

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 11th July, 1957.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Minister for Housing and "The West Australian."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I wish to make a statement which arises from certain things that have appeared in "The West Australian" newspaper. I think I should preface my remarks by saying that there surely comes a time

when the integrity of members of Parliament and, indeed, Parliament itself should be predominant above party political considerations.

Members are probably aware that on the 6th December of last year unanimously the Legislative Council agreed to a resolution condemning "The West Australian" newspaper because of what members of that House called a perverted account of proceedings in that Chamber, and the definition of "perverted" was made clear by one of the members who said, amongst other things, that it meant "to turn from truth, propriety or its proper purpose." I, therefore, desire to make a statement in connection with this matter because, no doubt, all members will be somewhat perturbed by the turn of events and, perchance, some of them will be of the opinion, based on newspaper accounts, that I have been giving false information in this Chamber; something which certainly no Minister should do on any occasion.

I want to say that it is not my intention to engage in argument with a newspaper, because that is futile. In this Chamber I can speak to 49 members, whereas the Press can put its viewpoint in the way it wishes to many thousands of people and, indeed, it can put my point of view in its own language to those same people. Therefore, the whole matter is very lopsided.

In this morning's issue of "The West Australian," apart from a rehash of an article which appeared earlier, there is a leading article entitled "Silly News Monopoly." It would appear to me that "The West Australian" has a monopoly of silly news. The article states this—

Yesterday, it emerged that "The West Australian" story had been right and Graham wrong, for the State Housing Commission had, in fact, been working on a plan for flat development at Mt. Pleasant of which the Minister was apparently unaware.

I can add no more in respect of that than to repeat that the State Housing Commission has not, at any time, been working on a plan for the erection of flats at Mt. Pleasant or within a radius of one mile of Mt. Pleasant, and has given no consideration to the question whatsoever. It has never contemplated the erection of flats in that area and, as I indicated to the member for Canning, the opinion held throughout and now is, that that area is unsuitable for that purpose, even if there were some thought being given to it.

In a footnote to an alleged news item this morning this was said—

The Melville Road Board engineer has had discussions with commission officials on such details as dispersal of water from the paved areas around the proposed flats.

I ask members to mark the words "the proposed flats." Again I repeat there is no proposal for the erection of the flats in Mt. Pleasant. The item goes on to say—

The commission, as we stated on Tuesday, is not undertaking construction of the flats at this stage.

In other words, it is something which is apparently to take place later on. On the 12th April, 1956, the State Housing Commission had before it a plan of subdivision submitted by a town planning consultant. The subdivision was approved, and nothing else. In due course that was referred to the town planning office which subsequently submitted the matter to the Melville Road Board, which local authority, I understand, is most perturbed at the trend of events emanating from these distorted reports by "The West Australian" newspaper.

The position is, and it is certainly a truism, that a little learning is a dangerous thing. "The West Australian" newspaper has made the mistake of jumping to conclusions. The area in mind at Mt. Pleasant embraces a subdivision of approximately 200 house sites. The town planner who submitted the design of the subdivision suggested that on the crest of the hill was a suitable place for the erection of flats. That is all there is to it. She showed on the plan this site which she suggested as being suitable for flats. But the Housing Commission has had nothing whatever to do about it, and the fact of the matter is that during this financial year, 105 homes will be built in that area—separate, individual houses—and in the course of the next 12 months, the entire area will be built out by houses, and on this special parcel of land something between 30 and 40 individual homes will be constructed.

I might say that apart from the Minister and the Melville Road Board, senior officers of the State Housing Commission are most perturbed, and without any instigation on my part, the Under Secretary for Housing is raising the matter at a meeting of the board of the State Housing Commission this afternoon—that this is an entirely false impression, stated and repeated, notwithstanding the assertions of the responsible Minister to the contrary, that there is some project to proceed with the construction of flats, if not at this stage then at some subsequent stage.

Therefore I do not know what I or any other Minister can do in these circumstances. My only concern is that there may be members of this House disinclined to believe me. I would suggest, as I stated earlier, that any Minister who wilfully gives false information is not worthy of the high position he holds. Therefore, whilst not suggesting any course of action that might be taken—and I thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, on this

matter—I view with the gravest concern the fact that an organ of public expression that should surely have some sense of responsibility and proportion, is able to do this thing because, I can only assume, of a vendetta that this paper has had in respect of myself for several years.

If it cares to throw its columns open for criticism of me and cares to criticise me, and cares to suppress and distort, that might be all right, however unpleasant it might be to be on the receiving end, but wilfully and deliberately to keep on perpetuating an untruth for, I suggest, only one reason—to discredit me in the eyes of the public—is not, I think, a fair and reasonable proposition; and perhaps it goes beyond being a concern of mine, as a Minister, but rather is this a most improper course being taken by a newspaper and it would appear that there is no escape or worth-while action that a Minister can take other than to make his statements, and perhaps Parliament at some time, having regard not only for this instance but for others, will give consideration to some action being taken.

I conclude by saying that if a mistake has been made on the part of the Press it is understandable because in the taking of notes and all the rest of it, perhaps errors do creep in. But surely in the name of all that is reasonable, they can be corrected later. To persist in this sort of thing in which even perhaps my own colleagues have suspicions regarding me and the veracity of my statements, is a very poor state of affairs indeed and ultimately can have only one effect, namely, the bringing of the institution of Parliament into disrepute.

QUESTIONS.

TRAFFIC COSTS.

Circumstances for Recovery from Crown.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Justice:

In what circumstances are costs recoverable against the Crown when a defendant is successful in a prosecution under the traffic laws in this State?

The MINISTER replied:

Under the Justices Act, Section 152, costs may be awarded against an unsuccessful complainant personally, whether a Crown officer or not. The practice is for costs not to be granted against a complainant who is a police officer, unless he has acted improperly and without reasonable ground.

(See *Kavanagh v. Herbig and ors.*, 9 W.A.L.R. 121 and *In re Bastian*, 24 W.A.L.R. 119.)

As to costs on appeal by a police officer, see Justices Act, Section 219 as amended by Act No. 29 of 1948.

FREMANTLE SLIPWAY.

Restriction of Use by Private Firms.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Are there any restrictions on the use of the Fremantle slipway by private firms?

(2) If so, to what extent?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The owner of the ship or vessel shall arrange with the manager of the State Engineering Works for the carrying out of all work of whatever nature is required to be done while the vessel is on the slipway, with the exception of work to be done by the crew employed on the vessel.

FISHING INDUSTRY.

(a) Commonwealth Investigation, Great Australian Bight.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) Has he details of the Commonwealth Government's fishing investigation venture in the Great Australian Bight?

(2) On which port will the venture be based?

(3) Is it likely to be of interest and benefit to Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. (1).

(b) Official Inquiries Made.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Fisheries:

The Minister has answered "No" in reply to the question on fisheries, but would he tell me whether he has made official inquiries with the Commonwealth Government about this scheme, namely, the fishing investigation to be undertaken in the Great Australian Bight?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, and if the hon. member cares to see me later, I can perhaps give him some information that I am not allowed to make public at present.

STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

Conversion and Repairs, s.s. "Delamere."

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Who is undertaking the conversion and repair work on the State ship "Delamere"?

(2) Were tenders called?

(3) Who were the tenderers, and what were their tender prices?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The major portion of this work is being done by the State Engineering Works.

(2) No. Calling of tenders is not a common practice in shipping repair work.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

SOLIATUM.

Legislative Provision for Payment.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) What provision is there under the laws of this State for solatium to be paid?

(2) Is any amendment proposed?

(3) If there is no provision for solatium for young children who are deprived of their parents when the latter are killed owing to somebody's negligence or other wrong doing, would he support such a provision?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) None.

(2) No. By letter dated the 9th August, 1956, the Law Society of Western Australia advised against the granting of a solatium in addition to other damages "since the general policy of the law is against a solatium being granted".

(3) Not in addition to damages recoverable under Lord Campbell's Act.

CHARCOAL IRON INDUSTRY.

Significance of Heavy Capital Expenditure at Wundowie.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

What is the significance of the current heavy capital expenditure at Wundowie, if the Government plans to have its main charcoal-iron industry in the South-West?

The MINISTER replied:

The Wundowie plant is being expanded to the limit of the wood reserves in the area to meet the heavy demand for charcoal iron from overseas.

The increase in output from 14,000 tons to 36,000 tons will convert an industry established as an experimental pilot plant to a sound commercial proposition.

The South-West industry will further utilise the vast waste wood reserves and will be complementary to Wundowie in meeting the demand for high-grade pig iron.

TRANSPORT BOARD.

(a) Temporary Inspectors, Number and Cost.

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many temporary or part-time inspectors, other than those already mentioned in Question No. 2 of the notice paper of the 9th July, are employed in policing the Transport Co-ordination Act?

(2) To what amount is the Government committed in meeting the wages and expenses of these inspectors?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The services of three temporary inspectors have been available to the Transport Board since the 8th April, 1957. There are four part-time inspectors.

(2) The salaries of the three temporary inspectors to the 30th June, 1957, amounted to £710 and expenses £415. The total cost for part-time inspectors is £15 per month.

(b) Refusal to Grant Permits.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Transport:

Why is it that when private road transport operators tender below Government road transport for the transportation of school children to and from school, sporting and social functions, the Transport Board refuses to grant the private road transport operators the necessary permit for the journey?

The MINISTER replied:

The State Transport Co-ordination Act requires that before granting licences, consideration must be given to existing services. Such consideration is extended to existing services irrespective of whether they are Government or privately operated.

RAILWAYS.

(a) Numerical Strength of Staff.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Premier:

(1) What was the numerical strength of—

- (a) Salaried officers;
- (b) wages staff;

of the W.A.G.R., as at—

- (1) the 30th June, 1955;
- (2) the 31st December, 1955;
- (3) the 30th June, 1956;
- (4) the 31st December, 1956;
- (5) the 30th June, 1957?

(2) What is estimated to be the numerical strength of the above at—

- (a) the 31st December, 1957;
- (b) the 30th June, 1958?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The number of staff employed by the Railways Commission was—

	Salaried Employees.	Wages Employees.	Total Employees.
30th June, 1955	2,098	11,569	13,667
31st Dec., 1955	2,093	11,766	13,859
30th June, 1956	2,119	11,855	13,974
31st Dec., 1956	2,118	12,066	14,184
30th June, 1957	2,113	11,599	13,712

(2) Estimates of employment at the 31st December, 1957, and the 30th June, 1958, are not available. As far as possible, the policy is being followed of not making new appointments to replace staff on retirement.

(b) Advertising on Railway Wagons.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the policy of the Railways Commission regarding business firms displaying advertisements painted on the sides of railway wagons?

(2) Has any consideration been given by the commission to boosting the sale of Western Australian produced goods by means of this advertising medium?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

This advertising medium is encouraged by the Railways Commission. A concentrated drive was made recently and the major business firms were interviewed.

(c) Leasing of Bullfinch-Southern Cross Line.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Transport:

Have the negotiations between the mining company and the Government regarding the leasing by the former of the Bullfinch-Southern Cross railway, been concluded, and, if so, with what results?

The MINISTER replied:

Negotiations are not yet complete. The matter is still under consideration by the company.

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION.

