

the items that will appear in the Estimates. Quite a number of matters require attention, and I hope to be able to make some comments respecting them at a later stage. Reverting to the question of meat supplies for the Goldfields, which most acutely affects the people there, I hope the Premier will do his best—I admit he has done so to date—to see that those people receive the greatest possible quantity of meat so that they will not remain in the invidious position they have experienced in the past with regard to procuring supplies of any kind. They should not have to rely upon sending to other parts of the State to procure meat that they require.

On motion by Mr. Owen, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 16th August, 1950.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### ROADS.

##### *As to Use of Commonwealth Aid Funds.*

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Transport:

What percentage of Federal Aid Road Grant money received by the State Government was used by—

(a) Main Roads Department;

(b) local government authorities, for the years 1948-49, 1949-50?

The MINISTER replied:

Approximate percentages of actual expenditure—

By Main Roads Department organisation—1948-49, 85 per cent.; 1949-50, 82 per cent.

By Local authorities—1948-49, 15 per cent.; 1949-50, 18 per cent.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

#### *As to Electors Enrolled and Voted.*

Hon. E. M. HEENAN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What was the total of enrolments in all ten of the Legislative Council provinces at the elections held this year?

(2) What was the total of enrolments in the provinces where contests were held?

(3) What was the total number of electors who voted at the Legislative Council elections held this year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Total enrolments in all ten Legislative Council provinces at 1950 elections—85,169.

(2) Total enrolments in contested provinces—General election (eight provinces), 61,129. By-election (Central Province), 6,952. Total, 68,081.

(3) Total number of electors voting—General election (eight provinces), 29,695. By-election (Central Province), 2,929. Total, 32,624.

### RAILWAYS.

#### *As to Tonnage to and from Ballidu, Pithara and Dalwallinu.*

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What was the total tonnage, over the last five years, from all freights out of the following sidings:—Ballidu, Pithara, Dalwallinu?

(2) What was the total tonnage, for the same period, of all goods into the following sidings:—Ballidu, Pithara, Dalwallinu?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Ballidu, 24,030 tons; Pithara, 18,942 tons; Dalwallinu, 30,087 tons.

(2) Ballidu, 27,417 tons; Pithara, 9,579 tons; Dalwallinu, 15,102 tons.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

#### *Sixth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [4.38]: First of all I desire to associate myself with those members who have spoken in extending a very hearty welcome to the new members. We have already paid a tribute to the lamented passing of Hon. C. F. Baxter and at this stage I wish to say how much I am going to miss the two members who went into honourable retirement. I think we should congratulate the members who have survived the election and particular mention might be made of two who were able to escape that severe trial—the Honorary Minister, Hon. G. B. Wood and Hon. H. K. Watson. Evidently their electors must have been elated with the work they have done seeing that they were re-elected unopposed.

To the new members, as I have said, I extend a heartfelt welcome. Although we are very pleased to see Mr. Jones amongst us, we regret that Mr. Daffen is no longer a member of the Council. He was with us for a very short period, but I am sure all of us felt that he showed promise of developing into a very useful member. To be defeated, however, is the fortune of war, and sooner or later it must come to all of us. However, whilst we deplore the defeat of Mr. Daffen, it makes no difference to the warmth of our welcome to Mr. Jones. I, too, would like to express my deep regret at the accident suffered by Mr. Mann. We trust that we shall shortly have the pleasure of seeing him back again in the Chamber in his usual seat, with his accustomed vigour, cheerfulness and good humour.

I was interested in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor at the opening of this Parliament. I noticed that very properly he referred first of all to the dreadful shadow hanging over the civilised world in the fighting in Korea. That, of itself, we may feel is a small thing in comparison with the two world wars we have known, but I am sure members realise that it can be the beginning of something which could be more catastrophic than anything in the past. This flare-up, which the United Nations are attempting to settle by force of arms is taking place on our side of the world, and if they were unsuccessful it would be an impetus to the communists to continue their work in Malaya, Indo-China and Burma.

Members can see, therefore, how very near to home this catastrophe could come. I often wonder as I read the papers whether the Federal Opposition and the Senate are really contented with having defeated the intention of the people and the Commonwealth Government to have the Bill dealing with communists become law without undue protraction. I believe we are living in a world where events are pregnant with vast consequences. It has been my privilege to be associated with an organisation that knows something of the inside working of the present world tendencies from a senior intelligence point of view. Nothing that I could say today concerning the latest news that we get from time to time in those certain quarters, would make very cheerful hearing.

When I first came into this House I listened carefully to a speech by Hon. G. W. Miles which impressed me greatly—far more, probably, than it impressed other members because, judging from the remarks passed during and after the speech, I believe they had become used to listening to the story that Mr. Miles put forth concerning the North-West. It was my privilege during the war years—at any rate at the beginning of the war—to spend quite a deal of time in the North-West,

and possibly on that account I was most interested to hear the views expressed so definitely and consistently by Mr. Miles at different times. His was a voice crying in the wilderness.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: No, it was not.

Hon. H. HEARN: I say it was because what have we found in the North-West? We have found that throughout the years it has become greatly depopulated until the figures are now, I understand, about 5,000. Do not forget that during the last 20 years we have had Labour Governments in this State with the exception of the three depression years when it was impossible for any Government to do anything! The net result of those 20 years is a decrease of population down to the nominal number of 5,000 souls.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Has it gone up in the past three years?

Hon. H. HEARN: I want to try to be realistic, and if Mr. Heenan would allow me to continue, he could interrupt when he gets the point I am making. With rapidly changing times I believe that we, who are supposed to be the leaders of our community, no matter what shade of politics we belong to, should now face up to this position in a realistic fashion. Dr. Hislop the other night suggested it was time that this House became a bit controversial.

This afternoon I shall endeavour to be controversial and throw something into the ring. Possibly other speakers will later take up the question I shall bring forward. We should realise the seriousness of the international situation, and I maintain that none of us can view with unmixed feelings the fact that our North-West is at the moment making no progress whatsoever. As a suggestion—bearing in mind that the Commonwealth has the financial side in its own hands and has laid down a vigorous policy of migration which must go forward despite whatever Government is in power, because the question there is really one of national survival—I would say that the time may have arrived when we as a State should consider the possibility of the Commonwealth taking over all that area north of the 26th parallel of latitude which is the boundary line between South Australia and the Northern Territory.

If it is felt that this is too drastic I would mention, as an alternative, the Tropic of Capricorn, or the 23rd parallel of latitude. With the developmental work ahead of other parts of this State, and because of our sparse population, I maintain it is impossible for us to line up to the job which must be done very quickly in the North-West. Western Australia is too weak, both financially and numerically,

to develop the North-West and the Kimberleys as they should be developed immediately. The pioneering work of the pastoralists, and the mining and pearling industries have opened up the country to some extent, but not sufficiently to justify our holding it in these modern times when the teeming millions of Asiatics are demanding a bigger share in life than a mere existence ranging from starvation to just plain hunger.

There is no reasonable doubt that by a vigorous and national effort, population could be directed to the North-West, but this State has not the financial or other resources to provide the necessary stimulus. The development of over 900,000 square miles of territory is beyond the capacity of a population of half a million already heavily indebted, through borrowing for public needs, and heavily committed physically to other projects. It is just on 90 years since settlement began in the North-West, and at present, as I have said before, there are less than 5,000 people in the area. The Kimberleys alone are as potentially rich as any area in the Commonwealth, and are only a few hundred miles from the nearest islands of Indonesia.

In my opinion, from the defence angle alone, it is imperative that the Commonwealth Government should take control. We no longer have a friendly white nation in control of the East Indies—thanks to the weaknesses of the previous Commonwealth Government and the assistance of the communists in Australia. The Dutch, who for a period of 200 years brought peace and prosperity to these islands, have been compelled to hand over to people who, I am afraid, in the event of an international flare-up, will prove to be nothing more nor less than communist stooges.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Stop reading your speech. Otherwise I may have to point out to you a few things for which you have to thank the previous Commonwealth Government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity to speak later.

Hon. H. HEARN: If this suggestion were carried out, the State railways, and any of its systems, would not be affected, nor would the other major public works that have been constructed. Western Australia would not lose any benefits of the trade with the North but would be relieved of a tremendous burden which is crippling the North as well as the South.

