

The **SPEAKER** (Mr. Hearman): The honourable member has another five minutes.

Mr. **KELLY**: Surely not, Mr. Speaker!

The **SPEAKER** (Mr. Hearman): The honourable member can have less if he wishes!

Mr. **KELLY**: I think the situation has been reached when the Government as such must review the position. I asked the Minister two questions at the commencement of the session. They were couched in similar terms to those of previous years. I thought that since 12 months had gone by the department must have resolved the auriferous difficulty and we must be in the position where the land was ready for release. My questions brought a reply that examination was in progress but not yet completed.

We are getting nowhere in this matter. Since it was raised, we have had two years without any progress having been made. It is possible that the Minister feels frustrated because he cannot go on with what he wants to do. That is where the fault lies.

Mr. **Bovell**: It is less than two years; barely 18 months.

Mr. **KELLY**: It was before the last election.

Mr. **Bovell**: No.

Mr. **KELLY**: It was before the last Legislative Assembly election. Be that as it may, it does not alter the fact that we have reached a deadlock. On the 7th August I asked when this land would be made available for selection and the reply I received was—

This will depend upon the result of the examination being carried out. However, some blocks have been designed south of the Goldfields Railway between Ghooli and Yellowdine but advertising of these locations for general selection has been withheld at the request of the Railways Department, pending a decision as to any deviation of the railway that may be required.

At the commencement of my remarks I linked the Minister for Industrial Development, as Minister for Railways, with the Minister for Mines. It has been shown very clearly that now, after 12 months, the Minister for Railways cannot make up his mind what land he requires for the new line that is to go through. In reply to questions I asked he told me certain things that did not help the position at all. So although this land is there, we strike a second, and now a third, reason why something cannot be done. I think the Government should get together as a Government and make a determination on this matter. A review must be made of

what we regard as auriferous country, because we will be seriously outdated if it is not done. The position would become intolerable if the land in question were to remain idle.

A little over 12 months ago I put a case to this House and finally to Digby Leach for the building of a road. The reason it was put to the Minister for Works was that the road was going to pass through suitable country for exploitation as a grazing area. That was one of the reasons we got the road. So it is quite ridiculous if this land is to be definitely tied up, because in the meantime we have a number of people who have been thrown out of the mining industry and forced to leave the homes they had made for themselves.

This township has been in existence for several years, but it is struggling to keep going. As a result a lot of these people will be faced with the difficulty of having to go somewhere else; that is, unless they get a quick decision on land which is lying idle and which is serving no useful purpose; but which could, by co-ordination between the various authorities, be thrown open at an early date. I regret my time is up, because there are several other matters I wish to put before the Ministers, but they can be left over until another occasion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr. D. G. May.

House adjourned at 10.5 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 15th August, 1963

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The **PRESIDENT** (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL

Inclusion of "Duties of Bailiffs" in Curriculum

1. The Hon. J. DOLAN asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is "Duties of Bailiffs" one of the subjects of the course taken by trainees at the Police Training School?

(2) If the answer is "No", will the Minister for Police consider introducing this subject into the course, as most bailiffs in Western Australia are police officers?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) No.

(2) A bailiff's work is not police work and should never be regarded as such. Whilst some police are appointed bailiffs or acting bailiffs in country areas, it is an extraneous duty performed in their own time, not departmental time. As a result it is not intended to include the subject in the course.

FEDERAL HOTEL, PERTH

Rent

2. The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND asked the Minister for Mines:

What is the rental charged for the lease of the Federal Hotel, George Street, Perth, and to which fund is the rental credited?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

The monthly rental for the lease of the Federal Hotel is £153 16s. 8d. plus outgoings (rates, etc.) and insurance.

The rental is credited to the funds of the Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority.

RAILWAYS DEPARTMENT

Haulage of Wheat, Oats, and Barley

3. The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS asked the Minister for Mines:

Further to the answer given by the Minister on the 7th August, in connection with tonnage of grain hauled by the Railways Department, could clarification be given to that part of the answer dealing with tonnages of grain hauled during the year 1960-61?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

In the year 1960-61 practically all wheat, oats and barley from Salmon Gums and sidings was consigned to the metropolitan area, but in each of the last two

years an increasingly greater percentage has been forwarded to Esperance as is shown by the following figures:—

Year	Tonnage Haul To Esperance		Tonnage Haul To Metropolitan Area	
	Wheat tons	Oats and Barley tons	Wheat tons	Oats and Barley tons
1960/61	13	3	7,298	3,910
1961/62	3,210	1,201	5,327	1,004
1962/63	15,765	5,613	1,496	118

KALGOORLIE-BROAD ARROW ROAD

Reconditioning and Widening

4. The Hon. J. D. TEAHAN asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has the Government any programme for the reconditioning and widening of the main road from Kalgoorlie to Broad Arrow?

