

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 11th August, 1955.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Minister for Housing and Incorrect Report in "The West Australian."

The MINISTER for HOUSING: Mr. Speaker, I desire to draw your attention to a report appearing in this morning's issue of "The West Australian." It sets out that I, speaking in the Legislative Assembly, made certain statements in connection with city traffic lights.

As you and members are aware, and as the records will show, I made no mention of this matter whatever, either in a statement, by way of interjection or in any other way. My reason for mentioning the matter to you, Sir, is that experience has shown that when I have endeavoured to have corrections made of statements in "The West Australian," it either completely suppresses them or misreports them. For that reason I feel it my duty to draw your attention to this matter, as I do not see why there should be attributed to me anything that may be the subject of public disputation when, in fact, I have said nothing whatever in regard to the matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will take the matter up with the management of the newspaper concerned and see that a correction is made as early as possible.

Mr. COURT: Am I entitled to ask, Mr. Speaker, whether the Minister could amplify what he is complaining of? I think he refers to the published report of the answer he gave to a question on behalf of the Minister for Local Government and I wonder what he is complaining of in the answer printed. I have only just got my official copy back to compare with the Press report.

Mr. SPEAKER: If my memory serves me correctly, the Minister for Railways answered that question on behalf of the Minister for Local Government, and not the Minister for Housing.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. Speaker's Ruling.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before proceeding with questions, I have a statement to make in regard to questions without notice. As members should know, there is no provision in Standing Orders for questions without notice and these have been allowed only through the indulgence of successive Speakers. However, this concession is being unduly exploited, so much so that the position is becoming somewhat farcical. It is quite obvious that many complicated questions are being asked with some other object in view than that of obtaining an answer and none of the questions asked recently have been of an urgent nature.

As members should know, the procedure regarding questions is laid down in Standing Orders Nos. 109-112. A number of members are evading Standing Order 109, which states that questions must be handed in not later than thirty minutes after the House meets. These members hand written questions direct to Ministers and then ask these questions without notice. It is the duty of the Speaker to have each question scrutinised to see if it is in order and this cannot be done with questions without notice. The tendency in this regard is for both the questioner and the Minister in reply to make speeches and offer opinions, and this is against the spirit of Standing Orders.

I have, therefore, decided that in future questions without notice will not be allowed, except on matters of real urgency, in which case I would require prior notice from the members concerned. In case it may be thought that this ruling is to protect Ministers, I would point out that Ministers can, and frequently do, refuse to answer questions without notice and ask that they be put on the Notice Paper. If members do not agree with this ruling the remedy is in their own hands; this being to alter the Standing Orders so as to allow questions without notice. This will take effect as from next Tuesday.

QUESTIONS.

FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

Salinity Figures.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works:

Can he reconcile the details on page 5 of the report on water samples taken from the Fremantle harbour, tabled by the Minister for Works on the 27th November, 1951, with figures supplied to me by the Marine Biological Laboratory of the C.S.I.R.O. of Cronulla, New South Wales, in so far as the Public Works table as above stated, Item No. 6, depth 4ft., opposite C Shed, chloride 18.410 parts per million; this when divided by 14.3 which the Public Works say is the way to ascertain grains per gallon, the result being 1287.4 grains per gallon, while the C.S.I.R. state on page 41 of volume 21 of 1953—Sampling water, station No. 1 North Mole, Fremantle, at depth, all chlorides 2.520 grains per gallon, and confirmed in their letter to me on the 26th July, 1955?

The MINISTER replied:

The tests tabled in 1951 referred to the chloride content which, in the case of Item No. 6, would have been 1287.4 grains per gallon. The C.S.I.R. figures of 1953 referred to all chlorides, which are the salts with chloride content.

TRAFFIC.

(a) Blinking Light Indicators.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Police:

What is the position with regard to car blinking light indicators?

The MINISTER replied:

Blinking light indicators on motor-vehicles may be used by motorists but a hand signal must also be given in accordance with the traffic regulations. It has been proved in England that the use of blinking lights only, without any hand or trafficator signal, caused many collisions to take place and more particularly injury to pedestrians who, at intersections, could not see blinking lights which only indicate to the front and rear of the vehicle.

(b) Installation of Lights, Midland Junction.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Is consideration being given to the installation of traffic lights in Midland Junction?

(2) If the answer is in the affirmative, at which points will the installations be made?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

A special committee has been appointed to investigate and recommend those points in the metropolitan area which should receive priority for the installation of traffic lights. No site in Midland Junction has yet been recommended for priority.

(c) Installation of Flashing Lights, Armadale.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that a further fatal accident occurred at the Third-rd. crossing, Armadale, where it is understood that approval has already been given for flashing lights?

(2) As this is a most dangerous crossing and one used daily by approximately 50 per cent. of the residents of Armadale, will he expedite the installation of these lights?

(3) When can such installation be expected?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The last fatal accident occurred on the 12th June, 1955.

(2) and (3) Certain equipment is already on the site, but installation cannot proceed until permanent way and signalling alterations associated with the reorganisation of the Armadale station yard are carried out. It is hoped, however, to have the work completed within six months.

PETROL STATIONS.

Application of Restrictive Regulation.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Is the recent regulation which restricts the construction of petrol-selling stations within a half-mile of each other working efficiently?

(2) Is it a fact that the regulation is applied parochially within a road board district only and without liaison with neighbouring local governing authorities?

(3) Has this regulation any application within municipalities?

(4) If not, is any similar general restriction exercised by such municipalities?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No cases of this nature have been brought to the notice of the Minister or the Department of Local Government.

(3) and (4) The Governor has power under the Road Districts Act to make general by-laws controlling petrol pumps and these by-laws can be applied to any road board which wishes to adopt them. No such authority is provided in the Municipal Corporations Act, but municipal councils are empowered by that Act to make by-laws themselves for this purpose. Only two councils have done so, these being the City of Fremantle and the Municipality of East Fremantle.

POLICE QUARTERS.

Conditions at Three Springs.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Is he aware of the unsatisfactory condition of the police quarters at Three Springs?

(2) Could he say what action is being taken to improve the quarters?

(3) Has any consideration been given to the economics of disposing of the old quarters and erecting a more modern structure?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Tenders have been called for repairs and renovations to these quarters in the "Government Gazette" of the 7th August, 1955.

(3) No. It is considered that when these repairs and renovations have been carried out, the condition of these quarters will be satisfactory.

FEDERAL AID ROAD FUNDS.

Estimated Total Available to State.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

What are the estimated total funds available to the State for the current financial year from Federal aid road funds?

The MINISTER replied:

The figure is £4,750,000.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) Loss and Average Increase in Values, Geraldton.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What was the loss on the Geraldton water supply for the years 1948-49, 1949-50, 1950-51, 1951-52, 1952-53, 1953-54, 1954-55?

(2) What is the estimated loss for the current year?

(3) What was the average increase in values of the properties rated under the Geraldton supply following on the re-valuation recently made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) —

Year.	Loss. £
1948-49	21,242
1949-50	22,373
1950-51	21,950
1951-52	33,168
1952-53	55,087
1953-54	54,195
1954-55	66,310

(2) £57,000 after taking into account consequential decrease in rates.

(3) 63 per cent.

(b) Meter Readings, Anomalies and System of Credits.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Is he aware that the reading of water meters in parts of Nedlands for 1953-54 and 1954-55 was done early in June, 1954, and in May, 1955, respectively?

(2) In such cases is the annual gallonage allowance adjusted to overcome anomalies which would otherwise mean 24 months' rates charged for less than 23 months, e.g., a person not using his allowance is overcharged at least 1/24th of total rate for two years?

(3) Have all suburbs been similarly affected as Nedlands?

(4) What procedure is proposed for the future and will it ensure a reasonably accurate and consistent 12 months' period?

(5) (a) To encourage conservation of water, has a system of credits for unused allowances up to a certain proportion of the total, been considered?

(b) If so, with what result and decision?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Rates are payable irrespective of the quantity of water used and the adjustment of the reading period does not necessarily create any anomaly to the disadvantage of the consumer.

If an anomaly occurs an adjustment will be made.

(3) Yes.

(4) Procedure provides for readings to cover a 12 months' period.

(5) (a) Yes.

(b) It is impracticable from an administrative point of view.

(c) Meter Readings, Adjustments and Tests.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Is it correct that should a person conform to the required procedure to have his water meter tested, including payment of the fee of 15s., and the meter is proved faulty, no redress is granted the ratepayer by way of an adjustment of quantities recorded up to the date of the reading complained of?

(2) If the answer is in the affirmative, does he agree that this is inequitable and would it not be fairer to either reduce the ratepayer down to the permitted annual allowance, or alternatively, adjust the previous reading to the extent of the error proved by the meter test?

(3) When the department advises a ratepayer that "arrangements will be made to subject the meter to a positive test at your convenience and in your presence," does this mean that it is obligatory for the ratepayer to be present in person for the test, or would the department accept his nominee so as to avoid the ratepayer losing time from his employment?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. An adjustment is made where the meter registers 5 per cent. or more in excess of the quantity that shall actually pass through the meter at the time of such testing, or in cases where the meter is found to be otherwise faulty.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) It is not obligatory for the ratepayer or his nominee to be present, but he is given the opportunity to witness the test at a time mutually agreed upon.

(d) Comprehensive Water Scheme and Approach to Commonwealth.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Premier:

(1) On what date, and by whom, were representations first made for an increase in the amount of the Commonwealth contribution towards the cost of the comprehensive water scheme?

(2) What was the date on which the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party made representations to the Prime Minister for an increased Commonwealth contribution?

(3) Does he consider that the representations with which the Leader of the Country Party was associated materially assisted the State Government's case for increased Commonwealth aid?

The MINISTER for WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

(1) By letters from the Premier to the Prime Minister on the 10th February, 18th March and the 4th April of this year.

(2) It is understood the date was sometime in April of this year and after publicity had been given in the newspapers to the Government's representations to the Prime Minister.

(3) No, not materially, but their efforts were appreciated by the Government.

HOUSING.*(a) Native Families, York.*

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the number of houses occupied by native families in York?

(2) Are these houses occupied on a rental or purchase basis?

(3) Has payment been prompt?

