity which cannot be kept for long, and a similar difficulty occurs with other vegetables. It is hard to regulate supplies when the commodity is one that cannot be kept.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Will not onions keep a long time?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Nothing like as long as potatoes. I have, on the behalf of the Government, urged the Potato Board to budget for a surplus of potatoes rather than a shortage. When this is done, the Government will come to the rescue and finance the potatoes that have to be put into cold storage for a while before they can be sold. On the whole, we have reason to congratulate ourselves on the supply of all the things we eat.

I wish to make special mention of the milk supply. I am of opinion that the Milk Board and the producers of milk have done a wonderful job. I desire to make reference to a statement made by Hon. J. T. Tonkin in the Legislative Assembly last November, to which I could not reply at the time, wherein he took me to task for having stated that in a year or two we would not know what to do with the whole milk in Western Australia. At the time, I knew what I was talking about, and I am happy to say that that position did arise a few months ago when we were embarrassed with a surplus of milk. Mr. Tonkin stated—

I was amazed to read in a recent issue of "The West Australian" a statement made by the Minister for Agriculture, Hon. G. B. Wood. Mr. Wood was present at the opening of a new milk-treatment plant at Kielman's Pty. Ltd., Victoria Park, and made this profound statement—

Profound, if you please!

He believed that in a year or two the State would have more milk than it would know what to do with.

I say that is just plain nonsense. Where the Minister got his information is completely beyond me. Yet he stands up in existing circumstances and under conditions where it is impossible for us to implement the free milk scheme of the Commonwealth because of insufficient supplies of milk, when it is general knowledge that production is not keeping pace with consumption, and makes that ridiculous statement. I suggest that the Premier should tell the Minister for Agriculture to wake up.

The Minister for Lands: He might be telling you to wake up, for all you know.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If that is the attitude of the Minister, it is a poor lookout for us, because there has to be some drive behind the production of milk if we want to prevent the occurrence of a very dire shortage in the metropolitan area. If the Minister has the belief—based on entirely wrong premises, I submit—that within a year or two we shall have more milk than we shall know what to do with, it is a poor lookout for us.

The hon. member is the one who should wake up. I knew what I was talking about. I knew of the efforts of the Milk Board and of various people, including myself, to secure an increase in the production of wholemilk, and I say now that my statement was correct. It is not that we cannot deal with the milk by processing it. We could deal with ten times the quantity of milk for making butter and cheese, but as to wholemilk, I foresaw the time when we would be embarrassed to know what to do with it. Yet Mr. Tonkin had the audacity to get up in another place and make a statement like that. He was the one that did not know what he was talking about.

The previous Government introduced a wholemilk Bill which was a very fine measure indeed, and though it was amended in this House, it was placed on the statute book substantially as it was introduced in another place. I, unfortunately, have to administer that Act, and I believe I am within the mark in saying that in 1947 it took up at least one-third of my time. I consider that the Milk Board, with the encouragement given it by the Government through me, has done a very fine job indeed. Not only has it assisted the producers and encouraged them to produce the milk in the present quantity, but it has also made possible the inauguration of the free-milk scheme. I do not say that I was ever in favour of that scheme; nothing of the sort. Somebody has to pay for it, and its inauguration is causing considerable embarrassment in some parts of the Commonwealth.

But we are producing this milk, and I say it is on account of the efforts of the Milk Board. We are producing the milk in spite of killing cows that were T.B. reactors, for which action we were criticised. We were told that it did not matter if a cow were a T.B.-reactor. I say it does. It would not matter if we killed thousands of cows if by so doing we saved the lives of only a few children. I have something interesting to read to members. This has not been put up by the Department of Agriculture, but by the "Medical Journal" which refers to a test made in regard to the incidence of tuberculosis in children. I shall not go into all the technical details because I do not understand them myself, and I would not expect anyone here to understand them except Dr. Hislop.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Who is the article written by?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is an article dealing with the Mantoux and tuberculin jelly tests survey conducted by Dr. B. A. Fergusson Stewart at the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. A thousand children were picked out for the tests which were made in 1946 and in 1950. I have the figures for 1950 only. I asked the secretary of the hospital today

if he could give me the figures for 1951, but he said he could not do so for a week. The findings are as follows:—

The considerable decrease in the numbers of reactors since 1946 can be, at least in part, attributed to an intensified anti-tuberculosis campaign which has been conducted in this State during recent years. An important aspect of this control which particularly affects children in earlier age groups was tuberculin testing of dairy cattle and destruction of positive reactors. Thus, in 1947-48, 5,539 cattle were tested in the Perth metropolitan area, with 40.50 per cent. positive reactions. The corresponding figures in 1949-50 being 4,876 and 2.28 per cent. Similar results were recorded in other areas in Western Australia. At the same time there has been a great decrease in incidence of tuberculosis adenitis as evidenced by the number of admissions to this hospital which were as follows:—

Year ending June 30, 1946, 53 admissions.

Year ending June 30, 1947, 36 admissions.

Year ending June 30, 1948, 17 admissions.

Year ending June 30, 1949, 15 admissions.

Year ending June 30, 1950, 13 admissions.

These figures relate to only one hospital, and I daresay the incidence would have been decreased in other places—

In addition to the destruction of the animal source of infection, the increasing use of boiled and pasteurised milk, together with surgical extirpation of glands in chronic cases has resulted in this fall, and it can be confidently expected that bovine tuberculosis will soon become a thing of the past in this State.