(2) If so, what is the programme?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) Widening of the road from Kalgoorlie to Broad Arrow must be related to the need to extend the reconditioning and surfacing work northwards from Menzies. For the present the extension work is being given priority in programming.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

FLUORIDATION OF WATER

Talks by Health Education Council

5. The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) How many centres have had talks by the Health Education Council on the benefits of fluoridation of water supplies?

Approvals

(2) Of these centres, how many have approved of the proposed fluoridation?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) 83.

(2) 64 (77 per cent.) expressed approval. None of the remainder rejected fluoridation, but preferred to postpone a decision for constitutional and related reasons.

HOUSING FOR NATIVES

Number of Homes to be Built at Norseman, and Cost

6. The Hon. R. H. C. STUBBS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many houses are to be built—
(a) on the native reserve at Norseman; and

(b) in the township of Norseman, for occupation by natives?

(2) What will be the cost of each?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) (a) Four type "3" houses have recently been erected on the native reserve. It is not planned to erect more during the current financial year.

(b) Two type "5" houses are being erected in the current financial year in the township of Norseman for occupation by natives.

(2) (a) £1,115 each.

(b) £2,257 each.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIFTH DAY

Motion

Debate resumed, from the 14th August, on the following motion by The Hon. A. R. Jones:—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver:—

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

THE HON. C. R. ABBEY (Central) [2.41 p.m.]: I want to refer this afternoon to a number of matters, some of which affect the province I represent and others of which are of a wider nature. With regard to those of a wider nature, I consider that the continual influx of noxious weeds into this State is very serious at the moment. Apropos of this subject, the following article appeared in *The West Australian* of the 1st August, this year:—

E.S. Sheep Had Burrs

Bathurst and noogoora burrs were found on more than 6,000 sheep which arrived in W.A. from the Eastern States during the past year.

The sheep were among consignments of more than 100,000 inspected for noxious weed seeds after arrival from other States.

I will pause there and explain to the House how this inspection is carried out. The sheep are off-loaded at Parkeston near Kalgoorlie. Up to about two years ago, anyhow, there was only one Department of Agriculture officer available to carry out this inspection; and I understand the same position still applies. Should there be a number of truckloads in the one day, this officer has a tremendous task in trying to handle the sheep quickly and efficiently.

It is impossible to attempt to ascertain whether every sheep has burrs, because there might be 1,000 sheep involved at a time. Therefore the method adopted is to inspect approximately 25 per cent. of every consignment. The officer concerned makes his check by using the Union Jack pattern but if he finds one burr in that inspection then, of course, the whole consignment is inspected. However, I am assured that some sheep do get through, the reason being that one man cannot possibly adequately inspect all the stock.

Four years ago, when Mr. Cunningham was a member of this House, he brought to the attention of members the need for further investigation into the very serious infestation of Bathurst burr, caltrop, and several other weeds in the goldfields. That led the following year to several members of the Government parties forming themselves into a committee; and, with the approval of the Government, but at their own expense, they spent about a week on the goldfields investigating the situation. It was then that we ascertained the method of inspection. The article continues—

The Department of Agriculture's seed certification and weed control branch chief, Mr. G. R. W. Meadly, said yesterday that W.A. inspectors were always on the alert for noxious weed seeds.

Where possible, all imported stock, farm produce and pasture and bird seed was inspected before being released to importers.

The return to the Eastern States of 250 sacks of panicum had been ordered when they were found to contain mintweed seeds which could not be removed by cleaning.

Other imported seed lines which needed attention from inspectors before their release included wimmera rye grass, barrel medic and Japanese and white millet.

Dangerous

All had contained potentially dangerous weeds.

The department's campaign included showing farmers the risk of noxious weed seeds among stock and produce imports, especially from the Eastern States.

If farmers recognised the weeds as soon as they appeared, they could be controlled before becoming established.

Farmers who found uncommon weeds growing or unusual seeds in imported stock or produce should send them to the department for identification.

That is very good as far as it goes, but I do not believe it goes far enough. The department is very limited in finance and available staff to handle this matter,

and the report of the committee which investigated the situation recommended, among other things, that check points should be established on the Western Australian border to apply to both rail and road access.

Members will recall that during the Commonwealth Games a checkpoint was established at Norseman to cater for the large influx of tourists from the Eastern States. It was considered a great danger at that time but I believe there is a continuing danger—in fact, an increasing danger because every day, I would think, there is someone coming here to take up suitable areas. These people are coming from the farming areas in the Eastern States where a number of these serious weeds are established. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that on their trucks or cars, or even perhaps in the mud under their vehicles, would be seeds from these weeds which could well be dropped in our agricultural areas.

Proof of this is that in at least 11 districts in this State Bathurst burr is to be found, not in any great quantity as yet, although I believe that at Broomehill there is 30 acres of it and the property is quarantined. The owner is only allowed to sell his stock after inspection, and his wool for export. These are measures which are for the present containing this danger, but they do not go far enough.