(4) If there are arrears, what is the amount owing by the various tenants?

(5) Who is responsible for the payment of rates to local authorities?

(6) Has an inspection been made of these houses recently. If so, what is the nature of the report?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Four.

(2) One rental; three purchase.

(3) It has been necessary to follow up three cases.

(4) (a) Rental home—No arrears.

(b) Purchase homes—

(1) £20 15s.; (2) £38 6s. 3d. Arrangements have been made to reduce substantially these amounts.

(3) £112 6s. 9d.—Arrears are being satisfactorily reduced under an arrangement with the purchaser.

I might mention that arrears are to be met to the extent of £5 a week, in addition to the current payments.

(5) State Housing Commission after occupancy of homes.

(6) Inspections have been made since occupancy and standard of tenancy varies as do white tenants.

No recent inspection has been made by commission, but native welfare officer called recently on these tenants.

(b) Press Report, Emergency Settlements.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Was he correctly reported in the "Sunday Times" of the 12th June, 1955, when it was stated that the emergency housing settlements were to be closed and the buildings demolished?

(2) If this is correct, what settlements are to be closed and to which districts are the people to be shifted?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. Flats will be closed progressively over a period.

(2) Allawah Grove, Hilton Park East, Naval Base, Vale Park, Wembley, Leighton.

Tenants will be transferred to houses in areas reasonably close to employment.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

Position of Dairy Farmers.

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) In view of the fall in returns to dairy farmers, what adjustments, if any, are contemplated in the commitments of dairy farmers under the war service land settlement scheme?

(2) What is the position of settlers who have already signed procuration forms for their commitments for this year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The commitments paid by dairy farmers under the war service land settlement scheme during the developmental period are based upon the productivity of the farm which is determined annually. Suitable adjustments, therefore, may be made from time to time as necessitated by a variation in the price of dairy products.

This is in conformity with the policy already in existence.

(2) Answered by No. 1.

DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

Returns and Loss on Export.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) In view of the altered economic conditions applying to the production and sale of butter, can he inform the House if the dairying industry will receive more, or less, from butter sold in Australia this year than last, and to what extent?

(2) What is the estimated loss on every lb. of butter to be exported this year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Because of the increase of 3½d. per lb. in the wholesale price of butter in Australia, the industry will receive more for sales on this market than in the previous year unless, of course, such increased price brings about a severe decline in consumption. It is not possible to say how much more or less the dairy industry will receive until the actual Australian sales are known.

(2) As export butter is now sold on a free market for the first time for over 15 years, it is extremely difficult to forecast what prices are likely to be realised during the coming year. It has been estimated, however, that the net realisation might be at least 1s. 8d. per lb. less than the recognised total cost of production ex factory.

BRITISH FOOTBALL POOLS.

Legality in Western Australia.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware that a British football pool organisation is conducting an intensive advertising campaign by post in Western Australia?

(2) Is this form of gambling contrary to any law of the State?

(3) Is the use of postal facilities for this purpose contrary to the Act?

(4) If the answers to questions Nos. (2) and (3) are in the negative, will steps be taken to prevent the outflow of Western Australian funds into this channel?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes. Under Section 4 of the Lotteries (Control) Act pools are an illegal lottery so far as Western Australia is concerned. It is not illegal for individuals to subscribe to the pools, but it is illegal for agents to conduct or organise the pools within the State.

(3) No. The Lotteries (Control) Act does not include any prohibition of this nature.

(4) To do so would require an amendment to the Lotteries (Control) Act which would be practically, if not wholly, impossible to police.

EDUCATION.

(a) Trades School, Leederville.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will he indicate when it is anticipated that the extension to the building trades school at Leederville—

(a) will be commenced;

(b) will be ready for occupation?

(2) Will this extension complete the programme of transfer to Leederville of building trades education?

(3) If not, what further trade courses are required to make Leederville a complete building trades school?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This is not possible as yet.

(2) Yes.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(b) Junior Technical School, Leederville.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is it planned to build a junior technical school adjacent to Mongers Lake in Melrose-st., Leederville?

(2) If so, when can a commencement of building be expected?

(3) Is it intended to transfer the Newcastle Street Junior Technical School to this site?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) Yes, but not immediately.

(3) When the Mongers Lake school is completed it is hoped that the Newcastle Street Junior Technical School can be used for other purposes.

(c) *Armada High School, Date of Completion.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What has been the reason for the delay in the completion of the first portion of the Armada High School?

(2) When is it now expected that this will be ready for occupation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The non-arrival of steel windows from England.

(2) The 12th September, 1955.

HEALTH.

Claims for Benefits.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Health:

Is it allowed under the relevant Act and/or regulations for the Hospital Benefit Fund and friendly societies to demand, as directed in red on each claim form, that all accounts must be paid before a claim can be made for the benefit?

The MINISTER replied:

I am advised that this is a matter which is subject to Commonwealth law, namely, the National Health Act, 1953, which provides that a registered organisation—hospital benefit or friendly society—can make payment of either hospital benefit or medical benefit to the contributor only on production of a receipted account.

However, I am also advised that the organisation may, on receipt of an authority from the contributor—by way of a procuration order—make payment direct to the hospital or doctor concerned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Ministerial Authority and Ratepayers' Wishes.

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

In view of the expressed attitude of the Minister for Local Government to ratepayers' petitions and referendums, would the Premier please indicate what form of expression of the will of a majority of people directly affected would be accepted and acted upon by the Government in respect of proposed and future local government amalgamations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

It is thought that amalgamations should be decided upon the basis of what is best for all concerned in any proposed new and enlarged local government district and not upon the basis of what might be desired for sentimental and other reasons by those in any one section of the proposed new district.

S.P. BETTING SHOPS.

Details of Operations.

Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER asked the Minister for Police:

(1) What number of licensed s.p. shops operated on Saturday, the 6th August—

(a) in the metropolitan;

(b) in the suburban areas; and

(c) what numbers in other districts?

(2) What number of telephones were used—

(a) in the metropolitan area;

(b) in the suburban areas, and

(c) what numbers in other districts?

(3) How many calls were made by women in all districts?

(4) What was the number of people employed in these s.p. shops—

(a) in the metropolitan; and

(b) in other districts?

(5) How many bets were made in these betting shops—

(a) in the metropolitan;

(b) in the suburban areas; and

(c) in other districts?

(6) What was the total amount paid by bettors—

(a) in the metropolitan;

(b) in the suburban areas; and

(c) in other districts?

(7) What was the total gross amount in profits credited to the bookmakers—

(a) in the metropolitan;

(b) in the suburban areas; and

(c) in other districts?

(8) Is it a fact that all police take an oath to uphold the law and to see that the law is upheld? If so, why did policemen defy the law and bet with an unlicensed s.p. betting man, as reported in the "Daily News"?

(9) Is it not a fact that persons who make bets with s.p. bookmakers are liable to a penalty?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This question is answered in respect to the areas defined in the regulations—

(a) Metropolitan Area—within 30 miles radius of the Perth Town Hall—69 registered premises.

(b) Outside metropolitan area—99 registered premises.

(2) This information is unknown. At present the board is in the process of ascertaining details of telephones operating in registered premises in the metropolitan area.

(3) This information is not officially known or ascertainable, but from my own personal observations when inspecting a number of these premises during last Saturday afternoon, only a total of eight women were seen at the premises which I visited.

(4) Bookmakers' employees licensed by the board to work in registered premises—

(a) Metropolitan area—547.

(b) Outside metropolitan area—218.

Number of licensed employees actually engaged on the 8th August by licensed (exclusive) premises bookmakers is unknown.

(5) and (6) Returns to the Commissioner of Stamps are not due to be lodged until the 11th instant and the information is therefore not available at present.

(7) This information is not received by the board, but is a matter dealt with by the Commissioner of Stamps. That officer advises that the details in any case are required to be treated as confidential, in a similar manner as information contained in an income tax return.

(8) No. The engagement subscribed to by a police officer is briefly—"That I will see and cause Her Majesty's peace to be kept and preserved and prevent to the best of my power all offences against same and will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to law."

No police officers defied the law by betting with an unlicensed s.p. betting man, as reported in the "Daily News."

(9) A person who bets with an unlicensed bookmaker commits an offence. It takes two parties to make a bet and one must be an accessory to the other.

No person, including a police officer, becomes an accomplice, who merely goes through the motions of making a bet with an unlicensed person, for the purpose of detecting and prosecuting an offence.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion for the adoption of the Address, as amended.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [2.38]: In this Address-in-reply debate I am going to confine my remarks to two, or possibly three, topics and I do not intend to harass the House with them although I believe they are important. First

of all, I would like to mention the historic fight that took place from the Perth Airport this morning at 9 a.m. This will be the inauguration of a service that will link Perth on a direct route with London.

Members of this House know that for many years I have been concerned in my own small way with attempting to bring this objective to fruition. In the years I have been trying to assist in bringing this service into being, I have received very welcome assistance from a number of people, not the least of whom is a journalist in this House. This journalist, indeed, was doing his bit to bring the service about before I attempted to play my part in the parliamentary sphere. So there are many others who can feel warm within themselves at the knowledge that at last this very important service has been inaugurated.

I do not intend to say any more about that particular feature. I think it is well known now that the benefits that will accrue to Western Australia will be almost limitless. What I feel I should possibly mention at this stage is that there is one facility which is not available at the Perth Airport and which, I think could well be there. In a tour again this morning of all the facilities on the station, I was impressed by those that were available. In a brief space of time the whole place has been renovated, and entirely new additions have been made to cater for the comfort of passengers, and to comply with international air regulations. In many ways, indeed in almost every respect the Perth Airport measures up to the requirements of an international airport.

It is possibly only this one feature that it lacks. The feature to which I refer is that it has no licence to cater for the public who travel by air, or to cater for the public who meet air travellers. I believe this matter is before Cabinet, or is about to be brought before Cabinet, and I do trust it is one that will receive favourable consideration. I feel very strongly on the matter of there being a licence at the Perth Airport to enable our airport to conform in every way to the international airports overseas. I cannot see any reason against a licence being granted. It will be availed of only for the period when overseas airliners are on the ground. I think it is quite apparent that Qantas does not propose to make any substantial profit by possessing a licence; it is purely a service it will offer.

