

happen in many other hospitals in the metropolitan area as well as in country districts where the matrons are too busy to carry out the duties of an authorised person. I think it is right they should refuse those duties, because they are not appointed to carry out the duties of the Electoral Office.

Mr. Bovell: In the country, the matrons have already a great deal to do.

Mr. ROBERTS: They have more than their fair share of work in country districts. I trust that hon. members will give serious consideration to the two small amendments in the Bill, because with them an opportunity will be given during the elections next year to persons desiring to vote by postal ballot, to do so early and with the least possible inconvenience. I commend the Bill to the House and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. A. R. G. Hawke (Premier), debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 9th October, 1958.

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

STATE BUILDING SUPPLIES.

Railway Royal Commissioner's Report re Combine of Sawmillers.

1. The Hon. J. MURRAY asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the interim report by Railways Royal Commissioner A. G. Smith, tabled on the 7th October, will the Minister inform the House—

- (1) Is it true that the State Building Supplies are part of a combine known as Associated Sawmillers and Timber Merchants of W.A.?
- (2) If the answer to No. (1) is in the affirmative, and as such association is against the original intention in setting up State sawmills, can the Minister say how long this state of affairs has existed?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND replied:

(1) State Building Supplies is a member of Associated Sawmillers and Timber Merchants of W.A. Under its constitution the association has no power to fix prices binding on members.

(2) State Building Supplies has been a member of Associated Sawmillers and Timber Merchants since it was founded as Associated Timber Industries in January, 1948, other than from the 1st July, 1950, to the 20th October, 1952.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Power Line from Perth Central Station to Serpentine.

2. The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) In view of the answers given to questions on Tuesday, the 7th October, why then has the W.A.G.R. not constructed its own power line from central station, Perth, to Serpentine, in order to keep the "railway safe working lines free of general power supplies"?

(2) In view of the statement made in answer to a question on the 7th October that no detailed survey has been made by the State Electricity Commission of the Keysbrook-North Dandalup area, how was it possible to justify the answer to the previous question on the 7th October that the Keysbrook-North Dandalup request for power had been refused because the loads offering are small and the distances excessive?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND replied:

(1) The answer to question No. (3) on the 7th October stated that the railway power line will be connected to a State

Electricity Commission line with alternative supplies. In elaboration of this answer, the following information is given:—

At Armadale, railways draw supply from S.E.C. main feeder which has alternative routes from source of supply, thus ensuring continuity and minimum voltage variations with which the apparatus can cope satisfactorily. For this reason no separate railway power line was needed between Perth and Armadale.

In the event of a total S.E.C. failure, the railway apparatus could function satisfactorily on battery supply for several hours.

If domestic draw from the railway power line was permitted, then voltage variation could not be guaranteed within a reasonable range, and this would increase the incidence of faults in the equipment and in the railway power line.

(2) The general survey referred to in the statement showed that the loads offering would be small and the distances excessive compared with areas where it had been possible to extend electricity.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Hon. L. C. Diver and read a first time.

HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL BILL.

Report of Committee adopted.

SUPPLY BILL (No. 2), £18,000,000.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [2.26]: This is the second Supply Bill to be introduced into this House this session. As hon. members are well aware, the Supply Bill gives the Government its house-keeping money in order to carry on the affairs of the State. We do not, as I have said before, see the Loan Estimates in this House, and, therefore, they are only debated in another place.

The Estimates, from an administrative point of view in the electorates of hon. members, have quite a considerable bearing, because, under the various ministerial departments they show the expenditure of the moneys contained, in the main, in this Bill. The introduction of the Supply Bill provides an opportunity to members to address themselves on a fairly open market upon matters which are not only of a financial nature, but also of an electoral or parochial nature.

I do not propose to take advantage of debating the Bill from either point of view. I understand there are some hon. members in the Chamber who want to take the opportunity this afternoon of

using the measure to address themselves upon various subjects, and I want to afford them this opportunity. The only other chance that hon. members have of addressing themselves to general matters is on the Address-in-reply debate. In all other cases you, Sir, keep us to the Bill before the House at the time.

I repeat, that the Supply Bill gives hon. members a chance to wander where they desire in bringing forward various matters of interest. I support the second reading of this Bill realising that it is necessary for the Government to have supply in order to carry on.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [2.28]: I ask the indulgence of the House on this measure in order to bring forward something which started from what I said in the debate on the Address-in-reply. This matter has reached a stage where it has become a personal one; but because I have been challenged on this issue I consider it only right for me to take the first opportunity to bring it before the House in order that it can decide whether my actions were right or otherwise.

Hon. members will recall that when I spoke on the Address-in-reply—this is reported on pages 74 and 75 of Hansard No. 2—I made certain references in criticism of the Press. Apparently the Press did not like it, because I received the following letter dated the 15th August:—

Dear Mr. Logan,

After our cordial talk last September on the subject of Press relations, I was surprised to hear of your attack on "The West Australian" last night. You have not told me of any new grievance and I cannot discover from your speech what motive made you put such misleading statements into Hansard.

We cannot let outside people take charge of the paper. You would not let a stranger come into your business and tell you what to do and what not to do—and it is even more important to keep the Press free from political influence.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: That is a funny one.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The letter continues—

One of our prime duties is to publish English; and if politicians misuse the language we have to correct the matter before publication.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: In a way suitable to them.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The letter goes on—

At the same time, our staff has instilled into it the strongest sense of its responsibility to give fair and accurate reports. Anyone who thinks

we are in error at any time would do better to tell us about it than to nurse a grievance. We desire to uphold and strengthen the institution of Parliament, and, of course, it is part of the work of responsible journalism to keep uninformed tittle-tattle out of the paper.

If you would be good enough to read this letter in the House it could go to posterity with your comments to which we take exception.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) G. Richards,
Editor.

I made statements in criticism of the Press; not misleading statements. Everything I said was perfectly true. So, in reply to that letter, I wrote, on the 25th September, to the paper. Hon. members will notice by the date that I did not do anything hastily, but gave the matter a lot of thought and consideration. Eventually I sent this letter to Mr. Richards of "The West Australian"—

In reply to your letter of August 15th, 1958, I must also express my disappointment that the results of our talk did not lead to a better relationship between "The West Australian" newspaper and my Party. For your information, I submit the following.

A letter written to the Editor by Sir Charles Latham was never published, despite the fact that it was in reply to many letters appearing in your columns from the end of November to December 23rd, 1957, including a leading article on Wednesday, December 4th, 1957, but mainly in reply to R. J. O'Connor of Monday, December 23rd, wherein he stated that no Liberal had ever voted for socialistic legislation.

Sir Charles Latham's letter gave a list of the socialistic legislation passed by the Legislative Council when the Liberal representation numbered at least 14.

A statement prepared by the Executive of C.D.L. on the endorsement of the Hon. C. H. Simpson, M.L.C., as Country Party candidate for the Midland Province, and delivered to you personally by Mr. E. P. Hayes, past President of the C.D.L. was not published as presented and one important passage was omitted.

A letter signed by the late Mr. J. H. Ackland, M.L.A., which was submitted on behalf of the Party, was not published in full and the meaning of a phrase was entirely altered, viz. "another candidate had withdrawn in his favour" read "another candidate found favour" which you must agree is an entirely different interpretation.

The leading article of Monday, March 10th, 1958, on Hon. C. H. Simpson, M.L.C., was one of the most unwarranted attacks ever made upon a public man in Western Australia, and in complete contrast to statements made by a newspaper published in the Province which Mr. Simpson represented. The statement in the leading article that a "sordid political intrigue is perceptible here" was an absolute lie. No intrigue or even discussion had ever taken place on this matter.

The same article stated that several Country Party M's.L.C. had become laughing stocks, especially in the shrewdly-led Labour Party, which uses them cynically. This also was an unjust slur upon these members (I notice that they were never named, because no such position has arisen).

My criticism of space made available for Parliamentary proceedings is one which was widely held throughout the State—country people particularly are anxious to have a better coverage, and I compared this to the complete coverage given to the evidence submitted before the Television Board—surely a fair criticism.

You cannot refute my statement that space booked by the organisation for the advertisement "The Country Party Speaks" was refused on the ground that it was unacceptable to the paper—surely not much freedom of the Press when people or organisations are refused advertising space just because it is not in line with the policy of the paper or perhaps because it contains some slight criticism of the paper, in reply to criticism already published against the individual and the organisation by the paper concerned.

My criticism of the statement on Badgingarra was the result of complaints to me by two of the persons interviewed, who were particularly hostile to know that their remarks had been interpreted in such a manner and that the article could have implications in that the P.M.G. could quite easily have decided on the strength of the article to defer work on the telephone communications in the area.

The statements appearing in "The West Australian" on Friday, August 22nd, and Saturday, August 23rd, accusing Senator Agnes Robertson on leaving the Government in danger of defeat and stating that she was absent without leave, are again not according to facts; and as yet, I have not seen Senator Agnes Robertson's letter published, giving a denial of this charge, which I know has been forwarded.