I believe that we should have, no matter what the cost—and it would not be very great—a checkpoint on the railway as near to the border as possible, and one on the road system. It is important that there should be a checkpoint on the road as near to the border as possible, because with the development of pastoral properties east and south of Kalgoorlie roads will be built which will enable those who wish to avoid inspection to bypass a checkpoint at any place other than on the border.

I feel so seriously about this that should a consignment of sheep or cattle arrive at the Western Australian border with any of these noxious weeds, I would refuse it entry into the State. That may sound harsh, but as a means of protecting our farming industry, I do not think it is too harsh.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It is an absolute necessity.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: I agree. I would be very surprised if more than one consignment were turned back, because the word would get out that we have a proper protective system, and no-one would then attempt to bring machinery or stock that was infested with noxious weeds into the State.

It is not inconceivable that in the future—and perhaps the not-too-distant future—we will have to do the same thing in the north of Western Australia because,

as members know, with beef roads and the development that is taking place in the Northern Territory and our own north-west, access to the southern part of the State from the northern areas is going to be pretty free, and we should be mindful of the necessity to control this matter. What if it should cost £50,000, eventually, to do this? Would it not be better than spending a much larger sum on spraying, etc., in 20 years to control these weeds over wide areas of the State? I think the money would be a very good investment; and I would ask the Minister—the Leader of the House—to inform us what steps are being taken to prevent the introduction of these noxious weeds into the State by means of stock, machinery, and vehicles, because it is vital that something should be done about it.

I have here the report of an interested body of Government members who, because of their fears, investigated this matter, and they found pretty heavy infestations of Paterson's curse, Bathurst burr, caltrop, and saffron thistle in many districts. Caltrop is moving down through the State and we find that in a district such as Northam there are a number of plants; and I would say that caltrop is out of hand in Kellerberrin and Merredin, and it certainly is on the goldfields. So I ask the Minister to advise the House what is being done in this regard and what is hoped to be done in the future; and I would stress to him that it is vital that a very serious view of the matter be taken.

I move now to a question which I raised last year; namely, water conservation. In the hills areas adjoining the city we have a pretty prosperous agricultural community growing mainly apples, stone fruit, and some vegetables, but all very badly in need of a good permanent supply of water, which they have not got. Odd ones are lucky and can put in large dams and catch sufficient water to irrigate portion of their property, but not the whole by any means.

I am aware that the Minister has made boring plants available in the area, and they are doing an extremely good job, and I hope to see some results in the future. But I do not think that what is being done is sufficient. We need a water conservation authority to advise all farmers in the State on water supply problems. I have no doubt that in a large part of the State—except where the land is salt-affected—local supplies are possible and it is not necessary to rely solely on reticulation from a central supply.

I have had the experience when moving around the State of seeing far-sighted farmers—the odd ones—who have gone to the trouble of putting in dams as large as 5,000,000 gallons capacity, or more. As a result they have established supplies that will undoubtedly enable them to carry on in dry years; but they are the far-sighted

ones. Others, of course, have put in smaller dams which go dry in bad years. Many make the mistake of putting in a dam at the wrong spot. It may appear suitable, but had it been surveyed and the land tested for suitability in respect of clay, and so on, an expensive and costly mistake would not have been made.

I feel that a water conservation authority could assist by providing the advice that is needed, not only in respect of boring but also in regard to suitable dam sites. This year there must be hundreds of millions of gallons of water going to waste on every farm. Would it not be much cheaper to impound the water on the site rather than catch many millions of gallons of water in the Darling Range and reticulate it through the State?

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The function of the Mines Department is to locate and determine the extent of underground water.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: I realise that, and it is a very good function and one that has been extended so that the department is doing this work throughout the State, not only in the Hills areas, and, as a result, it is doing a great deal of good; but it does not seem to me to be sufficient. I think we need a separate department—a water conservation authority with trained engineers—to advise—and not at great cost—the farming community on this subject.

I would like to hear from the Minister whether there is any possibility of the establishment of such an authority in the future. It is not only the small industries such as the fruitgrowing industry, but others, such as the mixed farming industry, in the drier areas which are in need of this type of advice.

One of the important things that came out of the recent Budget speech was the information concerning the super subsidy. That would appear to be something of a gift or handout, but really it is not. I see my friend across the Chamber is smiling.

The Hon. R. Thompson: I was smiling about the sheepskins.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: It is really not much of a gift when we take into account the added costs that primary industries will face in the near future. I do not quarrel with the 10 per cent. increase in margins, or the extra week's holiday that has been granted. These are all signs of the times and of the prosperity of Australia. They are good signs, but they have the quite serious effect on the agricultural producer of causing his costs to increase again; and we then have economists—or so-called economists—immediately coming into the picture and saying that the agricultural industry should become more efficient.