That is something we can be very happy about, and I am glad that I have taken some part in what has been achieved, and that I, together with the Milk Board, stood up to the criticism that was levelled at the destruction of the cattle. The incidence of T.B. in cattle in the State today is nearly eliminated, but not altogether. But the fact that it is now only two per cent. shows how greatly it has decreased. Throughout the various districts, I would say that T.B. could be completely eliminated from the cattle; but what is more important is that the "Medical Journal" says that the incidence of bovine T.B. will be eliminated in this State. I understand, but I am not sure on this point, that it is almost eliminated in America. A lot has been said about the dairying industry. Mr. Murray told us the industry was dying on its feet.

Hon. J. Murray: The butterfat section.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I want to show that it is not dying on its feet. The industry is a good one; and with a little bit of help, such as the Government is giving, I believe it will thrive; and, as Mr. Craig said, its product is much needed and must be bought. In June, 1949, there were 458 milk licenses; in 1950, there were 463; and in 1951, there were 530, which shows an increase in milk licenses, or people producing milk, of 70 or 80. That does not look as though the whole milk industry is in a bad way. The gallonage consumption in the metropolitan area in 1948-49 was 7,721,000; in 1949-50, it was 8,149,000; and in 1950-51, it was 9,259,000, or an increase of something like 1,100,000 in round figures.

Milk from the South-West is being supplied to country towns such as Cunderdin, Northam and others, and the people in the towns to which I have referred have done away with their cows and gone in for sheep. The great South-West—I do not say that in a spirit of derision—is supplying these wheatbelt towns with milk. This shows how the industry has thrived under the sponsorship and shepherding of the Milk Board. I do not believe that we are paying too much for milk. I am a buyer of milk, and 7½d. is not too much to pay for a pint bottle of pasteurised milk.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What is the cost of beer by the pint?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be 1s. 4d. in Sydney. My son-in-law in Sydney was growling about what he had to pay for milk, and I said to him, "What are you paying for beer?"; and he said, "The same amount in a bottle would be 1s. 4d." I asked, "What are you growling about?"; and he said, "I have never thought of that before." He realised then that milk was not so dear. People are producing milk in ever-increasing quantities, and I do not think the consumer is having to pay too much for it.

In regard to other products of the dairy farm, while butter production has not reached the peak figure of 1947, that for 1949-50 is 15,010,843 lb. For 1950-51, the figure was 15,574,000 lb., or a rise of 564,000 lb., which shows that the industry is not declining, as some people would have us think. Cheese production rose from 1,574,000 lb. in 1949-50 to 1,725,000 lb. in 1950-51, an increase of about 125,000 lb. The output of sweetened condensed milk, rose from 9,700,000 lb. to 10,900,000 lb. in the same period, and concentrated milk from 972,000 lb. to 1,190,000 lb. That is the answer to those who say the industry is declining.

Hon. C. H. Henning: Are those increases in line with our increase in population?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think they are just about keeping pace, and that is a happy state of affairs when one thinks of the wonderful opportunities available to our primary producers in fattening up sheep and cattle for market, woolgrowing and so on. Mr. Murray said he doubted the sincerity of the Government towards the dairying industry but, had it not been for the Government of this State, it is doubtful whether anything would have been done recently in the matter of obtaining an increased price for butter.

A motion of censure is to be moved in another place because of the action it is said we did not take with regard to a subsidy; but I set the ball rolling by asking Mr. McEwen, at a meeting of the Agricultural Council, to bear some of the costs of the increase. I thought the Commonwealth could carry perhaps one-third or one-quarter of the cost and that the consuming public could carry the rest; but that was not the view of the Commonwealth Government, and now four States must pass on the burden of the extra 1½d. per lb. for butter.

Hon. G. Fraser: This State did not put up much of a fight with the Commonwealth Government over it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: So the hon. member says, but I made representations long before the Premier went over East. As is well known, we did not take the position lying down. When over here, Mr. McEwen said that the Commonwealth Government would on no account increase the subsidy on butter; and I do not wish to have criticism from Mr. Murray on behalf of the producers and from Mr. Fraser on behalf of the consumers at the same time. We took the view that the butterfat producers were not getting enough for their product. My own opinion is that perhaps the most efficient 25 per cent. of them, or those on the best properties, were getting enough out of it, but the others were not. Our stand was that there should be an increase, and it is owing to the efforts of this Government that the producers are to get an increase.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am not worrying about that. They are due for an increase.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member cannot have it both ways. Is he with the producers?

Hon. G. Fraser: I agree that they should get a fair return for their product.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member wants to pass the buck to the Commonwealth Government, and I am a bit in agreement with him or I would not have put the matter up to Mr. McEwen. I did not think it would be hard for the Commonwealth Government to divide up the increase, but no one

can tell me that we did not make every effort to ensure a better state of affairs. It is no use continuing to ask for something when one knows one will not get it.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You did a good job, at all events.

Hon. G. Fraser: You did not stick out with the other States for the extra subsidy from the Commonwealth.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Political capital will be made out of what we did not do, but I will have no one saying we did not try. All the States concerned tried, but Queensland and New South Wales stood out, and members must know what a chaotic state of affairs will exist in those States where the price of butter to the producers will be lower than it will be just over the border. They will have a terrific butter famine. Although I do not wish to pay 3s. 2d. a lb. for butter if I can get it cheaper than that, I do not think that price is extremely high. The basic wage will go up, due to that increase, and when an extra 2s. per week is received the workers will be happy. The difference with the subsidy is that those who use the butter have to pay for it. People do not seem to realise that nothing is free, and it is only logical that someone must pay for a subsidy.