In the reporting on Parliament on Friday, September 19th, it was stated that the Hon. H. L. Roche had supported the Land Tax Bill last time. This again is untrue as the Hon. H. L. Roche opposed the Land Tax Bill.

I, as well as many others, appreciate that increased space has been made available for Parliamentary proceedings. I trust that this will be at least maintained—if not, increased in the future.

I hope that cordial relations can be established and maintained in the interests of all concerned.

Before going any further, I will say that the paper did make a correction in regard to the statement concerning the hon. H. L. Roche, M.L.C. In reply to my letter I received the following letter, dated the 30th September, from "The West Australian":—

Your letter of September 25 ignores our request of August 15 that you read into Hansard our reply to your ill-informed criticism of "The West Australian." Are we to assume that, applying the same principle, you would not expect "The West Australian" to publish any reply to criticism that you might want to make from time to time?

I thought that Mr. Richards, who has had many years' experience of Parliamentary procedure through reporting the proceedings in Parliament, would know that no opportunity had arisen from the time I received his communication until now, to lay his letter on the Table of the House, or to have it incorporated in Hansard. The only method available to hon. members to do anything like that is to move for the adjournment of the House; and they can only do that on the ground of urgent public business. The only other thing an hon. member can do is to wait for the introduction of the Supply Bill, and then deal with the matter; and that is what I have done.

I am not afraid. I have been accused of making misleading statements. I refuted every one of those statements in the letter which I wrote to the Press, and they did not mention one of those items in their reply, but still said I was making misleading statements.

I do not mind coming here and presenting the letter that the Press has written to me, but I think that at least, the Press should do the same thing. When it makes a mistake, it should correct it; or when I say, "when it makes a mistake," perhaps I should have said that when it has done something it should not have done in regard to the freedom of the Press, it should correct it.

The Hon. A. L. Loton: It has never made a mistake.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There is the statement in regard to Senator Agnes Robertson that the fate of the Government could easily be decided because she was away, or words to that effect. It would have made no difference whether one or ten senators had been out of the State, because at any stage of the game in the Federal House the Labour Party had the majority, as was proved on the Banking Bill. That was common knowledge; and that was a stupid statement to make. Why did the newspaper have headlines—this is calculated criticism—bringing Senator Agnes Robertson into disrepute?

The Hon. A. L. Loton: So long as it affects the Country Party.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; they boot us where they can. I make no apology for craving the indulgence of the House to raise the question this afternoon. I have done as I was asked; I have read out the letter, and my reply to it, and they will be incorporated in Hansard. I shall leave it at that.

There is one other subject that I would like to mention and this concerns the proposed Geraldton regional hospital. As hon. members will know, for many years this has been a rather touchy subject, because of the delay in commencing the building of a regional hospital at Geraldton. I think it would be a good idea if we forgot about the word "regional" and merely called it a new hospital for Geraldton; we might get somewhere then. In about 1948 or 1949 the State Health Council, which was under discussion last night, recommended to the Government of the day that Geraldton, Albany and Bunbury should all have an equal priority in regard to the building of hospitals.

That was 10 years ago and, despite all the pleading by the Geraldton Municipal Council and hon. members for the district, we find that we are still in the same, if not a worse position today. I can remember attending a deputation to the Minister for Health, just prior to the last elections; and he almost promised that he would at least have the area levelled so that the land could consolidate and be ready for the building of the hospital when its turn came up. That work has still not been done. Yet, when I read the paper of the 20th September, I found that the Government intends to spend £6,000,000 on hospitals within the next few years. When I asked a question as to whether any of that money was to be spent on the new Geraldton hospital, the answer was, "No" and when I asked "Why," I was told that loan moneys were not available.

But the Government can find £6,000,000 for other hospitals in the State, which 10 years ago were not even thought about. Some of that £6,000,000 will be spent on a general hospital at Osborne Park, another at Esperance, a mental home at

Guildford, and extensions to the Albany, Fremantle and Narrogin hospitals. The hospital at Osborne Park will be a 63-bed, single storey structure, and work is to be carried out at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, where accommodation for a further 92 beds will be made available plus provision for the Medical School staff, as well as students and nurses' quarters. As Geraldton has not been included in the list, and this money will be spent over the next few years, it looks as though it will be another 10 years before a start is made on a new hospital in Geraldton.

It is all very well for the Minister to say that a lot of money has been spent on the existing Geraldton hospital. I admit that money has been spent on it; but in my opinion that money has been wasted, because, no matter how much is spent on the hospital, it will never be a good one. In my opinion, a certain sum of money should be set aside each year for the erection of hospitals at Bunbury, Geraldton and Albany, although I understand that the hospital at Albany is now in course of erection.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: Geraldton should be like Kalgoorlie. The hospital caught fire and the authorities had to build a new one.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That might not be a bad idea. As I said, 10 years ago the Health Council recognised the need for these hospitals, and today new hospitals are springing up throughout the metropolitan area and country districts, while those which, in 1948, were considered essential, are being neglected. So, I ask the Government to have another look at this matter and give consideration to putting aside £100,000 a year for the purpose of building hospitals in the places I mentioned.

There is another aspect in regard to the Geraldton hospital. If Co-operative Bulk Handling build a new silo near the No. 1 wharf, as I hope they will do very soon, it will be right opposite the present maternity home, and the dust nuisance created by the working at the silo will make conditions in the maternity home unbearable. So, now is the time to level the land which is available, and make provision for the new hospital by starting off with a maternity wing. I hope the Government will give serious consideration to this matter. I support the Bill.

THE HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [2.45]: I rarely speak on the Supply Bill because I hate to delay such measures more than is necessary. But I feel that the matter I wish to discuss is of considerable urgency, and as the only other way I can deal with it is to move an urgency motion, I decided on this occasion to speak on the Bill.

As hon. members will know, following the tabling of the railway Royal Commissioner's No. 6 report, I asked a question of the Minister. I knew the answer

before I got it. The association referred to by the Royal Commissioner includes among its members the State Building Supplies, which is probably what might be called the non-paying member of the association. In his reply the Minister said that the association has no power to fix prices which are binding on its members. Of course it has no power, but it is such a tight fixed association, that all its members and others outside, use the one standard price list so that it is almost impossible to get timber of any kind, whether it be sleepers or building timber, at a price lower than that fixed in the list. On occasions some people are lucky and receive a special trade discount which makes the price to them a little cheaper.

On many occasions, both here and in another place, I have reviewed the position with regard to the State Building Supplies, but it might be as well at this stage to stress the original purpose of inaugurating the State Saw Mills, as it used to be known. The State Saw Mills were originally set up because there was some doubt in the minds of hon. members of Parliament at that time as to whether the associated sawmillers, as they were then known, could or would supply sufficient sleepers to keep the State railways going, and also whether they would be able to supply sufficient sleepers for the Trans line which was being constructed by Trans Australian Railways.

Of course, times have changed since then, and, as I have pointed out on more than one occasion, Governments over the period have lost sight of the original purpose of the State Saw Mills. It would be wrong to say that the State Saw Mills entered the field in a competitive way with other members of the associated sawmillers, because there can be no competition when buying from the one organisation only, and it cannot cut at competitive prices.

That has gone on for a period of years, and today it is the fundamental reason for the difficulty which the railways are in. It is no good turning to the State Sawmills in place of the associated sawmillers for sleepers, because I doubt whether they could supply them at the current price. That is all by the way. That is not my main reason for speaking this afternoon.

Hon. members will recall that we dealt with an amendment to the Forests Act in 1954, which is recorded in Vol. 3 of the Parliamentary Debates for that year. At that time I reviewed the amendment and had great pleasure in supporting it, because it was along the lines of my own viewpoint. I quoted the opening sentence of the Chief Secretary's speech when he introduced the measure. He said—

There is such a long-standing spirit of goodwill and co-operation between the department and the sawmillers that there should be no genuine fear as to misuse of the powers.

Those were his words. I went on to say as follows:—

Having expressed surprise, I go further and express much greater surprise at the complacency with which the sawmillers have accepted the amendments.

I stated that the Government had received a letter from the associated sawmillers which indicated the complacency with which the sawmillers had accepted the amendments. I said further—

My own opinion is that despite the assurance of the Minister, the associated sawmillers will, in the years ahead, find that the amendments proposed in Clause 6 of the Bill, can and will be used to limit their production. To stress my surprise at the complacency of the sawmillers, I shall read the first and last paragraphs of a letter to the department—

At a meeting of the council of this association held this afternoon, members expressed satisfaction with your explanation of the main intention of the amendments to the Forests Act, 1918, namely the future security of the State forests and the industry generally on a long-term planning basis.

That is the first paragraph; the last one states—

After hearing the Hon. Minister's speech on the second reading of the Bill and your assurances, and after a full discussion at our meeting, members of this association raise no objections to the proposed amendments.