It is rather an amazing statement sometimes. I wonder what these economists, and professors, would say after having participated in large salary rises, and better conditions, if they were told they had to increase their efficiency by 25 per cent., because of those increases. Could they, or would they, do it? Of course they would not! They would continue as they had been doing and take the salary rises and better holiday conditions as part of their entitlement.

But what of the agricultural producer? His costs go up, and he cannot pass them on. So he must become more efficient—that is the advice given him, anyhow. I would point out that the agricultural producer in the wheat industry has proved that he can become very efficient.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: The costs of wheat producers are passed on.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: To a very limited degree. The honourable member is of course referring to the wheat stabilisation scheme. I would, however, remind him that it does not allow for a profit margin. To get back to my argument that the wheat industry is increasing its production and efficiency: in 1948-49 the divisor for the stabilisation scheme was 12 bushels. That was agreed as a reasonable figure on the average production for that particular year.

Now we are told that in the new stabilisation scheme under consideration, the figure will almost certainly be 17 bushels—this is the figure that will be taken as the divisor. That no doubt is reasonable and fair when we consider the Australian average. But does it not point to something like a 50 per cent. increase in efficiency? That is what it means—the figure going from 12 bushels to 17 or 18 bushels, as the case may be. That is real efficiency; and it is brought about by better methods, better advice from our Department of Agriculture, better wheats, and a greater appreciation of the need for hard work and efficiency in the agricultural industry.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: How do you think farmers will use the £3 a ton subsidy on super?

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: I think they will increase production. They will use more super undoubtedly, and I should not think it would cost the Commonwealth Government very much, if anything at all, because the increased production must be very great in a year or two.

Coming out of these few millions of pounds that will be expended on the subsidy we will, I think, see a return which will be much greater than the cost to the Commonwealth Government. That of course is a good thing. Some people would argue that we are over-producing;

but the efficiency of our Australian Wheat Board has so far meant that we have, every year, been able to sell our wheat on the world market. Our wheat is going out from year to year without a stock pile; and that is a very satisfactory position.

It all comes back to the efficiency of the operations of the Australian Wheat Board; and the Wheat Board, in my opinion, leads the way for what should be done in the wool industry. The wool industry has in the last few years faced many ups and downs. I think that in all sections of the wool industry—even those that handle it—a realisation is developing that we need a change from the auction system. This year, if estimates come true, a very large part of the Western Australian clip will be sold privately; and that must be giving brokers many headaches.

The brokers have always opposed a change in the wool-selling system. But I feel, today, they are realising that should a change in the system come about, and a wool board be set up—personally, I hope on the same lines as the Wheat Board—to dispose of our wool clip, they would not suffer. In my opinion, the brokers would not suffer, but in fact would gain; because, having the necessary resources and knowledge to carry out the appraisalment of the wool clip, and a great deal of experience—experience that we as wool producers and farmers have taken advantage of over the years—they could still continue to apply as agents of the wool board.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Something like the C.W.C. during the war?

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: Yes, something similar. In my opinion, it worked very satisfactorily. Accusations have been levelled of course at the farming section interested in wool production to the effect that they desire to produce wool at too high a price, thereby letting in synthetics. Surely the wool industry and the people in it are not that foolish! I am quite sure they are not. A wool board set up to represent the producers would need of course to have a majority producer representation. It should, however, have the best advice available in Australia, and indeed in the world, as to how to go about marketing its product. Should it lead to stability, that would be a very good thing for Australia.

We have seen many fluctuations, some of them running into hundreds of millions of pounds, in the national product, because wool has gone down in price, and the bottom has dropped out of it on occasions. That of course is not good for the economy of Australia. Accordingly, should we require assistance to underwrite a scheme of that sort, such assistance would be well worth while and would be to the ultimate benefit of Australia as a whole, and not to just one section of wool producers.

Various estimates have been made that it would cost from £200,000,000 to £300,000,000 to finance such a scheme. But, in my opinion, that is very unsound thinking. Wool is shorn over at least six months of the year, or longer—longer today with modern shearing methods—and it would not be necessary for anything like that amount to finance the wool board. In fact, I would not like to see too much Government interference, but merely a sum made available from the Commonwealth Bank sufficient to commence operations. I would like to see the industry itself take over the responsibility of financing the scheme, as it is able to do so.

We can expect in the near future an explanation from Sir William Gunn, the controversial figure, who is to visit Western Australia shortly to explain this plan for more money for promotion.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The big gun.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: Yes. Personally, I hope he is not greeted with eggs and rotten tomatoes. I do not think that achieved anything in Victoria. In fact, I would say it was detrimental to the case of those growers whom the scheme is meant to help. I hope that in Western Australia we make it clear to Sir William Gunn, as a leader in the wool industry, that we do require some change in the wool selling system. Our Farmers' Union executive has in the past strongly put this view forward on behalf of the industry, and it behoves all sections to make the matter clear to Sir William Gunn and others who are in control.