Assistance to Local Authorities for Drainage.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Housing:

Will he inform the House as to the nature of the arrangements covering assistance granted to local authorities by the State Housing Commission where drainage problems are encountered in the development of housing areas such as at the Lockyer Estate, Albany, where drainage facilities are deplorable?

The MINISTER replied:

The State Housing Commission accepts the same responsibility as a private subdivider of land in relation to drainage problems, and carries out the conditions required by the Town Planning Board in its approval to subdivisions.

In some localities the commission has carried out minor drainage work on its own land in order to reclaim additional land for housing.

As any costs incurred in drainage must be recovered from the commission's clients, it cannot undertake major drainage works which are not its responsibility.

However, in the case of the Lockyer area at Albany, the State Housing Commission did make an ex gratia payment in an endeavour to encourage the local authority whose responsibility it is to drain the area and which can finance the scheme under its normal rating provisions.

SEWERAGE.*Bunbury Scheme.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

As on the 14th December, 1956, he intimated to me that prior to the 30th June, 1957, consideration would be given to including in the estimates for the year ending the 30th June, 1958, certain moneys for the Bunbury sewerage scheme, has consideration been given to this matter, and if so, what amount has been set aside for such works in this financial year?

The MINISTER replied:

The details of the 1957-58 loan programme are still under review. Consideration will be given to this matter before a final decision is made.

CRANBROOK-RD.*Position of Local Authority.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is the important secondary road in the Upper Blackwood Road Board area, known as the Cranbrook-rd. built wholly or in part on a railway reserve.

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," what is the legal position of the local authority so far as the expenditure of ratepayers' money on this road is concerned?

(3) What amounts of money are made available to the Upper Blackwood Road Board for the maintenance of this road annually?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) £1,000.

MILK BOARD.*Tests and Prosecutions.*

Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What number of tests were taken by the Milk Board from whole milk supplied in each month commencing from the 1st January, 1957, to the 30th June, 1957?

(2) In each month what number of tests showed a deficiency of solids-not-fat?

(3) What number of suppliers have been prosecuted since the 1st January, 1957, for selling under-standard milk when there was no question of adulteration?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) (a) The following number of samples were submitted for examination at the laboratory in the Department of Agriculture:—

January	....	208
February	....	293
March	....	373
April	....	349
May	....	251
June	....	347

(b) The following number of samples were submitted for analysis by the Government Chemical Laboratory:—

January	....	26
February	....	16
March	....	23
April	....	15
May	....	43
June	....	13

(2) Of (a) January	....	55
February	....	42
March	....	67
April	....	61
May	....	22
June	....	16

Of (b) January	....	24
February	....	8
March	....	23
April	....	15
May	....	31
June	....	9

(3) A summons has been issued against one supplier, a partnership.

EDUCATION.*Applecross High School.*

Mr. GAFFY asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has work commenced upon the Applecross high school?

(2) If not, when will the work be commenced?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, the earthworks required for the Applecross high school are nearing completion.

CANNING RIVER.*Bailey Bridge Construction.*

Mr. GAFFY asked the Minister for Works:

In erecting the Bailey bridge across the Canning River—

(1) Has provision been made for the passage of river craft under the bridge?

(2) If not, will provision be made for the passage of such craft?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.*Extension of Aridity.*

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he read the report in "The West Australian" of the 20th June, 1957, headed "'State Grows More Arid,' Expert Says"?

(2) If so, does he agree with the opinion of Dr. A. R. Main?

(3) What action, if any, is the Government taking in this matter?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Dr. Main was evidently speaking in terms of geological ages. There is no climatological evidence to base any conclusion of any increasing aridity within the present records.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

HEALTH.*Asian Influenza.*

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

In view of the statement by the Director-General of Health (Dr. A. J. Metcalfe) regarding Asian influenza, and in view of the report that a West Perth footballer, who was returning to Western Australia with his team, has been admitted to an Adelaide hospital as a possible case of Asian influenza, does he consider it necessary to make influenza a notifiable disease in this State?

The MINISTER replied:

A modified system of notification was introduced three weeks ago whereby general practitioners notify the Commissioner of Public Health the number of cases of influenza seen by them each week. These notifications have not disclosed any undue increase in the prevalence of the disease in Western Australia.

QUEENSLAND ELECTIONS.*Visit of Western Australian Premier.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the report in this morning's paper of the large exodus of New South Wales politicians to Queensland, is it his intention to accept the invitation that appeared in the Press some two months ago for him to go to Queensland to help fight the election? If so, when does he expect to go and how long will he be away?

The PREMIER replied:

I have not yet received any invitation to go to Queensland. If I were to receive one, I would have to refuse it because I think it is necessary for me to stop in Western Australia at this time to watch the Liberal Party section of the Opposition.

MEDICAL SCHOOL.*Admission of Second-year Students.*

Mr. HEAL (without notice) asked the Minister for Health:

During the year 1956 there were approximately 40 first-year medical students who passed examinations in Western Australia. Of this number 10 could not gain admittance for their second-year studies at either the Adelaide or Melbourne Universities.

(1) Can the Minister indicate whether second-year medical students will be admitted to the Western Australian Medical School in the year 1958?

(2) If so, how many?

The MINISTER replied:

It is anticipated that approximately 60 students will qualify for admission to the second year of the medical course at the University of Western Australia in 1958. There would be accommodation for this number.

I would like to thank the hon. member for having given me prior notice of this question.

NEW OIL REFINERY.*Establishment in Western Australia.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

Did he read in this morning's Press that the Premier of South Australia is hoping to have another large refinery established in South Australia? In view of that report, has he had inquiries made as to the company involved and does he intend to take some action to try to have the refinery established in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

I did see the report in this morning's Press but I have no other information. I will make further inquiries.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.*(a) Retirement of Manager.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Labour:

Yesterday I submitted a question regarding the State Government Insurance Office management and asked whether the method of selection proposed was from within the State Government Insurance Office staff, the State Public Service, or outside those two bodies. The Minister said that the matter was receiving consideration and I can appreciate that the actual selection is still receiving consideration. But obviously a decision on the calling of applications will have been made before this. Are applications, as distinct from the selection, being called from within the State Government Insurance Office and the State Public Service, or from there and outside as well.

The MINISTER replied:

Applications have been invited from permanent officers under the Public Service Act and yesterday's answer still stands.

(b) Calling of Applications.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Labour:

Am I entitled to take it from the reply that applications are not being called from without the Government service?

The MINISTER replied:

I have just announced that applications were being invited from permanent officers under the Public Service Act.

Mr. Court: Only?

The MINISTER: I am answering the question and yesterday's reply still stands.

Mr. Court: I did not say that it should not, but one is in regard to an application and the other to selections.

The MINISTER: Work it out for yourself!

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The PREMIER: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to allow the Local Government Bill to be read a third time before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

HON. D. BRAND: The Minister for Health who represents the Minister for Local Government in this Chamber approached me last night regarding this matter. As the Address-in-reply has been completed in the Upper House, I think this is an opportunity to have such a contentious Bill forwarded there in the hope that deliberations and amendments might be completed by the end of the session.

Mr. May: Did you say "amendments"?

HON. D. BRAND: There may be.

Mr. BOVELL: During the Committee stages of the Bill I advocated the inclusion of a clause to provide for ward balances, if thought desirable by the local authority concerned.

The SPEAKER: This is only a motion to suspend Standing Orders.

Mr. BOVELL: I thought I was speaking to the third reading.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: I have counted the House and have assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present and voting and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried in the affirmative.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre) [2.47]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [2.48]: I have been able to read only the debates which took place in the latter part of last session, but we on this side of the House clearly indicated that unless the amendments put forward in respect of adult franchise, certain systems of valuations, and the election of chairmen of country road boards, were made, we would vote against the third reading; and it is the intention of our party to do so. We still adhere to our original statement that while we support the urgent need for a consolidated Local Government Act for this State, in order to establish some uniformity in local government laws, we are strenuously opposed to the idea of introducing adult franchise into local government elections. There has been no demand whatsoever from the public for it, because the present system has worked remarkably well.

The only reason that I can advance for the Government's having delayed the introduction of this measure is that it desires to ensure that adult franchise would be imposed upon local government electors purely because that is part of the Government's policy. Enough has been said concerning the reasons. One that comes to mind is that relating to the full-scale elections in the Eastern States where they are developing the system of party politics in local government elections, and, as far as country road boards are concerned, I could not think of anything more disastrous. It would have the effect of taking away the neutrality of the elected representative; it would also have the effect, of course, of creating a starting point for would-be politicians through the medium of the local government system.

I cannot see any reason whatsoever for local government elections to be based on full-scale adult franchise. Local authorities right throughout the State are opposed to this principle and when this feature was being debated last year in this House, the Leader of the Country Party pointed out that when the Premier, who was then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, debated the original Bill, he emphasised that the protests of local government bodies should have been heeded; that he had received volumes of protests and he urged the then Government to review the legislation. It was following upon these demands that we appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into local government, the findings of which are available to this House. Among its recommendations was one that adult franchise should not be included in any legislation brought forward.

The Minister representing in this House the Minister for Local Government knows quite well that many local government bodies are not in favour of adult franchise being introduced into local government elections. He is a man who has some standing in the community and, further, he has had experience in local government. I could not think of imposing anything worse on the local government system than to introduce party politics into those elections as a result of adult franchise being agreed upon. If this principle is introduced, I can see people in the country and in the metropolitan area electing, as their local government representatives, a person who has little or no stake in the country and depriving the real taxpayers of the right to say how the money shall be spent. I think that is the principle involved and, therefore, on behalf of the members of my party, I oppose the third reading of the Bill and trust that when the measure reaches another place, amendments will be moved in this regard and that in the desire for uniformity in legislation dealing with local government, the principle of adult franchise will not be adopted.

Mr. Andrew: The remedy is in the hands of your party.

Hon. D. BRAND: It has been in the hands of the hon. member's party for years.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [2.54]: In rising to my feet on the previous motion I was somewhat premature, but I would like to point out that during the second reading and Committee stages of the Bill last year, I advocated that the system of ward balances be carried out at the option of the local authority concerned. Some local authorities contend that ward balances are superfluous and therefore do not desire to have them. Other road boards, including some road board members in the district I represent, have advocated that ward balances be permitted at the discretion of each local authority.

Public accounts are becoming increasingly difficult to follow and only recently the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made a public statement to that effect that Government departmental accounts were becoming extremely hard to understand. That was a statement coming from a chartered accountant, which would indicate that it would be almost impossible for laymen to follow and understand public accounts in the way they are presented today.

Therefore, it would be much easier for road board members to understand public balance sheets and statements if ward balances were permitted. The Bill, however, does not make provision for such balances. I understand that the Local Government Department is opposed to

their use and no doubt many staff members of local authorities also prefer to have ward balances abolished, but in the interests of board members I consider that this matter should be left to the discretion of the road board or municipality concerned.

I know that nothing can be done at this stage unless the Bill is recommitted, but I have no desire to follow that procedure now. Nevertheless I would like to repeat my previous advocacy of the inclusion in the Bill of a clause to enable local authorities to adopt ward balances if they so desire.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [2.57]: I do not wish to delay or extend the debate to any extent, but I could not possibly allow it to conclude without making a categorical denial of the main points of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. He said there is no call for adult franchise in local government elections. That is not so and is certainly not so in the City of Perth area. He also stated that there is no demand for a change. That happens to be completely wrong in the City of Perth area also and is definitely wrong in the Leederville ward, most of which I represent.