That was an amazing statement from such a body, because the amendments placed the industry under the complete control of the Conservator of Forests, if he so desired to exercise his control. I foresaw the position that would arise, and some suggestions made in the report of the Royal Commission indicated to me that the time was not far distant when the sawmillers would realise this fact. I went on to say during my second reading speech in 1954—

At the same time I point out that in the Bill, drastic alterations are proposed; and if those people who look on complacently when amendments of this nature are introduced, say they are going to accept them, it is not a bit of use for them in a few years' time to expect that I and other members shall listen carefully to the views they express at that late stage.

The time is coming when the sawmillers will express very strong views on the suggestions put forward by the Royal Commission. Perhaps it might be as well for

me to read extracts from the report. On page 15 of the sixth interim report this is stated:—

It was in his answer of 1/8/57 to this letter, from which I extracted the passage referring to the waning power of the Association. In addition, the Conservator pointed out that he could see no harm likely to result from the allocation of a percentage of sleeper requirements to independent small sawmillers although he considered the major part of W.A.G.R. sleeper requirements would continue to come from Association members. Furthermore, he stressed, that, if it became necessary, the position of the railways could always be protected by him through the control of permits.

The power suggested in the report, was not put into the Act until 1954. When I addressed myself to the House in 1954, I read out some of the remarks made in a report of a previous Royal Commission on forest matters, because I felt at the time that the findings of a previous Select Committee were along the same lines as the recommendations of the Royal Commission, in regard to the use by the Conservator of Forests of this far-reaching power. An extract from the report of the Select Committee states—

As it is the feeling of all members of the committee that the smaller people in the timber milling industry have had a raw deal in regard to forest areas, compared with the strong components of the trade, it is thought that an enforcement of the permissible intake conditions to a reasonable minimum . . .

It is strange to note that the wording of the amendment to the Forests Act was that areas would be made available through forfeiture to the smaller people in the industry who, it must be admitted, had not been regarded very favourably by those who control large areas of forest.

In other words, if there is no equitable solution to the position with regard to the supply of sleepers to our State railways, no doubt the associated sawmillers will have sections of their permits taken away and small mills, which I do not think should be set up as I have never been in favour of them, would be established throughout the State. We might call them one-man shows.

I am not going to delay the House much longer. I just wanted to stress to people outside the House that in 1954, they had their warning that for all time—at any rate for as long as a Government which thought the same as the then Government did was in power—the control of the industry would under the amended Forest Act, 1954, be handed over to the Government, through the Conservator of Forests. I support the Bill.

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West) [3.21]: I would like to say a few words in regard to the answers to my questions about the waste of money in the North Dandalup-Keysbrook area. Hon. members are aware that over the last several days I have asked some questions in regard to the supply of electricity, by the State Electricity Commission, to the North Dandalup-Keysbrook area, and the answers—to say the least—have been contradictory. The situation is that there is a strip of land there which is very productive agricultural land. It is comparatively densely populated and is carrying a large number of dairy cattle, and all hon. members know that a considerable amount of electricity is needed, when dealing with cattle, for the motors for hammer mills, milking machines, separators and lights, and, if the power is on a 24-hour basis, cool rooms and so on.

To the casual person driving along the road, the density of the population would not be apparent. He would have to go off the road a bit to realise it, and he would be amazed.

In answer to one of my questions, the Minister informed the House that a survey which the State Electricity Commission had conducted indicated that the loads offering were small and the distances between them excessive; but in answer to another question he stated that a detailed survey had not been made. I am fairly sure that the survey consisted of a reasonably fast drive along the main road with, probably, a man in the back counting the number of houses as they went along. That is all it could have been to arrive at the results submitted. Strangely enough, as I have said, very few of the houses and farm buildings are visible from the road.

The other point on which I would like to lay some stress, is that we have heard of the central traffic control system which is being installed by the Western Australian Government Railways—very wisely, I consider—and which will be utilised on the Perth-Bunbury line, although building plans are not envisaged to take it all the way to Bunbury. In America, I believe they run very busy lines now on a single track and, by means of this signalling system, they can pass trains on loops at 60 m.p.h.

As the Minister informed us, the railway Department has, by tapping the mains at Armadale, electric power as far as Serpentine. But there are 11 miles—I thought it was 15, but I was corrected—from North Dandalup to Serpentine where the State Electricity Commission has, in accordance with its policy, run the power to the railway line which is carrying the power over those 11 miles to supply its own needs.

The reason given for this is that it is world-wide practice, based on experience, that railway lines, for safe working, should

be kept free from general power mains. But then it is stated that a line has not been built from Perth to join that section of 11 miles, because it can satisfactorily be tapped at Armadale. If it is world experience that power lines should be entirely separate from the main supplies, then the answer which I was given was not satisfactory, because the main supply line is still being tapped.

The first answer does not hold water at all. Surely the logical solution is to run a line from Perth central railway station right through as far as the central traffic control system goes. It must have cost money to put the 11 miles of line in for the power, and I would like to hear what legal or mechanical bar there would be to the Railway Department making an *ex gratia* payment to the State Electricity Commission of the amount of the cost of that line, to encourage it to continue the line to North Dandalup. If the railways had done that, not only would they have been served but so would the settlers. In addition, it would have been an economic proposition, because those settlers are customers not only of the S.E.C. but of the Railway Department; and this could well have been an excellent method for the department to encourage a little bit of goodwill by going out of its way to help the settlers in that area.

The department is going to build 11 miles of line at some cost; and, at some time or other, the State Electricity Commission is going to build 11 miles of line to supply electricity. The statement will probably be made that the State Electricity Commission is a completely different department from the railways, and the State Electricity Commission is run as a business and that the two sections can not be mixed. The fact remains that taxpayers and users of electricity in this country foot the bill.

If we could have had a saving of £5,000, or £10,000, it would have been of advantage to a State which is having grave difficulty in supplying such elementary requirements as septic tank systems to country schools. Any possibility of a saving such as that should be carefully investigated, and I suggest that, in view of the stout efforts that the Minister for Railways is making to improve the financial position of the railways, if he could have come to a compromise arrangement with the S.E.C., while at the same time creating goodwill among consumers in that area, the possibility should have received careful consideration.

From reading the answers to questions which I have asked, I believe there is a desire to skim around the edge a little and avoid giving a straight-out answer which might reveal the actual reason for the action taken. It could well be that there is a good reason for what is being done. There might, for instance, be a big construction load on some job in the area, and when the job is completed the

lines there may be able to handle the local supply. If that is the case, the department should say so, instead of beating around the bush with all this kerfuffle—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: How do you spell it?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I will ask Hansard to change the word to "nonsense." It would appear that by both the S.E.C. and the railways there is room for investigation. We all know the policy of the S.E.C., and it would appear that it is becoming a little bit inflexible. It could be that the S.E.C. should interpret its policy with a greater degree of flexibility, to the advantage of all concerned; and at the same time we could well do with a bit of co-operation between the various departments, as that would permit some economies in our State expenditure. I support the Bill.

THE HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [3.13]: I was unable to make any contribution to the debate on the Address-in-reply, as it came to finality very suddenly, during a week when I, unfortunately, was away sick. There are, therefore, one or two matters with which I would have dealt on that occasion, and which I will endeavour to cover briefly now. With reference to the complimentary remarks that are customarily made during the Address-in-reply debate; I think that at this stage of the session they can be taken as read as far as I am concerned, but my feelings in that regard are nevertheless sincere. A number of the matters with which I had intended to deal have in one way or another since then been made the subject of legislation and so I will be able to deal with them when the Bills in question are before us. I have no wish to delay the passage of this measure any longer than necessary.

One of the questions which keeps cropping up in the northern areas is that of boring for water and the need for a survey of water possibilities in certain districts. Having in mind the repeated requests that have been made almost every time I visit the country, and the knowledge that similar requests are coming forward from other centres, and in the light of replies given to questions asked in this House, I think that many hon. members will agree with me that there should be greater provision made for water-boring facilities. Western Australia is particularly dependent on water supplies; and here I refer more specifically to underground supplies. I therefore think it would be wisdom on the part of the Government to make a survey in promising areas, as soon and as complete as possible, in regard to the possibilities of providing further water supplies.

I will deal now with a matter which is of great concern to a number of people in the district I represent and who are dependent upon tomato-growing for their livelihood. For a number of years the tomato-growers of Geraldton have made a

considerable contribution to the prosperity and economy of the district, but today their industry is not as prosperous as it should be. There was a time, years ago, when knowledgeable men realised that in a frost free area such as Geraldton, with its mild climate, tomatoes could mature early, and there was a great possibility of securing a market in the capital cities of the Eastern States—particularly Melbourne. They considered they could land the tomatoes there and sell them at fancy prices, before competitive tomatoes were available locally or from other parts of Australia.

However, as the years went by, the possibilities of this market were realised by others and competition developed, from both South Australia and Queensland, where, to my knowledge, some thousands of acres of tomatoes were grown under glass. I do not know whether the growing of the plants under glass affects the flavour of the fruit, or not, but the growers in those States, on account of their closer proximity to the market, have the advantage of being able to send riper fruit to the market for sale; and the result is that the industry at Geraldton has fallen on rather bad times.