I believe, too, that a point that could well be made is that Qantas has two classes of air passengers—the first-class and the second-class. Because of the additional fares, the first-class passengers are offered free drinks with their meals, while at the same meal a second-class passenger would not be able to have drinks because it is not on the free list as far as those

passengers are concerned. Accordingly these air passengers will be faced with the rather embarrassing situation of asking for and having to be refused a drink.

Hon. D. Brand: What facilities exist at other airports?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: At practically every other major overseas international airport of the world, this facility is available. I believe, however, that in Australia such is not the case. If the present Cabinet were to agree to the proposal that a licence be granted, it would greatly assist in bringing a similar state of affairs into existence in the Eastern States. We could lead the way in that regard, and that, I feel, is Western Australia's true role. I do hope and trust that by and large the Cabinet Ministers will arrive at a favourable decision concerning this matter just as soon as possible.

The other point I wish to raise is one that concerns the Parliamentary Superannuation Act. I find that there is what I consider to be an anomaly with regard to erstwhile Government employees who enter this House as members of Parliament. In the Constitution Act, of course, there is a provision that no one can hold two offices of profit under the Crown. That is quite understandable. But under the provisions of the Parliamentary Superannuation Act, I find the following situation—and I will take my own case as an example, because that is the one with which I am more familiar than any other.

I find that, being an erstwhile Government employee and at present a member of Parliament, if I were to be defeated at the poll within a period of seven years I would, like all others, be entitled to restitution of the moneys I have paid into that fund. But if I exceeded the period of seven years in Parliament and then, at a later stage, were defeated at an election, I would not be entitled to any pension, nor would I be entitled to a refund of the money I had paid into the fund, if I went back to my previous employment as a schoolteacher.

For the life of me, I cannot see how that is a fair and just state of affairs. It applies to any person who leaves this Chamber because of defeat at the polls, and goes back into Government employment. I think I can substantiate that from the Parliamentary Superannuation Act. Section 11 (1) (d) of that Act states—

Upon loss of membership by any person from whose salary, prior to the commencement of this Act, deductions had been made pursuant to the provisions of the repealed Act, there shall be paid from the Fund—

(d) To any person who has been a member for less than seven years, the amount of his contributions after the commencement of this Act with interest at the rate determined by the Trustees.

That, of course, caters for anyone up to the period of seven years. Section 14 of the Act states—

If a person in receipt of a pension under this Act or entitled on account of loss of membership to a pension—

(a) becomes a member of Parliament of any other State, or of the Commonwealth

(b) holds any office under the Crown, whether in Western Australia or elsewhere, for which he is remunerated out of the moneys of the Crown;

then, if the salary, remuneration or pension received by the said person as mentioned in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of this section is at a rate in excess of three hundred and twelve pounds (£312) per annum, the pension under this Act shall be reduced by the amount of such excess.

It is possible for a member of Parliament to be defeated at the polls, to be then employed by the Government and to receive a salary in excess of £312; in that event, his pension will be reduced by the amount of such excess. In effect, that would mean that such a person would receive no pension at all. What is more, he would receive no restitution or refund of his contribution.

The Minister for Railways: The same principle applies to all Government employees. They cannot draw superannuation and their wages as well.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: That is true. Does the Minister think that the illustration I referred to is fair.

The Minister for Railways: It is in common with what applies to all other Government employees.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I know that. I am asking the Minister whether he feels that I, as a member of Parliament, should pay in £70 odd per annum to a Parliamentary Superannuation Fund and stand no chance of getting any benefit from it if I am defeated and go back to my original calling of schoolteaching?

The Minister for Education: You will not be going back.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Does the Minister think that is fair.

The Minister for Railways: If it is fair to apply it to a wages man, it is fair to apply it to an ex-member of Parliament.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I cannot see that it is fair to the wages man, but that has no bearing.

The Minister for Railways: It is exactly the same principle. A person cannot draw superannuation where the Government is subsidising it, and at the same time draw wages from the Government.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: If a person is employed by the Government and joins the superannuation fund, then decides to enter Parliament, can the Minister tell me what happens to him under the superannuation fund?

The Minister for Railways: He does not get any superannuation.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: What does he get?

The Minister for Railways: He gets his parliamentary salary.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Does the Minister not realise that such a person will get a refund of the money he has paid in to the fund, plus about one per cent. interest?

The Minister for Railways: He will receive what he has paid in but not what the Government has paid in.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: He will be refunded the money he has paid in personally. Does the Minister realise that?

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Cottesloe must refrain from conducting a quiz session.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I realise I should not, but I felt this was one way to make my point. In the event of a member of Parliament being defeated, after a period of seven years, he would not even receive the money he has paid into the superannuation fund if he were to go back to Government employment, and that does not take into consideration any contribution by the Government. I do not think the Government contribution can be claimed; I agree with that, but I do suggest there should at least be a refund of the contribution which the member has paid personally.

The Minister for Railways: I agree that is fair.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: In my case, I am contributing £70 odd a year, and will get no benefit from it if I am defeated and go back to schoolteaching. That applies to me personally, but of course the same will apply to a much wider range of persons. It will apply to a wages man going back to a Government wages job. I do not know that there would be any difference between a wages man and myself if I were to go back to schoolteaching.

The Minister for Education: You would receive much more now.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: This matter can well be overcome by a simple amendment to the Act. There is justice in the claim I am making. I cannot see why there should be any discrimination against members returning to Government employment. If a member of Parliament goes back to private employment when he is defeated, what does he get? He will receive the parliamentary pension,

but a member going back to Government employment after being defeated would receive nothing. Does the Minister think that is fair?

The Minister for Railways: If you went further, you would find a catch in it.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I see no reason why, if a wrong practice is followed for a number of years, it should continue. At the end of the last session of Parliament I spoke to the Premier about this matter. He agreed there was reason behind what I put forward. I hope that he will include among his plans for this session a small amending Bill to overcome the anomaly I have pointed out.

The Minister for Housing: It will not affect your argument to point out that the £312 allowable income was increased to £546 last session.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I realised the increase after I had read the section. I do not think it will affect any member today.

The Minister for Housing: If you were to work for the Government after being defeated, it is likely that you would receive more than that.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Even if it were to be doubled, it would make no difference. In effect, it would mean that such a person would receive no pension whatever. The present position is that a member going back to private employment after being defeated is paid the full pension, but a member going back to Government employment will receive nothing after seven years.

The Minister for Railways: Have you ever considered this aspect? If you were to take up schoolteaching and contributed to a superannuation fund, and then left schoolteaching to enter private employment, and drew the money which you paid into that fund, what would happen?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: That would deprive the person of any further rights.

The Minister for Railways: If such a person drew the money out of the fund, he would have no further rights, and would lose the pension.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: That is to be expected. The anomaly I have pointed out can be overcome to give general satisfaction. In putting forward this case, I do not mean that I anticipate being defeated at the polls. I am putting forward my own case to show how unfair the position can be. The same position could apply to a number of members of this House. I do not know whether Cabinet has already dealt with the matter. When I spoke to the Premier last year about it, he saw reason in my contention. I do hope that the Deputy Premier will bring the matter before the Premier and inform him that I have raised this matter again, as I feel that it should be considered.

There is only one other minor matter I wish to deal with, and that refers to petrol-selling stations and the half-mile regulation under the Road Districts Act. In my question I asked if this regulation was applied parochially, and the Minister replied that no cases of that nature had been brought to the notice of the department by any local governing body. By a parochial application of this regulation, I meant whether the half-mile applies to the narrow confines of a road board boundary or not. It is possible to find a petrol-selling station constructed on the boundary of a road district and, on the other side of the street, which comes under the jurisdiction of another road board, another petrol-selling station may be erected. This is perfectly legitimate if the regulation is applied parochially. If the regulation is to be to any real use, there should be a degree of liaison between the local governing authorities and the Local Government Department, before any permit is issued; otherwise, the regulation will, to a certain extent, defeat its own purpose. That, however, is a matter I can raise with the Minister concerned, who is not in this House.

MR. YATES (South Perth) [3.0]: Mention was made in the Governor's Speech of many problems. One of them in which I am vitally interested, and with which all members are concerned, was that of housing. The figures given in the Speech make interesting reading—and not only those figures, but the statements made from time to time by the Minister for Housing, both in the Press and in this House, lauding the efforts of the State Housing Commission under his direction on behalf of the homeless and those requiring accommodation, both in the metropolitan area and in the country.

Naturally the Minister can be proud if he has accomplished what he set out to achieve. But I think it will be a long time before total success can be claimed by this or any other Government in connection with housing in this State, mainly because of the rapid increase in our population and the need for expanding our industrial efforts further from the metropolitan area. As our country needs become more apparent, so will the difficulties confronting the State Housing Commission increase.

Figures are always interesting, and that applies especially to those relating to the population of Western Australia. In 1950, the State had a population of 572,626. The population at the end of 1954 was 649,360, an increase of 76,734. The figures that are the most important to this side of the House are the increases in the years when we were in office compared with those of today. The population increase in 1950 was 28,460. In 1951 it dropped to 17,681. In 1952 it increased to 22,588. In 1953 there was a drop to 18,797, and at the end of last year there was an increase of 17,668.

So the increase of population, following the heavy migration period, is gradually being reduced to a normal figure, to an average which I would say is likely to continue for the next few years, unless we increase our migration policy and allow more migrants from overseas to come to Western Australia. Although the position regarding employment—that is, skilled employment for the building of homes—eased somewhat after 1950; and although the materials problem became easier and the Housing Commission was able to secure requirements for home-building more readily, it must be admitted that the population has been gradually decreasing. Therefore the commission must pick up some of the leeway irrespective of who is in power.

The Minister for Housing: Did you say the population is decreasing?

Mr. YATES: The natural increase is decreasing. The natural increase was 28,460 in 1950 and 17,668 in 1954. Although the State's population is increasing, the natural increase is dropping.

The Minister for Housing: What was it in 1951?

Mr. YATES: It was 17,681.

The Minister for Housing: Which is practically the same.