#### *Point of Order.*

Hon. E. M. Heenan: On a point of order. Mr. President, in view of the fact that you have addressed me, I would also direct your attention to the Standing Order regarding a member reading his speech.

The President: If the hon. member is reading his speech, he knows that is out of order.

Hon. H. Hearn: When putting up such a proposition, naturally I have been very careful in the selection of my words, but I am not, as Mr. Heenan suggests, reading my speech word for word.

The President: In that case, the hon. member may proceed.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

Hon. H. HEARN: In continuing that particular theme, I leave members to think over my remarks. I believe this question does require some serious attention on the part of not only us, as Western Australians, but also all the citizens of the Commonwealth generally—the lack of development in the North-West, the Northern Territory and the northern parts of the whole of Australia. I maintain that in these times, quite apart from any question of party politics which I think Mr. Heenan is worrying about, we should definitely see to it, as representatives of the people of this State, that everything that can be done for its future safety is carried out, regardless of any question of political thinking.

Hon. E. M. Heenan interjected.

Hon. H. HEARN: If Mr. Heenan is requiring me—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the hon. member resume his seat. I have drawn Mr. Heenan's attention to the fact that he has the opportunity of speaking later. He knows perfectly well that he is out of order in interjecting as he has been doing, and I trust he will observe the Standing Orders.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: I think I can justifiably draw your attention, Mr. President, to the insulting remarks made by Mr. Hearn towards a Government to whose policy I subscribe.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is not a point of order.

The PRESIDENT: If the hon. member objects to any remarks made by Mr. Hearn, he has his remedy. He is not justified in interrupting. Mr. Hearn may proceed.

Hon. H. HEARN: I am sorry to hear Mr. Heenan speak in that way. I would defy him to pick out one sentence, since I have commenced speaking, where I have said anything definitely derogatory to any Commonwealth Government of the persuasion to which he subscribes. I am trying to give the picture as I see it today and, having done that, I intend now to leave it for the House to think about, and possibly later, when Mr. Heenan replies, he can then tell me just what he thinks. In the meantime, he is quite unfair in saying that I have attacked the Labour Party.

Hon. G. Bennetts: A lot more was done in the North by the Labour Government than has been done by the Government to which you subscribe.

Hon. H. HEARN: I now turn to what I might term domestic references in the Speech of His Excellency, the Governor. Before I begin to talk about a subject which is fairly near and dear to my heart, I would say that I may be accused of using my notes. When one is talking about employer and employee relationships and putting up a scheme which has been adopted as the basis of working from one side's point of view, I cannot see how one can avoid using fairly copious notes. However, Sir, I am in your hands when that time does arrive. Firstly, I wish to draw members' attention to what I consider is an injustice so far as country members are concerned. I believe that there is no method, other than the extra allowance paid to country members, for them to be reimbursed for anything in the way of telephone calls. We all know that trunk line calls must represent a considerable inroad into the salaries of country members, if they are doing their jobs satisfactorily.

Hon. L. Craig: There is the stamp allowance.

Hon. H. HEARN: I do not believe that the stamp allowance covers it. Mr. Craig suggests that the 12s. 6d. per month may cover it.

Hon. L. Craig: It is 25s. for country members.

Hon. H. HEARN: If a country member is doing his job properly, he must spend a considerable sum of money, and I would suggest to the Premier that consideration be given to country members of both Chambers to see if some arrangement can be arrived at to relieve those members of this extra burden. This would be of immense benefit to them in carrying out their duties.

Hon. W. R. Hall: A good idea!

Hon. H. HEARN: Does the hon. member agree with it?

Hon. W. R. Hall: I definitely agree with that.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Hon. H. HEARN: I have read the report of the Forests Department for 1949 with great interest, and I am looking forward to receiving very shortly possibly another excellent report of its subsequent work. I would particularly draw attention to one aspect of it. I was very disturbed to find a suggestion in the paper the other day where a particular road board discussed the possibility of approaching the Government and asking the Government to destroy 600 acres of pine plantation to make room for houses. I know that housing is a No. 1 priority and I am absolutely convinced that everything must give way to a vigorous housing policy. But I remember the answers to questions addressed

to the Government by Mr. Watson when he asked about the amount of land held by the State Housing Commission.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Think about the Goldfields while you are talking about that.

Hon. H. HEARN: This is not the time to suggest that we destroy the plantations that we have planted, but rather it is the time to increase those holdings. The answer to Mr. Watson's question was that the Government has in hand land for 10,000 houses.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Is that true?

Hon. H. HEARN: I am amazed to think that we are so poverty stricken for land in any suburb that we are obliged to even consider the destroying of a valuable asset such as a pine plantation.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is plenty of land for building purposes.

Hon. H. HEARN: The target figure for the planting of pine forests has been 2,000 acres per year. Unfortunately, on account of lack of manpower and other considerations, we have not been able to arrive at anything like that achievement. I should say that the Forests Department, with the fillip given by the labour available in consequence of the arrival of migrants to the State, should be able materially to increase the plantings during the next year or two. We have a duty to posterity regarding the planting of softwoods.

Speaking from an intimate knowledge of what has been done in South Australia, it would be very difficult to say just where the economy of that State would be today had it not been for the foresight of people in planting pine forests in past years. In Western Australia we have a wonderful heritage in our timber, and all we require is to face up, in the interests of future generations, to the provision of a complete range by being prodigal—I use that word advisedly—in the planting of pine forests so that posterity will say of us, that we at least had vision.

I, as a representative of the Metropolitan Province, together with my two colleagues, have some doubt with regard to town planning. We are disappointed that the Government to date has given no information regarding what is intended in that respect. I feel just a bit worried as to what will happen when I know that the Town Planning Commissioner is not yet persuaded that there is traffic congestion on the Causeway. If that is to be his attitude towards town planning, I fear that in the end we shall simply build up trouble for the years to come.

Dame Rumour is, I hope, a lying jade with reference to rent control. We know we have been promised by His Excellency the Governor, in the course of his Speech, that something is to happen in that regard. If it is anything like what I have heard, I am afraid it will be a very unpopular measure. The suggestion to make

application if an increase in rent is desired, does not, at this particular stage, appeal to me as a workable proposition. I hope that when the Bill is before us it will be found to be consistent with the views of the L.C.L. and the C.D.L. on the question of rent control.

Hon. W. R. Hall: It is so much Liberal propaganda.

Hon. H. HEARN: I hope that during the session we shall be able to undo the very grave wrong we have permitted to persist over a long period. I think the time has arrived when any man who owns property should be allowed to take possession of it, if required for his own occupancy. I know there are difficulties but I believe, as I have said on previous occasions, that this question of individual ownership of property is one to which the Government should face up.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Confiscation!

Hon. H. HEARN: Every member of Parliament has been in receipt of dozens of pathetic letters from people who, for one reason or another, have put the whole of their life-savings into property, and yet in the eventide of their lives and because of protection that is accorded tenants, they are not allowed to live in their houses. There is certainly something wrong. I am quite in accord with protection being given to the other people concerned, but I believe the Government should be alive to the position and accept the responsibility of dealing with protected individuals. I am convinced that the time has arrived when every man who owns property that he requires for his own residential purposes, should be able to have the use of his house and no power on earth should be in a position to say that he should not have the opportunity.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. H. HEARN: I hope that when the legislation is before the House, members will appreciate that the time has arrived when the individual should be allowed the possession of that which is possibly the one thing he has struggled for many years to acquire. I am of opinion, as I have been for a very long time past, that the satisfactory solution of the problem of employer and employee relationship is most vital not only to all employers and employees but to the very existence of the citizens of this great Commonwealth.

Some of the organisations with which I am intimately connected have given much time to working out some satisfactory basis in order that we should get together with the great industrial unions, so that we might prove to the world that instead of our aims and objects being dissimilar, they have really the one objective, which is to ensure the prosperity of the Commonwealth, including the wellbeing of every individual within its boundaries.

It would be very difficult in a single speech to set out fully a comprehensive statement of policy with regard to the issues that arise from time to time to affect the interests of employer and employee.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Who wrote that out for you?