Hon. G. Fraser: That line of argument would wipe out the Federal subsidy altogether.

Hon. A. L. Loton: And that might be the best thing to do.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Premier and I were informed that the Commonwealth Government would on no account increase the subsidy of £16,800,000.

Hon. G. Fraser: They say a lot of things until they are forced to take action.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: How could we have forced the hand of the Commonwealth Government? As it is, the man who cannot afford the extra cost of butter now will receive a basic wage rise which will enable him to meet the increase. It is interesting to note how the opponents of measures such as this are always on the side of the producer and how they say the matter should have been handled in some other way; but all such moves as this must be paid for by someone.

The sincerity of the Government in the matter of tractors was questioned by Mr. Murray, and I think Mr. Henning touched on that subject also. After a trip through the dairying districts, I told the Land Settlement Board that I wanted some of its tractors for the dairying industry. The board said it would not give me any out of the pool, but would try to find 10 new tractors for the dairying industry to clean up a lot of logs on the semi-cleared

country and to do some new clearing. Much to my amazement, the Government was criticised for that.

Hon. J. Murray: It was not enough.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, but it is not easy to get 10 new tractors. Mr. Henning suggested that we should spend £8,000,000, but it is not easy to get such sums. We have made a start, and are offering the industry about £300,000 as an incentive to get a move on and increase production; but we are criticised for it. I realise that these tractors may not be large enough, but to scrap the present scheme and look round for £10,000 tractors would be of no use. As Mr. Craig said this evening, in answer to my interjection, one cannot get such things. It was suggested to me that perhaps two heavy tractors could be used in conjunction with the Fiats, and there may be something in that. It might be possible to work two heavy £10,000 tractors, D7's or D8's in conjunction with the 10 Fiats. I saw a Fordson doing good work recently in the South-West.

Anybody who understands tractors knows that the Fordson tractor is not considered to be a heavy type. I have seen the Fordson tractor—which was a half track tractor—doing good work in timber country with which it could cope. I went to another place where a man had actually improved his property by laying down new pasture after clearing with his Fordson tractor. I am not going to condemn any type, because if one knows its limitations one can use it correctly. It is an absolute waste of money to use a D8 tractor to knock over trees in that class of country. The D8 would be most useful further down in the more heavily timbered areas.

I do not like the Government being criticised about being too late and doing too little. Mr. Murray used the words "too little and too late." I say it is not too late, and we will not do too little. The figures I just read to the House show that we are definitely not too late. In this matter, and on the question of butter prices, the Government has done a good job, and I believe the dairying industry is on the verge of a long period of prosperity. The people in the industry are not desperately hard up, although they are not making as much as they could. I have every sympathy with the dairyman when he sees the woolgrower making a fortune. It is hard for him, and I believe that a lot of this discontent is caused by the dairyman seeing what other people are making. Had the price of wool been at the same figure as it was in the depression, no doubt the dairyman would have been much happier than he was.

Hon. A. L. Loton: But the Treasurer was very thankful for the big lift in the price of wool.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, I suppose he was. I have proved to the House that the exodus from the dairying industry has not been as great as Mr. Murray would have us believe. Therefore I hope Mr. Murray will alter his views, because I believe the producers do not want their representatives to stand up in Parliament and talk about the poor industry. The efforts of members of Parliament can be better directed than that. Give the Government something constructive to work upon! A representative of the Farmers' Union in the dairying area said that people in the industry were pleased with what the Government has done. He added that the Government could give them two big tractors to work in conjunction with the others, and I believe there is something in his contention. Surely it is better to have criticism and advice such as that rather than have the people saying that the Government has done something which is "too little and too late."

Hon. G. Fraser: It is hard luck that you have to thrash one of your own supporters.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I now want to turn to the question of pyrites, sulphur and superphosphate, and I want to thank Mr. Cunningham for the valuable contribution he made to this debate. I also want to thank him for his remarks about what I have done to assist the Esperance plain. When I went to Esperance three or four years ago, I was amazed to see the possibilities that existed. I cannot understand why, over the years—not so much during the war years, but both before and since the war—a determined effort has not been made to bring some of that land into production. I do not want any kudos for what I did. All I said was that we must do something with that land and we have, as Mr. Cunningham said, encouraged people, up to a point, to take up that land.

We have also established a research station which is running in conjunction with the one already in existence at Salmon Gums. It was difficult to establish this other research station, even although it was only an offshoot of the one at Salmon Gums. We had no manpower troubles, because we used men from the Salmon Gums station. It was a job to get materials, and we had to build a house and shed, and provide fencing and other things. But I believe it has been worth while, as Mr. Cunningham pointed out. The clover, lupins, oats and everything else are an eye-opener. Mr. Cunningham said that the lack of superphosphate is a big blow to him and the people in that district, but I can assure the hon. member that it is not as big a blow to him as it is to me.