Mr. YATES: But it was not the same as in 1950 and 1952. It has dropped to the lowest figure since 1949. Last year's figure was the lowest since that time. It appears from those figures that we will not have a greater increase per year, unless we reintroduce the migration scheme and allow many hundreds of migrants to come into Western Australia. That is a factor which not only the State Housing Commission is facing, but which is being faced by housing commissions in other States also. They have to budget for a natural increase in population as well as for any other influence which might affect population growth. Today the State Housing Commission would have a much easier task in budgeting for the future in connection with the number of homes required to be built and the easing off of the position in connection with those whose applications have been in for a very long period.

The Minister for Housing: No, because the 1951 and 1952 people had not been housed and this Government has done it.

Mr. YATES: They had not been housed because of the difficulties of securing skilled tradesmen and materials, and the Minister knows that that position has been getting better and better each year. I am not denying the fact that the present Government has done a good job—I will give credit where credit is due—but it has not overcome the problem altogether; and it will be quite a number of years before the present Minister or any other Minister for Housing will be able to sit back with ease

and say that the position has been solved, because in this State, especially in the metropolitan district, the number of marriages in the area from Midland Junction to Fremantle is in the vicinity of 2,500 each year. It can be safely said that most of those newly-married couples require their own accommodation, and there will therefore always be a need for at least 2,000 homes within the metropolitan area for the newlyweds. Furthermore, a lot of the older homes are condemned from time to time or are bought up for industrial purposes.

Therefore the building of homes must go on continuously; and it is up to the State to see that the needs of those who cannot afford to pay big sums to purchase their own homes are adequately catered for. One of the schemes whereby that can be accomplished was introduced recently under which the State not only assists in financing people for this purpose, but also enables them to buy homes on a low deposit. Although those homes are not up to the standard of the Commonwealth-State rental homes, yet they do fulfil a need. The time may come when that scheme will be abolished and some other form of assistance to the home-maker will be instituted by the Government.

The Minister for Housing: In the next few weeks.

Mr. YATES: That is interesting. Although the State's population increased by 76,000 over four years, most of the increase was in the metropolitan area. Out of the 76,000, no fewer than 42,000 remain in the metropolitan area. So we are faced with an ever-increasing population within that area, with the rest of the State suffering in consequence. The capital city of Western Australia is becoming top-heavy from the standpoint of population and many other things in connection with our expansion.

The Minister for Housing: It will become a jolly sight more top-heavy according to Professor Stephenson.

Mr. YATES: Yes. At a lecture at South Perth, Professor Stephenson mentioned that by the year 2000 the State's population would have increased by over 1,000,000. He worked it out on the natural increase in the past, plus migration schemes, which must carry on to a certain extent in the future; and he said that he would not be far out in his analysis.

This would mean that the population of the metropolitan area would increase alarmingly. Do we find the metropolitan area or the city capable of withstanding that increased population? Will our system of roads, our system of transport and all the other systems connected with such expansion be strong enough to carry this influx of population? I do not know

whether the whole of those matters has been mentioned in the report because the full text has not been made public, but I venture to say that, although Professor Stephenson might be an expert in his particular field, he could not possibly envisage what will occur in the future.

There might be a different age in connection with transport. We have passed through the petrol-engine age, the jet-engine age and at present are going through the atomic-engine age, but there might be a different form of propulsion in future. Nobody can tell. Each of these changes entails change of policy, change of communication systems, change in the layout of city and suburban areas and even country centres. He would be a very clever man who could plan for the future not knowing what the future might bring forth.

Apart from housing, we have many other problems—the problems of school accommodation, hospitalisation and education. These are very important matters which are mentioned frequently in this Chamber and are on the list of every person who has an interest in the welfare of children attending school, in relatives and friends requiring hospital treatment and in the further schooling of a youngster after he has left the Government and secondary schools—education in our university. We are faced with an increase of over 6,000 children annually, entering upon the new venture of school life, for whom the Government has to find accommodation. Has adequate provision been made for the future expansion of these schools? Is the Government getting sufficient finance to permit of going ahead with the schemes which should have been prepared?

Already a few questions have been asked in this Chamber since we met last week, and from those questions asked by members, both metropolitan and country, it is evident to me that they are not satisfied with the conditions in connection with the housing of schoolchildren. This problem has been with us since the end of the war. Granted that all Governments since then have had to utilise hat-rooms and other emergency accommodation both in the schools and in public halls, now that the housing problem, according to the Minister, is easing, a lot of the effort that has gone into housing should be deflected to education, even if it means tightening up the housing situation in order to meet the urgent needs of education.

Hon. D. Brand: The Treasurer told us yesterday that £1,700,000 for housing expenditure was financed from trust funds.

Mr. YATES: It is the responsibility of the Government to see that those funds are replaced. At the moment I am not interested in that item. What I am interested

in is the need for spending money in the right direction with the object of extending existing schools, planning for new ones and ensuring that at the beginning of each school year there will be sufficient accommodation to house the influx which must occur as a result of our increasing population.

To house more than 6,000 new scholars in one year represents a great problem, especially when the authorities do not accurately know where they are all situated. It is only after the children have been enrolled at the various schools that the authorities really know where the greatest influx has occurred and what steps can be taken to alleviate the problem. Children have been turned away from school in the first weeks because the school could not accommodate them and have had to wait until such time as the department could arrange for them to go to a school less crowded or make other arrangements.

There is a mix-up in the first few weeks of the new school year, but it is quite understandable that that should occur. However, this has been happening so long that we should make better provision for the accommodation of the number of children who will be entering the schools next year. Perhaps the Minister for Education, when he speaks on this motion, will give some indication of the extent of the proposed expansion and what schools are to be built both in the metropolitan area and in the country. He should give us an indication of how far his funds will go in this connection and tell us how much is being spent on the education of the child and on the building of new schools.

Hon. D. Brand: He has a big problem in respect of the transport of children in the country.

Mr. YATES: Yes, but I do not intend to touch upon that subject because I have other matters with which I wish to deal. I am most concerned about the position which has confronted us during the last 10 years and which we have not been able to overcome. The Minister for Education, on taking office, stated in this House that he would do his best to overcome these problems. He has not overcome all of them, but he has remedied some of the difficulties, and as we progress, he may overcome them all. If it is entirely a matter of finance, he can only do his best with the funds available to him.

Hon. D. Brand: Over £800,000 has been spent on the transport of children.

Mr. YATES: Leaving the subject of schools, I wish to refer to hospitals. One of the biggest bugbears of any community is the responsibility of looking after the sick and needy. The growth of hospitalisation in Western Australia has been dramatic and rapid. Thirty years ago we did not have all the drugs and the necessary facilities for curing ills, and one

would have expected a greater percentage of the population who fell ill to seek treatment in the various hospitals. During those 30 years, medical science has progressed to an amazing degree. It has discovered cures for some of the ills that formerly kept people in hospital for months on end.

We have the wonder drug, penicillin, new use for x-rays, and many other scientific aids which have been discovered meanwhile and are being put to the best use in hospitals throughout the world. Yet today, with all these advances and with the tremendous growth of hospitals in Western Australia, we still have not sufficient room to house the patients. What is the reason? Are the people relying more on the Government to look after each one of the small ills that confronts them; or is it because of the new complaints that have sprung up in the last 30 years? I personally feel that a large number of the people in our hospitals today are put there by the doctors because the doctors find it much easier to look after their patients when they are under the one roof, rather than do what the old practitioner did, namely, go around in a sulky with a black bag and look after his patients in their own homes.

We see very little of that today. A doctor would far rather order his patient to hospital than treat him at home; and admittedly the patient might get better attention at a hospital. That trend has grown over the past few years to such an extent that Governments cannot build enough hospitals to house the people. If a census were taken of the patients in the hospitals in this State, I think we would find that a large percentage of them had only small complaints that could easily be dealt with in their own homes. Whilst this state of affairs continues, the need for further hospitals will grow to such an extent that our finance will not be able to cope with it.

The Royal Perth Hospital has been extended to such a degree that one would think enough accommodation were provided there for all time. That is not so. That hospital has a waiting list as long as a person's arm, and it is most difficult to secure a bed there. As the House knows, some eight years ago, certain prominent citizens of South Perth felt the need for a hospital to alleviate somewhat the conditions at the Royal Perth Hospital. They felt it would be a good idea to build a small hospital to take 40 or 50 short-term patients per week off the hands of the Royal Perth Hospital. After many trials and tribulations, and with the assistance of the Government and the State Lotteries Commission, and generous assistance from the residents of South Perth, they have practically completed the building of a 27-bed hospital.

Mr. J. Hegney: What is the assistance given by the Lotteries Commission?

Mr. YATES: The same as the Government.

Mr. J. Hegney: What is that?

Mr. YATES: It is £45,000 spread over three years. The hospital will be opened towards the end of this year. It is a magnificent structure, and a credit not only to the builder and the architect but to the Government and the Lotteries Commission for their assistance.

Mr. J. Hegney: And also South Perth.

Mr. YATES: Yes, it is a credit to those residents of the South Perth district who started the scheme and who have generously contributed towards it and will continue to do so. That is one of the answers to the hospital problem in Western Australia. If communities are sufficiently civic-minded to have the care of the sick uppermost in their minds and are prepared to form themselves into committees to raise finance for the building of hospitals, I am quite certain they will always receive a sympathetic ear from the Minister, the Premier and the Lotteries Commission because the burden when spread over all these people is not as great as when left to the Government only.

Because of the lack of finance in the past, Governments have had to refuse to build hospitals in certain areas where they were vitally necessary. If other citizens in other districts of the State were to do the same as we have done in South Perth, the position could be relieved to some extent. No doubt other districts have done that, although I do not know their names. I do know, however, that certain bands of people within the State have assisted in the building of small clinics, hospitals, kindergartens and other annexes which make for the better health of the people.

It will be a proud day in my electorate when that hospital is opened; and, we trust, free from debt, because we hope that we will have raised sufficient finance to furnish the building completely and give a working capital of £2,000 or £3,000 to the management committee to commence operations. A modern flat, apart from the hospital, has been built for the matron, and the best nurses' quarters I have seen at any hospital have been provided. Each nurse will have a room to herself. The nurses' quarters are beautifully designed with every modern convenience, including Wonder-heats throughout the building, hot and cold water, and their own laundry facilities. The building, which is self-contained, is away from the hospital, but not so far that the nurses cannot be called in times of emergency.