I will quote part of a letter that was written to the Minister for Agriculture. It states—

Deep concern is felt at the present time by members of the tomato growing industry in Geraldton, regarding the collapse of the Perth market when disposal to Melbourne is no longer practicable.

A good illustration of the results of these conditions was given in the early part of 1957, when glut conditions in Melbourne forced local production almost entirely on to the Perth market and again, more recently, with the usual seasonal end to Melbourne consignments from Geraldton the weight of fruit diverted to Perth from Geraldton, together with increasing consignments from Carnarvon, produced a condition of marketing chaos.

The letter continues and asks the Director of Agriculture and his experts whether they can suggest any remedy, possibly in relation to regulation of the growing and marketing conditions. At all events, this is a matter in which the growers are feeling the pinch, and they desire any help which can be given them by either the Government or the department.

I have here something which I think will interest hon. members; it is a sample of cotton grown in the Mullewa district and it attracted favourable notice from cotton experts who were visiting this country from California. The property on which the sample was grown is a few miles east of Pindar and belongs to Mr. Frank Field, a very progressive and active farmer.

This man has a considerable holding in the district and, whilst he grew this cotton purely as a matter of interest and experiment, he was agreeably surprised to hear the complimentary remarks of the experts who are visiting this State. They surveyed various areas throughout Western Australia, and not only were they impressed by the cotton that was produced from this particular soil, but also they were interested enough to take extensive samples of the soil. They said it was particularly adaptable and that the climate in that area showed promise of being in every way suitable for the growing of cotton. They also said that the ideal climatic condition for growing cotton was warm and fairly dry. An important factor was a good supply of water which could be fed to the plants as needed in fairly copious amounts and, of course, regularly as required.

Mr. Field told me that on the property he had taken up he had discovered a source of water which he thought the department could well prospect. He said that he had sunk a number of boreholes and had obtained water at a fairly uniform depth of 28 to 30 feet. The source of water seemed to be three or four miles long and 300 or 400 yards wide, and the quality was good. He was of the opinion that, perhaps, steps could be taken to establish a cotton-growing industry of an experimental nature with the aid of this fairly good water supply.

Mr. Field asked the experts concerned what he might expect by way of yield from the land he had, and they replied that he might have to grow a different type of plant. These days cotton is planted each year and in the harvesting the machines pull the plants to pieces, and the area has to be replanted in preparation for the next harvest. However, with the selective type of plant grown on the ground that he had, and with the use of the water available, he was told he could expect nothing less than two bales to the acre. Mr. Field asked what a bale of cotton would weigh and they said that each bale weighed 500 lb., which would make the yield 1,000 lb. to the acre. On asking what would be a reasonable price for the cotton they said that, like wool, it would vary with the length of staple and the quality. However, in making an estimate on the quality of the cotton sample that I have here and with the knowledge that it was grown under primitive conditions at Pindar as compared with a cotton sample that could be grown under ideal conditions, they told Mr. Field he would be unfortunate if he could not get 60d. a lb. That would mean a gross return to him of £250 an acre.

I discussed this matter with the Director of Agriculture and he said he knew the Americans concerned, and he promised me that an official from the Department of Agriculture would visit the area and

check the information that I was able to give him. He told me that cotton-growing had been encouraged in Queensland over the years, and from period to period there had been a fair amount of production in that State, generally depending on the price. However, it seems to me, when we take into account the large amount of money that must be sent out of Australia to buy cotton overseas, that if there is any possibility of producing this product in our own country, the proposition is well worth examination.

I suggest that, when we pass this Bill to grant the Government the money it requires, perhaps some of it may be applied to investigate the question of cotton production which would seem, from the information supplied to me, to have distinct possibilities. With those remarks I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

THE HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [3.25]: I am not going to take very long, but at the same time I am not going to excuse myself for the time I do take to raise a matter which I consider is important and which goes a little further than that mentioned by the hon. Mr. Simpson. I am concerned about the fact that for the past two years, at any rate, some hon. members of the Country Party have referred to the plight of those settlers who began developing properties some few years ago, but who are not yet well established or have not reached the stage where they can run stock or operate their farms as economic units. It is vital that these men should receive assistance from the Government.

We have been telling all those interested that story for some considerable time, but I regret to say that the Estimates and the Budget have been produced, but no moneys have been set aside to fill that need. In my opinion, the position in which these settlers are placed has gone from bad to worse. The producers consider that this year they are experiencing a recession despite the fact that the wheat yield is estimated to be well over the average and a reasonable return may be expected from other cereals produced. Also, whilst we might say that the returns to farmers from meat have been reasonable, one would not think so when making purchases at the butcher's shop.

Of course, nobody needs to be told the sad story of the fall in the price of wool. For some time we have pointed out what might happen if this occurred, and if people do not know by now what effect the fall in wool prices will have on the economy of the country, they will know next year. Therefore, with conditions as they are, it is imperative that the Government should do something to assist those settlers who, actually, are not many in number. If no assistance is forthcoming to help them develop their properties,

I am afraid that they will be walking off them, and they will be placed on the list of unemployed.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Are they war service land settlers?

The Hon. A. R. JONES: No, they are not. I am sure the settlers who have taken up property under the war service land settlement scheme will be well looked after, because they have a sound organisation to back and protect them. The settlers I have in mind are those who have spent £3,000 or £4,000 of their own capital to settle on properties in districts which promised good results. I am speaking of settlers in those areas such as the Eastern Stirlings, Dinny Hill, Badgingarra and Mendel-Wongoondy West.

The settlers in those areas have taken up properties on good country with a reliable rainfall, but because water is hard to obtain, and in view of the fact that cereals do not always do well in those parts they have been unable to produce any cash crops. As a result, they have been passing through difficult times, and it will be some time yet before they can be classed as economic producers. They certainly need extra time to enable them to bring their properties up to the required standard. Most of them are good farmers, but they need a little extra assistance to enable them to carry on until they reach the stage when they can become self-supporting. The Government, therefore, should regard this matter seriously and act quickly to define a policy to assist these people.

I have mentioned that water supplies are hard to get in some places. I will elaborate further on what the hon. Mr. Simpson said and explain to the House that at the instigation of myself, the hon. Mr. Logan and others, the Government inaugurated a drilling campaign, and set up two machines to drill for water in places where it is difficult to find. The two areas about which we were concerned were Mendel-Wongoondy and Badgingarra, where water is found at a great depth, if it is found at all.

The Government made two machines available and also provided geologists from the department. These were working under the Mines Department. One of the machines went into the Badgingarra area and the other into the Kalannie area. Unfortunately there was a breakdown of the latter machine and it has not started working yet. There was no contract for the one that went to Badgingarra. No farmer was prepared to sign a contract even though the drill site had been selected by the geologist. I have asked some questions to determine the position.

I believe the bore has been sunk to a depth of 700 ft. and there is an ample supply of good water. That bears out why the settlers have not signed the contract with the Government for this boring to be carried out. The reason is they could

be putting something round their necks which they would not have any chance of paying off earlier than 10 years or so. The Government, of course, will want its money if it strikes a successful bore.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: It will cost well over £2,000.

The Hon. A. R. JONES: That is so. It is no wonder, therefore, that these people will not sign a contract with the Government, and tie themselves up for such a large amount. If these people are to be given the assistance they need, and a boring plant is to be provided, they must be given to understand that if a successful bore is found the amount they will be charged will be spread over a period of years; they must be told that they will be permitted to pay for it when their properties become economic propositions. That is not too much to ask.

It will not take a large amount of money to ensure that these people are supplied with water. I know that anybody starting out on a venture will run into difficulty and experience teething troubles, just as the Government is experiencing with its boring plant. If the Minister had a property in one of the areas I have mentioned, and had no money, would he sign a contract which would tie him up to a large amount, as would have been the case with this bore at 700ft.? Of course he would not.

The Mines Department is now saying that it has set up a plant to do what was asked of it, and it now finds that no contract has been signed in that area. I have already given the reason why no contract has been signed. The Government is now contacting the people in the Kalannie area where, I understand, about 20 of them have signed a contract. If this is so, I hope they will get the water they want. I trust the Government will see the fallacy of the contract, as it is, in the light of the facts I have mentioned. Some of the people in the Mendel-Wongoondy area signed contracts and for reasons unknown to me have had their deposits returned. I asked questions the other day to try to find out why their deposits had been returned to them. The people in that area were the first to make application for the boring plants, and they should have been looked after before others who came in later. That does not mean I want to see the people in the Kalannie area deprived of water.

I hope the Minister will make a note of this, and mention it to his colleagues in Cabinet; to see whether some policy cannot be inaugurated to enable these people to be given financial assistance through the the Rural and Industries Bank, under a system similar to that which operated years ago. I am not suggesting that the Government is over-charging, but I do say that any person who has not very much money will not sign a contract which may involve him in an amount of up

to £2,000, particularly if he has no hope of paying it unless it is spread over a period of, say, 10 years.