Hon. H. HEARN: Any policy regarding these issues must be determined from time to time in the light of circumstances that apply when a decision is to be taken. It may be truthfully said that the policy of employer and employee relationship is subject to continuous development and modification in accordance with changing conditions, ideas and experience.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You are not reading your speech, are you?

Hon. H. HEARN: I do not know if Mr. Hall desires to make a speech!

The PRESIDENT: I will ask the hon. member to resume his seat. I trust Mr. Hall will give Mr. Hearn a reasonable opportunity to deliver his speech.

Hon. W. R. Hall: If Mr. Hearn wishes to read his speech, I shall be delighted to listen to him.

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Hearn may continue.

Hon. H. HEARN: I am sure Mr. Hall will be glad to listen to me because I feel certain that he, as well as other members of the House, is greatly interested in this problem. It is desirable to define as clearly as possible our policy on the broader issues affecting the relationships of employer and employee. I believe we have to accept as fundamental the fact that a comprehensive and stabilised economy is one of basic importance to both management and labour, and the objectives of either side must be designed to promote, within the limit of their capacity, such a desirable state.

We believe that the time is right now when the question of real wages should be the basis upon which employer organisations and the industrial unions should get together. Too long have we seen the spectacle of the tail wagging the dog. The way the basic wage is rising without any apparent advantage to the worker must be a matter of great concern not only to the Government but to the workers and the employers as well. Two of the most important requirements for a stabilised economy which have exercised the minds of Governments, managements and responsible labour leaders in recent years, are the maintenance of a high level of real income as distinct from a high nominal income and, secondly, the maintenance of a level of production sufficient to meet the expanding needs of the community and a balanced export trade.

From a purely industrial standpoint, this involves considerations inherent in maintaining an equitable level of real wages,

considerations relating to the maintenance of a high level of employment, and also considerations involved in employer-employee relations. It is in connection with these phases that both employer and employee must be interested. Chief amongst these is undoubtedly that of high level production and those factors that are involved in achieving this desirable state of affairs. Management cannot, and indeed should not, desire to escape the major share of responsibility for full production.

Hon. W. R. Hall: I wonder who prepared this for you?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. HEARN: The efficiency, vigour and inventiveness of management under free and competitive enterprise is the cornerstone of a sound economy. Therefore, we believe that management should show itself worthy of its very definite responsibility by developing and implementing modern techniques, by effective management, by the recognition of the need for comprehensive training for executives and an enlightened approach to the problems of management and labour relations. There is a definite role that the Government should play in these days. We believe that the function of the Government is to provide favourable conditions for the development of private enterprise by freeing it from all unnecessary restrictions and controls that seriously hamper production.

Hon. W. R. Hall: I still want to know who wrote that for you.

Hon. H. HEARN: The hon. member did not write it for me! The Government could also assist by pursuing a policy of reduced taxation, thereby ensuring an adequate return for enterprise and by maintaining a policy encouraging capital investment. I know that the question of incentives is a very controversial one between unions and employers' organisations. I fully recognise why the unions are so prejudiced against incentives. As I have told the House before, I was born in an artisan home in England, and I know something of the evils of the piecework system under which the pace was set by the fastest worker and the price was determined by the hours taken by that fast worker, so that the average man had a pretty rough time.

It is because the executive men of the unions in Australia know something of the abuses of the piecework system that they very rightly view with suspicion any talk about incentives. I suggest, however, that we are living in days when we have to recognise the very special need that exists. As I said at the beginning, if Australia is to be made safe we must move quickly; and if we are going to move quickly and are really to increase our population at a

rapid rate—which is our only means of security—we have of necessity to devise some means whereby we can increase and expand our production.

Today in England, with its Labour Government, despite the nominal wages, the biggest income in the worker's pay envelope is the result of incentive payments. The average wage for an upholsterer in England is somewhere in the vicinity of £6 10s. to £6 15s. a week. A manufacturer from England who passed through here a few weeks ago told me that he had 500 upholsterers working for him and not one of them took home less than £12 per week, some earning up to £15. That has been achieved by incentive payments. I know that in the old days the question of any special effort being made was damned as a result of individual employers abusing the privilege.

I suggest to the unions today that the time has arrived when we should get together and see that, with proper safeguards, we each do our task and endeavour to produce the maximum quantity of goods possible. In that connection, as I said earlier, management must play its part, because it alone can produce the conditions in which men can give of their best. I do not believe that at any time incentives should be allowed to creep into awards or industrial agreements. They should be arranged between the union and the employer concerned in the particular business. I am very sorry to see that incentives do creep into industrial agreements at times.

Finally, I want to touch on what I believe is also an important side of employer and employee relationships. I refer to the human aspect. In the bad old days the men were very much taken for granted. I know many men who, in a period of many years, never spoke or had the opportunity of speaking to their employer. I believe that we should recognise that we are a co-operative concern; that management cannot possibly function without labour; and that each and every one of the men employed in the various factories throughout the length and breadth of this Commonwealth should know something of the aims of management, particularly as we go into mass production where very often we find a single purpose machine with a man working continuously on it.

It is difficult for a man to maintain his enthusiasm unless he knows something of the whole plan and just what the management is aiming at. I believe the time has arrived when we who are employers must be prepared to take the men into our complete confidence, and when we should make conditions so good that they at least can recognise that we are interested in them, not only as employees, but as human

beings. In England there has been a tremendous development in the provision of amenities for workers. It is a common thing for an organisation of a reasonable size to have its own playing fields and its own recreation halls; and while in Western Australia we have not developed amenities to that extent, I believe the time has come when we must look to these things and treat employees as part of a great co-operative movement—because, after all, that is what industry really is and the very small return which comes from any turnover is only the result of efficient management, plus the efforts of the men within the factories.

So I am hoping that we in these days, recognising the great responsibility that is ours, and realising just how short the time really is as far as Australia is concerned, will get together and endeavour to appreciate just where we stand concerning these big questions. It is only by complete co-operation between management and labour that we can really be successful. Before I sit down I would like to say one word to private enterprise. I am a great believer in private enterprise and the phase I notice in these de-valued days is that the man who in 1939 believed in private enterprise is today called a reactionary. I want to sound a note of warning to private enterprise. We must take up our responsibilities. In days when the inflationary spiral is just around the corner, it may well pay private enterprise to pause a little and be prepared to sacrifice in order that it may continue, because I believe that private enterprise is on trial at the moment. I believe it will prove itself, as it has done before, capable of dealing with this emergency; but I feel that it is my duty in my position to say to private enterprise, "Be careful and be efficient."

**HON. J. McI. THOMSON** (South) [5.25]: I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for and appreciation of the cordial welcome I have received as a new member in this House. I also desire to express appreciation of the sentiments voiced with regard to the hon. member whom I have had the privilege to succeed. I am indeed proud to have followed my father to this House and I know that my pride and pleasure are shared by him. I am very conscious of his high standing in the political life of Western Australia and of the responsibilities that devolve upon me as his successor to prove myself worthy of following him.

I can assure you, Mr. President, and the House, that it will be my honest endeavour to prove as worthy a member as he was in the years he served the State. I remember when at school, attending this House on many occasions and having the privilege of sitting in the President's and

Speaker's galleries in the two Houses. It is pleasing today to see that there are still one or two members in this Chamber who were here then, in the early 1920's, and I am proud to have the privilege of working with them.

The major problem that is facing the country areas today is that of water supply. Unless we provide sufficient water for the country districts the prosperity of the State will be largely affected. I trust that a bold and vigorous policy will be adopted by the Government to ensure that the people in the dry areas will be adequately served. I was pleased to read in the Press, over the week-end, the statement of the Minister for Works regarding the work that is being undertaken in the Lake Grace, Newdegate and Lake Biddy areas. I hope that along with these operations the Government will be able to and will use all its endeavours to utilise to the fullest extent the various rock catchments in this State.

I was particularly pleased to notice that the Minister referred to the Kent district. This area has problems peculiar to itself inasmuch as it is not a good holding area. Therefore it is necessary to bore for the water which has been detected by diviners and of which I understand there is a large quantity. I trust the Government will not allow the matter of cost to be taken into consideration when dealing with this problem. When we realise that at this time of the year the dam in North Pingrup has a depth of only 2ft. 6in. and summer is nearly upon us, it behoves us to look for ways and means whereby we can increase supplies in the coming years.