I had looked forward to a big development of that area such as we have had in other parts of the State. It was to be developed entirely by private enterprise, with practically no Government help, although it was offered later on through the

Bank. It is a big disappointment that that country has not been developed in the same way as other parts of the State; but unfortunately we are faced with a shortage of superphosphate as well as of fencing and other materials. The shortage of fencing is not such a problem to the people in that area, however, because many of the settlers were station-owners and farmers who pulled up the fences from their stations and took the material to that district. Nevertheless, these settlers still require a certain amount of wire.

I can assure Mr. Cunningham that experiments are being made, including the use of lime. They are being carried out at the research stations in the district, and the officers at those stations are also experimenting in the use of ground phosphatic rock. I understand that phosphatic rock is taken from Christmas Island, or Ocean Island, and shipped to Singapore. I have in mind the possibility of a shipload of phosphatic rock being brought to Esperance; I see no reason why it should not be done. The rock may have to be ground there, but the farmers could use the product in conjunction with a certain quantity of superphosphate. That would be better than shipping the phosphatic rock to Fremantle, taking it to Bassendean for breaking down, and then rail-lining the product to Esperance. If it were shipped direct to Esperance, all that would be required would be a certain amount of superphosphate to be carried by rail. Everything possible will be done to assist Mr. Cunningham's friends in the Esperance district.

Now I have something disappointing for Mr. Cunningham, and it is also disappointing to me. I refer to the shipping of superphosphate and various other commodities, as opposed to rail transport. I am sorry that Mr. Bennetts is not in the House, because he is also interested in this question. But no doubt he will read my remarks. I had the idea that many commodities, including pyrites, could be shipped to Albany from Esperance and thus save the long haul by rail. Moreover, if ships were used, they could back-load other goods. However, I received some figures which are really amazing and show how impossible it is to use ships for this purpose. I think Mr. Henning will also be interested in these figures. The rail charges from Norseman to Esperance would be 14s. per ton.

Esperance jetty charges are—

	per ton.
	s. d.
Wharfage	2 0
Haulage	1 3
Handling	3 9
Berthage	3
Harbour Improvements	6
20% war surtax on wharfage, berthage and storage dues	5 4
Total	8 2 4

Before pyrites, super or anything else leaves Esperance, a rail charge of 13s. 5d. per ton and jetty charges amounting to 8s. 2d. per ton have to be paid. The sea freight from Esperance to Fremantle is 37s. per ton.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What is that 13s. 5d. for?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I made a mistake as to that charge of 13s. 5d. My figures have been altered. The rail charge from Norseman to Esperance has been increased to 14s. To anybody who is interested in these matters, the figures I am quoting will prove rather revealing. I must admit that they caused me great disappointment when I received them. As I was saying, the Esperance jetty charges total 8s. 2d. per ton.

The sea freight from Esperance to Fremantle is 37s. per ton. We then have a wharfage rate at Fremantle of 1s. 8d. per ton, harbour improvements, 6d. per ton, plus 20 per cent. The total wharfage amounts to 2s. 7d. per ton. Handling by grab costs 1s. 1d. per ton and the haulage from Fremantle to Bassendean costs 11s. 1d. per ton, making a total of 73s. 5d. per ton. I hope members will not get mixed up regarding these figures.

The amount is a little more than that because I have not taken into account all the alterations which have been pencilled in. It is near enough to say that the freight on pyrites from Norseman to Bassendean by rail is 73s. per ton. That figure has been worked out by the manager of the State Shipping Service on a movement of 160,000 tons a year and with the use of the best boats available, but we have not got the best boats.

Hon. C. H. Henning: What increase in the price of super. will that cause?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We will not be using those figures in regard to super. so I do not think we need worry. But I am afraid that the general cartage on pyrites from Norseman will be considerable. I can visualise superphosphate rising in price to some degree. We are dealing with the transport of pyrites from Norseman to Bassendean. The rail freight from Norseman is 30s. per ton. Shunting charges at Bassendean are 3.30d. per ton, making the total cost by rail 30s. 3.30d. per ton.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is not the present rate.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. I believe the present rate would be slightly above that, but members must not forget that sea freights must also increase. These are comparative prices at a given date. Therefore, it is extremely alarming to realise that we cannot assist our railways by the use of some ships. I think it was Mr. Bennetts who made some mention of the "Kybra," because he is very keen to get that ship on the coastal run to Esperance. On making inquiries,

I was told that the "Kybra" would be quite unsuitable for the transport of pyrites, even to a limited extent.

I know Mr. Henning is particularly interested in the transport of coal, and I have some very illuminating figures on that subject. I will not read all the details to the House because Mr. Henning may peruse them when he so desires. However, there is considerable difference between the respective charges for rail, ship and road transport. The rail charge from Collie to Bunbury for the transport of coal is 9s. 9d. per ton, and the shunting charge at Collie, on an average of 10 tons per wagon, is 3.3d. per ton, making a total of 10s. 0.3d. per ton. By the time coal is transported from Collie to the East Perth loco. sheds the total of charges amounts to 50s. 10.05d. per ton. The figures that have been supplied to me are rather comprehensive, and if members would care to peruse them in detail they are at liberty to do so.

I would point out that pyrites and coal are put straight into a rail truck and transported direct to the place where they are used. Not only the transport costs have to be taken into consideration, but also the various handling and other charges that are incurred between the two points. It therefore seems to me that we must stick to the railways for the transport of these two items.