Some time ago, before his recent sickness, the Leader of the Opposition will remember that a certain public meeting held in Leederville got headlines, accompanied by photographs in the Press. In the article published were all sorts of reports complaining about difficulties in the local government system. Some of the changes advocated at this meeting are provided for in several clauses which appear in this Bill. In particular, there is an urgent and pressing demand in the Leederville ward of the City of Perth area for valuations to be made on the unimproved value. There is also a desire for the meetings of the Perth City Council to take place at a time that will permit those people who are interested in local government to take part in such discussions.

With the present set-up of the meetings of the Perth City Council, the position is that no one who does a useful job on which he is employed during the day can hope to enter the council buildings. The only people who can attend the meetings of the Perth City Council are those who are retired or semi-retired or those who are self-employed and can so organise their business as to be able to attend Perth City Council meetings in the afternoon and possibly attend to their own business in the evening. I wish to give a categorical denial to the claim that there is no call for a change, because there definitely is. In fact, there is considerable call for a change, and if the Leader of the Opposition were to descend from his ivory tower and mix among the ordinary rate-payers, he would soon find that there is a desire for a change.

I want to give a denial to the proposition that adult franchise would introduce party politics into local government. It would not. The situation is that, in local government, party politics already exists in the same manner as it does in Russia. There is only one party able to get in because there is no opposition; and the Leader of the Opposition feels this is not party politics! That is not so, and I invite his attention again to the Perth City Council.

Mr. Court: Would you say there are no Labour men in local government?

Mr. JOHNSON: As far as the Perth City Council is concerned, one would have to look through a microscope to find them.

Mr. Court: You have not answered my question.

Mr. JOHNSON: I fancy there are one or two in some districts but they are very hard to find.

Mr. Court: There is a big proportion of them who are Labour men.

Hon. D. Brand: What about the member for Maylands?

Mr. JOHNSON: The general proposition is that there are few and it is certain they occur only in those areas where meetings are held at night. That is very much so. This is only possible where meetings are held at night. Although I know that there are some Labour members so involved, they are, however, exceptional people. I know one who is sitting not very far from me, and I would say that he is a very exceptional person.

Members: Hear, hear!

The Premier: Exceptionally good.

Mr. JOHNSON: Another point I wish to make is that which deals with the suggestion that the ratepayers should retain all voting rights because they are the ones that pay. In order to explain the position to this Chamber, questions were asked last session in regard to this matter. If anyone cares to look at last year's Hansard they will find that questions were asked and answers given indicating that ratepayers in practically any municipality pay barely 50 per cent. of the income of that municipality.

Hon. D. Brand: How many Liberal members are there in the Sydney City Council?

Mr. JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition is trying to introduce an entirely different proposition because that is where they do have different ideas about voting.

Mr. Roberts: Where is the ex-Lord Mayor of Sydney now?

The Premier: He is down at Bunbury.

Mr. Roberts: He is in Queensland.

Mr. JOHNSON: That could be so, but it has nothing to do with this debate. I want to make it clear that not only does

the Leader of the Opposition make the untrue statements he has but he also implies that the ratepayers are the ones who pay. In the parliamentary records for last year there is a categorical denial of that. I do not want to start a blue in this House.

Hon. D. Brand: You won't. It is not worth it with you.

Mr. JOHNSON: I do feel, however, that the wilfully stupid statements made by the Leader of the Opposition should not be allowed to pass because we know they are not very seriously intended. I feel these statements should be challenged and categorically denied.

Point of Order.

Hon. D. Brand: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am going to allow the equally stupid statements made by the member for Leederville to pass without challenge.

Mr. Johnson: I, too, propose to allow the point of order taken by the Leader of the Opposition to pass without challenge.

Debate Resumed.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [3.4]: Briefly, I want to confirm that we, the members of the Liberal Party, are very much in support of an amended and improved local government law. But we did make it very clear during the second reading debate that if certain vital amendments were not agreed to by the Government, we would have to oppose the Bill at the third reading.

Mr. Potter: Then you cannot have an improved law.

Mr. COURT: The member for Subiaco may consider that this Bill is an improved law, but we consider it is not. There are certain matters of principle that the Government refuses to alter. Without reservation, I say that if in another place this Bill is amended to exclude those obnoxious clauses, we will to a man support the amended Bill so that an improved local government law can exist in this State.

The objectionable clauses are well known. They were gone over in great detail during the second reading and the Committee stages and relate mainly to franchise, valuation, method of election of chairman, audit and one or two other important features. I want to make it clear that we support the amendment and improvement of local government law, but we are not prepared to support this attempt by the Government to introduce into local government in this State their party political platform.

Probably the best case against the Government's objectionable features in this Bill was made out by the member for Leederville when he was answering interjections regarding the chaotic state of affairs that has developed in local government in New South Wales; developed

there because their legislation included clauses such as the Government seeks to put into our legislation in this State. If there has been any intrusion of party political campaigning into our local government activities, it is so unimportant as to be insignificant.

The fact remains that almost without exception our local authorities have carefully and studiously avoided party politics. They have done a remarkable job in handling matters on an objective basis, and we have found people from all walks of life gathering together freely in local government. Do not let us injure the present set-up. I oppose the third reading.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [3.7]: In delaying this debate a little further, I would like to point out to the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy that if ever a Government had a mandate to introduce a feature into legislation in this House, surely the present Administration must be it. The matter of adult franchise has been on the platform of the Labour Party for goodness knows how long.

Let us see how much this principle has been endorsed even in the Perth City Council area and consider the electorates within that area and the members who have been returned for those areas. We find that East Perth has a Labour representative, as have North Perth, West Perth, Victoria Park, Beeloo, Middle Swan, Leederville, Subiaco and Wembley. Finally, but not the least important, there are a few misguided people along the Swan River foreshore who have to put up with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, possibly not because of their own fault but due to the people who are living further down the Swan River who comprise the bulk of the voting strength of Nedlands.

So the seats that have portion or the whole of their area in the district of the City of Perth have made it quite clear that they require a change because they are endorsing the platform of this party by returning to this House the members to whom I have referred. If the Leader of the Opposition was worried about delaying tactics in respect of this Bill, he should have made certain that members on his side did not, during last session, argue at such great length on clauses in measures dealing with reforestation and the like that did not matter. Had he done so, this measure would have been far more advanced than it is now.

To say that there is no reason for adult franchise and to argue the point on that is not really sound. In many cases the people whose names appear on the local government rolls would be the wives or husbands of ratepayers, or their adult children who definitely have an interest in the area in which they live. It is a foolish argument on the part of the

Liberal Party to maintain its attitude that there should not be adult franchise in local government.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has insisted on drawing attention to the circumstances that prevailed in regard to the greater Sydney City Council. Let him turn to some of the other councils and see if he can pull them to pieces. That city council has been highlighted because it became great Press news when it was found that somebody had not done the right thing or someone had received a bribe, but generally no one could prove anything about such assertions. The hon. member is too busy to highlight those instances to worry about or draw attention to the local authority at Woolongong, for instance, and similar places. He has poisoned his mind by what he has read in the Press. He has only referred to the Sydney City Council, and that was as far as he could go.

Mr. Court: Would you like to substitute Brisbane for Sydney. That is all right with me.

MR. JAMIESON: There is probably nothing very much wrong with Brisbane, but it would be a great deal better than the Perth City Council whose wards are represented in this House of Parliament by nine Labour members against one from the Opposition. The only ones in the Perth City Council who are not Liberal Party supporters are Liberal reactionaries.

Mr. Court: How do you know that?

MR. JAMIESON. I have spoken to some of them and I know their feelings.

Mr. Court: Who are they?

MR. JAMIESON: The member for Nedlands in his own choice way is intent on getting someone's name besmirched.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Why do you always find it necessary to get nasty? Are you coached to do that?

MR. JAMIESON: It is necessary when members adopt the attitude that some people should not have a vote in local government, as they have in other forms of government.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: You are lowering the standard of this House.

MR. JAMIESON: I am not. I cannot lower it to the standard to which the hon. member has lowered it at times. I say that the mandate given to this Government in respect of including adult franchise in local government, as endorsed by the people at the last election, should be enough to satisfy even the whims of those who sit opposite.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [3.14]: I think it is somewhere about nine years since the first attempt to bring down a combined Local Government Bill was made in this House. I understand there

had been agitation for such a measure for approximately 20 years prior to that time. From correspondence which has reached me from a number of local authorities during the last six to eight months, I am satisfied that there is still a very considerable demand for this legislation, and an anxiety that it should go to another place, there to be given, as I have no doubt it will be given, the once-over in regard to a great number of matters that are contained therein.

The Minister for Health: Three aspects only.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: But before I go further upon that path, I would like to say that subsequent to the first appearance of a similar measure in this House, it was referred to a Royal Commission. That Royal Commission, as far as those who were able to select it were concerned, was representative of nearly all shades of political thought in Western Australia. Certainly there were people on it who had distinguished themselves in the interests of all political parties at one time or another, in one way or another, small or large.

That commission sat under the chairmanship of a local government officer in the person of Mr. White, and it brought down certain recommendations as to what should be done in regard to the Bill. Those recommendations in some respects were translated into the measure which this House has been trying to pass for approximately four years. There were three or four very substantial proposals, however, which were put into the Bill but which were not recommended by the Royal Commission or, alternatively, recommended against by the commission, who had heard evidence and considered all points of view over a period of many months. Those are the principles. They include, for example, adult suffrage which was the subject of very great debate in this House.

At one stage it appeared that the Minister in charge of the Bill was anxious that this House should pass the Bill as printed, that is to say, without any amendment or discussion on these or any other principles, whether they were objectionable or not, and send it to another place as it was printed, so that the other place could handle it in the manner it thought fit, and remit it here for final consideration.

Mainly I think as a result of both public and private protests from myself to the Minister, and it being pointed out to him that there would be no election intervening in either House between 1956 and 1957, and therefore it would be quite competent, as has been done, to reinstate the measure early this session and send it to the Legislative Council, the Minister decided to drop his rigid attitude of accepting no amendments and to allow the debate to take its ordinary course. That

was done with the result that the Bill passed the Committee stage towards the end of the 1956 session of this House.

At that time it was, without question, generally understood that the measure would go to the Legislative Council. I know as a fact that I headed opposition to certain portions of this measure, and, as a matter of fact, I even grew very critical on one occasion which I remember, of the Minister himself, not only because of what was in the Bill in one instance, but because of what he said in regard to it.

I am still just as critical, just as much in opposition to those objectionable major proposals—not recommended as I said, and in some cases recommended against by the Royal Commission—which the Government, as I said then and I repeat now, in my opinion with no sufficient justification inserted in the Bill. The only justification they had was the desire to implement Government policy. The paragraphs or clauses in question are just as objectionable to me now as they were at the time I sought to amend them. The amendments, and the consequential amendments dependent upon them, are over 100 in number and they are still just as desirable in my view as before.