Next I shall refer to the extension of the water supply from Collie to Narrogin. I would like to see a pipeline laid, simultaneously, to Pingelly and Katanning. The urgency of that work will be apparent when it is realised how inadequate is the water supply of those two centres. Although the position at Katanning is not quite as bad as that at Pingelly, in the coming summer both those towns will be extremely short of water and the position will not improve under present conditions. The matter of water supply to country areas immediately brings to mind the question of sewerage.

Water supply and sewerage should go hand in hand in our country districts and I trust that a sewerage scheme for our country towns will be implemented, thus enabling us to do away with the present most unhygienic method of disposal. More consideration should be given to the proper utilisation of the waste matter from country sewerage systems. I would draw attention to an address by Mr. J. C. Jessop, in the Country Hour, in Victoria recently. Mr. Jessop, who is chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, said, with reference to the farm at Werribee—

The farm soil had been found to be deficient in mineral and organic matter. Over the past 26 years, due to the sewage, the phosphates in the soil have increased six times and the nitrates four times. There had also been an increase in other minerals and elements. Before this experiment the farm carried one sheep to 1½ to 2 acres. It now carried 14 sheep to the acre and the mortality rate in cattle and sheep was below one per cent. per annum. The 450 residents on the farm were among the healthiest in the State. The outstanding lesson to be learnt from the experiment was that apparent waste could be converted into wealth.

I feel that we are not using this valuable waste to the best advantage at present and I trust that, when these long needed sewerage schemes are put in hand in country towns the waste matter will be utilised to the advantage of the primary producers in the areas concerned. Housing is a question of great importance today and I congratulate the Government on its honest endeavour to increase the supply of building materials. It is indeed pleasing to note that the Government has been prepared to import into Western Australia—although at increased cost—cement, iron, steel, and, in more recent weeks, asbestos, in an effort to meet the long felt need for greater supplies of building materials. I believe that the lifting of permits for dwellings of up to 12½ squares was a step in the right direction, and, although it will not solve the problem of shortage of supplies I think the re-establishment of private enterprise in the building industry is a move—as in any other industry—for the betterment and advantage of the community as a whole.

The lack of adequate supplies of timber is causing both builders and the Government grave concern today. I refer particularly to seasoned timber. Scantling is available, although one has to place an order well ahead in order to be able to complete a contract on schedule, but seasoned timber for flooring, mouldings and joinery is almost unobtainable. I believe that the whole timber position should be investigated by a Royal Commission. Kiln dried timber is extremely difficult to obtain and an investigation such as I have suggested would be of benefit to the State. I was pleased last night to hear the remarks of Dr. Hislop with regard to institutions for the care of our chronically sick and aged people.

Up to the present we have not, in this State, paid much attention to making provision for the aged or chronically sick in country areas. Although perhaps it should not be solely the responsibility of the Government, I strongly urge the establishment of institutions in our larger country towns so that the unfortunates concerned

may be cared for within reasonable distance of their homes and families, instead of having to be brought to the metropolitan area for attention. I can speak from personal experience in this regard, as it was my duty to try to arrange accommodation in such a case. The difficulties that I encountered were extreme. I was eventually forced to accept accommodation, for this case, about which I was not very happy. However, I was able to secure accommodation in the Home of Peace. I cannot speak too highly in praise of the magnificent work that such institutions are doing for our aged and chronically sick, but, nevertheless, I reiterate that provision should be made for such people nearer to their homes.

Although I know that the increased cost of living is a dangerous subject, I must deal briefly with the ever-increasing rise in prices, as sooner or later we must face up to the position. Too often have we asked how long is this trend to last. I have no solution to offer. On the one hand we hear it said that wages should be pegged, and on the other hand it is said that the cost of living should be pegged. This problem should be investigated by an expert body, in the form of a Royal Commission, which would be entirely free from party bias. I believe that from the deliberations of a Royal Commission suggestions should be directed to the proper quarter. That would help to prevent the persistent increase in costs, which is of no benefit to anyone, and particularly the wage earner.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You will have the support of the Labour Party in any endeavour to keep prices down.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You have one convert already.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am pleased to hear that. I congratulate the Government on putting into effect its policy of decentralisation, as exemplified in some of our outports today. I refer particularly to Albany. Although progress is slow—to the minds of many people—with the arrival of the dredge that is now on its way, I feel sure that rapid progress will be made and that the scheme for the development of that port will take shape in the near future. It is gratifying to know that the Albany Harbour Board, as now constituted, is doing splendid work and has cut down the time for the discharge of cargo and its distribution to country areas. From the financial point of view the board is doing far better than was envisaged by many people. I trust that the potentialities of Albany from a defence point of view have been fully realised by the powers that be and that the harbour will be ready for any eventualities that may arise in the present state of the world.



This brings me to another point. I sincerely hope the Commonwealth Government, together with the State Government, will reconsider the question of a broad gauge railway linking Fremantle with Kalgoorlie and that it will traverse the areas surrounding Corrigin and Southern Cross, along the lines which have been recommended by the Royal Commission which recently took evidence on this matter. Apart from its value in wartime, I consider that the construction of this railway line would, in peacetime, serve a useful purpose in opening up and developing the areas I have mentioned.

Referring to the tourist traffic for a moment, I sincerely hope the Government will, with the assistance of Commonwealth money, be able to develop it more than has been done in the past. It is an extremely profitable business, and I trust that the subsidy, which I understand has been granted to some local governing bodies, will be extended to all of them because I consider that the development of the tourist traffic is a matter that is far beyond the resources of any local governing body. I hope, therefore, that this money will be forthcoming to enable this tourist business to be properly developed to the advantage of the State in general.

I wish to express my appreciation for the bus service which has been provided by the Government to serve the Ravenshorpe, Hopetoun and Lake Grace areas. This is a commendable step by the Railway Department. I hope that it will prove to be all that the people have long desired in that part of the State. I would also like to commend the Honorary Minister for Agriculture for the manner in which he has dealt with the question of soil erosion, which presents another major problem in Western Australia. I trust that as a result of the efforts being made today, we shall be able to see the benefits in the near future which will, of course, be of great advantage to the agricultural areas.

In conclusion, I thank members for their patient hearing. I realise that they fully appreciate my feelings today because they have all experienced the ordeal of making a maiden speech in this House. I will terminate my remarks by saying that we live in a State which offers to its people and to all those migrants who are entering it, great opportunities. There are still many benefits which this State can confer on its people, and it is up to each and every one of us, in our own individual way, to work and strive for their achievement. This will require faith, perseverance and a will to work. By such means we shall achieve our rightful place in this, our Commonwealth of Australia. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

**HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North)** [5.51]: In supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, I wish to refer briefly to some remarks made by Mr. Hearn regarding the North Province and which I wish to correct. I do not think the hon. member was quite conversant with his subject. For instance, he suggested that the Labour Government has never done anything for the North and to refute this statement I will quote an extract from the report on the North-West of Western Australia by a committee appointed by the Government to investigate measures necessary to promote the development of the North-West, which was published in 1945, wherein it says:—

#### Debt Adjustments.

Following on the recommendations made by the Royal Commission, the Government in 1941 appointed a Debt Adjustments Committee to carry out the agreement reached between the Stock and Wool-broking firms, one of the Associated Banks, the Pastoralists' Association, and the Government. A representative of each was appointed on the Committee which is known as the Pastoral Industry Debt Adjustment Advisory Committee. The whole of the adjustments made during the four years it has been in operation was made voluntarily.

Since 1936 the Government, on the recommendation of the Pastoral Appraisal Board, has granted relief from the payment of pastoral lease rents.

It was the Willcock Labour Government that achieved that. It goes on to say—

The figures for the first four years of this voluntary scheme, and the rent remissions, tell a remarkable story of assistance. They are as follows:—

Number of stations in respect of which assistance was given = 66.

	£
Amount written off by secured creditors ....	386,932
Relief granted under Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act ....	36,813
Rent on Leases remitted	94,051
Government contribution of interest ....	49,237
<b>Total Relief for 66 stations ....</b>	<b>567,033</b>

That is something at least, which the Labour Government, in those years, did do to assist the North-West.