Mention has been made by Mr. Thomson of the investigation into a pyrites show at Ravensthorpe. Recently, the Government decided to spend £20,000 on boring plants for the purpose of investigating the various pyrites deposits in Western Australia. I agree whole-heartedly with Mr. Cunningham in saying that no matter what investigations are made—and we have made several—we will always come back to Norseman for our main supply of pyrites. I hope I am wrong in my conclusions, but I do not think we will obtain much pyrites from anywhere else in Western Australia. That is my own personal opinion, but if we can we will obtain as much as possible from Ravensthorpe for the Albany works. I can give that assurance to Mr. Thomson.

I would like to answer most of the questions which have been raised by members; but if I miss out on any, it will be merely through inadvertence on my part, and I will supply them with the answers to their queries privately if they so desire. Mr. Forrest asked what was being done in regard to a disease which was affecting horses in the north. We have discussed the matter at agricultural council meetings that I have attended, and some two or three years ago it was decided that a committee should be appointed to ascertain the cause of the disease.

Why it was not appointed years ago I do not know, because when I was in the North many years ago we frequently heard of the disease being prevalent

among horses in the Kimberleys. The personnel of that committee comprises; Mr. A. L. Rose, Chief Veterinary Officer, Northern Territory; Mr. W. Webster, Chief Veterinary Officer, Queensland; and two of our Western Australian officers, Mr. C. R. Toop, Chief Veterinary Officer and Dr. H. W. Bennetts, principal of the Animal Health and Nutrition Laboratory. The committee met in Alice Springs in May, 1950, and plans for the future were drawn up. Mr. McConnell, the veterinary surgeon for the Northern Territory and Mr. Gardiner, of South Australia, have conducted surveys and further investigations are being carried out.

I believe Mr. Gardiner has discovered a particular plant which may be the cause of this disease in horses. He has analysed every plant grown in the Kimberleys to ascertain if the disease emanates from plant growth. Two diseases have been classified, one known as Birdsville disease, because that is the centre where it was most prevalent, and the other is known as the Kimberley horse disease. Mr. Gardiner found that the plant causing the Birdsville disease was also growing in the Kimberleys and it was therefore concluded that both diseases existed in this State. I would not say that anything very definite has been found with regard to the cure, but investigations will be carried out. I want to refer now to the remarks by Mr. Forrest regarding freights on the North-West coast. Mr. Forrest said that it was the dearest coast in Australia. In fact, I think he implied that it was the dearest coast in the world. I believe I can convince the House that this is not so.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: I said I thought it was.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is near enough for me to think it worth while replying to the hon. member. It is a very serious charge, because as Minister for the North-West I do not want to run the dearest service in the world.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: It is pretty dear, all the same.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In what type of freights?

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Wool freights. All freights.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member only quotes one freight. I have to admit that we did place a heavy freight charge on the wool industry. Mr. Forrest quoted freights in 1938, but they were depression freights.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Take 1939.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member is getting away with it too cheaply up there. We charged what we thought was a fair thing for the wool industry to pay. I would like to point out that wool is only a fifth of the freight, and that does not include cattle either. I will quote some of the freights. Those on wool amounted to £55,000; and on general

cargo to £301,000. It will be seen, therefore, that it is just more than a fifth, or nearly a sixth of the freight. I want to point out to Mr. Forrest, and to the people of the North-West, the loss we are incurring on the general cargo rate. We could increase that rate and do better out of it, but we are holding it down. I admit that the wool freights were increased quite considerably but recently we have made a small reduction.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: I am talking about all freights.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I believe the hon. member is on very dangerous ground if he quibbles about the freights charged for the North-West; he is only stirring up a hornet's nest.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: With whom?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: With the general public and the people of other States who are paying for it through the Grants Commission. I do not know how long the people are going to stand the loss in spite of the increased freight on wool.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: There was a loss of £400,000 last year.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It has been going on for a good while, and it is causing the Grants Commission and other people here some considerable concern.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What have the railways lost?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not quibbling about the loss incurred by the State steamers; I am only saying that I wonder how long the people and the Grants Commission will stand for it. They would not stand for our loss on the railways. Why should they? I want to give some comparative figures, which are very illuminating, concerning these freights. In the general freights, it costs 11s. 4d. to take a drum of petrol from Fremantle to Wyndham. That is not very much money to take a drum of petrol all that way. To Kalgoorlie, which is a comparable distance with Carnarvon, it costs well over £1 to secure the same service. We find that a bag of flour goes to Carnarvon for 10d., and all the way to Wyndham for 2s.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Most of the North-West coast is served by oil depots.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am telling the hon. member exactly what it costs on the ships, and all we get out of it. That is all I can do to prove that the general freight rate is far below anything else. The rate starts at 39s. 6d., which is too silly for words—that is to Carnarvon. It has gone up since the depression rate to 60 per cent. further along the coast. On the other hand, inquiries I have made reveal that the freight from Fremantle

to the Eastern States has gone up 500 to 600 per cent. I admit we are taking it out of the people of Darwin because they are paying it the other way, but they do not complain.

The hon. member is on dangerous ground when he talks about freight on the North-West coast. If we raised the general freight by 500 per cent., as other places have done, the people in that part of the State would have something to complain about. If it can be avoided, however, we do not want to take any such action. This is not a promise, but I hope that the freight on wool will come down further as the price of wool decreases.