I would like now to refer to matters affecting the province which I represent. The Burakin-Bonnie Rock railway line was a controversial subject a few years ago when 800-odd miles of line were closed, and it was something I had to face on my election to this House. The line had been closed and the settlers in that area were most upset. In fact, they were talking of taking steps to bring about a re-opening of the line. I well remember attending a meeting at Beacon when Mr. Strickland, then Minister for Railways, addressed the gathering. It was a pretty hostile meeting, but he carried it off because he upheld a policy he genuinely believed in and thus was in the clear.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Which Parliament believed in.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: Unfortunately it had a very serious effect on the producers in the area. They were hostile and upset and a lot of them decreased their production for a short time. I was very sympathetic as I was a farmer myself; and had I been in the House at the time the Bill was passed, I would have resisted the move. I can assure members of that. However, I was not here at the time and had to take the backwash afterwards.

I would like to read to the House a few figures relating to the production of wheat on that line. In 1947-48 the area served by the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line produced 164,487 bushels of wheat. There was also a small quantity of barley and a small quantity of oats. In 1948-49 there was an increase to 268,546 bushels of wheat. In 1950-51 there was another increase to 599,024 bushels of wheat. In 1951-52 the figure was 644,389 bushels. In 1952-53—a dry year—the figure dropped back to 180,355 bushels. In 1953-54—again showing an increase over normal years—the figure was 744,118 bushels—nearly three-quarters of a million bushels. In 1954-55—probably a dry year again—the figure was 496,493. In 1955-56 the figure rose to 1,720,764. I hope I am not wearying the House; I have quoted these figures to prove my point.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: What was the acreage sown?

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: In 1956-57, some 432,836 bushels were produced; and in 1957-58 the figure was 353,432 bushels. I have been informed that settlers in the area in that year in particular were so discouraged at the closure of the line that they decreased their acreage and lost part of the production. I feel that could be the explanation.

In 1958-59 there was more confidence and the figure was 1,205,860—nearly 1½ millions. From 1948-49 to 1958-59 there was a very big increase. In 1947-48, 164,000-odd bushels were produced; and in 1958-59, the result was 1,205,840 bushels—a very big increase.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You cannot make a comparison without acreage. Some might be grown on another line.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: No. In 1959-60, the production was 1,010,141 bushels; in 1960-61—getting closer to home—the figure was 1,308,453; in 1961-62, it was nearly one and three-quarter millions—1,733,612; and last year it was 1,800,207. In that area, the increase in wheat produced was approximately half a million bushels in a three-year period. I have quoted those figures to give a picture of what happened. I do not speak in a critical vein of the decision made previously, but to prove that it is not always easy to foresee what will happen in the future. The Burakin-Bonnie Rock line undoubtedly should never have been closed.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Don't forget it was your party that helped to close it.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: I was not in the House at the time, but I would have opposed the move.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: The line is not closed yet.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: No; it was reopened for grain and super when this Government took office.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: It was never closed.

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: It was threatened with closure. Now that the line is established as a seasonal line, the settlers are pretty happy. They have a road service for the normal lines they need. They have good bitumen roads in the area and a rail service that is adequate; but this brings me to a point I wish to make. To the north of the Bonnie Rock line there is still a great deal of land that is suitable for opening up for selection.

I am reliably informed that in the near future, blocks of an economic size will be available to the north of Beacon. This area enjoys about a 12 in. rainfall and is capable of further production; and a lot of farmers in the vicinity have land which they could clear. I am sure that when the new blocks are available, they will be snapped up. Probably there will be many applicants for each block.

It is a good, sound district. It does suffer from the odd dry year, but in the main large areas are put down to wheat by every farmer, and it is a prosperous district. One of the factors which make the area more prosperous is the lessening of development costs. It is now possible to physically knock down the timber and scrub with large bulldozers dragging huge anchor chains linked between them—even in those areas where they have forest type country—for something like 18s. per acre. The cost varies according to distances from the centre, and the figure may be up to 25s. per acre I am told. It is not expensive to burn the country once the vegetation has been cut down, and one is able to obtain a good burn.

Once the land is properly in production it is able to produce some of the best wheat in the State; wheat which is suitable for a premium. I would ask the Minister to ascertain whether it is possible to make an early start each year on the rail system to enable producers in the area to participate in the premiums which are available. Unfortunately the line is not normally opened before December and this does not enable many of the producers to participate in the premiums.

The wheat is very good bread wheat, mostly of a high premium quality. It is necessary that the line should be opened a little earlier to enable the wheat to be transported to the millers as and when it is needed, and, I repeat, to enable farmers to participate in the premiums. It might mean up to 9d. or even 1s. per bushel to the producers. If the quantities were large the benefits would also be large.