Hon. L. Craig: The stock firms also wrote off some large amounts.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is correct, but here is one which the Government wrote off—

Rent on Leases remitted	£94,051
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Many pastoralists would not be in existence today had it not been for the remissions granted by the Willcock Government. There may have been others there, too, who obtained relief from the stock firms.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Look what the Commonwealth Labour Government did for the North-West, too.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I have quoted those figures in order to correct the misstatement made by Mr. Hearn. The hon. member also stated that there were 5,000 people in the North but the 1941 census showed that there were 7,600. Since then two towns have grown up and another one—Carnarvon—has increased its population. The number living at Wittenoom Gorge has now reached the 400 mark and it is expected that there will be 1,000 people there in the next 18 months.

Yampi Sound has grown also and the population has increased out of all reckoning. There are now 1,500 people on the Gascoyne roll which before had only about 900 recorded and in the Carnarvon district there are over 2,000 men, women and children. I do not wish to say anything further as to the hon. member's remarks on the North because obviously he is not aware of the conditions existing and, like many others, he has probably just flown over it. There are a few members in this House who know the district fairly well and Sir Charles Latham is one of them.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Members want to go over it on horseback.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is worse if one walks.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I will take this opportunity of thanking you, Sir, and all of the members in this Chamber for the kind advice which has been tendered to me as a newcomer to this House. I will now endeavour to take members on a trip through the North Province and I hope the going will not be too rough. The boundaries of the North Province extend from the Murchison River in the south to the Northern Territory border in the north. It has an area of over 500,000 square miles; more than half of Western Australia. Although it comprises approximately one-sixth of Australia, which has a population, today, of about 8,000,000, the North Province contains only one-thousandth part of that total. This thinly populated area with its untapped resources and wealth, which do exist, might quite easily be, as the hon. member said, the envy of the densely populated countries lying to the north of this continent.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There are 200,000,000 people there awaiting to grab it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What! Two hundred million!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There is one answer to this problem and although Mr. Hearn was bordering upon it he did not express it. The answer is: Populate the North. But the next question is: Where are we going to put the people? We must first have the land to populate and provide for those who are already there. The hon. member was certainly bordering on the question with the ideas he put forward but I do not know why he did not go further. Perhaps Mr. Heenan put him off his cue.

Hon. G. Bennetts: He did mention the Kimberleys.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That was one reason put forward. How long are we to be permitted to carry on with this thinly populated country? It is not for us to say these days. How long will the rest of the world let us carry on? That is the question, and it is something which all of us should sleep on and think about. To my mind, inaccessibility is the barrier that has retarded and is still holding back the development of the North. I believe that the Great Northern-highway, which is the road which runs right up the coast serving all the ports—

Hon. R. M. Forrest: That is the coastal highway.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: —should be made a good all-weather road and, as a result, quite a lot of tourist traffic would follow. I believe that our 2,000 miles of coastline, which stretches right up round the North-West Cape and then north-eastwards to Cape Londonderry and Wyndham, would provide many attractions for tourists. The tourist trade is a profitable one for small businesses, but it has a more profitable side than that because it leads to the opening up of the country. Provide roads and people will follow. That has been the experience elsewhere, and the North would prove no exception. Under existing conditions, however, the North is shut off and is practically unknown.

When I speak of the natural resources and the wealth in that part of the State, I remind members that there are many minerals known to exist in the country between the Murchison and Hall's Creek and in the Kimberleys, and they have barely been scratched. Among these minerals are gold, copper, silver-lead, tantalite, beryllium and many others, and I believe that even diamonds have been found. Practically all known minerals exist there, but the trouble is that they cannot be worked economically. The gold-mining areas of Marble Bar and Nullagine have been worked, and prospectors have had their shows, but once any business fails to pay, the tendency is for those engaged in it to leave.

We know of the mineral resources in the shape of blue asbestos that are being exploited at Wittenoom Gorge, and there are various other sorts of asbestos in the

Pilbara district which are said to be the largest known deposits in the world. The provision of a mill at Roebourne, similar to a State battery, to mill the white asbestos raised by the smaller prospectors, would be a great help and would permit many of these men to operate economically. I should like to see the Government provide a mill of that sort. The iron-ore deposits at Yampi are of immense value. Their accessibility and the ability of ships to load alongside the cliffs and transport the ore to Whyalla or Port Kembla are advantageous features. Such a natural asset is of immense importance, as the Japanese obviously realised.

One might say, too, that commercial fishing along this coastline of more than 2,000 miles has not been touched. There are six or seven boats operating in those waters, boats with modern refrigeration for snap freezing, but they are hampered by the fact that they cannot get their fish to market. At this season of the year, when all the boats except the "Kybra" are busy bringing down frozen meat to maintain the metropolitan meat supply, the fishermen in the North cannot get space. The two seasons clash; the shortage of meat here is accompanied by a shortage of space on the boats. I travelled down on the "Kybra" last month, and the agent at Carnarvon told me he had 500 bags of fish each weighing about 120lb. for shipment, and the boat could not take them. One fisherman from Dirk Hartog's Island went to Carnarvon Jetty, and was told that the boat could take only one-third of his lot.

Fish is available in large quantities and at all times but the marketing difficulties prevent the expansion of the industry. If the northern highway were completed, refrigerated trucks could provide the requisite transport to bring the fish south. We have had experience of refrigerated trucks being used to transport fish from a point 80 miles south of Carnarvon to Albany. That seems hardly credible, but it has happened. I believe that great wealth could be obtained if the fishing industry in the North were developed. Apart from commercial fishing, we at last have Australians engaged in the whaling industry. Prior to the North-West Whaling Co. starting operations at Point Cloates, the owners were foreigners.

We also have the Commonwealth whaling concern—a big £6,000,000 concern which the present State Government nearly drove out of the North. I assert that because there is only one other site along the whole of the North-West coast where fresh water is available in sufficient quantities to cater for a whaling station, and that is at Point Cloates. The Chifley Government suggested the only other place. The people of the North want to see industries started there because they realise that the country must be populated. The Commonwealth station is not

yet being operated. There has been some messing about between the two Governments and delay has resulted, but the intention is to start operating this month, though not much can be expected by way of results as it is now too late in the season. Between the two concerns, the whaling industry certainly promises to bring dollars to Australia, which will be a very good thing.

We had a shark industry at Carnarvon. It was established by an experimental company which spent £100,000. Sir James Mitchell and Sir Charles Latham inspected the place in 1927. Sharks are to be had there in tons. Scientists who came from Europe told us they proposed to catch sharks weighing tons, and we laughed at them; but they were as good as their word, and some of the sharks weighed two tons. They were certainly enormous fish. The company treated everything; the only portions thrown away, so far as I can remember, were the jawbone and the teeth. I understand that the company considered that it could obtain 20 or more by-products from the shark. However, that venture was lost to the State because the company found that it could operate more economically on the South African coast, where cheaper labour was available. A proposal was put to the State Government of the day that indentured labour should be obtained to man the industry, just as it was used in the pearling industry, but we were told that this could not be done, and so that industry was lost to the State. The sharks are still there waiting to be picked up.

The seabed up there is swarming with crayfish and the tails exported to America are proving a good dollar-earner. I am glad to see that a departmental boat is in the North investigating the industry. Dealing with other resources of the North, there is every prospect of oil being found in the Kimberleys. Companies have been boring for a long time without success, but we have been informed that the North-West Cape prospects are promising.

Let me now speak of the Kimberleys and the fertile land there. To my way of thinking, the Kimberleys represent the most valuable spot of perhaps any part of this State, and I think experience will prove that. Progress with the Ord River venture is painfully slow; there is still a lot of experimenting to find out what can be done there. Unquestionably, soil and rainfall conditions are favourable, and the climate is good, but I think that before anything can be done in the way of closer settlement, it will be necessary to do what I expected Mr. Hearn to mention, namely, let private enterprise show what is possible by cutting up leases. That would be far better than leaving the land tied up as it is now, because that is what is happening. Only this year, an English com-

pany paid £250,000 for a station in the Kimberleys, and I am curious to know whether the Government intends to sink bores for a company that can afford to pay such a price for a property. We have read that so much money is to be spent on stock routes and bores, and I should like to know the reason why the Government has to provide it.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Before tea I was dealing with the huge leases in the eastern or northern Kimberleys in the Ord River section. I am curious to know if the taxpayers are, in effect, going to put down watering places on those huge areas owned by large companies which can pay £250,000 for them. What is to be the result if, for instance, there is a resumption of land on a big scale for closer settlement? Would the Government have to buy back its own improvements? Would it be repurchasing the land at an inflated value owing to its higher carrying capacity by paying for improvements which, after 70 years of settlement, the companies have not carried out? They have simply grazed their cattle and used the natural watering places, causing erosion there in consequence. That is admitted, and is that the reason why the Government proposes to provide these improvements?