With regard to his comments on milk, Mr. Bennetts rather got out of his depth. He quoted a lot of anomalies which existed in South Australia and said something of the sort might happen here. I think I have convinced the House that these anomalies will not occur in Western Australia. We have the milk and we will make every effort to get it to the country; but it is a very difficult business. An attempt was made to provide milk for the children in Cunderdin and it was most successful. But unless our railways can put on a refrigerated van, I do not know how long the milk will last during the summer.

During his remarks, Mr. Baxter had something to say about the development of land near Perth. I think he should know that I will do all I possibly can to exploit the areas near Perth. Long ago, when I was a private member, I did not know the members of the Milk Board very well. In fact, I did not know them at all, but I suggested to them that a licence should be issued to people in the hills. The Mundaring Road Board and I were successful in obtaining a licence for people in Mundaring. Ever since I have been able to do so, I have tried to get milk from the areas near Perth, with the possible exception of Osborne Park, which I have endeavoured to have eliminated. I do not make any apologies for that because I do not think the dairies there are very desirable. Dr. Hislop showed me a dairy in which the backyard could hardly be seen for jam tins and rubbish. He would probably remember.

I have encouraged the Milk Board to eliminate the dairies from that district; but there are other places a little further out which, after experimentation, could be used for the production of wholemilk so that we shall not have to encroach on the butterfat areas further south. Some of the producers of butterfat would like to enter the wholemilk business but, generally speaking, they are too far away from Perth; and we have all this land which, in my opinion, can be and will be exploited before many years have passed. The departmental experts are learning that this land can be used.

I recall that 20 or 30 years ago, if a man had taken up land at a place like North Dandalup, he would have been told that he was mad. But look at North Dandalup today and look at the land out west from Coolup! Thousands of acres of land, except that carrying banksia, will be brought into use. I do not mind how hard the hon. member pushes me in that direction. He mentioned the Mundaring district. I believe there is plenty of land in the pockets of the hills that could be used for dairying.

The hon. member also made reference to the marginal areas and the stigma attached to them. The stigma is not of our making. When I entered Parliament about 1936, there was a stigma on the marginal areas, and no doubt it was deserved. The settlers there seemed to be up against everything imaginable—grasshoppers, lack of rain, low prices for their wheat and so forth.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Chiefly vermin and low prices.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Commonwealth Government came to the rescue and provided the money for the rehabilitation of those areas. That is how the name originated. I do not like it at all. The Commonwealth authorities struck a more or less straight line and there were properties inside the line far worse than those outside.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They did not strike a line.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, a definite line was struck.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: No.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We were dragged into an agreement in order that we might obtain money from the Commonwealth for the rehabilitation of those settlers, who were told that they could crop only a certain area of wheat; that they would have their debts written off and would be given a fair start. As a result, the industry in that territory has been revolutionised. Better seasons have been experienced. The Government set out to secure the destruction of emus and I give credit to the previous Government for its efforts to combat the grasshopper menace. These measures have enabled the settlers to get on their feet. Their trouble now is that they cannot grow enough wheat, but probably that difficulty will be overcome.

Mention was also made by Mr. Baxter of a suggestion to link up the rabbit-proof fences. That would be desirable but for the presence of many emus on this side of the proposed fence. Anyone travelling from Perth to Kalgoorlie by road will bear out my statement that the emus are breeding on this side of the proposed fence, but I think such a fence would stop a big rush of emus from the Mur-

chison and would provide a happy hunting-ground for people desirous of going out and destroying them.

Two or three years ago I was instrumental in getting the Government to provide an additional bonus of 2s., and this, together with what the road boards and Vermin Board are paying, making a total of 4s. per beak, has been of tremendous benefit. Professional shooting parties go out and get hundreds of emus because the money makes it worth while. I do not say that this provides a complete solution of the problem, but it has done much good.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Is it a fact that parts of the rabbit-proof fence have been pulled down and sold to farmers for their own fencing purposes?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, I think the squatters were given first preference over one fence further north, and I do not see why they should not have had it. The Vermin Board has kept a certain amount of fencing material for repair work. What was in the hon. member's mind? That it should be sold by auction?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: No, I spoke of linking up.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a difficult problem. Some settlers are keen on it and some are not. It was suggested that a couple of the fences at Northampton should be linked up, but one man said, "That is no good to me, because I am on the wrong side of the fence and will catch the lot." I do not know whether that will happen elsewhere.

Shipping on the North-West coast was discussed by Mr. Strickland, who stated that certain housing materials had been excluded as cargo for the State ships. I have a statement from the manager of the State Shipping Service to indicate how far the hon. member's complaint is justified. It says—

We are making satisfactory clearances of all housing materials, including shipments of timber for the Australian Blue Asbestos Co. Ltd., Point Samson. Although we are unable to accept all of the latter as it becomes available we are taking up enough timber on each sailing to keep the available men employed.

The only known shipment of timber for Point Samson for which space has been applied for is seven tons, which is going forward per m.v. "Koolinda," 3rd September.

Reference is made by Mr. Strickland to a similar hold-up with materials for houses at Onslow, but we have no applications on hand for space for timber to Onslow. This also includes asbestos etc., and cement, which are being accepted as soon as quantities become available from the manufacturers.