An estimate made last year of rail freights paid on the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line places the figure at something like £200,000. The area produces something like £2,000,000 of produce per year—that is, grain, stock, wool, and so on.

Again, one of the good things that is taking place up there is the very marked increase in the purchase of machinery. This has a good effect right through the State. I have been reliably told that in the last three years the increase in the purchase of machinery and the general expansion of production in the Burakin-Bonnie Rock-Mukinbudin-Bencubbin area has been threefold. Three years ago in one district alone machinery to the value of something like £100,000 was sold, and it is estimated that £300,000 will be spent this year on machinery and allied products. That is a large increase and it is reflected in the economy of the State.

Finally, I would like to refer to a recent trip that I made to the north-west. It was partly a holiday trip, but it was mainly to enable me to be informed on some of the developments that are taking place in the north-west. It is a topical subject when we recall that the Ord River diversion dam was recently opened by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies. That project came into being, of course, as a result of a partnership between the Commonwealth and the State.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Did you get an invitation to the dinner?

The Hon. C. R. ABBEY: I did not even get an invitation to the opening, but I did not really expect one. I would have liked one, but that was impossible. Once one is 18 hours to 24 hours out of Fremantle, the ship settles down, and even if one is not a good sailor the trip is enjoyable. I might say that I am not a good sailor and I did not particularly enjoy the first 24 hours. However, we sailed through calm seas; and, if one was so disposed, one could change into shorts and shirt and enjoy the sunshine. I realised then that this State of ours is really the sunshine State.

Once one gets beyond Geraldton there is no doubt about the tourist potential that is there, and it is almost unexploited. We must realise that we have great tourist potentialities in the north. The State ships are very comfortable and there are more applicants than there are passages available. The ship I was on went to Darwin and back in four weeks.

I am by no means setting myself up as an expert on the north; but as an agriculturist I was most impressed with the potential of the north. The first place I inspected, having made arrangements beforehand, was Camballin. It is an area of river flats which are truly amazing. I have been informed that the soil contains 12 feet of silt which has accumulated over the years, and the area is highly productive. A few problems have been encountered in the growing of rice, but from information given me by the management of Camballin they are being overcome and we are reaching the stage where it can be proved that rice-growing is economical.

Being a man who is engaged in primary production, mainly stock, I was greatly impressed by the area. Where the rice crop had been harvested and the land reflooded, the regrowth of rice suitable for stock production was quite amazing. A few weeks after irrigation the rice crop was once again 30 inches high and would obviously make very good stock feed.

Northern Territory Developments has purchased Liveringa, a station in the Camballin district, and is grazing something like 20,000 sheep. I have received information to the effect that it is the intention of the management to graze those 20,000 sheep largely on the irrigated area during the dry season. From my own appreciation of the pastures produced I would have no doubt that they can be grazed most effectively and with benefit to the stock.

It opens up a wide field, of course. There are many thousands of acres of flats along the Fitzroy, and undoubtedly in the near future a great grazing potential will exist. We have been told this many times by Mr. Strickland and Mr. Wise, and others representing the north; but one has to see it to believe it and, having seen it, I certainly back up their contentions regarding the potential of the area. This is realised of course by our present Government, and it is doing something about the matter to the limit of its resources.

Government finance, whether it be Commonwealth or State, is generally limited and must be spread so thinly over the State and the Commonwealth; and some assistance should be given by the large financial institutions. We have many prosperous banks, including the Commonwealth Bank, and we have big insurance companies, and other companies in that category, that could well place at the disposal of the north—the people who are prepared to develop the north—some portion of the funds they have available annually.

Of what use is it investing in the southern parts of this State if we are going to leave our north empty and exposed? It is not only the responsibility of the Government to do these things but I believe it also devolves on the community itself to play a big part. There are many adventurous people who are prepared to spend their lives, and whatever capital they may have, in going into the north, whether it be to take up pastoral pursuits, or whether it be to open up a meatworks, or whatever else they might feel is a suitable outlet for their efforts. But they need finance, and not Government finance. In my opinion they need finance from the private sector, and the private sector must play its part. I say that with all sincerity; because if we are to develop the north at the rate at which it should be developed then we need these big financial institutions to take part in that development.

I was told on the trip north that certain banks are opening up branches. That is a very good thing, but, after all, I suppose a branch would not cost more than £20,000 or so in, say, Wyndham or Derby. It is not much of an investment, but I hope it means the private banks are going to make more finance available for the area.

There is undoubtedly the possibility of a huge expansion in the pastoral industry. From inquiry I find—and no doubt this has been said many times before in the House—that it is possible greatly to increase production with the provision of water supplies and fencing away from areas where nature provides such bounty. I observed along the rivers how badly eroded the areas are and how they have been eaten out for a distance of, say, 10 miles. Therefore I believe that the people owning those properties should have some further incentive from the Commonwealth Government to expend money on development. They should be given taxation concessions to encourage this expenditure.