THE HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [3.35]: I support the second reading of the Bill and, in doing so, I would like to do some thinking aloud on a subject that has been exercising my mind in recent months. I refer to the question of conferences between the two Houses. Almost from the inception of the arrangement for conferences between the Houses it has been an unwritten law, and a definite understanding, that the managers would meet in secret and not discuss their proceedings, or disclose or divulge them to anybody.

Having concluded their meeting, they would bring in a report to their respective Houses indicating, in the event of agreement, the manner or nature of the agreement arrived at; or, in the event of disagreement, they would simply report that there had been a disagreement. At no time did any manager divulge what took place in the conference room. But in recent years that principle, which I think has much to commend it, has been departed from. I submit that the present position is intolerable, and that unless there can be a clear and more definite understanding between this House and the Legislative Assembly as to just how the conference of managers shall be conducted, and as to just what the nature of the report to their respective Houses shall be, this House should not grant any further conferences. We should not grant any further conferences until these matters are cleared up.

The particular question that has served to highlight the present difficulties arose last year in connection with a conference on the Local Government Bill. A conference was held, and the managers failed to agree. The Chief Secretary came back to this House and, in accordance with ancient custom, reported as follows:—

I have to report that the managers met in conference on the Bill and failed to reach agreement.

He then moved the adoption of the report. One would have expected, since this is the usual method, and has been so from the inception of conferences in the event of disagreement, that in the Legislative Assembly a similar report would have been submitted. But we find a similar report was not submitted. On the contrary, the Minister for Justice on that occasion returned to the Legislative Assembly and submitted a very long statement purporting to disclose what took place in the conference, and then reported that the Bill was lost.

Apart from the fact that the Minister purported to disclose what took place in the conference, we know he criticised the

activities, views or stand in that conference of an hon. member of this Council. I feel, particularly as the hon. member who was criticised asserts that the purported record of the proceedings is not even correct, that until such time as the present intolerable position has been cleared up, there should be no further conferences between this House and the Legislative Assembly.

This view appears to be shared, strangely enough, by the Minister for Justice, because, I notice in making the report to which I have just referred, he said on page 3568 of the Parliamentary Debates on the 12th November, 1957—

I feel that these conferences are just a farce. As the procedure now stands, it is a waste of time to hold these conferences. I have no further desire ever to be on such a conference.

The Standing Orders on the question are briefly this; and for many years they were the same in both Houses—

At all Conferences the Managers for the Council shall be at liberty to confer freely by word of mouth with the Managers of the Assembly. If no agreement be reached the Bill or other matter referred to the Conference shall be deemed to have been determined.

The Managers for the Council shall, when the Conference has terminated, report their proceedings to the Council forthwith, in writing. Such report to be signed by the Council Managers.

A few years ago that Standing Order was altered to read this way—

The Managers for the Council shall, when the Conference has terminated, report the result of their proceedings to the Council—

The insertion of those words was not intended to give a new meaning to the Standing Order, Mr. President. It was merely intended to make clear that Standing Order as it always existed. It was also intended to apply as it had in fact been applied and followed by managers of both Houses for very many years.

These words were inserted as the result of an experience which I had at a meeting of managers. I was threatened with much the same procedure by a Minister, in another place, as was adopted here. I was informed that if I did not agree—and the Minister informed me of this—he would go back to the Legislative Assembly and state that the Bill had failed, because I would not agree to the proposals of the Legislative Assembly. It so happened that on that particular managers' conference, while I and my colleagues were discussing the Bill with two other managers from the Legislative Assembly, the Minister was writing a broadcast which he had to deliver either that or the following evening. I promptly told the Minister that if he went back and reported what the proceedings

were I, in my turn, would tell the House he had not participated in the subject under discussion, but had confined himself to writing his broadcast for that evening.

On that occasion, the Minister saw the force of my argument and simply reported to the Legislative Assembly—as had always been the case in the past—that the conference failed to agree. Unless we are going to have a definite understanding that when conference does fail to agree there shall be no purported disclosures, backbiting, unfair criticism, or unjust charges, I feel that the conference is not only a farce, but places this House and its hon. members in a very invidious position.

Sitting suspended from 3.46 to 4.4 p.m.

The Hon. H. K. WATSON: I understand that the Council amended its Standing Orders and made it clear that all that had to be reported was the result of the proceedings. A similar amendment was not, I believe, made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly. But I do not regard even that as of much moment, because I do not think the amendment made to our Standing Orders altered the sense of the Standing Order as it had always been understood. It simply made the original meaning clearer.

I feel that if there are to be further conferences, then, before they are held, the position should be cleared up and there should be a perfect understanding between both Houses. If conferences are going to be held in secret, let them be held in secret; alternatively, let them be held in the open so that they are open to the Press and the public.

I would through you, Mr. President, ask the Minister to bring these thoughts to the notice of the Premier and perhaps you, yourself, Sir, may deem it advisable to mention them to the Speaker. Until such time as the present unsatisfactory position is cleaned up, and until hon. members of this Chamber can be assured that when they go to a conference they will not subsequently be misrepresented, and even abused, not only here but in the Press and over the air, I am firmly convinced that we should not agree to any further conferences.

THE HON. R. C. MATTISKE (Metropolitan) [4.7]: I support the measure, and I take this opportunity of amplifying the remarks made by Mr. Watson in connection with conferences of managers. I share his view that if, in this Chamber, we are to receive a bare report of what has happened at such a conference, while in another place, hon. members are able to hear a lengthy report which may or may not be correct, then I feel these conferences are a waste of time and money. At page 3568 of Hansard for 1957, the

Minister for Justice, when reporting on the conference of managers on the Local Government Bill, stated—

One member of the conference—not a member of the Legislative Assembly—refused to agree to both owners and occupiers being registered unless there were two different systems, namely for cities and towns, the present municipal council system where the occupier is automatically registered to the exclusion of the owner, while in shire councils the occupier would have to make application for registration.

It was clear from the Report of Proceedings in Committee in the Legislative Council that the House had rejected a proposal that the owner should have preference over the occupier.

A suggestion was made to the dissenting member of the conference that he should cease to dissent from the proposition which, in principle, was agreed to by the other five members, and explain the divergence of opinion to the Legislative Council when the report of the managers was presented, leaving the House to accept or reject the conference report on that subject. This he declined to do.

It became clear that by no means could his agreement be obtained, thus the conference failed to agree and the Bill was lost.

Following that, there were statements in the Press and over the air by the Minister for Justice and the Premier. The Minister for Justice may have had some justification for making statements in that he was present at the conference of managers and should have known what transpired, but the Premier had absolutely no right to make any public statement on the point. He was not present at the conference; he only knew, from a third party, what happened there. Therefore, without making sure that the facts were absolutely correct, I feel he was in no position to criticise what occurred. I am going to ask the Minister for Railways to lay on the table of the House the re-write of Clause—

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member will have to do it at the correct time, not now.

THE HON. R. C. MATTISKE: Very well. I shall take other action to make that request to the Minister, because I feel that the clause that was suggested was a complete change from what the House considered. The proposition was so radical, that I believe the House should have had an opportunity of debating it and expressing its opinion on the matter. I think that for a Minister to re-write a clause—particularly one of such importance—and to introduce new subject matter

which had not been considered by either House, was entirely radical; and then for the Minister to make a statement, as he did in another place, that someone else was responsible for the breakdown of the conference, is a matter which must be cleaned up in the interests of hon. members of this Chamber, and in the interests of the whole system of Parliament. For the Minister for Local Government—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: He is not Minister for Local Government.

The Hon. R. C. MATTISKE: For the Minister to try to force through an amendment by which every occupier of a house, and the spouse of every occupier, would automatically be on the roll, is far beyond the normal functions of a member of a conference of managers. Like the hon. Mr. Watson, I feel that if that sort of thing is to be permitted, then at least a report should be received in both Houses, and the members of the conference should be able to speak to the report; or else, as is provided in the Standing Orders of this Chamber, there should simply be the bare report and no comment whatsoever in either House.

I appreciate the opportunity of being able to say these few words, because up to the present time I have been debarred from doing so. In due course I will ask the Minister for Railways to lay on the Table of the House the paper to which I have referred.

THE HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [4.13]: I do not intend to take up a great deal of time, but I shall not apologise for what I have to say because when an opportunity, such as this, presents itself for hon. members to speak to a Bill and deal with questions that are not relevant to the measure, there is no reason why they should not embrace it.

The point I wish to raise is one that must be exercising the minds of most people in the State and the minds, I venture to say, of hon. members in our legislative halls. The question to which I refer is that of the unemployment which exists not only in Western Australia and in other parts of Australia, but, indeed, in other parts of the world.

I feel that the method of endeavouring to make available sufficient funds to allow these unfortunate people to exist—these funds come mainly from the Commonwealth and are supplemented by the State and amount to many thousands of pounds over a period—could be improved upon. I am just wondering whether the money that is paid out—nothing is received in return—could be raised on a different basis.