Mr. May: Have you decided on the charges you will make?

Mr. YATES: That question will be left to the management committee which will investigate all avenues of expense through the Department of Public Health and will approach hospitals of similar size. The

committee does not want to make a profit out of running the hospital. If it shows a loss, the people of South Perth will, I am certain, run functions—bazaars, fetes and so on—to meet the deficit. The management committee will consist of 12 people. There will be two medical practitioners, members of the Red Cross, members of the Community Centre Association, and businessmen. This committee will control the hospital from the moment it is opened.

The Minister for Health: The South Perth community hospital is a very fine effort indeed and a good example to the whole of the State.

Mr. YATES: I commend it to other parts of the State as a means by which they can assist the Government and take away some of its financial burden. In this case the Government has paid only £45,000 which, in these times, is not a lot of money for a 27-bed hospital which contains in all more than 80 rooms. That is the standard required by the Minister's department.

The Minister for Works: Your leader argued against this the other evening.

Mr. YATES: He might, but he approved of it.

The Minister for Works: He hoped there would not be any extension of it.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: He approved of it.

Hon. D. Brand: The Minister for Health in the previous Labour Government argued against it, too.

The Minister for Works: The Leader of the Opposition said it was an additional form of tax of which he did not approve.

Mr. YATES: He did not say that to me.

The Minister for Works: He did to the House.

Mr. YATES: When he was approached by a deputation—

The Minister for Works: Perhaps he has changed his mind since.

Mr. YATES: He never voiced any objection to me against building this hospital, or against the Government financing it.

The Minister for Works: The Leader of the Opposition referred to the medical school as an example and said it was an additional form of taxation on the people.

Mr. YATES: He might have meant the medical school, but not the hospital.

The Minister for Works: It is the same thing.

Mr. YATES: One is a hospital, but the medical school is something new that we have not had before. I have always supported the proposal to establish a medical school. The Treasurer knows what is in

the kitty, and he sees things through different eyes compared with ordinary members. Since the present Premier has been in office, his financial outlook has changed considerably.

The Minister for Works: He was always pretty generous.

Mr. YATES: He has refused requests for assistance because of the many applications made.

Mr. May: All Premiers do that.

Mr. YATES: Of course, and some of the causes to which they refuse to make a grant of money are very worthy ones. I am not trying to be critical but am endeavouring to impress, not only on members of this House but also on the public of the State generally how the people can assist Governments in breaking down the colossal amount of finance needed to build and run hospitals, if individual communities do their share towards establishing facilities for hospitalisation in their own districts. The Lotteries Commission has been particularly generous to us and the people of South Perth have, in turn, been most generous. The help and assistance rendered by the Department of Public Health has been outstanding.

We have received nothing but the best of advice since the commencement of the building of the hospital—so much so that we had to alter our plans on at least three occasions in order to comply with the newer ideas that were coming into operation. The final plans, to which we are now building, will make this hospital the most modern of its size in Australia. I do not think anything more modern in the way of hospitals will be built anywhere in Australia for a long time, or with better materials than are being used in this instance. I believe the Deputy Premier was present at the laying of the foundation stone in South Perth and he must have been impressed by the wonderful brickwork that was visible on the face of the building at that time—

The Minister for Housing: They were socialistic bricks, were they not?

Mr. YATES: —and by the superb craftsmanship of the men who laid them.

Mr. May: Did you have trouble in getting your bricks?

Mr. YATES: A little, but it was fixed up with the Minister for Housing, who is also Minister in charge of the State Brick Works. We overcame all the initial difficulties in the building of the hospital and hope to have it open by the end of the year or early in February next at the latest. If members have half an hour to spare I would recommend them to make a trip to South Perth and go through the building which is now in its final stages of construction as that might give them some ideas as to what could be done by committees in various parts of the State to assist their

own communities, with the support of the Government and the Lotteries Commission.

Last night, when moving an amendment on an amendment which the Leader of the Opposition had moved to the Address-in-reply, the Premier became as heated as I have ever seen him; so much so that at one stage I thought he would need a blood transfusion, so heated and irate was he simply because the Opposition had the nerve to move an amendment to the Address-in-reply, couched in words with which he did not agree. It was quite refreshing to members on this side of the House to see the Premier come out of his shell at least once and let us see what he could really do in debate.

I listened attentively to him and tried to ask him a question three times by interjection. He knew what was the question I wished to ask him and deliberately raised his voice on each occasion so that it was too difficult for me to ask the question. He spoke very little, and in fact not at all, to the amendment but dealt with many other matters outside it. He kept away from the amendment and then made an attack, which I thought most unjust, on the profiteering of certain companies, and I take it he referred to Western Australia in particular.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Alleged profiteering!

Mr. YATES: He referred to these companies and said they were fleecing the men engaged in rural industries, particularly, and mentioned that on two or three occasions.

Hon. D. Brand: He admitted, later, that they contributed to Labour Party funds.

Mr. YATES: That is only a side issue. He would not name one of the companies. That was the purpose of the interjection I tried to get in, and when others by interjection asked him to name the companies he evaded the issue, and so I am not aware which company or group he referred to.

The Minister for Housing: Their record profits are being published nearly every day in the Press.

Mr. YATES: The fact that a company makes a profit, whether large or small, does not require the Premier of this State to become so apoplectic in this House as to say that no company should make a profit at all.

The Minister for Housing: But these are all-time record profits being made while the basic wage is pegged.

Mr. YATES: We have to analyse more than the profit they disclose.

The Minister for Housing: Yes, we know the profit is far greater than that.

Mr. YATES: Connected with profit making is the investment of shareholders, the total holding investments of the company

in question and the amount of money that they spend on research and so on, together with the number of men that they keep in regular employment, the conditions under which the staff are employed, the amenities provided free for the staff and the superannuation schemes that many companies have introduced. All these items must be taken into consideration before we can condemn any company or group of companies for having made a profit.

The Minister for Housing: But all those things are taken into account in their books, and, over and above that, they are still making enormous profits.

Mr. YATES: They are not taken into account by members on the Government side.

Mr. May: All the profits are made possible by workers in industry.

Mr. YATES: The hon. members knows that without those who guide them in their work and, in fact, without everyone assisting each other, the community could not exist.

Hon. D. Brand: And without a great deal of mechanisation also.

The Minister for Works: For which the Government often pays.

Mr. YATES: Because the State and the Commonwealth have been going through an era of prosperity, certain companies are showing greater overall profits now than they did prewar. We admit that, of course, but in comparison with increases in the basic wage and the cost of production, as well as many other cost factors, the majority of these companies have kept within bounds in regard to their profit making, but because their sales have been so vast and they have found new markets—a lot of them were not permitted to export during the war but are exporting today—they are now showing greatly increased profits.

The Minister for Works: What do you regard as a fair percentage of profit on shareholders' funds?

Mr. YATES: It all depends—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It depends on the efficiency of the company.

The Minister for Works: Not at all.

Mr. YATES: If a company is prepared to invest £500,000 on a new venture and gambles that the product produced will sell on the market, any person who invests in that company is entitled to at least 6 per cent., because he could get 4½ per cent. without working by investing in stocks such as Commonwealth bonds and the State Electricity Commission loans throughout the Commonwealth. The man who is prepared to invest his money where there is no guarantee that he will get it back is entitled to at least an extra 1½ per

cent. and so I would say the minimum should be 6 per cent. as a return for the shareholder who takes a gamble—

The Minister for Housing: On subscribed capital?

Mr. YATES: We will not go into the capital side of it because it would take too long, and I am not a financial expert.

The Minister for Works: Would you regard 15 per cent. as being unconscionable?

Mr. YATES: No.

The Minister for Works: Or 20 per cent.?

Mr. YATES: No.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You seem to think—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley must keep order.

Mr. YATES: When a company with a small capital happens to find that its product is selling tremendously and its sales are so enlarged that the return is out of proportion to capital invested and it strikes a dividend of from 10 to 30 per cent., it is on the invested capital only. If it called in another £400,000 or £500,000 of capital the return would drop to 6 per cent. or 8 per cent., but some companies have not done that and have preferred to keep their original capital intact, perhaps at £100,000. Yet their trading for the year, or gross profit, might be £500,000. Even under those circumstances the profit on each article would be no greater than if the capital had been three times as large. So there is an anomaly with a company or group of companies of small holdings having bigger returns and, as a consequence, necessarily showing a greater profit to shareholders.

The Minister for Works: The member for Nedlands would not agree with that argument.

Mr. YATES: That actually happens.

The Minister for Works: I still do not think the member for Nedlands would agree with you.

Mr. YATES: He must agree! Let me give an instance of one of the big trading banks which might have a capital of £500,000,000. That bank has money invested throughout the Commonwealth because of branch buildings in every small town and village throughout the States. The overall profit for the year might be £500,000. On the other hand, a motor company might have a capital of £100,000 and, because of changed conditions at the end of the war, the price of cars increases and instead of selling only 100 cars a year, it sells 5,000. The profits of that company might be £130,000 on the £100,000 invested.

The trading bank which I used as an example would have to split the profit of £500,000 among its many shareholders, whereas the motor company, which made

a profit of, as an example, £130,000, might have only 1,000 shareholders and the return to those shareholders would be a much greater percentage than that returned to the shareholders in the trading bank. That is the point I am trying to make. Some of the returns shown in the financial reviews are not compared with the actual sum of the original capital.

Let us also take the Broken Hill Pty. Ltd. as a further example. That company has about £40,000,000 or £50,000,000 invested and it may show a profit of £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 in the year. But the rate of return to shareholders would be no more than 4½ per cent. because of the colossal sum invested in the company's undertakings.

The Minister for Works: Lots of it watered capital.

Mr. YATES: No.

Mr. Court: I do not think you can take an arbitrary percentage of returns for all types of industry. Each different type of industry must be considered separately.

The Minister for Works: I thought it was more than the member for Nedlands could stand.

Mr. YATES: I am quoting one company as against another. It is quite possible for the Deputy Premier to go to the races with £5 and come back with £50.

The Minister for Works: Come back with nothing.

Mr. YATES: He went to the races with a capital of £5 and increased it to £50 and so the percentage of profit was great. If he had gone there with £500 and still made £50, the percentage would not be nearly so large. To work only on percentages is to take an anomalous view of the position.