The Minister for Health: A number of amendments were accepted.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I said "including the consequential." The number of amendments would not be more than a dozen in all, other than the consequential alterations.

The greatest argument is on the question of adult suffrage; on the question of values to be used in respect of rating; the question of election of the president by electors and not members of the board with respect to rural or shire councils and in regard to certain matters concerning auditors and the powers of the auditors. They were the four major matters debated, and I am still as much against the provisions as I was at that time, and will remain opposed to them. I know for a positive fact that there is a general consensus of opinion among local authorities that this matter should be permitted to go to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: We cannot stop it.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Admittedly. In the present position of this House, it is to be presumed it cannot be stopped because it is to be assumed that the supporters of the Government will vote with the Minister, but I do not see why I should record a vote against the third reading of this Bill deliberately. It should go to the Legislative Council irrespective of whether it was amended or not; that is my understanding and I am convinced that the Legislative Council should have it because I am satisfied that the local authorities

want it dealt with in that House in order to ascertain the final opinion of Parliament and whether it will be satisfactory to them.

Therefore I think that by simply saying that I am going to vote against the third reading I am saying in effect that I do not want it to go to the Legislative Council. I do want it to go through and be amended there, as I am convinced it is going to be. I do not propose to record a vote against the third reading but to reiterate with all the emphasis at my command, that I am still as dissatisfied with and opposed to the amendments made by the Government which were objected to by me at the time, and I am perfectly certain the same view is held by those who sit with me on these benches.

I would like to comment on a remark made by the member for Leederville dealing with the absence or presence—from his point of view—of party politics in local government.

The Minister for Transport: Do you mean Leederville or Beeloo?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The greatest thing about local government—I will confine myself to the rural areas as I know more about them—is that one does not know what are the party politics of the members of those local authorities. It is extremely unlikely that the proceedings and debates of any of these local authorities reveal, at any time, the party political affiliations of the members of those bodies.

I know a great many local authority members in the various parts of the State are, in many cases, supporters of my friend, the Minister for Health, but in the proceedings of those local authorities, one does not know it. If we are going to convert it, as has been done in other places where the contests are conducted purely on a party political basis, then while it may not, in some cases, be disastrous to local government, it will not improve the present position. I think that no party politics, whatever they may believe in, enter into their deliberations in any way at all, which, in my view, is most desirable. I trust I have made myself plain in regard to this matter.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre—in reply) [3.27]: The Bill has been thoroughly debated in this House and many amendments have been accepted. There were only four principal clauses in the Bill which were really debated seriously on which we have not given way. After all the years that this Bill has been required by local government in Western Australia, I am surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition absolutely refuse to vote for the third reading to give another place an opportunity to express its views.

Mr. Court: No vote we may make will stop it.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If we all took this attitude, the Legislative Council would not receive it.

Mr. Court: It would not go through in its present form.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member is indicating that we do not want it to go to another place in order that it may express its views.

Mr. Court: That is not the case.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Leader of the Country Party has stated clearly the views of his party.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: They do not express ours.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH: He does not agree with a number of the clauses in the Bill—and we are all entitled to our opinion as to what is right and what is wrong—but I am surprised to learn that the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader do not want to allow another place to discuss the problems which we have discussed here, particularly after they have had the opportunity of reading what discussions took place in this House. They will probably hold different views altogether from some of my colleagues or members opposite.

I hope that the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader, together with their colleagues, will take an example from the Leader of the Country Party. Although he is opposed to certain provisions in the Bill, he does not want to deny another place the opportunity of discussing it. This Bill is vitally required for local government and I hope that the vote will be unanimous.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 4th July.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [3.30]: The debate on the Address-in-reply is usually led off by the Leader of the Opposition, and I would imagine that no one, this session, is more pleased about this than the ex-Leader of the Opposition, the member for Murray. Before I proceed further, I wish to pay a tribute to Sir Ross McLarty, the member for Murray, for his leadership and the integrity and goodwill which he established in the political world of Western Australia during the time he led our party.

I think it is recognised, too, that his leadership of a coalition Government over the six years was one of achievement. A great deal was done for Western Australia under his leadership and I would pay a compliment to his tolerance and understanding in leading a Government of two parties when, sometimes, it was without

even a clear majority. I imagine that the Premier himself will whole-heartedly agree with this because it is difficult enough to lead a party that has a worthwhile majority.

For my part, I trust that even though Sir Ross McLarty has retired to the back bench he will remain in politics, that his decision to offer himself again for the electorate which he now represents will stand and that he will be returned here to help and advise as one of the elder statesmen with respect to the political life of his party and of the State.

I also would like to express the hope that his good lady, Lady McLarty, who has not enjoyed the best of health over recent months, will quickly be restored to health and strength because I understand that Sir Ross, in retiring, has looked forward to a little home life with his wife in their home at Pinjarra. On behalf of us all, I express the hope that they will live long and happily, and in good health, together.

Mr. Bovell: Hear, hear!

Hon. D. BRAND: Today—I want to raise this point while it is fresh in my mind—we heard the Minister for Transport make a personal statement which dealt with a problem which arises here from time to time—that of a controversy with the Press. I feel we have to take the good with the bad. These periods come and go. It could be that just ahead of us there will be very satisfactory reporting of Parliament and of Government utterances by the Press of this country.

With respect to this particular controversy, it would seem that both parties believe they are right because I cannot imagine that the Press, in the first place, would repeat assertions which it made without having some backing or belief that they were on the right track. I would suggest to the Premier that, in view of the doubt and lack of confidence which arises, even over this issue, some attempt be made through an inquiry—a personal inquiry perhaps—to get at the truth.

It is a matter of regret that in the State of Western Australia, our Press does not give greater prominence to the constructive things that are said in this House. All of us here are bound by party policies, each believing that through those policies we can do something worth while for the State. From time to time, irrespective of our party allegiance, there develops in our minds a doubt as to whether we are really getting a fair crack of the whip from the Federal Government. Some may go as far as to ask: Were we right in not going on with the secession movement? Imposed upon that, of course, is the question: Should we have our taxing rights returned; and if so, how would we fare as a State?

So, I think that greater publicity and greater emphasis should be given to the constructive views expressed from each side of the House and to the information which arises from the answering of questions in order that the public might be better advised as to what is done here. On the other hand, it is very important indeed that we retain the freedom of the Press and that in no way do we reach the point where a Government attempts to influence the thinking or the production of news of any paper or other news avenue.

I here ask the Premier through you, Sir: Is it a fact that some direction or memo has gone out from the Premier or the Government with respect to our morning daily paper, anyhow, to give no Government publicity or to publish no Government notices or advertisements in that paper? I understand that to be so and that the emphasis has been on giving the advertisements to the week-end paper.

That is a matter of decision by the Government, if that is what it has decided, but I hardly agree with the principle because I think that irrespective of the problems, difficulties or differences between the Press and the Government or the Press and any party, the public from day to day should have available the advertisements, advice and information which emanate from the Government from time to time through the calling of tenders and the calling of applications for positions through the daily Press. I say that, having no quarrel whatsoever with the insertion of that same information or advertisements in the week-end Press or anywhere else.

In my opinion, it is indeed unwise that the Government has made this decision and I would hope it has not arisen out of pique or an endeavour to influence in any way the publicity which it, from time to time, receives through the Press. As an Opposition we, too, have our quarrels, but I imagine that they are just another burden that the Opposition has to bear.

At this stage I desire to express my pleasure at having on the front bench with me a younger team of men. I would like to congratulate the member for Cottesloe on having come forward to the front bench and express my appreciation of our Secretary-Whip, Mr. Ivan Manning, the member for Harvey. I think the responsibilities of the Whip are often overlooked, and particularly in Opposition, where the position carries certain responsibilities that do not appear to be fully recognised by either members or the general public.

I understand that there was a dispute with regard to the registration of pairs in relation to the controversial vote on rail closures and that upon the Whips there rested some responsibility. I am sure that

in the member for Harvey, we, of the Opposition, have as our Whip, someone who will discharge his duties to the satisfaction of all concerned.

It is not my intention to speak at length but I feel that, as Leader of the Opposition for the time being, I should touch on the problems of Western Australia and of how best we can help its progress and development, as those matters are of paramount importance. I believe that all the frustrations and limitations in respect of what the Government desires to do and what the public would like to see done, can be traced back to the limited amount of money available to us and I repeat what I said when speaking to the debate on the Supply Bill.

From the angle of obtaining more of the taxpayer's money for expenditure in this State, the responsibility is that of the Premier, seeing that he leads the Government, to try to get a more liberal formula for the distribution of the funds, which he often refers to as being colossal—I think an amount of £1,000,000,000 was mentioned—which are handled by the Commonwealth. I think it is his responsibility by sound argument to endeavour to obtain an alteration of the present formula in order to obtain more money for the development of this State, particularly of essential services such as education, electricity supplies, water supplies and so on.

On the other hand, as a Parliament we surely must unite and do our best to attract private capital to this State. Since the change of Government, I think it is fair to say that no major industry has been established here. As the Premier said last night, there was quite a controversy following on the commitments which our Government had to enter into in respect of Kwinana and the work involved in that agreement. But, as I pointed out, it was a question of seizing the opportunity whilst it existed rather than of waiting to make a decision. I would remind the House of the statements of the Minister for Lands when he came to this Chamber asking for an amendment of the Land Act in less than one week, in order to open the limitations of that Act so that an agreement might be made with Mr. Alan Chase in respect of a big land agreement, and, in principle, the Opposition agreed, I think, while placing some minor limitations on it. That was an opportunity which came and which had to be taken then and there, and this House agreed. The same circumstances applied to the coming of the Kwinana oil industry to Western Australia and I cannot help thinking that the impact of that industry on our economy, in spite of the drain it meant on our loan finance at the time, has been well worth while.

Hon. D. BRAND: I was remarking on the influence of the establishment of the Kwinana oil refinery, as an industry, in Western Australia, and no one can deny that as a result, first of all, of its establishment followed by the opening up of Cockburn Sound, and the establishment of the B.H.P. steel rolling mill and the Cockburn cement company, the stocks of Western Australia rose sharply and investors all over Australia, at least, were looking to this State as a place of the future.

In fact, for many months people were visiting here regularly with a view to ascertaining what were the prospects of establishing industries of one kind or another. It was unfortunate, I think, that this forward trend did not contribute to actual decentralisation of industry in this State because we, as a Government, at that time, had hoped that more and more industries would follow and be developed in the region of Medina and Kwinana.

The Minister for Industrial Development: That would have taken place had we discovered oil in commercial quantities.

Hon. D. BRAND: No doubt. The Minister for Industrial Development points to the obvious when he says that had we discovered oil in Western Australia in commercial quantities, then further industries would have followed. The flow of capital would also have followed, as it has done in other countries. Unfortunately, no more oil was discovered after the initial announcement on the result of the first successful boring. Since then there has been a tightening up of the finance that is available to this State and I am of the opinion that this has arisen out of the creation of the wrong climate for financial investment in this State.