I think it would be unworthy, after the country had been eroded, the goodness taken out of it and huge profits made from it, for the people of Australia to be asked then to put it into workable order again. I am curious to know just what is going to happen with respect to these big areas, because there are millions of acres—not just small leases—controlled by large companies. Despite the fact that some of them have had the advantage of free native labour, they have done very little in the way of improvements to ensure the carrying capacity of the properties. That poses this question: Are they really graziers, or are they investors? I am speaking now of the big companies that have bought up to £250,000 worth of leases. Do they know what the Government is going to spend? Or that there will be a re-sale value?

That is what I am interested to know. We are aware that there are huge areas of good land in the Kimberleys, along the rivers, which, no doubt, in the years to come will be turned into very profitable dairy and cattle-raising country. With closer settlement and irrigation the same could be done there as has been done with the South-West; in fact, more could be done because the soil is better and the tons and tons of super required in the southern part of the State are not needed in the North.

We read a lot about Air Beef. That is something new and revolutionary in regard to transport, and it is a very good thing,

for the inaccessible stations such as Glen Roy and the group there that are being served at the moment. The Kimberleys are very inaccessible, and perhaps only that type of transport could serve that group. But from a national point of view it is, in my opinion, uneconomical. I would prefer to see, rather than this Air Beef extended generally, the three Kimberley towns linked with roads whereby the graziers could move their stock, either alive or in refrigerated vans, as they desired. They could kill as they are doing now and move the carcasses by means of road transport. The roads would then open up other ventures in the country such as, perhaps, goldmining at Halls Creek, which was the first goldmining centre in Western Australia.

There are other minerals in the Kimberleys. There is plenty of asbestos. That area would also grow tropical fruits, which are being experimented with now. From an economic point of view, transport by air is not paying the taxpayers of Australia, at any rate. Air Beef is subsidised to the extent of 1d. per lb. by the Commonwealth Government. The average weight of the beasts last year was, in round figures, I understand, 660lb. delivered at the Wyndham meatworks. At 1d. per lb. that amounts to £2 15s. per beast. That is what the subsidy amounts to in order to shift a beast from Glen Roy aerodrome to Wyndham aerodrome, a distance of 180 miles. Who shifts it from the Wyndham aerodrome to Wyndham—another 7 miles—I do not know. That requires more expense because refrigerated vans pick it up there and take it to the meatworks.

Whether Air Beef pays for that cartage or not, I am not prepared to say because I have not investigated that matter. I presume the Government does. The Government also provides the abattoirs. Still, Air Beef is possibly something quite new and I am not attacking it from that angle, but drawing attention to the fact that it is not an economical proposition. We are told that by transporting the beef by air to Wyndham it is possible to land 100lb. more meat in the chillers than would be the case if the beasts were driven in. If we take the 1d. per lb. subsidy, which amounts to £2 15s. per beast, and work it out at the extra 100lb. of meat, we find that that amount of 100lb. costs about 6d. per lb.

Another thing against the extension of Air Beef rather than the development of roads—I have no objection to Air Beef being extended providing roads are built as well—is this, that an airline, generally speaking, constitutes a monopoly in its particular sphere. It needs a highly skilled and trained staff to operate aircraft. On the other hand, when I was at Wyndham in February I saw aborigines driving big diesel trucks over the so-called roads there. Another point is this, that with

Air Beef the producer has little choice. He has either to put his commodity on the plane or drive it in, whereas if roads were constructed there would be competition and, perhaps, a better service would be provided for him.

Air Beef, I claim, will not put one more person in the Kimberleys. It is something seasonal, the same as shearing. There would be a team of butchers moving around the same as a team of shearers travels around today. Those men are not residents but are only there for a few months of the year. If it is the ambition of the Government to populate the country with cattle, that is all right, but if it wants to put human beings there and populate it with people, I cannot see how that is going to fit in.

Moving to the West Kimberleys, I suppose the sheep stations there are the only ones—in my province anyway—that have reasonably held their own in numbers of sheep in the last half-century since they have been grazing sheep. The numbers on the Fitzroy sheep stations are not much lower today than they were 50 years ago. As against this, there is an improvement because in those days I think the average fleece was about 3½lb.—it was on some stations in the Kimberleys—whereas today, with improvements in breeding, the pastoralists have increased that by about 100 per cent. I would not be certain on that point, but I think that is so. Therefore with the sheep industry in the Kimberleys, if the losses are down, probably the tonnage of wool will be up.

I point out that the meatworks at Broome is the only stable industry there. It will be stable as long as cattle are sent there. The pearlshell industry, unfortunately, has declined to a great extent. Now there are only about a score of boats operating as against about 350 when I was there in 1920. That is due not to any shortage of shell in the seabed, but to the fact, evidently, that the buying of the shell has got into the hands of one man. There is only one buyer there, from what I can hear. In consequence, he just purchases what he wants and the market is more or less controlled by that one buyer—I think America is the buyer concerned. The people in the pearling industry sadly miss the Japanese divers at Broome. No-one has been able to replace the Jap as a diver even though many nationalities have been tried out. We must hand it to the Jap; he certainly is a first-class diver. Consequently, the pearlers in Broome are not receiving the return, from the labour they employ, that they did when employing Japanese divers.

I would like to see a road built from Broome into the cattle country of the Fitzroy to ensure the life of the Broome works. Passing on from there, we travel down to the sheep country. That is from Broome down to the Murchison which is

the north-west section of our North. I suppose that would be approximately 1,000 miles as the crow flies. There the rainfall cuts out and the sheep men—the pastoralists—all over that area suffer setbacks from drought, depressions and unstable markets. Today, the markets are good but who knows what they may be in five years time. These pastoralists suffer from the ravages of all sorts of vermin; foxes and dingoes are the worst offenders.

Generally speaking, throughout that area the pastoralists are doing as much as possible with the land they have under their stewardship. There are, of course, isolated little places such as Carnarvon where perhaps a few hundred acres are cultivated. But, that can only be done economically at Carnarvon, and this will be the case until such time as our population increases tremendously. A few of the pastoralists are disgruntled and have a dislike for paying taxes. I do not think there are many of them but there are some who do not stock the country to its full carrying capacity. But, as against that there is the fact that these people are spelling or resting the country and although some of them may be disgruntled they are doing the nation a good turn.

Moving on to the question of banana production, the area used for plantations in Carnarvon is termed the Gascoyne irrigation area. It is a remarkable piece of land and the industry has grown up on its own merits without any financial assistance from Governments. In the first place it started through the depression period; the drought followed and then the war. People everywhere condemned the scheme, but today it is an industry producing a considerable sum of money and is a credit to the pioneers who stuck it out. Consequently most of them are wealthy men today. The financial institutions in Carnarvon at the time were two private banks and three stockbroking firms. These financial institutions claim that they assist in opening up the country in Australia by their loans. However, they would not advance one penny to banana growers and they would not give any credit for stores. They had no faith in the banana industry and no value was placed on the land. It was not even possible to mortgage a block.

How bad was their judgment? This was proved only three weeks ago when nine blocks of land were sold by auction by the Government. They averaged over £60 per acre. There was no re-sale value in the land. They were only four-acre blocks, in my opinion not quite large enough for a banana plantation. But, they were put up for auction and they brought over £80 per acre. It is bare windswept land that has stood there for 50 years—land with an upset price of about 60s. an acre and nobody would have it. So that instead of writing off losses, as the Government

has done for wool and meat, it has had the benefit of showing a profit out of the trial and error of the men who formed this irrigation area.