I know an old builder who sits on one of the committees in which I am interested. He says that he does not believe in percentages and when I asked him why he said, "I knew a man who shipped a horse to Singapore and it died on the way up. He received a return from the company which said that 100 per cent of the cargo had been destroyed. The next time that man sent up five horses and two of them died and the return from the company showed that only 40 per cent of his goods had been destroyed on that occasion." So as a result he said he did not believe in percentages. When a man shipped only one horse and it died, he lost 100 per cent, but when he shipped five and lost two, he lost only 40 per cent.

Hon. A. F. Watts: He lost two horses instead of one.

Mr. YATES: Yes, and the percentage altered. When investigating the profiteering angle one must take many other factors into consideration. The production of those companies, the work that they do assisting Governments to enrich the country further and to make it better for

humans beings to live in, must all be considered. Not all companies make profits. There is a large one in this State which has not been a money spinner, but a money spender for the Government; I refer to Chamberlain Industries. This Government, assisted by the Commonwealth Government, sunk large sums of money into that undertaking; I do not know how much, but it ran into a big sum.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.5 p.m.

Mr. YATES: Prior to the break for afternoon tea, I mentioned one of our local companies which commenced operations after World War II, and which has spent a lot more money than it has received. It was a gamble as to whether the products which it produced would be saleable in Australia; as it happened they were, but before the company overcame its production difficulties, imports of tractors and other farming machinery into Australia from other countries put this company back somewhat.

Accordingly, to my way of thinking, the gamble did not come off, and the company is faced with heavy commitments. It is generally understood that when a company is formed there are, of course, hazards which it must face. One such hazard is the business undertaking itself; the type of industry in which it is going to engage, and whether it will be lucrative to the company and the shareholders, or whether it will be a straightout gamble as to the amount of money it makes. To illustrate what I am trying to get at, I would mention a mining company as an example.

Money invested in a mining company is always a hazard, especially when a new company goes to the public for funds. Of course, it has reports on the type of ground, and it also has previous reports from other mines in the area, but it does gamble as to whether when the mine starts production, it can procure a sufficient surplus of ore. That is a hazardous type of business and naturally the shareholders would expect a greater return when risking all their money.

On the other hand people investing in brewery shares or in firms like Broken Hill Pty. Ltd., whose income is assured, and whose capital is vast, are quite prepared for a smaller return because there is little risk attached to the company in which they invest their money. The factor affecting the profit ratio of the company is the original capital invested; coupled with that are the undistributed profits and other reserves. Some companies although they have a large capital available, do borrow further substantial amounts from the banks.

So one cannot compare one undertaking with another. The ratio is vastly different for a company investing money in the manufacture of farming machinery against

one investing in mining shares. To say that these companies have not the interests of the workers at heart is untrue. The Institute of Public Affairs in Victoria recently made a survey among 1,300 limited liability companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange for relative data connected with share ownership by the employees. This is what the review says—

To what extent do employees participate in the ownership of the companies for which they work? To what extent do they share in company profits, either as a consequence of ownership or through other channels? These are questions of great political, economic and industrial significance on which there is much speculation but little factual knowledge. To throw light on this problem the I.P.A. in March/April of this year approached some 1,300 limited liability companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchanges for relevant data. Some highly important results were secured. Each company was asked to reply to the following questions:—

- (1) How many people are employed by your company (including subsidiaries)?
- (2) What is the total number of shareholders in your company?
- (3) How many of your employees own shares in your company?
- (4) Does the company make, or has it ever made, special arrangements for the issue of shares to employees, such as—
 - (a) Portion of public issue reserved for employees.
 - (b) Purchase by instalments deducted from pay.
 - (c) Special employee shares.
- (5) Do employees share in profits in any other way, such as—
 - (a) Bonuses or gratuities at the discretion of the board.
 - (b) Profit-sharing schemes, i.e., proportion of profits to be shared fixed in advance.
 - (c) Special appropriations from profits to employee provident or retirement funds, etc.

Over 700 forms have been returned. This represents about three-quarters of the companies from whom a return might reasonably have been expected. The emphasis on employee shareholdings probably led many companies

with relatively few employees to ignore the questionnaire. The sample, which embraces a substantial proportion of the employees and the share capital of all listed public companies, can be taken as giving a fairly representative picture of the position for industry as a whole.

The results for 704 companies showed:—

Total number of employees: 449,676.

Total number of shareholdings: 1,060,892.

Proportion of employees holding shares in companies which employed them: 1 in 12.

The survey bears out what the I.P.A. has already shown to be true for a number of large representative companies, i.e., that in the great majority of companies shareholders greatly outnumber employees. Of the 704 companies tabulated only 58 had more employees than shareholders. Totaling all the companies surveyed—and ignoring the element of duplication arising from the fact that many people hold shares in more than one company—the number of shareholders exceeds the number of employees by more than 2:1.

About 250 of the companies replying to our inquiry have made arrangements of one kind or another to encourage their employees to obtain shares in their companies. The commonest method is to set aside a portion of a new public issue for employees or to give preference to applications for shares by employees. This trend is most noticeable among companies floated or converted from private to public status since the end of the war. Two hundred and seven of all companies which returned questionnaires reserved shares for employees out of new issues. Of these, in 110 companies 10% to 30% of all employees participated. In 29 companies over 30% of employees participated. Twenty-eight did not state the proportion covered. Forty-five cases came to hand of companies which had made "special employee share" issues. "Special employee shares" do not possess the full rights of shares issued to the public. Usually they do not carry voting rights and are not freely transferable. They are generally paid for in cash or by instalments, but some amount to a free gift under bonus and profit-sharing arrangements. Rates of dividend on "employee shares" are normally equivalent to dividend rates on ordinary shares. Seventy-two companies made arrangements for employees to purchase shares by instalments.

The survey shows that where a company went out of its way to promote employee share ownership striking results could be achieved. Dunlop Rubber, for example, operate a Share Purchase Employees' Association. Two thousand of Dunlop's 7,500 employees are members of the association and through it hold over 100,000 Dunlop £1 ordinary and preference shares. While the company contributes towards the cost of operating the association, control rests entirely in the trustees who periodically purchase Dunlop shares on the open market with funds subscribed by employees. Dividends received are distributed pro rata to members who also have the right of withdrawal of moneys invested. On the other hand, the Olympic Tyre and Rubber group of companies have in the past issued special employee shares payable in instalments. Nearly one-third of employees took up these shares. They have since exchanged them for ordinary stock units in the new holding company (Olympic Consolidated Industries). One thousand two hundred and twelve or 70% of McPherson's employees own "employee shares". These shares can be paid for either by cash or from dividends as declared. It is therefore not necessary for employees to make any payment but eventually they have an asset of fully paid shares and receive regular dividends. These shares always remain at issued par value and must be transferred to a nominee of the directors if the employee leaves the company.

Under the heading of "Some General Observations" it says—

The broad practice of giving employees a greater financial stake in their companies is growing. It is true that there has been no significant expansion of formal profit-sharing schemes of the older type. (There may be good reasons for this.) On the other hand, the payment of bonuses and the institution of company subsidised retirement funds have become widespread. There has also been some development in share ownership by employees, notably through the issue of "special employee shares." But whatever the method used, the broad principle of encouraging employees to acquire a financial interest in their enterprises is almost certain to extend both in the range of companies to which it is applied and in the coverage of employees within individual companies. Apart from the relative merits or demerits of the various possible methods, this general trend is certainly to be welcomed as a stabilising influence both politically and industrially.

This brief review indicates that hundreds of companies situated in the Commonwealth are genuinely interested in the welfare of those engaged within their own particular industries. They have made provision for the employees to obtain shares at a very low cost, or in some cases without cost at all. By the dividends allocated to them they pay for the shares. Since the war big industries have also made marked and rapid changes in the facilities provided for staff in various undertakings.

A member has only to travel through the industries in Western Australia and elsewhere in the Commonwealth to see the marked changes in conditions of employment. It is all to the good for both employer and employee. One cannot live without the other. The average worker whose educational standard does not permit him to rise higher than some other men is satisfied to have constant employment. He is all the more satisfied if he knows that the company will treat him generously if he gives value for the money he receives in wages.

So we have the genuine employees on the one hand striving to keep their jobs and to produce a little more so that they can share in the profits as employees; and the trusted employee, who, having been employed with a company or an industrial undertaking for 20 or 30 years, could, at the time of his retirement, go out with quite a number of shares in the concern, and look back with pride on the work he had performed and the assistance he had rendered to the industry. So the harmonious relationship which we on the business side are trying to create between management and staff is today coming closer to realisation. The more that can be achieved in industry the less friction we will have, and there will be a lessening of strikes. There will be a more harmonious relationship between the trade union movement and the Employers' Federation.

Mr. Moir: You want to preach that to the Employers' Federation.

Mr. YATES: The members of the federation know it and are working at it. It needs to be preached to the trade union officials. It cannot be done on one side if it is not accepted on the other. I am certain that the federation in each of the States is only too happy to co-operate in putting these new ideas into operation so that all may share not only in profit making but also in the general prosperity of the country with the least possible friction and strife. The member for Boulder knows very well that nobody can win in a strike. It is not possible for a worker especially, who has not the capital, to win if he is out of work for six or eight weeks.

Mr. Moir: You do not know what you are talking about when you refer to the Employers' Federation in this State.

Mr. YATES: The federation in this State is equal to organisations in the rest of the Commonwealth, if not better.

Mr. Moir: They must be in a bad way!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's time has expired.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [4.22]: The Address-in-reply is one of the debates, and perhaps the only debate during the session, in which one can cover any ground at all that one feels disposed to cover, either of a parochial, State, national or international character.

Mr. Brady: I think you are partly to blame for that, too.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: As a general rule, members freely avail themselves of the opportunity to cover ground that sometimes extends far beyond the limits of Western Australia although frequently, when doing so, they refer to things which have their effect on Western Australia, because we can hardly escape from the currents which flow outside this country. They trickle past our shores, usually, with results which are sometimes good and sometimes bad. It is not my intention today to go beyond this State in any of the matters to which I shall refer in this debate.