I believe that the legislation that has been passed, the general attitude that has been adopted towards profits, the apparent lack of enthusiasm by the Government in going after new industries—for it is only through the Government that we can achieve these things—has caused some newspapers in the Eastern States to refer to Western as a "soup kitchen" State. For a long time we were referred to as the Cinderella State, and it was difficult to live that name down. Following the development that took place in 1951 and 1952, however, Western Australia really came into the picture. I am not sure whether this change could be attributed to the publicity that arose as a result of major industries being established here, but I do know that the publicity which has surrounded the activities of the Chase Syndicate at Esperance has been very desirable from the standpoint of attracting people to Western Australia.

Once having visited this State, many people have realised the potentialities and the opportunities that exist here and I

do not think that any worth-while executive, whether he be interested in primary or secondary industry, can overlook the fact that this is a State—provided we create the right atmosphere and the right industrial climate—where money can be safely invested. I am of the opinion that we should go out after new industries. Only a short while ago the Minister for Industrial Development visited the United States of America. I do not know what he achieved, but no doubt, through the contacts he made and the goodwill he established in that country, some indirect benefits may come to this State.

I understand, however, that nothing direct has resulted from his visit except perhaps a finalisation of the arrangements with the Chase Syndicate. I know that he also went to America for the purpose of inquiring into the legislation that existed in relation to the oil industry in those countries in order that he might have some concrete and immediate information to present to this House in the event of the oil industry being established in this State. I feel, however, that the Premier must share some of the blame with respect to the creation of the attitude that Western Australia was really bankrupt and a State in which unemployment was rife, because he himself, on a number of occasions, warned the people that an unemployment problem existed.

At the Loan Council meeting, the Premier's main appeal for more money was based on the difficulties in which we found ourselves here; and indeed, it was a fact. There was unemployment but, unfortunately, when this mode of thinking is projected from a high office in the Government, there becomes established in the people's minds a feeling of insecurity. As you know, Mr. Speaker, at the time the Savings Bank deposits built up, and there was some recession of trade and commerce in this State.

I think we can quickly trace that fact to a savings campaign by the rank and file of people who, feeling their position was not secure and that the economy of the State was not as stable as it might be, set about replacing their nest eggs which in many cases, they had used to buy oil shares in recent years. I believe that contributed to the recession. We are gradually pulling out of the situation, but we will make no worth-while advancement until we can get some major industries—it does not matter whether they are primary or secondary industries—to come to Western Australia.

There is a great need for more development to take place in our State. In this morning's paper we read that the Premier of South Australia, Sir Thomas Playford, has said that he is going out after another oil refinery for that State. As far as I know, this State does not boast an oil refinery and he is basing his claim on the

fact that that State possesses the necessary harbour facilities which enable it to accommodate oil tankers with a much greater draught than can be accommodated elsewhere in Australia. I think they can accommodate tankers of up to 80,000 tons. In Cockburn Sound, however, we can only take ships of up to a 35ft. draught or 45,000 tonners. I hope the Government will keep in touch with the oil companies in order, if necessary, to deepen the channels to allow larger ships to come in with a view to further industry—the oil industry in particular—being given the opportunity to establish itself. If that is necessary I hope the Premier will not hesitate in the matter.

I consider that we have failed to attract large industries in competition with the Eastern States. We must go after those industries. The Premier of Victoria has made a world tour in which, I understand, he was reasonably successful. I heard from time to time, and I have read in the Press occasionally, that further industries are being established in Victoria. We cannot lose any opportunity to secure such industries. It may be said that we are enjoying a certain degree of prosperity but we do not realise just what we are missing.

These major industries decide to migrate from the Old Country and from America and we must put out our hands, make quick decisions and say, "Come here, we will help you all we can." There is a clamour not only from the State itself, but from the major towns locally for some industries which will help to boost their economy, and assure their continued prosperity.

Recently in an effort to build up secondary industry in this State—and this was referred to by the Leader of the Country Party last night—the Premier announced that plans were afoot for the establishment of a charcoal iron industry in Western Australia. As far as I could read, it would be achieved through the sale of iron ore to Japan. I am not in a position to say whether this is right or wrong, but I want to make it quite clear that I am not directly opposed to the sale of iron ore, any more than I am opposed to the sale of lead or anything else, provided we have an assurance from the Federal authority, which is the responsible authority for exports, that there are satisfactory reserves to cover a long period of years.

We cannot overlook the fact that this is a very young country by comparison with England and the demand on our iron ore reserve will be very great in the future when secondary industries are established and manufacturing generally is expanded in Australia.

The Minister for Transport: B.H.P. is exporting iron.

Hon. D. BRAND: If it is exporting iron ore—

The Minister for Transport: No, only iron.

Hon. D. BRAND: I am not discussing the export of Holden motorcars, or anything like that. I think it is vital, having obtained the necessary employment through the manufacturing of these goods, that we should endeavour by means of an export trade to balance and bolster up our trade and not leave the whole task to primary production.

The Minister for Transport: I did not refer to manufactured goods but to iron.

Hon. D. BRAND: But it has been treated here in Australia, and when I referred to iron, I went one further step because steel had been used in the construction of motorcars which I understand have been exported from this country. I trust this export trade will build up a worth-while trade for us. I am told that we have the prospect of exporting farm machinery from Western Australia. This again means the export of steel and iron, but nobody would be stupid enough to oppose that.

The only doubt that exists in my mind is born of the fact that iron ore has been a prohibited export with the Commonwealth for some 20 or 30 years, and I imagine that the powers of the day did not come to that decision lightly. The Premier last night referred to the fact that we export wool, oranges, and quite a number of other primary products, but they can be reproduced. Iron ore on the other hand, is an expendable item.

The Minister for Mines: Where would the difference lie between the export of iron ore and the export of ilmenite?

Hon. D. BRAND: That is a pertinent question and I am not competent to answer it, but there must be a reason for Commonwealth Governments of all political complexions prohibiting the export of iron ore from this country when they allow the export of lead, manganese, and a dozen other minerals. The Minister for Mines may well be able to answer that question. But there must have been some reason to reserve the iron ore to Australia. Having sold iron ore in limited quantities and if licences can be obtained from the Commonwealth Government—and I am hopeful that it may decide to permit the export of iron ore from this State—it will be a very good thing, and it will mean that the Federal authorities have considered the very real question of the value of our reserves of high quality ore, particularly those that are accessible. That is a very important matter.

During a debate on the B.H.P. agreement, the Premier, by inference and almost directly, challenged our Government for giving away the reserves. When we claimed that at Koolyanobbing there were huge reserves of ore, "Hansard" indicates that he challenged the figures. It was after a drilling programme which was followed up by the present Minister for

Mines by a drilling and exploration programme that he discovered that Koolyanobbing ore was to be found in huge quantities, enough on which to establish any steel industry which might be interested in this State and to enable it to continue for many years to come. In any case, I am sure that we have not fully explored the reserves of minerals in this State, and I am certain that iron ore can, and will, be found in more accessible places than even Koolyanobbing, as the years proceed and as our means of investigation improve.

The problem which high-lights itself in regard to the establishment of a charcoal iron industry is whether it is to be established by the State itself. By no stretch of the imagination could we on this side of the House support the establishment of a State-owned charcoal iron industry. I believe that if the Premier, as he implied, could interest private industry to fully investigate the future demands for charcoal iron and the prospect of expansion in the State, and private industry then put up its money, with assistance from the Government in respect of services, we would be 100 per cent. behind the suggestion.

But the record of State enterprises up to date is not such that we could take any risks by walking away with millions of pounds of the State's money, which, as the Leader of the Country Party stated, might be better spent, and could be better spent immediately on higher priority work to provide schools, hospitals and other facilities and services. Another point emerges. If the Commonwealth Government refuses the State an export licence for iron ore, I should imagine the refusal would be based on the fact that from all the other States would come applications for the export of iron ore. The Commonwealth would have to review the whole situation in the light of the demand for the export of ore.

The Minister for Mines: There are very few deposits in Australia as good as ours.

Hon. D. BRAND: In any case would it be right for the Commonwealth to allow this State to export iron ore if, in fact, it was not prepared to allow Victoria or Queensland to do so because those States have not as much ore as we have, but which wish still to export the ore for the reason that they desire to obtain the much needed and ready money in terms of millions of pounds?

The Minister for Mines: Those States have not the quantity or quality that we have.

Hon. D. BRAND: That is the Minister's statement. I am not denying that. If the position I referred to arises, as I know it will, even though we might be a State favoured by nature in respect of deposits of iron ore, a refusal by the Commonwealth could quite conceivably be based on

the problem that would arise from demands by other States to convert their iron ore assets into cash.

The Premier: It would be an illogical decision if the Commonwealth were to make one on that basis.

Hon. D. BRAND: I am not suggesting that, because Japan or any other country is at this stage prepared to pay a big price for iron. In order to boost the respective State's finances, it is natural that State leaders will ask to be given the right, as we have asked for the right, to take advantage of the situation.

The Premier: But you are only stating half of our proposition.

Hon. D. BRAND: The proposition is that we sell the iron to Japan and put the money into a charcoal iron industry.

The Premier: Based on the use of our own iron ore.

Hon. D. BRAND: Of course. We cannot get the ore from anywhere else.

The Premier: That is the complete proposition. What other State will put a proposition like that to the Commonwealth?

Hon. D. BRAND: I could not say because I do not know the extent of the deposits, but I do know this very problem I refer to, will arise.

The Minister for Mines: If you were quite happy to give our iron ore away to a New South Wales company in millions of tons, why should you oppose the sale of it by us?

The Premier: And given away at 6d. a ton.

Hon. D. BRAND: In view of all that has happened, the decision of my Government has proved to be the right one.

The Premier: It was just a decision.

Hon. D. BRAND: There are millions of tons of ore reserves at Koolyanobbing, so much so that the Premier wants now to sell to Japan over and above what he said we gave away.

The Premier: Not at 6d. per ton.

Hon. D. BRAND: What would have happened had we decided not to make the agreement with B.H.P.? The iron ore would still have been there and nothing would have been done. We now have a very worth-while industry in this State.

The Premier: But you gave it away.

Hon. D. BRAND: It is the same one-eyed attitude to industry that is now being expressed and which has placed this State in the position in which it finds itself today. It is not a happy comparison.

Mr. Johnson: The B.H.P. company would have paid 10 times the amount of 6d. per ton.

The Premier: One hundred times.

Hon. D. BRAND: The member for Leederville has no idea what that company would have paid and he has no basis on which to make his comments.

Mr. Johnson: You have no reason to suppose they would not have paid 10 times as much.

Hon. D. BRAND: Another question arises. If the Premier is allowed to get his millions to be earmarked directly for assistance to the charcoal iron industry, the Government should keep clear of the running and organisation of such an industry.

The Premier: Which industry are you referring to?

Hon. D. BRAND: The charcoal iron industry.

The Premier: That is a woeful attitude to take in view of the fact that the State pioneered the industry and it is the only such undertaking established in Australia.

Hon. D. BRAND: I realise that the experiment has been made by the State, but up to date the financial record has not been a very good one. The Premier cannot deny that he has had to pour hundreds of thousands of pounds into the Wundowie industry.

The Premier: What for?

Hon. D. BRAND: To replace, to build up and expand the industry itself.

The Premier: You are hopeless!

Hon. D. BRAND: I am not hopeless. The Premier knows that his Government has built—

The Premier: I thought you were hopeless. Now I am sure.