The meat market is quite good and the export of meat to America is on the increase. This has meant a great increase in production in the north of the State. I have a mixed farm in my own district and I can see what the potential is up there, and I hope it is possible for the necessary expansion to take place. However, I must emphasise again that a partnership is needed—the big financial institutions and the Government. This is something which I sincerely hope the State Government will press for more and more.

It would not be impossible, and probably it would be very desirable, to establish in the future some sort of a commission—a development commission would probably be the right name for it—sponsored by the Government to seek funds from the banks, the insurance companies, and other companies that have large funds to invest annually. If this co-ordinated approach were made it would do much to increase the development of our north, and Lord knows we need it. I support the motion.

THE HON. S. T. J. THOMPSON (South) [3.37 p.m.]: I would like to make a few brief remarks on the Address-in-Reply debate and, firstly, I want to take this opportunity of congratulating the two new members. I hope they will have a long and enjoyable stay in this Chamber; and, judging by the speeches they have made so far, I am sure they will make a worth-while contribution to our debates.

The first point I would like to discuss was brought to my mind by a speech made by the Minister for Lands when he addressed the Y.A.L., I think it was, a few weeks ago. He advised the young people to go outback and become pioneers. I do

not know what he meant by being pioneers, because one can be a pioneer in several different ways. One does not have to be a farmer to be a pioneer. However, I would like to point out the difficulties confronting our young people who may wish to become pioneers in farming. My remarks are clearly illustrated in this morning's copy of *The West Australian* where figures relating to war service land settlement in Western Australia are published. Some 1,260 farms have been allocated in Western Australia at a total cost of £23,204,000; and on top of that there is a further £1,300,000 for administration, which was met out of State funds. This means that the cost of those 1,260 farms was approximately £20,000 each.

That is a considerable sum of money, and there are not many young people in a position where they can go out pioneering with £20,000 to spend. Although an enormous sum of money has been spent on war service land settlement, not all the settlers are in the happy position of being able to go over to the bank, or become acceptable to the bank. There are some who are still in a difficult position.

The Hon. R. Thompson: A lot of them have walked off their places, have they not?

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: Yes, quite a number have, but I think in any walk of life, where there is a large group of people, there are some who do not make the grade. If a large number of people were established in grocers' shops, or any other type of business, we would find that those who have no natural ability, and probably for other reasons too, would not succeed. In the case of the settlers, some of them did not succeed because of the condition of the farms when they went on to them.

I am pointing out these things to illustrate the cost involved in becoming a pioneer in farming. There are dozens of young chaps throughout the agricultural districts who would like to become farmers, but they have not got the capital necessary to make their properties a worth-while asset for the development bank to take over. The bank is doing a first-rate job provided one has sufficient capital to get on one's feet.

There are quite a number of farmers on the outskirts of our areas with a little capital who reach a certain stage of development, but who then find that the development bank refuses to grant them any assistance. It is a difficult situation. I consider that if it were possible for the State Government to make some assistance available through the Rural and Industries Bank it would not be money wasted, because the asset, once developed, is always there.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Perhaps the State Government could guarantee the bank.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: Yes; that is the proposal I have in mind, really. This war service land settlement scheme has cost us £24,000,000 to date. That is an enormous amount of money, but it will pay dividends in the years to come. Therefore, any money that is guaranteed for expenditure on these properties will not be wasted.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That £20,000 is still a lesser sum than is required to buy a freehold farming property of equal area and value.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: Quite a number of those farms were bought for £3 or £3 10s. an acre before they were developed, so the value of one of those farms today would be much higher than £24,000.

The Hon. J. G. Hislop: What is the acreage of the farms?

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: In the Rocky Gully project each farm would be between 600 and 700 acres. Some would be up to 1,000 acres; and, again, some around Gairdner River would be about 2,000 acres in area. In the main, they are situated in the wheatbelt area. The 600-acre farms have proved to be more expensive to bring into production than farms of a similar size in other areas.

After making those few remarks on the agricultural industry, I will now pass to the question of education. We appreciate what the Education Department has done in the country areas. I realise that at times we become frustrated when we cannot get an extra classroom that we want in a particular area. However, there is one aspect to which I would draw the attention of the Minister for Education; namely, we have many organisations and individuals who provide scholarships for the worthy child. Those children apparently possess just that much extra intelligence, and they are encouraged to go on and win a scholarship. However, recently it has been brought to my notice that it bars the parents of such children from receiving a living-away-from-home allowance. This allowance is paid to parents of children in country districts who finish their education at a high school away from home.

It is a very bad system indeed when a parent is debarred from receiving this allowance because his child is brilliant enough to win a scholarship. I believe the living-away-from-home allowance is £40, and the scholarship is worth £50, but it is the principle of the thing that matters. As far as the two allowances are concerned, the boy who wins a scholarship would come back to the same level as the

boy who was not so successful. Therefore, what is the incentive for a child to sit for a scholarship? I would be pleased if the Minister could inquire into that aspect of education.