Attached is a table showing that this has been followed out by the various boats—"Dulverton," "Dorrigo" and "Koolinda." I do not know where Mr. Strickland obtained his information, but it was not altogether correct. The hon. member also stated that land settlement was being prevented in the Kimberleys. I knew there would be an answer to that. I asked him by way of interjection why the land had not been taken up many years ago. Settlement in the Kimberleys was an open go in the days when the pioneers took up all the land they considered was good enough. The hon. member complained that people could not take up land in the Kimberleys now because it was withheld by the Lands Department from settlement. That is quite true. For the present, the department has put a blanket over the land which, I repeat, has been lying idle all these years.

The Kimberleys were pioneered about 80 or 90 years ago and since then nobody has seen fit to take up land in the area mentioned. The department has put a blanket on with a view to cutting up areas into smaller blocks in order that some use may be made of the land. That is the answer to Mr. Strickland's complaint, and it should be satisfactory to him because he is an advocate of the cutting up of the holdings into smaller blocks.

Hon. G. Fraser: What is the size of the smaller holdings?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not an advocate of making the holdings in the North too small, especially as that part is subject to drought at times and a lot of the country is very hilly. I spoke to a policeman who had done patrol duty in that part of the State—I suppose he was out after natives—and asked him why the land was still unused and he gave a very mournful report on it, saying it was very rough country indeed. He probably knows more about it than anyone else. I understand that the Surveyor General wants to take an expedition through that country to find what it is like. I have not flown over it, but I have been told by people who have that it is a mass of rugged hills.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You are talking of North Kimberley.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of North-West Kimberley, below the Drysdale Mission. Mr. Strickland said that no one was allowed to settle that country.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: It has never been explored.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. In 12 or six months' time, or less, I believe that Mr. Strickland and his friends will be able to take up as much land there as they like. The hon. member spoke of agriculture. Well, there is nothing to prevent a man taking up c.p. land for agricultural purposes provided he gives

notice to the squatter. There was a time when it was possible to sneak in on the pastoralist and take up c.p. land without giving him notice. That happened near the Stirling Ranges when Mr. Meehan took up land leased to certain people and they were going to shoot him. Now, however, notice has to be given.

I believe too much is said about agriculture in the North-West. I do not say that nothing can be done, but it is dangerous to talk too much because people in other countries might ask why the land has not been utilised for agricultural purposes. I know from the experiments at the Ord River how difficult it is to make use of the land in this way. I believe that the work at the Ord River will succeed, as will that at the Fitzroy and the other places mentioned by Mr. Forrest; but I do not think one can grow cotton and peanuts in a wholesale way at the moment.

Anyone who thinks that he can will be in for a big disappointment. I saw how much superphosphate was required at the Ord River, where there was beautiful looking land. Someone even suggested to me that a superphosphate works should be erected at Wyndham. The results at the Ord River show that it is worth carrying on with the experiments to see what can be done later with irrigation. Mr. Gray brought up his old friend, the quality of wheat. I am glad that on this occasion he did give us some praise for what we were trying to do. It is difficult to get the farmers to see eye to eye with the millers and grow good wheat from the bakers' point of view; but we have made a start. He complimented the department in regard to some of its efforts, but not in connection with its fruit-fly activities.

The department has advanced a long way towards the eradication of fruit-fly. We have a group fruit-fly baiting scheme in different districts, and good work has been done. The Government has granted quite a lot of money for the purpose. Instead of men walking around orchards with knapsack sprays, we now have mechanical sprayers. There are three groups in this scheme. Only one district has not come into it, and when it does, it will pretty well complete the whole show with regard to stone fruit near the metropolitan area. I assure Mr. Gray that the department is making these efforts in spite of the fact that it is not sending an officer into his backyard to catch him! I did intend to see that an inspector called on him, but have not had time to do so yet. A terrific effort is being made in those parts of the State where there are commercial orchards.

Hon. G. Fraser: Have you any actual supervision in the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, an inspector calls on most people. Not only does he inspect the trees, but he also looks for the people who have not paid

their registration fee of 1s. The department is keen on stamping out fruit-fly. Mr. Hall talked of restocking holdings in the Goldfields district that had been subject to drought. I do not think it is the Government's job to go to the pastoralist and advise him that money is available so that he can restock his holding. That is generally done by financial institutions such as Dalgetys and Elders. I will not advocate to the Government that assistance be given to pastoralists for this purpose. Possibly no pastoralist has lost all his sheep, and, as one member pointed out, from where are we to get the animals? It is in the hands of the pastoralists to find their own methods of finance.

I much appreciate the remarks of some members in connection with the efforts of the Agricultural Department. I am not against constructive criticism, or criticism of any sort for that matter, but I am glad that Mr. Logan, Mr. Thomson and Mr. Jones did express appreciation of what our officers are doing. I have had every opportunity to watch the officers of the department and see the work they do, and I can say without any fear of contradiction that I would not wish to have a better lot of men under my control. They have a tremendous job to do, and I have given them extra work to do such as the development of Esperance and at other places, which they carried out very well. I am glad to know that the farmers appreciate the efforts of these men.

One can judge that this is so from the numerous requests that come from all over the State for research stations. If research stations cannot be established, we are asked to make an officer available. These requests, and also the attendance at the field days, show that the farmers recognise the work that is being done. I mentioned the other day that over 1,200 people attended a record field day at Geraldton. At the field days at Merredin, Wongan Hills and so forth, it is impossible to drive near to the scene of operations because of the number of farmers' cars. I do not care how often I am urged to appoint more officers because the more pressure there is in that regard, the happier I shall be, realising that we have not nearly enough good men to further the development of agriculture from which our State derives perhaps 75 per cent. of its income.