Hon. D. BRAND: That expenditure cannot be justified to take priority over other works.

The Premier: You want the expenditure of State loan moneys to go into activities from which there is no financial return, not a shilling?

Hon. D. BRAND: The question which poses itself is this: I very much doubt whether there will be any financial return from the charcoal iron industry run by the State.

The Premier: The Wundowie industry is now paying.

Hon. D. BRAND: Of course, but by a chance incident.

The Premier: You are indeed a great knocker. Knock Western Australia to bits! We cannot do anything that is right.

Hon. D. BRAND: The records show that—

The Premier: You are like your predecessor, right in Canberra's corner on all of these issues.

Hon. D. BRAND: We put the State on the map the only time it has been on the map.

The Premier: You are always 100 per cent. in Canberra's corner, always the same. The Liberal Party is always 100 per cent. in Canberra's corner.

Hon. D. BRAND: We want our share of the money.

The Premier: You are afraid to offend those in Canberra. You think that Bob Menzies will not say, "Good afternoon" to you any more.

Hon. D. BRAND: I do not know whether I am as much concerned about Bob Menzies saying "Good afternoon" to me as some people in this House are afraid that Dr. Evatt will say, "Good afternoon" or "Good night" to them.

The Premier: That does not apply to me.

The Minister for Transport: Mention one, if you can.

The Premier: Robert Menzies was not welcome here several months ago during the last election campaign.

Mr. Court: We welcomed him.

The Premier: So did the public.

Hon. D. BRAND: I am hopeful that, if the Premier is going forward with his idea of establishing a charcoal iron industry, he will bring to bear the views of businessmen, as it is a well-known fact that there is a worth-while firm from the Old Country interested in the industry. The Premier is faced with a clamour from all parts of the State for the establishment of this industry; they have come from Geraldton, Bunbury, Manjimup and Southern Cross.

The Premier: It is a good thing.

Hon. D. BRAND: It is a very good thing indeed. I will now become a little parochial about this matter as Geraldton has made some applications in respect of the sale of iron ore.

The Premier: Through the member for Geraldton.

Hon. D. BRAND: I have not any quarrel with that. They have written to me and to many others. We must not forget the Premier's interest and his natural interest in Wundowie, seeing it is in his own electorate. Whether the Premier likes it or not, it is my intention to support any representations on behalf of Geraldton as the member representing the Tallering area, where the iron ore is deposited.

The Minister for Mines: Can't you give the Premier a little credit for being able to think of more than his own electorate?

Hon. D. BRAND: I did not infer that; I said the industry was in his own electorate.

The Premier: It is by accident as a result of a redistribution under an Act brought in by the McLarty-Watts Government, but I will do my best to keep it in.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: And expand it.

Hon. D. BRAND: I do not blame the Premier for that and I am sure the Minister for Mines is only being helpful, but if the Premier gives it, he should be able to take it. Getting back to the sale of iron ore from Tallering, it would be a good idea if the sale could be arranged from that area and the money earmarked for the development of Geraldton harbour. Where is this policy to end? It may lead to many problems we do not see at the present time. I hope that the effort to establish industry in this State will continue along the lines of bringing private capital here and having it controlled and directed by private enterprise and not by the Government.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: There is not much chance with this Government in power.

Hon. D. BRAND: There is another point I wish to make. I would like to read an article headed "Thermal Energy from the Sea." It reads as follows:—

Much has been said and written throughout the world about thermal energy from the sea during the past few years. The interest shown in this new form of energy became much more acute once it had been proved that by-products from this energy could also be obtained. Some of these by-products are salt for chemical and similar industries, cold water for air conditioning, plankton and fish for food industries, and especially large amounts of fresh water. In addition, the fantastic pace with which world consumption of electricity is growing (it doubles every 10 years) makes it evident that the day will come when traditional sources of electricity will be exhausted. In this connection, coal and oil are essential raw materials in organic chemistry and it is imperative to reserve their use for developing synthetic materials, plastics, textile fibres, silicones, etc.

I read that to indicate that this French journal gives a warning, and it is evident from the facts that the demand for electricity doubles every 10 years. I have questioned the Minister for Works in respect of plans by the Government for meeting the demand in Western Australia, which I understand is about a 10 per cent. increase each year.

The Minister for Works: It is greater than that.

Hon. D. BRAND: That makes the position all the more dangerous if it is being neglected, and I sound the warning that we should plan well ahead, bearing in mind that from the time of calling tenders or

from the time of the decision of the Government to do something about installing major generators, it will be some four or five years before those machines are brought on load. I am hopeful that we will not have to face what has already happened in this State, because we cannot obtain the necessary machinery and have it installed in the time available. I hope we do not suffer the same restrictions on the use of electricity or, on the other hand, some restriction in the extension of main lines, which have been going out from the time that the South-West power scheme and other power schemes were installed.

The Minister for Health: We look well ahead, but we have to be careful we do not over-capitalise the future.

Hon. D. BRAND: That is for the Government to look into. The point I am making is that there will be a demand for the use of electricity and, whatever the problems underlying that situation, they must be solved in order that no limitation will be placed on development on account of the restriction of power in Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: Have you any reason to believe that we are not looking into the requirements of the future?

Hon. D. BRAND: I am looking at the figures, and ask the Minister for Works to ensure that there is sufficient planning ahead in this matter.

The Minister for Works: There is.

Hon. D. BRAND: Then, I hope, as a result of questions, we will be able to satisfy ourselves that what has been done, and what is intended to be done, will meet the anticipated demand based on these figures.

On another matter, the Premier said that the development of the North-West could be brought about through mining, which could play a very important part. It would seem to me that, as yet, sufficient money, except for the oil companies and those interested in oil exploration, has not been put in. It might be that large companies, whether mining or otherwise, could be interested in making exploration worth while through drilling and investigation and through the use of modern instruments, if the Government gave the same security to them as to the oil company in its exploration programme.

It is essential that they have the necessary capital and know-how. We may be able to interest American capital or capital from other countries, but it is necessary that we ensure that through the expenditure of such money and the making of such investigation, the companies concerned are assured of reaping the rewards of their efforts. This I put forward as a constructive suggestion. I do not know whether the Government has it in mind but it seems to me that any investigation or exploration work on the

mining side in the vast North, has failed to some extent because it has not been big enough or wide enough.

No doubt the Minister for Mines made many contacts during his visit overseas and I hope that he will follow up any interest that might have been shown on the basis of full co-operation, by giving those who are interested large areas to explore whether the exploration be for lead, copper, nickel or other base minerals. I think a great future is assured if we can demonstrate, through drilling and investigation, that large deposits of minerals exist. Therefore, I conclude on that note in the hope that the Government will make a worth-while and concrete endeavour to clear the atmosphere and to clarify its attitude towards private capital. I trust that it will encourage private interests to come here to develop this State.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion (adjournment) put and negatived.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [4.42]: My hon. friend from Murchison is to be congratulated on his effort. It seems to me that the earlier enthusiasm for discoursing upon various subjects in the Address-in-reply has somewhat lessened for I hear that in another place, notwithstanding the voluminous notes possessed by one or two members, no one was to be found to continue the debate yesterday afternoon, and in consequence the other place is busily looking for something to discuss. However, on that occasion it was obliged to adjourn.

Looking at our notice paper I thought that might be the position of the Government this afternoon so somewhat against my will I decided I would make some slight contribution in order, possibly, that my worthy colleague from Murchison might have his heart's desire after I finish.

I might say that one gets some surprises occasionally when wandering around the country and receiving information from one source and another. I have in mind at the moment the minutes of an organisation known as the Lower Great Southern Regional Council which I find sat on Saturday, the 6th July, 1957, at 7.30 p.m. I was not present at its deliberations but I have read the minutes with interest because the first item refers to the consideration of replies received to council resolutions and it deals with a letter from the Deputy Secretary for Railways, W.A. Government Railways, Perth.

Apparently this communication was in response to a request through the Lower Great Southern Regional Council for consideration to be given to regrading the southern part of the Great Southern railway. This is a matter which has been

ventilated in the House more than once. There are, I understand, two banks, one known as the Moojebing bank and the other as the Carbarup bank which are responsible for interfering very greatly with the capacity of the trains running between Albany and Wagin. Because the grade over these two places is particularly steep, the loads have to be considerably lessened, and, in the opinion of those who have given some study to the subject, it makes the trip of each train more likely to be unprofitable because the pay-load is so very much less than it otherwise would be.

I am aware that for some time there have been discussions and representations on the subject of having these particular banks—and there may be a third one that I am not aware of—regraded. This letter from the Deputy Secretary for Railways, according to the minutes, states that the cost of the regrading would be approximately £175,000 and therefore it was not possible. The point, however, to which I want to make particular reference, is what follows. The letter goes on to state—

It is hoped to relay the Great Southern railway within the next few years when regrading may be considered.

This is a somewhat surprising statement from the Deputy Secretary for Railways, in my opinion, namely, that it is proposed to relay the Great Southern railway. This railway, as I understand the position, starts at Beverley and journeys to Albany, a distance I believe of something in the vicinity of 250 miles. I have been given to understand that in recent years a great deal of effort has been spent on it and that it is capable of carrying considerable loads, except where these grades make that difficult, at fairly high speeds. The time for the train trip from Perth to Albany has recently been reduced by two or three hours, and I, having, unlike the Premier, recently travelled by train on that line, would like to say that I found it an extremely comfortable journey.

Mr. Hall: What about the rock n-roll?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I found it was no worse than that to be found on the 4ft. 8½in. gauge railway in New South Wales.

Mr. Hall: I differ from that one.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I have never in all my life had two more uncomfortable journeys than I experienced in New South Wales. As compared with the trip to Albany, which I made a little over three weeks ago, the two trips in question were virtually nightmares.

Mr. Cornell: Have you ever tried to change your pants in the roomettes there?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I point out to the member for Mt. Marshall that there are no roomettes on the New South Wales train that I am aware of.

The Premier: It would be interesting to see the member for Mt. Marshall trying to do that in a roomette.

Mr. Cornell: That is why I interjected. I am speaking from experience.

The Premier: Painful experience.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Let us not digress too far. I was observing that the trip on the Albany train, which I do not make so frequently as the member for Albany, although I have made it several times in the last few months, is a comparatively comfortable one and I suggest that it is pretty difficult, on a 3ft. 6in. gauge and at the speed at which, at intervals, that train travels, to have a more comfortable ride than one gets on it, and I repeat that it is much better and more comfortable than the travelling I experienced on the couple of trips I had between Albury and Sydney on the night express which, incidentally, does not succeed in traversing the distance it has to cover—bearing in mind that it is a standard gauge line—in much better time than the train from Perth to Albany at the present juncture.

In all the circumstances of the case I was astonished to read a letter from the Deputy Secretary for Railways saying that it is proposed to relay the Great Southern line within a few years, because in the absence of very clear proof to the contrary—and there is none offering yet nor has any mention been made of it at any time previously—I would suggest that that expense could very well be avoided, and it certainly throws some considerable doubt on certain of the assertions that have been made in respect of the necessity for rehabilitating some other railway lines in Western Australia.