The point I want to bring before the House is that this money, which is paid out on a weekly basis, but which is not adequate to keep a family, or even an individual—of course, it is much better than it was some years ago and those who

receive it are very grateful—is not being utilised in providing work. A large sum is being expended on unemployment relief, both by the Commonwealth and State Governments, and to my mind it could be used to provide full-time employment for many people who are now unemployed. By this means they would be able to obtain sufficient money to live at a proper standard.

I cannot see any reason why the Commonwealth Government, which is responsible for the economy of this country, cannot float a loan for the purpose of providing employment through public works. The money at present paid out in unemployment relief could be used to pay off that loan, or at least to pay the interest on it and, in that way, people who are now receiving unemployment relief could be given gainful employment on work which would be useful for the State. It would be far better to do that than provide unemployment relief which is not sufficient to keep the people receiving it on a decent standard of living. Unemployed people would rather be employed than receive unemployment relief and do nothing for it. Most people like to be occupied, and I am of the opinion that a better use could be made of this unemployment relief money. This is particularly so in Western Australia where more Commonwealth money should be spent on public works.

This is a matter of great importance, and I feel sure that the Commonwealth and State authorities could evolve some scheme along the lines I have suggested. Western Australia has always been regarded as a primary producing State, and we are now doing our best to encourage secondary industries to establish themselves here so that we will have a better balanced economy. Therefore, the Commonwealth should carry some responsibility in this matter, and should realise that we on this side of the continent are entitled to receive an equitable share of the Commonwealth money that is being spent.

That brings me to the question of a uniform railway gauge. I think this is one project on which men who are at present unemployed could be utilised. Money should be provided for that project, and it would be of benefit not only to this State but also the other States of Australia. If men were employed on that work they would be paid a wage sufficient to enable them to live properly. Works of this kind would overcome our unemployment problem, and it is a problem at present.

There is also the question of a naval base. Australia is a vast continent, and I see no reason why a naval base should not be built on the western side as well as there being one on the eastern side. A great deal of money was spent on Cockburn Sound but, because of an agreement between the Commonwealth Government

and the Imperial Government—and I make no criticism of their decision—Singapore was chosen as the naval base for the defence of the Indian Ocean. It was thought that this side of the Australian continent would be protected by the establishment of a base at Singapore. Unfortunately the methods of warfare changed, and an enemy was able to come behind that base, and, naturally, it was of no value to the Allies during the last war.

Because of the loss of the naval base at Singapore, it was necessary for the allied powers to make other arrangements with the poor facilities that existed in Western Australia, and, as most people well know, a large number of British and Australian ships, and ships of other allied countries, utilised Fremantle, and other harbours in Western Australia, as their base. From these harbours those ships carried out attacks upon the enemy, and we have since heard that thousands of tons of enemy shipping was sunk by craft based on Western Australia.

I think we should have a naval base in this State, but I have been told by Commonwealth sources that it would be too costly to maintain a naval base here as well as one in the Eastern States. This is a vast continent and I cannot see why it would be so much more expensive to have a base here as well as one on the eastern coast of Australia. If we had a naval base here, ships would be stationed in Western Australia and the docking facilities could be used by other ships as well. The work of building and maintaining the base would provide employment, and the money so expended would be credited to defence. It would be of considerable benefit to Western Australia and, in fact, to Australia as a whole.

Other hon. members may have different ideas, but it seems to me that the money at present being spent on unemployment relief could be put to much better use by making employment available to people who desire to work, and who do not desire to accept money and not render some service for it. These people are at a loose end and it is not good for them. They would far rather be occupied, and they should be occupied on work that would be of benefit to themselves and to the State as well. I trust that hon. members will give some thought to this matter. I support the Bill.

THE HON. C. R. ABBEY (Central) [4.27]: I rise to express the concern felt by a great many people in the State about our present educational facilities. I have had many letters from associations throughout my province, and I have heard many opinions expressed that little is at present being done to further the education of our children, particularly in view of the great pace at which technical and other educational facilities are proceeding.

I want to draw hon. members' attention to a special public meeting of the parents and citizens' associations and the State School Teachers' Union which was called recently to express the concern felt at the educational facilities available in this State. Many speakers who knew their subject spoke on the matter and covered the situation fully. Following those speakers there was a general discussion and these motions were agreed to by the meeting—

This meeting calls—

- (a) on the State Government to give to education a greater allocation of revenue and loan funds, and in view of its belief that funds beyond the present resources of the State may need to be provided by the Commonwealth,
- (b) on the Federal Government to appoint a commission similar to the Murray Commission to produce a report on primary, secondary and technical education in Australia, and
- (c) on the citizens of this country to give to education a higher regard than it has hitherto received especially in view of today's extreme need for a properly educated community.

Those motions have received general support from parents and citizens' associations throughout my province. They express the need to tackle this problem immediately, and tackle it right throughout the State.

I stress the words "right throughout the State." I do not decry that in the metropolitan area a great many facilities are provided, which are not available in the rural areas. Everyone must feel that the Government should press on and make those facilities available in rural centres so that the children can obtain the higher education which they so urgently need, without having to come to the metropolitan area.

The establishment of agricultural high schools is also a pressing need. I know there are one or two in the course of construction, and the one in Cunderdin will be completed shortly. There is a need for one in the more northern areas of the State to serve the north-east wheatbelt where, every year, some 200 children reach post-primary age and need higher education at some centre nearer than Merredin or Northam. The result is the parents of those children send the brighter ones away while the others miss that education. I would ask the Government to take steps to implement the three points I have mentioned, so as to give a boost to this State and take us to the lead in Australia in

this respect. Western Australia is a young State and nothing will further its growth more than better education. I support the Bill.

THE HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [4.33]: I support the remarks which have been made by the hon. Mr. Abbey. I attended a meeting some months ago in Perth, at which people of all standards of education and station were present. It is possible for the State to do something in regard to the requests made by the hon. Mr. Abbey. He has not, however, told us that, because of the introduction of atomic energy and electronics, we are living in a new age. We are now living in the second half of the 20th century. I am fully in agreement with the words used by the Prime Minister of England (Mr. MacMillan) when he said that the past is not a sofa to lie on but a springboard from which to look to the future.

The Commonwealth should take a greater part in finding the necessary finance for the building, not only of schools, but also of training centres for teachers of the future. We are now living in a world entirely different from what it was five years ago. The amount which this State is spending on education approximates £7,000,000 per annum, as against £1,000,000 ten years ago. I do not believe that it is within the resources of this or any other State to provide adequate education unless it receives more Commonwealth aid. I am not one of those who complain and say that the Commonwealth Government should provide us with this and that, but when that Government collects £600,000,000 per annum in revenue and also handles the loan funds, then it has the job to ensure—perhaps through the National University at Canberra—that the education system of this country is lifted to a much higher plane. This is not only a State but also a Commonwealth matter.

One of the countries which is reputed to have high education standards is the U.S.A. Delegates at the public meeting to which I referred stated that the difficulties which face education in Australia are also found in that country. With the introduction of electronics and modern technical advancements we have to reorient our thoughts completely in regard to education. It will be the grave responsibility of State leaders in the next ten years to impress on the Commonwealth Government the need for more funds for education.

I am very concerned with one other matter; and this relates to transport. I have not heard any other hon. member in this Parliament or in the Federal Parliament discuss it. It relates to the piggy-back system. I have here a booklet entitled "Piggy-Back in U.S.A. and Canada and Australian Potentials." The hon. Mr. Davies has just said that one way of providing employment in this State is to construct the

standard gauge line from Perth to Kalgoorlie. With this I agree, but the residents of Kalgoorlie might not think that a good idea. If it should come about, then much trade will be taken from Kalgoorlie. Furthermore, the revenue of the State railways will be reduced as a result of piggy-back. The fact is that the piggy-back system of transport is with us, and it is being practised most successfully.

The booklet to which I have just referred contains a comprehensive report presented to the Prime Minister by the Co-ordinated Transport Industries Research Council (Aust.). I have seen with my own eyes the amount of freight that has been loaded at Port Pirie and unloaded at Parkeston. It has reached astronomical tonnages, and it has proved most successful. To the warehouseman, this system of transport is a very good one, because goods can be picked up at one door in one State and unloaded at another door in another State. This State will suffer severely from an employment point of view unless somewhere along the line it receives some revenue from the transport operators.

A few weeks ago I happened to be in Kalgoorlie for about seven days, when I obtained figures which indicated that close on 70 piggy-back wagons had been unloaded at Parkeston. I saw the vehicles being driven off and along the road to Perth and Fremantle. I made inquiries from the Minister about this matter and I found that the State received no revenue from such transport operators. Of course, under Section 92 of the Constitution, they are quite free to travel from State to State without paying anything towards the upkeep of roads.