I wish to quote some production figures. For the financial year just ended—1949-50—a total of 73,911 cases of bananas was marketed in Perth at a market value of £278,688. For the financial year before that the figures were slightly less and this year they may also be less because of the drought conditions prevailing. From the 16th June to the 24th October of the same year—that is only about five months—a total of 140 tons of beans was marketed for a return of £19,431, making a total market value for the two crops of £298,119. With private treaty sales the sum would exceed £300,000. There is also a wide distribution of these sums and they are as follows:—Freights from Carnarvon to Perth would be, in round figures, £37,000; fruit cases, £18,000, and auctioneers' selling commission £20,902. On top of that there is the expense of running the plantations.

The last figures I quoted were for banana crops alone and on top of all those expenses is that of labour. It is not possible to get even a native to work for under 20s. a day. However, they do work if the owner is there to supervise. Bean freights are £37 a ton by air and £20 by road. On a fifty-fifty basis that would be £4,480 for freight and the auctioneers received £1,470 for selling the beans. From that members can see that these growers have done a wonderful job. There are between 150 and 200 growers producing on that irrigation area with a total of no more than 600 acres under cultivation. That area under cultivation returns a gross figure of £500 per acre. That, on a small area, is very high production. The area is only six miles long by one mile wide—six miles up the river and half a mile each side—and there must be between 600 and 700 people living there. They include the owners, their families and the labour employed.

I do not think I would be optimistic in predicting that as our population increases we will see canneries at Carnarvon similar to the canneries at Leeton on the Murrumbidgee irrigation area. They have a dry climate over there, but the area has been turned into a most productive stone fruit district. That is one town in Australia where bananas are not permitted. A heavy fine is the penalty for taking a banana into the Murrumbidgee irrigation area. I do not know why, but there must be some disease in the Eastern States, whereas in Carnarvon it is disease-free.

The Great Northern-highway, which links Geraldton and Carnarvon, is the life-line of the industries in Carnarvon itself. I believe that this road should be metalled and made into an all-weather road. An industry such as this deserves some protection and security. The people engaged in the industries up there depend upon this road to market their products. It is

metalled as far as the Murchison River and then there is a gap of about 240 miles from there to Carnarvon that is merely graded, and will not carry heavy transport. The road crumbles when it is dry and bogs down when it is wet.

Members must realise that bananas are highly perishable and will not stand any delay in transport; especially in the hot weather. On a still day, when there is not any breeze, they become "boiled." They go soapy inside and never ripen. This section of road is the expensive part of the journey. It costs approximately 10s. a case to bring bananas from Carnarvon to the market in Perth. That is about 1½d. per lb. on fruit with an average of 90lb. in a case. Importers in Perth can buy Eastern States' bananas, when they are cheap on the Eastern States' markets and land them here at the same price—10s. a case—and they are trans-shipped two or three times coming across by rail. I maintain that supplying the local market is the inherent right of local industry and all consideration should be given to metalling this road and ensuring that the producers at Carnarvon can land their fruit here at an economical price and be able to compete with the growers in the Eastern States. I think that is only reasonable.

Coming next to the air services to the northern areas, their regular flights are doing much for the North. Daily papers are available by that means, and fresh vegetables are transported in consequence of the subsidy paid by the Government. I sincerely hope the subsidy will continue all the year round. In asking for that I am not suggesting something that would be abused because it would automatically adjust itself. People living in the Kimberleys will not consider paying 2s. and 2s. 6d. per lb. for vegetables air-freighted from the south if they can grow their own. I am positive that the position would automatically adjust itself if the subsidies were continued all the year round.

The Department of Civil Aviation has come in for a lot of criticism, mostly from people who do not fully understand the work carried out. It is a Commonwealth department that paves the way for the air services that follow. It is responsible for building aerodromes, servicing them and keeping them in safe repair. It supplies weather information and is in constant radio touch with planes flying on the north-western routes. The work of the department, plus the air services, have made life in the Kimberleys quite bearable. Not enough can be said about this work although, as I have remarked, it has come in for so much criticism. The department is just as vital to the safe running of the air services as are harbours to shipping. Each provides similar services in its respective sphere.

Then again the Flying Doctor service has rendered admirable and invaluable service to the people living in the far North, and by means of the pedal radio much helpful advice and information have been made available. As an instance of what happens, I read in the newspaper the other day that a child at the Comet mine at Marble Bar was found at 3 o'clock in the afternoon to be very ill. Those concerned got in touch with the Flying Doctor with the result that the child was in the Port Hedland hospital by nightfall, which entailed a journey of over 200 miles for the doctor.

By way of contrast, I would remark that I was on the Noonkanbah Station on the Fitzroy at shearing time years ago. The team consisted of 50 men and over 40 of them were stricken down with malaria. We were five days traversing the 140 miles from Noonkanbah to Derby by horse and mule. That was by the regular mail service in those days. That comparison serves to indicate beyond all doubt that the present-day air service with the Flying Doctor available has proved a great institution. Dealing next with the housing position in the North the shortage there is just as great as in the South or elsewhere. It grieves me when I sit here and hear members speaking about thousands of houses in their provinces. If we could get 50 erected in the North pretty well everyone would be satisfied.

To give due credit to the State Housing Commission I have to say that after all these years the first State rental home in Carnarvon has been occupied by the local medical officer. Of course, the house is just a beach shack, consisting of two rooms and a small verandah at each side. The kitchen is at one end of the building and the bathroom and other conveniences at the opposite end. The place is so small that the doctor cannot put all his furniture into the rooms. He had been houseless in Carnarvon for over two years, the previous medical quarters having been burnt down. In consequence, over all that period there was no house for the doctor nor was there any surgery where anyone could consult him. The practice was for everyone to line up on the verandah of the hospital and wait their turn for attention there.

It is just about 12 months since the Premier stated in "The West Australian" that the health of the people of Carnarvon was the Government's and his first concern. He said that, or words to that effect, when he was defending the Government's attitude in attempting to prevent the Federal Labour Government from embarking upon a £6,000,000 whaling venture at Carnarvon. What has happened about the health of those people? Let us see how really concerned the Premier is about

it. When the Government took office in 1947 plans were drawn up and the money was available for the construction of a new hospital at Carnarvon.

What has happened to them I do not know, but evidently they were cancelled, as I will show later on. The point is that nothing was heard about the matter until the 10th February of this year. The Minister for Health visited Carnarvon on a pre-election tour and she told a public meeting this—

I have come to Carnarvon especially to see the new school and the hospital and I am convinced that Carnarvon is in urgent need of a new hospital.

That statement was given a half-inch headline in the local paper, "The Northern Times" of the 16th February. The people were buoyed up in consequence of what the Minister had promised, but again nothing happened until the Premier came along a month later. On the 17th March he addressed a very large public meeting in the hall at Carnarvon. Mr. Forrest was there at the time. In the course of his speech the Premier said—

An amount of £7,000 has been allotted for improvements but a new hospital would be built as soon as possible.

The L.C.L. candidates were beaten at the election—and the hospital disappeared. The people are getting a bit worried about the hospital and are wondering what is going to happen. Are they to wait until just before the next election when the matter will be attended to and then the present Government will be able to say that they have made the necessary provision?

Is all this so much tomfoolery and mere political propaganda in the shape of repeated promises? The agitation continued on the part of everyone concerned at Carnarvon and in due course the member for Gascoyne again wrote to the Minister for Health and the reply received was dated the 22nd June, 1950, and read—

Dear Mr. Wise.—With reference to your letter of the 15th instant and your subsequent interview with the Under Secretary, I have to advise you that the Government is prepared to proceed with the theatre block—

That was what the £7,000 was for—

—of the Carnarvon hospital as soon as the plans and specifications are prepared and a contract let.

I remind members that the plans and specifications were already drawn up in 1947. The letter proceeds—

I hope, however, that it will be possible to proceed with more extensive work, but am unable to commit myself at this stage, pending the consideration of the many building projects which face the Government.

That is the position. Election time comes along and there is the promise of the hospital and everything else! Election day passes and the hospital and everything else is forgotten. That is the unfair part of it. Should anyone become sick and need special attention, there is no place in the North-West that can offer the necessary facilities. That means that the people in that part of the State are subjected to very heavy expenses, including aeroplane fares which were raised 25 per cent. this year. This was quite unfair. If the Government cannot provide the necessary services to deal with the health of the people it should at least refund the plane fares, provided that the patient is armed with the necessary doctor's certificate as to his condition of health, the necessity for x-ray treatment and consultation with specialists.