I would like to suggest to the Railways Commissioners and the Government that they concern themselves a little more in this regrading which the regional council was writing to the Railways Department about, because I am convinced that the result of such regrading would be much more economic working of that particular line. For a long time one of the problems, of course, was back loading from Albany and to some extent that difficulty has been obviated; partly by the greatly increased population in that district—it has considerably more than doubled in the last seven, eight or nine years—and partly because of the creation of the superphosphate works and other industries there which have provided back loading that previously did not exist.

However, the problem of these very substantial grades still remains and I think the necessity to do something about them is apparent. If, as is stated in this communication to which I have referred, the expenditure of only £175,000 is required, I should suggest that it could reasonably be contemplated over a couple of financial years with the idea of making a substantial improvement in the operating of that main

line in that part of the State, because when one comes to think of relaying the Great Southern railway, of a total distance of 250 miles, at a cost of something like £14,000 per mile, my mental arithmetic is completely inadequate to allow me to arrive at the total figure.

Mr. Ackland: Why should you make it £14,000 per mile when the committee recommends a figure of £18,000 per mile?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The hon. member has something there, but whatever the figure is, it runs into so many millions of pounds for the job that I question—and this is the point I wish to make—the authority of this person, whoever he may be—I do not know him; the deputy secretary—to make such an assertion to a responsible body of that nature, because if there is no authority for it, it is at least unwise to make the statement.

If there is authority for it, then it seems to me an extraordinary thing that an expenditure of that nature should be contemplated, in view of the general situation in regard to finance and, I would say, the comparatively satisfactory state of the track in question, which has had a great deal of money spent on it in the course of the last two or three years. However, I hope that in due course we shall get some authentic information on this subject so that we may be in a better position to determine the accuracy or otherwise of the statements made to the Great Southern Regional Council.

It is not very often that I take the opportunity of commenting in this House on what I see in the Press, but my attention has been drawn to a leading article in "The West Australian" of Thursday, the 11th July, and a moment's consideration will enable members to realise that I refer to to-day's leading article. In the minds of some people a leading article in a leading newspaper is considered to be a very weighty matter. One would imagine that it was the consensus of opinion of, should we say, perhaps the majority of the people in the metropolitan area. That is how some people view it.

Actually, however, it is the writing of one individual, possibly supported by consultation with two or three more and therefore, to me, it has not by any means the weight which is attached to it by a number of people. I say, without fear of contradiction, that the leading articles in this leading daily newspaper have had a great deal less weight attributed to them in recent times than they had in times gone by.

The Premier: I think the editorial staff know that.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not in a position to say what they know or do not know but I am merely venturing to express that opinion as my own in precisely the same way. I would suggest, as the leading article writer of this paper has

expressed an opinion which I am about to quote. Under the heading of "City Railway Losses Demand Action" he says—

The Government is still right in the principle of its decision to suspend services. The Liberal Party is also rightly pressing its case that the Government, in overhasty suspension of services of 840 miles of track, has not fulfilled its undertaking.

That is the general sense of the statement. It continues—

The Country Party is merely playing a sectional hand in persistent refusal to make any constructive State approach to the railway problem as a whole.

I am going to ask the gentleman who wrote that article, firstly, how does he know that the Country Party is not making any constructive State approach to the railway problem as a whole, because he has never asked me and, secondly, if we are making a constructive approach, am I supposed to rush off to "The West Australian" and tell its representative what ideas we have, or is it more reasonable for me to decide whether I shall tell him if "The West Australian's" representative comes to me?

Our attitude in this matter has been made crystal clear, as far as I can see, over the last seven or eight months. We are by no means satisfied with the position of railway finance in Western Australia. We believe that the problems of Western Australia and its population sparsity render it extremely difficult to make the railways profitable in this State, but we are satisfied that a great deal can be done to minimise the losses, and that the way that has to be done can hardly be definitely and finally ascertained by persons who at the best, in technical matters of this kind, are laymen, but only by persons who are completely qualified to investigate and advise the Government of the day upon the subject.

We believe that by such activities as those, ways and means should be found of improving the service and reducing losses. If the services were improved, the use of the railways would thus be improved. I could give members many examples which have come within my knowledge of the services rendered by the Western Australian Government Railways to persons who would at one time use nothing else—they refused absolutely to touch road transport—but because of the present unsatisfactory service they have been compelled, almost for survival, to use road transport.

I know of one man, a builder, who ordered two trucks of asbestos super six roofing material on the 21st June in a given year, from Perth, to be transmitted to a place which was at the other end of the main line—not any branch line or any line far up in the back country where

only weekly trains run, but a main line. He received those two trucks of super six asbestos which were consigned in Perth on the 21st June, on the 14th July. That man was one who, to my certain knowledge, had had a good deal of material purchased and railed to him and he always used the railway service.

Although he made several inquiries, during the three weeks, as to where his property was he received no information until two or three days before he finally received the goods. The result was that he had four tradesmen standing by—because the material concerned was sufficient to roof two houses—at approximately £20 a week, whom he could not dispense with and whom he could not use because he was kept waiting 23 days for two trucks of asbestos to travel 340 miles.

The Minister for Transport: How much was the fault of the railways and how much the fault of the suppliers?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The suppliers consigned it on the 21st June, and that has been definitely established. Where it got to in the meantime I do not know, but it arrived at its destination on the 14th July—it may have been the 13th July, but as far as he was concerned it was the morning of the 14th. That is only one of many similar cases that have come to my notice. The result is that that person today would do almost anything to get his goods transported by road because, in his view, he lost £80 and suffered a lot of inconvenience because of the delay.

Therefore, I submit that one of the first things we have to do is to inculcate into our railway system, by some means, the belief, as I said here a year ago, that the customer is right. That is the motto of successful business people, and it should be the motto of State instrumentalities—and in some cases it is. I firmly believe that if we had a reasonably efficient and smart service for the public users of this transport system, many of the arguments in regard to road transport that have been raised here would come to an end, because I think that in regard to the fraction—a very substantial fraction in the outer country—who use road transport, there are a great number of people who have a proper sense of responsibility to themselves as taxpayers, if to nobody else, who would be only too happy to return to their former love, to wit, the State railways.

There was a time, and it is within my memory, when there were no instances of this nature brought forward. There was a time when there was a considerable degree of smart handling and rapid dealing with the goods offered for transport on the railway system. But there has been some deterioration—there is no question about it—and while one swallow does not make a summer, it is a well-known fact that one or two complaints lose far

more customers from a shop than the actual complaints justify. That, I am afraid, has been the effect to some degree upon our railway system.

Our only complaint, or substantial complaint in this matter, and one which I would like to impress upon the leader writer of "The West Australian", is that we object to the country districts, and particularly those which are further out—if members look at the map of the railways they will find they are the ones concerned in this argument—being made to bear the brunt of the first attempt, if I can call it that, of economy that the State has made in recent years. Why should they be the ones to bear the weight of this responsibility in the first instance? Why should it not have been first of all a general assessment of what is wrong with the State railways and an attempt made to rectify the position on an over-all basis? I think that if the Press had been present when I took the deputation to the Premier on the 13th March last, of which I shall have something to say at a later date, they would have discovered that that deputation did not go there and say to him that they thought everything was quite all right and that nothing should be done.

We asked him to postpone the action which his Government then contemplated until such an examination of the whole position had been made, and other aspects as well to which we individually referred. So for a newspaper, ill-informed on our attitude as this one obviously is, to make the statement to which I have referred is, in my opinion, scarcely fair; and I think that it is as well that I should say so here. I have no animus against "The West Australian", nor anybody connected with it—quite the contrary; but I trust that they will be as fair to me, and to those associated with me in the future, as I have endeavoured to be to them in the past.

Mr. Ackland: Sir Winthrop Hackett would turn in his grave if he knew what these birds are doing now.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I now want to touch on the question of the licensing of motor-vehicles by local authorities outside the declared metropolitan area under the Traffic Act. I must confess that I have not heard, as yet, from any responsible member of the Government, any proposal that the collection of traffic fees in those outer districts should be centralised or collected by one central authority, but there appears to be an idea in the minds of the members of the Road Board Association that that is a pending proposal. If it is one that is likely to be brought before this Parliament, I sincerely hope that it will be abandoned because I contend that not only is it unnecessary, but also it is undesirable. Whilst that is my own view, it is supported by the Road Board Association and its member bodies.

There is, I would suggest, in the majority of local authorities, nothing whatever to justify some of the aspersions that have been cast upon them, for example, in regard to the control of traffic in their districts. Naturally, in the majority of the country centres they have nothing like the traffic problems that beset the City of Perth nor, as far as one can see in view of their number, the distance apart and the unlikely event that there will be a number of large cities among them, are they likely to have commensurate problems for the next half century at the very least.

Without the revenue which is derived from these traffic fees by the local authorities, many of them would have the greatest difficulty in carrying on. What they fear, of course, is, I understand, the adoption of the same practice that is followed in Queensland where the central authority collects all the traffic fees and the local authority receives nothing in return. The whole of the revenue derived from that source, from Commonwealth funds and any other source that may be available to the Queensland authorities is devoted to the maintenance of main and major roads.

That is not so in Western Australia, and I hope it never will be. Today, as we know, because of its vast area, Western Australia allegedly has been fortunate in regard to its collections under the Federal aid road scheme. It has, in fact, received a larger share than its small population warrants and that, of course, has resulted in some objection being raised in such places as Victoria where the area is smaller and the population much greater. Of course, I think our friends in Victoria lose sight of the fact, for example, that we in Western Australia have for many years been among that State's best customers; that it is virtually no customer of ours at all, whereas our trade with that State is probably in the vicinity of £40,000,000 or £50,000,000 a year.

All of these things have, no doubt, been wisely taken into consideration by the Transport Council of the Commonwealth Government in arriving at a decision in the distribution of these particular funds. To my way of thinking, the same argument, precisely, applies to the local authorities. Comparatively speaking, they have a large area and a small population. To my way of thinking, they are entitled to a very substantial share of the traffic fees collected; so great and substantial a share, indeed, that I do not see any reason why they should not have all of the traffic fees collected provided they are prepared to accept their responsibilities in regard to the control of traffic.

As I have said, I believe most of them are anxious to accept and shoulder their responsibilities in this regard. I have no doubt that most of them are. Some aspersions have been cast against them in

the same way as they have been made against vermin boards. The member for Murray, the Minister for Lands, the member for Avon Valley, Mr. Triat, an ex member of this House, and one other gentleman spent many months, as an honorary Royal Commission, inquiring into and finally making a report on these very subjects. Without any fear of contradiction, we found that the great majority of the local authorities were doing their work under the Vermin Act in a way which reflected credit upon them.

There were, of course, one or two exceptions, but I understand that they have since been corrected. If there is any local authority that is not doing its job in regard to traffic activities, surely that is something for the Local Government Department to look into and to take steps to ensure that it is. However, it does not want to go listing all the local authorities and raising contentious subjects to be followed by correspondence and suggestions appearing in the Press on the collection of licence fees only to find that there are perhaps but half a dozen local authorities that are not completely standing up to their responsibilities.

Anyway, I will conclude this subject by saying that if there are any proposals coming forward for any major alterations in the present system, I shall be definitely opposed to them because I am a firm believer in the system of local government, as the Minister for Health knows. I would be a believer in a better system of local government for Western Australia and, in a lesser sphere, I extend that argument and belief to the nth degree. The local authority is a most valuable contributor to the work that is done in Western Australia in more ways than one. It deals not only with roads and bridges. A local authority concerns itself with many more affairs than that and it has a greater standing in the community than that, whatever may have been the position more than half a century ago.