I am concerned about the effect of the piggy-back system on the railways of this State. Whereas previously interstate goods were unloaded at Kalgoorlie, and transferred to the State railways, to-day that is not the position. I feel it my duty to bring this matter before the House. Unless some voice is raised at this juncture, the piggy-back system will be like the flu; before we know where we are it attacks us and leave us in a poor state of health.

The piggy-back system has been introduced, and it will not go backwards, therefore it is of great interest for me to refer to it. I now quote from page 33 of the report to which I referred. It says—

Potentials of Immediate Institution, of Piggy-Back in Australia.

With the building of terminal facilities at Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Port Pirie, Kalgoorlie, and Perth plus portable ramps for use at Albany (while rail gauge break conditions still apply pending the completion of the Wodonga-Melbourne rail project), and at Alice Springs for the

Darwin section, piggy-back movement of road freight per rail might well be then placed into operation in a Commonwealth-wide practice almost immediately.

Those words have great significance. I realise that the piggy-back system will bring goods from the warehouse to the door at a much cheaper freight rate, but whether, as a result, the distributors and other people concerned will lower the price of goods to the consumer I do not know. I am at a loss to know how I can assist in this matter; all I can do is to draw the attention of Parliament to the introduction of the piggy-back system of transport in Australia, and its effect. I realise it is a successful form of transport and that it will make inroads into the existing transport system in this State.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [4.44]: The Supply Bill has certainly attracted a variety of speeches which are of interest to the House. I am pleased there has not been any speech made which necessitated an adjournment of the debate to enable me to obtain information. I am not able to give detailed information on some of the points raised, but as it is a matter of urgency to pass this Bill, I shall endeavour to do the best I can to answer the various comments. Some, of course, it will be necessary for me to omit altogether. However, generally it seems that some of the main points in connection with the supply of money, concern education.

The education vote is a large one, and the expenses also are large. Yearly the education vote is growing bigger and bigger, and any Government would be only too pleased to increase it by larger proportions; but the extent of the vote is naturally governed by the amount of money that is available through revenue and loan funds—particularly loan funds.

Nobody can deny that every effort is being made to allocate as much as possible of the funds available to education, without sacrificing the expenditure on water supplies and other essential facilities. There are tremendous costs involved in health and also agricultural extensions, and pursuits of all kinds—some of them educational. While hon. members may criticise the vote to some degree, I believe that generally it can be accepted, and must be accepted, that as much money as can be reasonably provided for education is being allocated, without sacrificing other essential requirements. For instance, in the country, the transport of country schoolchildren now approaches the figure of £1,000,000 a year. It is a tremendous amount to be spent before teaching is even started.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: What is the alternative?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There is no alternative; only to go back to the small dispersed schools.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: And what would be the cost?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am not questioning the cost. I believe the expenditure today is more than it was with the dispersed schools, but the additional cost is justified on centralised schooling. Children will learn more quickly and will become more efficient through their association with greater numbers of children, than by being in one-teacher schools where there are perhaps only six or seven pupils.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: In other words—it's a good investment!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is difficult for one teacher to endeavour to teach a few children the various standards of education they have reached. As I said, the expenditure is justified. But I am pointing out that it is growing and will continue to grow, of course, and this amount takes a substantial proportion of the education vote.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: An extra £25,000,000 a year is needed.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Of course, the Commonwealth could help, and help considerably, as could the State, by sacrificing other essential expenditure. No doubt when the comprehensive water supply scheme is completed—if it ever is, because there will always be need to extend water supplies—more money will be available; some millions in fact. But at the present time this is not the position. The views expressed by hon. members in connection with education, will certainly be forwarded to the responsible Minister.

On the Standing Orders question that has been raised, I am a little bit—I cannot express the word the hon. Mr. MacKinnon used, but I will call it—befuddled, with some of the explanations that have been made, and I have never yet been informed directly by any of my associates what was supposed to have transpired at the conference which is causing some criticism and comment of our Standing Orders.

I was here on the 29th of November last, when I listened to one hon. member expressing his views in connection with this particular conference, and I certainly did not assume from his comments that his remarks might have been directed to my colleague—the Minister controlling local authorities. I thought the remarks were directed to another member of the conference, and I must confess that as my colleague has never confided to me any of the details of the discussions that took place at this conference, I am rather surprised and disappointed that his name should be mentioned in debate here; on this occasion, as being connected with the failure of the conference.

I would have thought, from what was said in this Chamber in the early hours of the morning of the 29th November, that the Minister for Local Government had no responsibility for the breakdown of the conference. However, he is not here to express his views or defend himself in the matter, and I can only express the facts as I heard them myself in this Chamber.

In regard to these conferences the hon. Mr. Watson suggested that I should speak to the Premier and that you, Sir, should confer with the Speaker. I quite agree with that, but we have a Standing Orders Committee and it would be my suggestion that the whole question be submitted to that committee to discuss, and, if it so desired, bring proposals to this House for consideration. Personally, though, I feel that conferences could reduce Parliament to a one-man Parliament—almost to a dictatorship—on certain questions, and I feel that would be most distasteful.

On the other hand, a lot of good can be achieved by the conferences which are a feature of the Western Australian Parliament. The questions in dispute have been resolved in a manner which might not be entirely satisfactory to both sides at the conferences, but they have at least prevented, perhaps, a possible complete failure and have left the legislation in a manner which is at least workable and satisfactory to the majority of the members of Parliament.

The hon. Mr. Murray drew attention to the fact that he had warned the Timber Millers' Association in 1954 that there was a danger in amending the Forestry's Act in a manner which gave the Conservator almost complete control over the timber areas in this State. I do not think the position he forecast has arisen. There has not been any necessity for action to be taken by the Conservator of Forests, and I doubt whether such action will ever become necessary. In fact, it would be deplorable if ever any private association of sawmillers or manufacturers was to have such control over the natural timber resources of the State, which are on Crown land, that they could, perhaps, hold the State to ransom. Although I cannot recollect it myself, if the amendment did have the effect which the hon. member tells us it had—and I do not doubt it—I think it was a good thing; and it could have been—and possibly is—the reason why the Western Australian railways are able to secure a cheaper supply of sleepers today.

There is not the slightest doubt about that, and it will be proved if the report is studied—and the report was based, I remind hon. members on the minutes of railway files dealing with sleepers. If anybody is interested in checking that statement, I would have no hesitation whatever in placing the files on the Table

of the House. Hon. members could themselves see then, that the associated sawmillers, particularly during the period when material supplies were controlled, were in a position to dictate to the Western Australian Government Railways what sleeper supplies it would receive; and it is a fact that during the days of materials control, the right to supply the quantity of sleepers required by the Western Australian Government Railways was given to the associated sawmillers, who distributed such quantity amongst their several members—and among others who were not members of the association, but who had to supply through the association.

In other words, they sublet, or subcontracted. They bought in from the small millers, of which the hon. Mr. Murray spoke, with a consequent added cost to the Western Australian Government Railways. But when materials supply control ceased, so should have ceased the control by the association which is referred to by the Royal Commissioner as a combine. Whether those responsible for railway administration had succumbed to the threat of "no supplies" by the sawmillers' association, and decided that it was useless to attempt to alter the situation, or not, I am not prepared to say.

It appears obvious that nobody cared much about the position which had grown up during the war years, when materials control was effective, and which has continued up till this year. In fact, it was brought to my notice more than 12 months ago; but at the time the current contracts had been let and nothing could be done regarding the supply of sleepers for that financial year. However, the position regarding the supply of sleepers in the present financial year is quite different, as tenders were called and a number of firms, all of which are listed in the Royal Commissioner's report, tendered. Some of the tenders received were as much as £1 per load below the price tendered by five or six members of the sawmillers' association.

The Hon. J. Murray: That amounts to only about 11d. per sleeper.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is £1 per load saving. This House and another place charged the Government with effecting all possible economies in railways expenditure and, even if it is only a saving of £1 per load, I consider it is my duty to make that saving; and while I am Minister for Railways it will be my ambition to effect every such saving. The sleeper tenders were submitted and quite a number—in fact six—members of the sawmillers' association tendered £22 18s. 3d. per load for various quantities of sleepers. The State Building Supplies tender was higher than that of members of the association, being £23 1s. 6d. per load for 40,000 sleepers.

Certain of the smaller operators, however, came in and their tenders ranged from £22 12s. 9d. per load to £21 18s. 6d. per load. The lowest such tender was 19s. 9d. below the price tendered by what I term the combination of the associated sawmillers, and it was for 15,000 sleepers; but for some reason the person who submitted that tender, which was the lowest, did not, when notified that it had been accepted, take it up, but all the other small men took up their contracts. It was possible to effect a saving of several thousand pounds, and so the contracts were let to those smaller tenderers and not one of those who tendered £22 18s. 3d. per load received a contract.

I did not think that would have worried them but there was a deputation to me from the sawmillers' association, asking me—I think with the intention perhaps of telling me that I should not have done what I did without at least notifying them—to take the sleepers which they had continued to cut. They offered them to me at about 8s. per load below the prices which they tendered. I told them that I would consult with the Railway Department and see whether it required the number of sleepers which they had for sale.