The first thing I would like to mention is the very difficult problem which is continually facing the Department of Education. There are not lacking signs that in some respects the education position in Western Australia is slowly but surely deteriorating. That, of course, is substantially due to the very rapid increases in the school population. These commenced somewhere in the vicinity of six or seven years ago and have progressively become greater as the years have rolled by.

I remember when I first announced here that it was expected that the school population would increase in the new year by something like 4,500. That was quite an unprecedented state of affairs. In the pre-war years, and in the early postwar years, we have known increases of up to 500. Sometimes there have been slight decreases; but, in the main, the increases were in the vicinity of 500 or thereabouts at the most, and the problem of increased staffing, and, above all, the problem of increased building accommodation, was not very substantial. It was not only within the capacity of the building industry to deal with quite easily in one year, but, in fact, the building industry could have handled a great many more buildings than were required.

In the early postwar years that was the position; and in consequence, the idea came into being, and was subsequently steadily practised by the Government of which I was a member, of substantially improving the type of school building that was available, particularly in the country districts of the State; and that practice was very well received. It was, however, halted by the inability of the building

industry, quite apart from financial considerations, to cope with the number of classrooms required when the increase of population rose to 4,500 or more, and the number of classrooms required in a year rose to a couple of hundred as against those we had been accustomed to—25 for new construction, and any more we cared to build for the replacement or betterment of buildings that were not considered very satisfactory.

To be quite frank, I do not remember getting a great deal of sympathy in that extremely difficult position from the hon. gentlemen who now sit opposite me in this House. Therefore, although I intend to be entirely fair—which I hope I can be—I do not propose to offer them any sympathy in the somewhat bewildering position in which I feel sure they now find themselves; because in answer to a question I asked a day or two ago as to the number of buildings belonging to others which are now used as classrooms, I was informed that 51 halls are being used. In answer to a question as to how many classes not accommodated in buildings belonging to others are accommodated in departmental premises which are not classrooms, I was told that there are 78 groups housed in hat-rooms, offices, etc. So that makes a total of 129 places of accommodation which would have to be replaced in order to overcome that section of the difficulty.

Then I asked a further question as to the extent to which it was likely the school population would increase in 1956 and what additional classrooms would be required as a result of such increase. The answer was—

It is expected that the increase will be 6,500 and that the number of rooms needed will be approximately 180.

That adds another 180 to the number that will be required in the early part of next year. That number added to the 129 which I previously mentioned, makes a total of 309. A further question asked is this—

To what extent will the deficiency be remedied by the completion of new orthodox classrooms?

The answer is—

It is anticipated that a further 72 classrooms will be ready for occupation by 1956.

I assume that means the beginning of 1956, when this influx is expected. That number can be subtracted from the 309 to which I have referred, so that it will be 237 short. That is a tremendous number. In round figures it would accommodate at least 8,000 pupils. So, in the absence of these additional rooms, it is fairly obvious, I think, that at the beginning of the year 8,000 children will be without orthodox classrooms; and, in fact, that number may be greater because I have not allowed a very substantial number per classroom. I have no doubt that in some cases the number I have worked on will be exceeded.

So, this is a problem of the greatest magnitude. I am in no position at this stage to criticise the proposed loan expenditure for the coming year, mainly because I do not know what is intended. But I offer this suggestion to the Government that it be careful not to expend any loan funds on matters which are not going to provide items that are essential to the community. I do not, of course, refer merely to schools. I have no intention of objecting to expenditure on such things as essential water supplies, hospitals and other similar works, but, of course, the money can be expended—and there are not lacking indications from Press references and even in the Governor's Speech that moneys are going to be expended—on things which cannot be said, by any stretch of imagination, to be as essential for the people of Western Australia as the betterment, for example, of the school accommodation position.

There is a reference in the Governor's Speech of an intention to spend further money on Wundowie. In normal times, provided I held the views of the hon. gentlemen opposite, I could have no objection to the spending of loan funds on that venture provided it did not minimise the amount of money available for more essential purposes, but the expenditure from loan funds during the coming year, of any sum at all, be it only £50,000, is going to limit to that extent the funds available for such essential purposes as remedying the school accommodation position. The Governor's Speech states—

Ministers are now giving close consideration to proposals which aim at greatly expanding the industry's capacity to produce pig iron.

Having been connected with the industry for more than five years, I know sufficient about it to be aware that its capacity to produce pig iron cannot be increased without the addition of another blast furnace. The present blast furnace was worked to its full capacity. The maximum, if I remember rightly, was 30 tons per day of six workings, and that capacity cannot be increased. I have no doubt that a considerable amount of money will be expended on it this year, if it has not already been expended, for re-bricking because there is no question that the work of re-bricking has to be done about this time, or the efficiency of the blast furnace will be considerably impaired.

In addition, I would say that further retorts would have to be provided for the burning of the extra charcoal without which a second blast furnace could not satisfactorily function. In fact, it could not function at all without it unless the management were prepared to use coal, which has not so far been the practice and is unlikely to become the practice. These two things would entail some additions to the plant itself to handle the resultant charcoal and the like. I have not the slightest doubt, bearing in mind the estimates that were given to me during my term, and

the somewhat increased costs which have ensued in recent times, that the cost of doubling the capacity of the blast furnace, improving the charcoal position and so on, would run into not less than £250,000.

So, implicit in the Governor's Speech, as I see it, is the proposition that Ministers are now giving close consideration to proposals which aim at greatly expanding the industry's capacity to produce pig iron "by expending £250,000." I have added the last few words myself. A few days ago there appeared in the Press a statement to the effect that Mr. Constantine, the present manager of the Wundowie industry, was being sent overseas. At first sight it seemed that he was going away to try to develop a market for pig iron. But from reading the Governor's Speech pretty closely, as I have done, it occurs to me that such cannot be the reason. It must be that he is going to examine what will be required to increase the capacity of the industry to produce pig iron, the substance of which I have been discussing, as the industry, presumably, does not lack a market, because the Speech says—

Orders for an additional 30,000 tons have so far been refused because of a lack of production capacity at Wundowie.

So I think it is not unreasonable to assume that the Government proposed to invest this substantial sum, or a similar sum, in the expansion of the industry at Wundowie.

As I have said, in normal conditions and so on, there would be no objection to that, but I do not think it is as essential to the development and progress of Western Australia as is, for example, the rapid improvement, to the utmost possible extent, of the school accommodation position which, as I have said, for reasons which are public property and for which no one can be blamed, has been steadily deteriorating during the past two years. So I appeal to the Government, and particularly to the Minister for Works whose interest in the education problem over a long period of years is well known, not to allow the loan funds to be depleted by incursions into them such as the one to which I have referred.

If there are others which are no more essential to the true welfare of our community than the Wundowie concern, then I ask him, and the other Ministers also, to set their face against the expenditure and so let us be sure that first things come first. Whilst I know there are other matters which are tremendously important in the social services of our country, broadly speaking I would say it is true, especially in these times when greater knowledge and the use of it is becoming more and more essential in every vocation, that there is nothing more important than to provide the best possible education for our children and adolescents.

That is as I see the situation, and I trust that the Government, whatever its difficulties may be, and I can appreciate it has one or two, will give consideration to the position along the lines I have suggested because it will be a very dissatisfied community, as is strongly evidenced by the discussions at the recent Parents and Citizens' Federation Conference, if it is shown that funds have been expended on matters which are not first essentials, while the education problem has, to a large degree, been left to take care of itself because of that expenditure.

I next wish to refer to the considerable pleasure I had at being informed by the Minister for Railways yesterday that there had been such a substantial increase in the patronage of the suburban railway system. Most members here will recall that during the time the then Minister for Railways was in the Legislative Council it was my obligation to help him in this House. Therefore, at times I was compelled to take rather more interest in suburban railways, and such matters, than might normally have been expected. No doubt at one stage a bad position was developing and it appeared that the losses on the suburban railways would be so considerable that they would amount to a substantial percentage of the total losses on the railways.

Of course it was well known that it was an intricate matter to calculate. Expenditure had to be incurred on the maintenance of suburban paraphernalia whether the suburban trains ran or not because over those lines ran traffic which came from far distant parts of the State destined either for the metropolitan area or carrying goods for export from the State's principal port. So we had to incur that expenditure and we could not very well say that the whole of it was a charge against suburban traffic. It was difficult to assess what portion of it might be regarded as such.

Whatever way we went about it—and the commissioners did everything possible—the losses on the suburban railways mounted above £250,000 in 1952 and the passengers carried were substantially reduced largely because of the slow, uncomfortable and unsatisfactory service which could be rendered as compared with other types of transport. So during the time that I was in the Ministry diesel coaches were ordered. They have since arrived and have established that they can attract back to the suburban railway service a considerable proportion of those who hitherto—although it might have suited them from the point of view of nearness to their habitations—were inclined to avoid carefully travel on such service because of the several reasons to which I have referred. The result of that progressive move is now reflected in the figures although, unfortunately, it has taken four or five years to achieve it in the improved conditions of the revenue from that service.

Perhaps more important is the fact that it is giving service to more people who now appreciate it.

The next subject I wish to discuss is that of war service land settlement and it is one of great interest to me. As is well known, subsequent to the end of repurchased properties—the Government of the time was obliged to cease purchasing those properties when the prices of primary products rose to high levels and as a consequence the price of land was enhanced—an idea was set on foot to initiate the project development scheme. In other words it meant the development of large areas of virgin land, in suitable portions of the State, for the purpose of making a great number of farms thereon and accommodating some hundreds of applicants who were still unsatisfied.

The greater number of these projects were started in the area I represent. We have there the Frankland River development, Rocky Gully, Narrikup, South Stirlings, Jerramungup and Corackerup and now the projected area near what is known as the Gairdner River, in the vicinity of Bremer Bay. Upon those areas there are already a couple of hundred settlers and I should say that when the projected development is completed, there will be provision for a further similar number. Only a few miles away, just outside the boundary of the electorate I represent, is the Mt. Many Peaks project upon which there is a considerable number of settlers.