I noticed, from a report in the Press last week that he intends to increase the allowance that is granted to parents who drive their children to school. I congratulate him on that, and also on the proposal he put forward last week to provide a hostel in Perth for those young people who are attending the training college in the metropolitan area.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.3 p.m.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: On the subject of education there is a good deal of feeling in the outer country districts which have not a sufficient number of children to qualify for junior high schools. In such cases the children have to leave home at as early an age as 12 years to complete their education, if they are to compete successfully in life. Unless a child passes through a junior high school he will be at a disadvantage.

Unfortunately a large part of my province covers districts in the category I am referring to, in particular the Roe electorate. In the bigger country towns the people are particularly fortunate as regards the provision of educational facilities, but there is a distinct disadvantage to the parents of children who live in the outer districts. Perhaps some attention could be given by the Government to reduce the quota for qualifying for a junior high school. I understand that the status of schools is based on the number of pupils attending, and they are graded accordingly.

Perhaps in the outer areas relief can be given to the settlers by prescribing a smaller quota than those prescribed in the more settled areas. I would like the Minister to consider this proposal. Whilst the people in the country appreciate all that has been done for them, they are hoping that a little more can be done for the pioneers in the outback areas.

In recent months there has been a great deal of talk about decentralisation, and seminars have been held. I contend that at present we have done nothing except give lip service to decentralisation. Such seminars cannot achieve worth-while results for the inland portions of this State, which are now retarded by high freights and high costs.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think the Laporte industry in Bunbury is a form of lip service?

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: I am not talking about Bunbury; and decentralisation does not only apply to towns like Bunbury, Albany, and Geraldton. We have

to get away from that idea altogether, because decentralisation applies to the whole of the State.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The establishment of the Laporte industry at Bunbury is a form of decentralisation of the first order.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: Decentralisation is being implemented in pockets. We want decentralisation over the whole State. I know the Minister will say that this cannot be done, but in many respects it is being successfully implemented. Today the people pay the same price for a bar of chocolate, a motorcar, or a packet of cigarettes in all parts of the State; and the people do not seem to mind that. If decentralisation can be achieved in one form it can be achieved in many others. It would only need a little courage on the part of the Government to achieve true decentralisation. Unless some such method as I have referred to is put into operation, we will only be giving lip service to decentralisation.

This matter is of great importance, particularly to the outback centres of the State, some of which are well over 200 miles distant from a port and are never likely to be any closer. The districts around Bunbury and Albany are well served, as is the district around Esperance where a superphosphate works is to be established and a harbour provided. The fringe areas of those towns will benefit, but the central heart of the State has been left unattended.

In many country towns additional amenities have been provided, and one method of increasing the population is to encourage farmers nearby to retire to those towns instead of to the metropolitan area. To do that we have to provide electricity, water, and sewerage in country towns.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: And superphosphate works.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: Superphosphate works do not come into this.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The superphosphate works and the land-backed berth in Esperance are all very popular products of decentralisation.

The Hon. S. T. J. THOMPSON: In a number of country towns the facilities I have referred to are being provided, but the cost is much greater compared with the cost in the metropolitan area. I refer to charges for electricity, rates, etc. It is difficult to prevent the drift of the population from country towns to the city, as it is much more advantageous to a retired farmer to sell his property and transfer to the city, because of the cheaper charges for electricity, rates, and other items.

The previous speaker referred to the topic I am about to discuss; that is, wool. I agree with the sentiments expressed by

him in regard to wool marketing, but there is one aspect which he failed to mention. Despite what is being done in wool promotion, and despite price fluctuations, there has not been a time when all our wool was not disposed of readily—whether the price be up or down by 20 per cent. That points to the fact that the sale of our wool needs little more than promotion.

On the question of wool promotion and levies, I consider the present system of levying a certain amount per bale of wool is entirely unjust. If the farmer has to accept the price offered for his wool at auction—when the price during a season might fluctuate by 20 per cent.—the wool promotion authorities, which derive their funds from the sale of wool, should also make levies on the same basis; that is, levy on a percentage of the selling price, so that if the price goes down 20 per cent. the levy will be reduced by 20 per cent.

This more or less sums up all I have to say in this debate. I conclude by referring to two headlines which appeared in the *Weekend Mail* in the last two weeks. These should give people, particularly members of Parliament, much food for thought. One headline was, "Labour Tangle in North-West," and the other, "Let Us Try to Free Industry." I do not know if members have read those articles; I suggest they do, because they are very interesting and point to the drift of labour and production. We should consider where this State is drifting. With those remarks, I support the Address-in-Reply.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon.

House adjourned at 4.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 15th August, 1963.

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