The department said it could take the sleepers but suggested that, instead of the sawmillers tendering a price, we, as railwaymen, should tender a price, and that is what we did. We tendered a price of £22 7s. 6d. per load—the same as the lowest tender which was accepted—and the timbermillers' organisation accepted it. In that way a further saving was made. At the deputation it was said by the sawmillers—and previously at an interview with the manager of the State Building Supplies, who was also a little concerned—that they buy in the sleepers, and have done so over the years, and resell them to the railways. Surely that is money for nothing.

Had the position, as expressed by the hon. Mr. Murray, obtained—that the supply rested solely in the hands of the sawmillers—one can be certain that there would have been no small men to tender on this occasion; and so the amendment to the Forests Act has certainly, in my opinion, had the effect of bringing about an economy in the railways. Not only have we commenced to reduce the cost to the Western Australian railways, but also the Commonwealth railways have cashed in on our move. Perhaps I should not say that they have cashed in on it, but that they have wakened up to the fact that they had better test out the sleeper supply position by tender. We have been notified that they have been successful in obtaining a tender from one of the associated sawmillers, for a supply of sleepers one foot longer than those required by the Western Australian Government Railways, at a price equivalent to £21 3s. per

load, or a reduction of something like 35s. per load when compared with the Western Australian price.

In that way the Commonwealth railways have effected a big saving, as I understand they were paying something like £26 or £27 per load for sleepers, prior to this proposition with regard to the calling of tenders. I was accused, by one member of the sawmillers' deputation, of having thrown them out of the window. Those were the words which one of those gentlemen used, and I replied that I could not agree that he could fairly claim to have been thrown out of the window when the Western Australian Government Railways called tenders for the supply of sleepers. If anyone threw him out of the window, he did it himself.

In the Royal Commissioner's report, which, as he says, is purely taken from statements, letters and minutes on files, he recommends that an inquiry be held; and I was pleased to read in this morning's paper that a spokesman for the sawmillers welcomes the inquiry, as that will mean that the problem of timber supplies will be properly cleaned up and a stage might even be reached when a fair price will be paid by the Western Australian Government Railways for the sleepers it requires.

I was somewhat surprised at the tone of the leading article in "The West Australian." I do not think it is the directors of that newspaper who inspire or write those articles. I think the writer expresses his own opinion and not that of the proprietors of "The West Australian;" but at all events he expressed the view that the inquiry by the Royal Commissioner should be terminated as quickly as possible.

It is not the first time that such a view has been expressed in "The West Australian." What is wrong with the people who claim not to defend waste and extravagance by various Government departments when, on an occasion when a good job is being done and a saving is being effected—and when no doubt there will be further avenues for substantial saving—they express a view of that kind? One cannot understand the leading newspaper of the State advocating the termination of this Royal Commission.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: The appointment of the Royal Commissioner is one of the best appointments ever made in this State.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is certain that great savings have been achieved, and perhaps for the first time in many years the public of Western Australia is getting a real picture of the Western Australian Government Railways as they stand, both financially and physically. In my opinion the Royal Commissioner is doing an excellent job and I say now that the Government has no intention of being influenced by the leader writer of "The

West Australian." I feel that any further debate on the report of the Royal Commissioner in regard to sleepers can be left to those who may be faced with an inquiry into that phase of railway expenditure.

As regards the hon. Mr. MacKinnon's view that there is waste in the erection of a powerline from Armadale to North Dandalup, I would suggest that he discuss the matter with the officials of the Railway Department and of the S.E.C. I have not at my disposal here the details or the technical matter required in this regard. I am sure that the secretary, or the Commissioner of Railways, or the electrical expert, whoever he may be, and the S.E.C. officials, would be only too pleased to discuss with the hon. member the particular points he has raised.

As regards those hon. members who spoke in connection with boring for water, I would say that the obtaining of a supply of potable water is one of the greatest problems we have in this State. It is not a localised problem, but is one that exists throughout the State, and the expenditure of money on that work is governed also by the amount of money that is available. However, the speeches made on that subject will be forwarded to the appropriate Minister for consideration. I know of no other points which I am able to explain at this juncture, but I will do my best to get the information sought by hon. members.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Bill read a third time and passed.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [5.20]: Hon. members will recall that the object of this Bill is to expand the operations and scope of the State Government Insurance Office. The provisions of the measure were well covered by me when moving the second reading, and I am disappointed to have received such a poor response to my claim that the extension of the operations of this office will be a good thing for the public of Western Australia.

The main point made in opposition to the Bill, and submitted by the recognised Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber, (the hon. Mr. Griffith) was that it is a matter of policy in connection with State trading concerns. One can quite well

understand that, because the party to which the hon. member belongs has made no secret of the fact that it is opposed to State trading concerns, and that it would have no hesitation in selling them, if the views of the leader of the party can be taken to be authoritative—and I do not doubt for one moment that they can be so taken. He expressed those views at the annual conference of the Liberal and Country League.

It is rather unfortunate that the party has such a rigid policy in respect to trading concerns that are run by the State. The leader of the party even went so far as to say that he would sell the railways.

The Hon. F. D. Willmott: He would have to find a buyer first.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We know from past experience that that party has given away public trading concerns.

The Hon. F. D. Willmott: You would be battling to give that one away.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That could be so; but we know that the party to which the hon. member belongs gives those concerns away, and also gives with them a nice little bonus to enable them to be operated. That has been done on more than one occasion.

The Hon. J. Murray: In this State?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: So, whether the leader of that party is merely flying a kite, or sending up a smoke signal, I do not know. I feel there are times when he and his representatives in this House talk one way, think another and, at times, act in still another way.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: When are you going to get on with the Bill?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am talking about the Bill now, because the hon. member said that his opposition to the Bill was based on the fact that it was against his party's policy to extend State trading concerns. I can understand his being opposed to it. We all know that hon. members of all parties have certain obligations, otherwise they would not be members of those parties. I think I said by way of interjection that the hon. member would not be here if he did not subscribe to certain policies. I believe that to be right, unless he joined the Labour Party—

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Heaven forbid!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: —or the Country Party. The hon. member might be able to do that because members of his party do flit about at times. However, be that as it may, the policy propounded in opposition to this Bill is not one which is carried out to the letter in every instance.

The attitude of hon. members in adhering to that policy is quite out of step with that of their counterparts in the Commonwealth sphere. We now find that the Commonwealth Liberal Country Party Government owns one of the greatest

shipping fleets in the southern hemisphere and it is expanding it. It also owns, I would suggest, the best airline in the world. It continues to expand its post office facilities; it is now entering the field of television, and is issuing licences to its friends to establish stations for the purpose of producing television programmes.

This is merely local policy, and I could not accept that as being a valid reason for rejecting the expansion of insurance facilities for the benefit of the public of Western Australia. If the Bill is passed it will bring revenue to the State, and it will be kept here and will circulate within the State. Perhaps my assumptions in expecting support for this Bill are a little optimistic. Nevertheless, there is still time for one to change one's mind on such matters. Every one sees the light at some time or other. Every one must reach the point when one realises that it is extremely necessary to have some public facilities and some publicly-owned institutions. I do not agree that all State trading concerns should remain under State ownership, but this State-owned public utility is extremely necessary. The Bill could have great effect—as will the amendment to the Forests Act which we had before us not so very long ago—on those people who desire to effect insurance and to be assured.

I was extremely interested in the remarks made by the hon. Mr. Roche who wanted to know when something was to be done about the Opposition's policy. I am wondering that myself. I am wondering, if ever there is a change of Government in Western Australia, what is to be done with the £3,000,000 worth of State ships that were bought to serve the people of the North-West. Are they to be sold or given away? Are those ships to suffer the same fate as the fleet which was operating previously or, rather what was left of it? Are we to have the railways operating under the chaotic conditions they were in a few years ago? The previous Government, in its six years of office, between 1947 and 1953, spent £60,000,000 in an effort to rehabilitate the railways, but what have we got for that expenditure? All we have is a number of engines that do not run very often.

I still believe that the policy followed by the Government in regard to this State trading concern, and others, is extremely necessary, because it is designed to give the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. Therefore, I hope the hon. members of this House will support the Bill so that we can extend these benefits to the people who wish to effect insurance generally, or to take out policies of life assurance, or policies to cover school children. During his second reading speech, the hon. Mr. Griffith said that if a Bill were introduced purely to extend the insurance cover for school children he

would support it. However, I hope he will change his mind and support the Bill we now have before us.

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

Ayes—10

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. J. D. Teahan
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery (Teller.)

Noes—13

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. A. B. Jones	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. A. L. Loton	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. G. C. MacKinnon	Hon. J. Murray (Teller.)
Hon. R. C. Mattiacke	

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. L. C. Diver
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. J. Cunningham
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. J. G. Hislop

Majority against—3.

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

House adjourned at 5.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 9th October, 1958.

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