The present situation is very serious. Some 2,000 people are living within an eight-mile radius of the Carnarvon hospital. At that institution 16 beds are available apart from four in the maternity block which is in a separate building. In the hospital there are two wards with four beds each and the other eight beds are on the verandah. As I remarked earlier there is no consulting room and patients have to queue up on the verandah. The doctor there told me that he had 80 odd surgical cases waiting for treatment but he cannot attend to them. There is no provision for separating medical from surgical cases and patients are mixed up in the wards. In these circumstances it becomes necessary at times for patients to travel to Perth by plane, and that involves them in great expense.

Carnarvon is there to stay and the population at that centre will not fade away. The people have proved their bona fides and have surmounted every test including the depression period, droughts and so forth. They are certainly there to stay, providing the Government will co-operate particularly in maintaining the road from Carnarvon in a condition that will enable the growers to operate economically.

With regard to the shipping position, the State ships were put on the coast by a Labour Government to serve the people of the North-West, but they are not always operated with that end in view. In fact, that objective is not kept in mind for the most part and the people in the northern towns have suffered in consequence. The State ships were to provide a service for the North just as the railways were constructed to serve the people in southern portions of the State. We find, however, that the ships often by-pass North-West ports in order to cater for the requirements of the Darwin people, in consequence of which cargo for our northern ports is often left behind. That is not a fair thing.

Most of the Carnarvon cargo goes back overland with the banana trucks at a much higher freight than the ordinary shipping freight. So the boats are relieved of much of that cargo. But it is not fair that the northern ports should be by-passed and that the boats should travel to Darwin and then return with perishables. I have seen potatoes taken to Wyndham which had gone to Darwin first and the storekeeper receiving them would not have had 33 per cent. saleable potatoes out of a bag. Those potatoes are supposed to go out to the men in the bush and to the station staffs by air services—but there are none to be sent.

I was present when the manager of the Carlton station came across the river at the bend of the Ord, and the first thing he asked was, "Have you got the spuds on?" He was told by the carrier, "I am very sorry but the potatoes were all bad." It is hardly a fair thing that a service which is supposed to be provided for the people is becoming an interstate instead of a State service. There is another bad practice indulged in by the State Shipping Service in regard to booking tourists on its boats. There is only one passenger boat going to the far North. I refer to the "Koolinda." The "Kybra" can carry only twelve passengers. The practice of booking tourists months ahead and filling up the passenger list in Perth is detrimental to the interests of residents in the North. Those residents are allowed concession fares, but they are seldom able to get on the boat to take advantage of them.

Women living at Wyndham are permitted to make the return trip on the "Koolinda" for £20 but they are rarely able to obtain accommodation and they have to use the plane, which is the only other service available. The plane fare is £50 and members can realise that a working man cannot afford to shift his family about at £50 a time for his wife and half-fare for his children: it is altogether out of the question. The few days that these women could have on the water if accommodation were available might well be the first respite they had received from their housekeeping or other occupation. It might well be the only time that they really had a rest—a well-deserved rest for anybody who happens to live in that tropical climate. I hope that the Government will not be induced by Mr. Bennetts to take the "Kybra" off the North-West run. It is doing a wonderful job as far as Port Hedland.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It was taken away from us at Esperance.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: With its shallow draught, it is the only boat on the coast that can always negotiate the shallow channels at Port Hedland and Shark Bay and into Point Cloates these days, while the whaling station is open. It would be a tragedy for the people—especially those of Port Hedland, Marble



Bar and the Nullagine district—if the "Kybra" were taken off that run; and I hope it never will be.

Last month the "Kybra" was diverted from its course and ordered to call at Onslow, coming south from Port Hedland, to pick up 35 drums of dieselene and take them to the whaling station at Point Cloates. It was not originally scheduled to do that but the order was received while the vessel was on its way up the coast. As a result of that trip, the boat would earn £10 or £12 in freight; but it lost 16 hours, and that would cost somewhere about £150—in order to earn £10. I think that is leaning a little heavily on a public service.

The whaling people at Point Cloates have a weekly overland service and could have obtained dieselene from Carnarvon in that way. It would have cost them probably £30; whereas by having it carried on the boat, the cost was only £10 or £12. However, it cost the taxpayers about £150. On top of that, the vessel was one day behind in schedule as a result. One day does not seem very much down here, but it means a lot to the storekeepers in Carnarvon, Port Hedland, Onslow and Roebourne because they order goods from boat to boat. Commodities will not keep in the North as they do down here.

Such goods as cheese and bacon are carried as near to schedule as possible so that there will be no loss. On this occasion, however, the boat was turned aside and the people at Port Hedland and Marble Bar did not matter at all so long as the whaling station was saved some £20. Water supplies in the North are in fairly good condition for the most part, the exception being Port Hedland. The long-suffering people there have never yet had fresh water in which to wash except when they have carted it from the railway tank. I would like to see more vigour put into the installation of the water scheme for Port Hedland and more labour employed on the project.

I read in this morning's paper that it was unlikely the people at Port Hedland would have fresh water this coming summer. Anybody who has been there knows just what that means. I believe that the water rates in all North-West towns should be no higher than those in the metropolitan area. It is not fair that people who have to live in the discomfort of the North during the summer and who are trying to grow something to beautify their town a little should have to pay more for water than the people down here. If it were not for folk in the country towns and in the North there would be nobody enjoying the comforts of the city.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You will be able to support the Country Party in that.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I will support the Country Party in that and in many ways. I was pleased to hear Mr.

Cunningham extolling the Labour Party's depreciation of the pound. That has certainly been the means of boosting mining and all primary production and internal business as well. Perhaps the importers of motorcars have not benefited but it was a great thing for the mining industry and for primary producers. During the war the Labour Party also looked after the non-producers such as myself—I was a caterer—lawyers, doctors and businessmen of all kinds, when it brought taxation up to date. We always thought we were a year behind in taxation but instead of that we found that we were up to date. In fact, we received what one might term a year's let-off.

I have had quite a lot to say about the North and I hope I have not wearied members too much. I trust I have been of some assistance to the thoughtful ones, to whom Mr. Hearn referred and who may do something for the North. I agree with the Governor that the problem is one for both the national and the State Government. It is too huge a task to be handled by the State Government alone. Too much money is required for the State even to be able to put the facilities of the North back into first-class order. It is a huge problem requiring Commonwealth expenditure. It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government to provide roads sufficiently good to serve in the defence of the North.

Aerodromes alone are not sufficient defence. They are bases for attack. I think that strategists who imagine that an invader could not exist in our far North really cannot know that country. The dangers are more apparent today than ever before. Imagine the situation of our great national asset—the Yampi iron ore deposits—which, like the Snowy River Scheme, is a big project which is going to be valuable to the economy of Australia in the future. With such an enterprise to protect, what is the good of an empty North? We must put something there. We must have a network of roads to protect these huge undertakings. We must have some sort of network that will carry heavy transport in all weathers. Otherwise, if an invader got in there, how would we get him out if we could not get at him?

The theory was that no roads were a protection. It was said that the Japs could land there but what would be the use of that since they could not get down here? We might find the boot on the other foot. If somebody does land there, and we cannot get at him, how are we going to remove him? My idea is that he should not be allowed to get there and roads should be constructed. I think there should be a separate department established for the control of the North with either an administrator or a director in charge—somebody answerable direct to

the Treasury and not through a Minister who has charge of other departments and who cannot give his full attention to the North. We must look at it from a national angle.

That part of the State is not going to remain sheep and meat country forever and somebody must go into it; otherwise we may be faced with the problem of defending it. For such a position we require a man with a full knowledge of the problems, one who places the interests of his country above his personal gain, who is prepared to use some vision and foresight, a statesman and a man of courage who will tackle the job of lifting the North to its rightful place in our national affairs.

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

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**  
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 22nd August.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.33 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 16th August, 1950.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

*As to South-West Scheme Charges.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) When will he be able to make public the policy of the State Electricity Commission with respect to rates and charges as applied to the South-West power scheme?

(2) Can he say what route the power line will follow to Boyup Brook?