Hon. G. Fraser: You may be accused of having too many Civil Servants!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no need to worry about the Department of Agriculture in that respect. The pastoralists of the North-West have requested that a man be sent up there solely to go into the question of eradication of kangaroos, but we have not a suitable man for the job. There are only two men in the department who know much about the subject. One of them is the Chief Vermin Officer and chairman

of the Agriculture Protection Board; and I forget who the other is. I have made a strong request to the Premier for more men in the vermin branch so that at least one competent officer might be spared for the North-West.

I went from Ord River station to Wyndham, doing part of the trip in the evening, and saw kangaroos like a flock of rabbits, almost under the wheels of the car. I was informed that they are sometimes even thicker than that. Perhaps they could be commercialised by being made into meatmeal or something of that sort, but at all events I assure members representing the North-West and any others who are interested, that efforts will be made to do something about the matter and to consult with the C.S.I.R.O. to see if that department can be of any help. It is not a question only of money as the vice president of the Pastoralists' Association told the Premier his organisation would find the necessary money and equipment if we could supply a suitable officer.

The light land along the Geraldton line was mentioned by Mr. Logan, who said it should be worked in with existing holdings. There is a line of demarcation, taking the light land to the west of the railway and the heavy land to the east, and I think something could be done on the lines suggested. That is a matter for the Lands Department, but I trust that the suggestion will be followed up. Mr. Logan also mentioned the tomato industry and said he did not think the establishment of a research station was possible at present though an officer should be appointed to the Geraldton area. We have a University graduate at present learning that business from our plant pathologist, and he will be able to spend most of his time at Geraldton next year, working in with the tomato-growers. I know we should do something to solve the problems of this valuable industry, though they are world-wide and apply as much in the metropolitan area as at Geraldton.

I assure the House that specialists at the University and officers of my department are working on those problems. We will do everything we can to assist in solving them. Mr. Logan also said he did not know where the fruit and tomato industries would be if it were not for Wundowie producing cases. If we were dependent on private industry for fruit and tomato cases, the position would be infinitely worse. I appreciate what Wundowie and the State Saw Mills have done in this regard and realise that had it not been for their efforts the industry would now have been in a bad way. I know it is not profitable for private enterprise to make these cases at present.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Is Wundowie making a profit out of them?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Companies say they lose on case making, but I believe the problem will be solved by the opening of the new mill at Kent River. It is to be handed over to private enterprise on the condition that those concerned must make a certain number of cases if they are to receive permits. I compliment Mr. Tom Cullity on the great job he is doing with regard to butter cases. Members should see him peeling karri logs at Carlisle; because until a few years ago, it was thought that only softwood logs could be peeled. He is doing a wonderful job in manufacturing plywood for the construction of butter cases.

Then again, Mr. Jones mentioned Agricultural Department expenditure, which has risen from something like £225,000 in the past to an estimate of over £500,000 for the coming year. If we have failed in what we have attempted, it has not been through lack of money, but lack of personnel. Mr. Jones criticised the fact that a University graduate gets £830 per annum on leaving the University and joining the department and only a further £220 odd after 11 years' service. I think £800 odd is a good wage for a University student on entering the department.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Many a practical man would be glad to get as much.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. Mr. Jones said we were losing officers and not replacing them. We have lost our chief tobacco expert but have got another. Mr. Jones said also that he had heard that the next regional hospital was to be at Bunbury, but I think it will be at Geraldton. Mr. Craig mentioned expenditure—about which the Government is very concerned. It is all very well to speak of millions for this or that, but it is not so easy to get them. Our Loan Estimates have been cut down by 25 per cent. and we must examine the position closely.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about £20,000,000 for the Fremantle Harbour Trust?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know much about the finance of that undertaking and will not be dragged into a discussion on it. I appreciate the lack of criticism of the Department of Agriculture, though there has been some criticism of the portfolio of the North-West. The Minister for the North-West is in a very peculiar position. There is no actual department of the North-West and people think that because I am the Minister, I should be like the Minister for Works, the Minister for Health or someone like that. They think that I can get all sorts of things, when actually the only departments over which I have any control, other than agriculture, are State Shipping and Harbour and Light.

There is a linking up with the Department of Agriculture; but if the people in the North-West want a new hospital, a new jetty or something else, I have to go to the Minister concerned. In the circumstances, I do not think that the Ministry for the North-West is a successful one. If I were given £500,000 or £250,000 to play with, it might be a different matter.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: There should be a department of the North-West.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There may be something in that; but on the other hand, if a department were created, there would be a lot of overlapping with other departments. However, there may be something in what Mr. Forrest says and at the moment I am not very happy about being Minister for the North-West because I cannot do the things I would like to do.

When I was in the North, a little over a year ago, I saw things that needed doing and I had to go to the various Ministers concerned to see whether something could not be done. It was the same old story. I could not control the Minister for Works or the Minister for Health. So I point out to representatives of the North-West the difficulties that face a Minister in charge of that part of the State. I could, of course, ask the Government to lower or raise freights, or something like that, but actually I have very little control over North-West matters.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Give us some doctors.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 4th September, 1951.

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

QUESTIONS.

RICE.

(a) As to Shortage of Local Supply.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Why is the supply of rice so short in Western Australia compared with the amount available elsewhere in Australia?

(2) If it is possible to improve the supply here, will she take immediate steps to bring this about?