The Minister for Health: And the local authorities do it for nothing.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Yes, and I would accept that position and allow them to continue with their work with the least interference possible, except perhaps in the odd case that needs advising and correcting where necessary, but that is all we need to do.

From time to time, in this House, there has been raised the question of finance for those that are engaged in pioneering agricultural pursuits in various parts of the State. The member for Roe has brought this before the House on more than one occasion. He has pointed out that in his belief there is only one institution in Western Australia capable of handling some of these difficult cases, and that he has referred to as the agency section of the Rural & Industries Bank.

Apparently the agency section of the Rural & Industries Bank has little or no money for such purposes. It is a fairly

well-known fact, I think, that the capital of the Rural & Industries Bank can be increased only by extracting money from the State's loan funds, and therefore it adds to the problem of the State Treasurer when dealing with the loan moneys and; in my view, should contribute towards making him particularly careful how he disburses the loan funds that are available outside essential and high priority purposes so that there may be, from time to time, something left over from the Rural & Industries Bank to help it to carry out at least one of its functions, namely, the development of industry.

The people I have in mind are those who have either come to this State or have been brought up in this State, and, being the possessors of £2,000 or £3,000, have decided to strike out on their own—in areas far removed from Perth, in most cases, because there the land is available—in an endeavour to develop a prosperous agricultural property. Unfortunately, the costs of development have run away from them; their own money is being expended and they have as yet no worth-while asset that would attract the attention of the ordinary lender of money, even, in many cases, of the trading banks themselves.

Accordingly, they wander around from place to place, looking for this additional finance, in order that they might complete their water supplies and stock their properties and do whatever else they might need to do so that they may become a producing concern. But, they do not find it, and in the result some of them struggle on working from Monday to Friday at some other job to earn sufficient money to keep them going and doing a bit of development over the week-end. Finally, that breaks down also and in some cases they abandon the place, thus abandoning also the £2,000 or £3,000 they brought into it, and the land, on which clearing has been done and partial development carried out, is allowed to revert to nature. And all for the lack of some such institution as the Agricultural Bank used to be, to tide them over their immediate difficulties!

The types of person of whom I speak—and they would be easily recognised by a man with any banking experience—are what is known as good personal propositions. Quite apart from the fact that the development they have done so far with their own money is worth something and any advance that could be made to them need not be made progressively except when improvements and assets are required, they are people who, in some cases, of themselves can be relied upon to do everything possible to pay their way but they have not any opportunity of acquiring the funds necessary except in a very few cases, because there is no satisfactory plan or arrangement under which, as I have said, the so-called agency section of the R & I Bank could assist them.

If these people could bring their properties to a stage of proper development, they would be just as valuable to the State of Western Australia in the aggregate as are those developmental programmes of 200,000 or 300,000 acres that are being undertaken by State and Federal Governments, and now by private enterprise in various parts of Western Australia. Collectively, I have no doubt, they would total as much in developmental area although they are scattered about.

Surely to goodness if agricultural development is worth anything—as obviously we all believe it is, or successive Governments would not have been going in for it on a large scale—these people are worth encouraging! Some of them, I point out, have come from the Eastern States. When they report back home as to what their fate has been—and I know two or three instances of that character—then it will come to the ears of other people considering entering this State with possibly greater financial prospects, and they, finally, will not come.

I know of one case in the district I represent where a man has developed a property almost entirely out of his earnings. He had only a few hundred pounds at the outside when he went on to it and developed it almost entirely but of his earnings by working four or five days a week in the neighbourhood and, as I said, putting in his week-ends and holidays on the place itself. It is a district where potatoes can be grown successfully. He then applies for a licence to grow potatoes and is told that as he is not occupied full-time on his property, he cannot have one. That I suggest is an extraordinary attitude on the part of the responsible body.

If any statutory provision prevents them from having another job, I do not know of it; but to say that a person is not full-time engaged on his property simply because he has been struggling for five or six years to develop it into a worth-while property, and then to prevent him from getting enough off it by doing some intelligent grubbing in order that he might devote his whole time to it, seems to me a most extraordinary procedure. However, I will leave that topic for the time being.

There are many problems which face Australia today and the first of them, I would suggest, is the maintenance of our overseas credits. It is all very well to look at the position at the present time. We have just got out of a period of severe import restrictions. We still have some import restrictions and secondary industry in this country, in some instances, will not be able to carry on successfully unless there are considerable imports brought into the country. There is only one thing which is enabling those imports to be paid for at the present, and that is the wool industry. Every few days we get enlightened in the Press by the

fact that the wool clip is £455,000,000, £465,000,000 or what other figure it may be.

Our export credits to the extent of approximately 85 per cent. or more, are derived from the production of primary industry of one kind or another, and if there is any reduction in quantity or in sales, or if there is any substantial reduction in price, both of which can take place and indeed to some degree have taken place, then the margin between imports and exports is going to decrease rapidly. If the policy of restricting imports is the right one and is to be imposed again—and I do not see much alternative at the present moment—then the effect on industry will be very considerable. I am not thinking of the primary industries only. I am thinking of the secondary industries as well.

While I can see plenty of success, and I am a believer in a balanced industrial field for our country, nevertheless when one views what has been the situation for very, very many years, and is likely to be the situation so far as overseas credits are concerned for some considerable time, and when one realises what is essential to be brought into this country for its development and for the creation of more and more industry, all of which has to be paid for, then it is the more apparent that we should do as much as we can to develop and expand worth-while agricultural industries in order that there may be a continuance of them, and to some degree an expansion of the exportable field, on top of the increased demand locally because of our increasing population. If we do not do that, I believe we shall find more and more undesirable restrictions with consequent ill-effects.

That I think is another reason why there should be some real effort made to assist the people to whom I referred a few moments ago in their agricultural pursuits to ensure that some ways and means are found, some authority available which can investigate their cases, and some funds made available in the proper circumstances, to enable them to carry on and complete their developmental activities. I commend that idea to Her Majesty's Government. There is nothing else I want to refer to for the present, and on that note I shall conclude.

MR. HALL (Albany) [5.35]: I would like to draw the attention of the House to the urgency for decentralisation, and, having the interest of the people at heart, I believe it is the responsibility of every member in this Chamber to work to that end. We shall absolutely fail in our duty if we do not do that. Yet we find our centralised and vested interests always endeavouring to dictate the policy of State as can be observed from the discussion recently regarding the wool sale to take place at Albany when a small group was

taking resistance action against that sale. I can faithfully say that sale will take place irrespective of that resistance.

Nothing brings decentralisation home more to us than the clamour for our naval base. It has always been the clamour to centralise the naval base at Cockburn Sound. When it is known that Albany has a deep harbour, an outlying harbour and Oyster Harbour it will be seen that we have adequate facilities for harbouring submarines or surface craft. Today we find that the Government in office is taking decisive action towards decentralisation such as a power house being established, Bunbury being assisted in that regard, and we also have outlying power stations which can be used in an emergency. I repeat "in an emergency."

To be effective in decentralisation, we need the assistance of the Commonwealth Government. Some members might ask "Why the great urge?". It is clear to me that it is a case of decentralisation or perish, and this was brought home forcibly to me and to the members of the delegation sent from this State recently to attend the civil defence school at Macedon. The delegation can back up my remarks.

The horrors of the hydrogen bomb were explained to us explicitly. When we realise that a 40 megaton bomb has a 25 mile destruction radius, we become aware that two such bombs together with a few hundred incendiaries thrown in has a destructive value over an area of 50 miles which can be set afire and devastated. What a glorious fate! Now we want to push everything back into centralised areas. Other types of destruction were explained but the members of the delegation will probably report on it more explicitly later on.

If we are to observe the recent developments in Russia, we cannot fail to see the strategic move behind its decentralisation policy. This is done for no other reason than to use up the assets of the State and reduce the targets for attack. In Australia we have four targets and destruction could come from air or guided missile attack against which there is no protection. If it is good enough for Russia to decentralise, it is good enough for us to think about doing the same. This will entail a great effort and will need the provision of subsidies because if we are to decentralise industries and remove them from the cities, the people will have to be subsidised for transport in moving. Subsidies will also have to be paid for conveying commodities to markets. Financial assistance for hardship suffered and for the provision of housing that must go with any big move, will have to be rendered.

I say this: I believe that the Government today has done a great job in decentralisation, and the Minister for Works should be complimented for it, that is, for having

a water scheme of an independent source to serve the country districts. The country people today, in my opinion, are not only on the sheep's back but also in the safest part of the country with the sheep because of the availability of an independent water scheme and an independent power scheme. They are on the outside looking in for a change. If catastrophe does strike us, the decentralised areas will represent the only places from which anything will be pulled out of the wreck.

Hon. D. Brand: It is only completing the scheme which our Government started.

Mr. HALL: I hope it will continue. Going further from that, we find radio stations among the industries decentralised. I do not get much coverage myself from them but they serve our district and are absolutely essential in any decentralisation plan of which we have heard so much in the last two or three days.

Mr. Norton: What about television in the cities?

Mr. HALL: I believe in television for Western Australia. If we look at the Goldfields today we will find that they are being subsidised and decentralised. We have to admit they are decentralised and, with the price of gold as it is, kept by subsidy—and no one can dispute that fact. The Goldfields are decentralised and industries can be established there as they have the water. If an attack were made on the City of Perth, I would say the metropolis would be most vulnerable to radioactive fall out and the water supply from Mundaring Weir would be contaminated. The position was certainly not helped by the efforts of the previous Government.

Hon. D. Brand: Is not that the position in all cities throughout the world?

Mr. HALL: Yes, but the hydrogen bomb would be less effective if decentralisation were carried out.

Hon. D. Brand: Aeroplanes will reach wherever you go.

Mr. HALL: That is right, but the aeroplane is vulnerable to attack. A guided missile would have to come from a submarine, and it would come in minutes. However, an attack from the air would take two or three hours.

I have not spoken for long, and have covered my ground fairly quickly, but I would like to emphasise that decentralisation is the answer. We must also use the assets of the State. Unless we decentralise, we will have no chance of survival or of putting up a fight. The country people are the people who are on the outside and they should be helped by the people on the inside. The Government will need to have a look at these things very carefully and perhaps, by decentralisation, something will be saved out of the wreck.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 16th July, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

NATIVE WELFARE.

Government Acquisition of Beechboro Land.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What led up to the acquisition by the Government of the 20 acres of land in Beechboro, upon which it is proposed to establish a native reserve?

(2) Why was the Beechboro area chosen for such a reserve?

(3) What price was paid for the land?

(4) Does the Government not know that the land in question is very low-lying, and that 10 acres or thereabouts is swamp land, and most unsuitable for the purpose for which it is proposed?

(5) Does the Government know that the people of the Beechboro district are strongly protesting against the establishment of this reserve?

(6) Will the Government stay its hand in this matter in view of the tabling of a petition in this House on Tuesday, the 9th July, such petition being from the Beechboro residents requesting the Government to reconsider its intention to establish this reserve?