The great majority of the people in these areas seem to me—and I have made the acquaintance of the greater number of them—to be first class people, capable, given reasonable circumstances, of making a success of the properties upon which they are now resident. I do not suppose, if one hunted for them, one would find more than a small percentage who would not be able to do so because they are not fitted for the work and conditions; they would be only a small minority. But no matter how reasonably well developed the properties may be, and how capable the individuals may be, their position cannot be compared—it has not the slightest resemblance—to the position of those whom fortune favoured by their being selected in the earlier stages of the scheme and who were placed upon properties which, as it were, had stood the test of time and whose productive capacity was completely known.

As a consequence, those settlers found themselves in comparatively favoured circumstances. They went on the land in 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1952 and had the benefit, in many cases, of the period when the prices of primary products, particularly wool and wheat, were at their maximum. They were in the position of being in areas which, to a large extent, had been fully developed and were able to step into production in a substantial way in comparatively quick time.

Those settlers did not have the problems of regrowth or the many others that faced the settlers of Mt. Many Peaks and Rocky Gully for example. As I said just now, their properties had been occupied by other people—the great portions of them had, anyway—and those farms had stood the test of time. On the other hand, the settlers in the new project areas have faced a very different state of affairs. Quite apart from the fact that their farms have been hewed out of virgin bush, and in some places pretty heavy bush, they took possession at a time when the prices of primary products had fallen and when the cost of production had risen to some degree.

Because of the development from the virgin state many of those settlers have not been able to achieve maximum production even during the period in which the properties have been occupied. So their situation will not be nearly so satisfactory. What is more there is no lack of evidence, in my opinion, that the cost of clearing and development has been so high—mainly, I take it, because of increase in costs in every direction, which has faced all sections of the community as well as the Government—that the ultimate cost of the properties, particularly in comparison with their productive capacity, will be out of all reason unless something is done rapidly to put it right, and some of them will be placed in a most unenviable position.

They have not had the benefit of high prices, the bright years, that a great number of others have had. They have had to face up to a period of falling prices and increases in costs and many of them, with all the goodwill and the best intentions in the world, and with the best efforts—because as I said, I believe the great bulk of them are good men and hard triers—will feel a little doubtful as to what is to happen to them. Conditions are fairly hard in those areas. The Rocky Gully townsite is 45 miles west of Mt. Barker and about 60 miles east of Manjimup. Until recently there has been virtually no telephonic communication, except at the central post office. Today very many still have no telephone communication, and they radiate out 10 miles from the centre which I have described, which is the Rocky Gully townsite.

I would say even more isolated conditions apply at the South Stirlings where a limited number of settlers—who in my view are first-class people—are about 45 miles east of Mt. Barker in country, which until a few years ago, or a year or two ago, was virtually uninhabited except by black cockatoos, and a few wild dogs, and other sundries of that nature. It is true that tremendous amounts have been spent over a period of years, since this developmental work has been going on, by the Main Roads Department in the provision

of access roads to the various properties as they were designed for allotment, and by way of improvements to the roads that lead to the centre of the settlement.

The ordinary amenities which any reasonably-sized town expects are almost entirely lacking, notwithstanding considerable effort, not only by local people, but also by others interested in their welfare, such as myself, to improve conditions. Therefore I am only pointing these things out to show that there is nothing intrinsic about the surroundings which would want to make them stay there. It is only going to be a certainty, if that certainty can be developed, that they ultimately will have prosperous properties which are going to ensure that all the settlers will remain. One of their problems, as I ascertain it, is that they do not know what their ultimate obligation is going to be. No final determination of the cost of developing their properties has been made and they wonder what will be the net result when it is made.

I must say that I feel their doubts and apprehensions should be removed at the earliest possible date by having the determinations made. I gather that it is the intention, when these determinations are made, that they should be made by departmental officers. I have formed the opinion in recent times that that will not be a satisfactory way of setting about it. I really do not see how departmental officers can assess and deal with the values and productive capacity of properties situated in areas where the production is quite dissimilar; where conditions are by no means similar and where, above all, these departmental officers have been entrusted, at least to some extent, with the development of the property and expenditure of the money; and whose natural inclination, I can only assume, would be to have as little as is humanly possible noted down as likely to need writing off.

The Minister for Lands: I do not agree with that view at all.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The Minister is entitled to his point of view, and likewise I am entitled to mine. And I do not think it is fair to anybody, either to the settlers or to the departmental officers themselves, that in the final analysis they should be solely entrusted with this work. When he was chairman of a select committee on this subject in 1952, I think the hon. gentleman himself suggested, among other recommendations, if my memory serves me right, that there might be an appeal board. I think that an appeal board would serve very well in these cases.

The Minister for Lands: There are two appeal boards in existence now.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: What is their constitution; who are they constituted of?

The Minister for Lands: One of them is responsible for hearing cases that have a Commonwealth flavour.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Are they all departmental officers?

The Minister for Lands: No. This one has a magistrate as chairman and there is a departmental officer for the department's views on the one hand, and a person selected from a panel of names from the R.S.L. on the other.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I was going to say that what is most needed in my opinion on it is one person who comes from, and is accustomed to, farming in similar districts; preferably one who has made a success of it. That is the type of man who is best qualified to know what the productive capacity and economic ability of a property is; and who could view the property in question and form a very expert opinion based on years of experience in similar classes of country.

We are not lacking such people. I could suggest half a dozen names now, if I wanted to, of men who are not only eligible and have the qualifications I have just mentioned, but who would be extremely honourable and who would in no circumstances be led astray by bias or sympathy that was not supported by fact. I commend that idea to the Minister. It seems to me that it would be better if the first determination were made with the assistance of such a person because I think it would probably do away with the necessity for appeal.

If one goes into this country and sees the conditions and the various problems there, one would be convinced that it is not a job for a resident magistrate. In my opinion, it is not a question of evidence. Good gracious me! One might find a first-rate settler so far as farming operations are concerned who would be in extreme difficulty in putting up his case to a board of that nature, supervised by a magistrate. Members would know folk among their own friends who would be quite incapable, no matter how good they were in their particular occupation, of putting up a case of that nature.

It seems to me that the use of a magistrate for the determination of such questions is undesirable, because I suggest it would not be so much a question of assessing the weight of evidence, as it would be of observing and determining from practical experience the conditions and capacities of the property in question. Accordingly, I ask the Minister to consider making some such change as that as quickly as possible, with the idea of getting on and bringing to a conclusion in every possible case—and as soon as possible—the amount of the final determination of these values. Let us know just what the proposition for each of these properties is.

I know one thing that has troubled them to a degree, and which has hampered their activity is that they have a feeling that if they do any work which will effect improvements to the property, the chances

are these improvements, which they effect with their own work and at their own expense, will be charged up in the total to form a part of the liability on which their payments are assessed.

The Minister for Lands: They have been told over and over again at meetings I have attended that that is not so; that the amount of work is credited to them.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I know that, but it is extremely difficult in some cases to determine just what they have done. The quicker these things are fixed up and finalised, the less that problem will arise.

The Minister for Lands: They are being accounted for week after week now.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: It is a pretty slow business.

The Minister for Lands: That may be so, but a certain amount of work has to be done.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I think it can be stepped up considerably.

The Minister for Lands: How would you do it?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: By getting busy on it.

The Minister for Lands: They are busy on it every day, and I ask you how you would do it?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I would appoint more assessors to do it.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot make assessments on a farm until a certain amount of work is completed.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: In many cases the department has considered that the work is complete and they have not had their final determination.

The Minister for Lands: It is being attended to.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I suggest it should be stepped up, and I think it could be, because there is nothing worse for the human mind than a period of uncertainty. There is a great deal of uncertainty being experienced by a number of these people.

The Minister for Lands: It is not as if they are paying final commitments.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: However, I propose to leave the matter at that; I have said all I desire to say on that subject for the time being.

There are one or two other matters to which I wish to make reference. I would like now to comment on the proposals for the adjustment of metropolitan local government boundaries. As one who has taken some interest in local government over a long period of years—I did have the responsibility of being in charge of the department for a time—I am entirely unable to understand the attitude of the present Minister for Local Government towards these proposals for amalgamation.

Hon. D. Brand: I should think that would go for a great many.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Some of these proposals are, in my opinion, quite unnecessary. I certainly do not think that the protests of the people at Fremantle should have been treated as cavalierly as they have been.

The Minister for Works: The people at Fremantle do not oppose it. They are happy about it.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Are not Fremantle and East Fremantle and North Fremantle parts of Fremantle, and therefore are not the residents of those areas residents of Fremantle? Or is the Minister going to split straws?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They are not too pleased about it anyway.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: No, of course not! That is what I was trying to say.

The Minister for Works: The people of Fremantle are quite pleased about it. That is the difficulty.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Well, I suppose that East Perth is not in Perth.

The Minister for Works: Face up to it as it is. This is a proposal to make the people of East Fremantle and North Fremantle go in with the people of Fremantle, and the people of Fremantle are happy about it.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Very well, we will split straws for the Minister. East Fremantle and North Fremantle do not seem too happy about it, and one at least of those authorities held a referendum, if not both.

The Minister for Works: That is perfectly true.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The people, at that referendum, decided they did not want the amalgamation, but the Minister turned them down and said he was going ahead with it. Then, later on, he said he would put it off until next July. If he was so determined to go ahead with the amalgamation, ignoring—or rejecting, we will say—the petitioners under the referendum, why did he not proceed with it on the 1st November which was the date suggested? Why postpone it till next July?

The Minister for Works: There are administrative difficulties.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: As I understand it, there will be administrative difficulties next July.

The Minister for Works: There will be more time to resolve them. I understand that the difficulties could not have been resolved by November.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am glad to hear that, because I could not make out why the postponement should have taken place. In any event, I do not think the people who have protested against this proposed amalgamation should be made to have it. I could understand it if a local authority had virtually no plant, practically no money, and little or no claim to existence.

Then, of course, a determination would have to be made to put it in some place where it would get requisite attention. But these local authorities that have been ticked off, or who are presumed to be about to be, are not in that position at all.

The Claremont Municipality, which obviously does not want this amalgamation with the Nedlands Road Board, and which is apparently going to have a vote on the question before long, is a substantial local authority. It has the merit of antiquity, amongst other things, and a very substantial revenue, as has the Nedlands Road Board. It is not a tin-pot organisation with £2,000 or £3,000 a year, but more like £70,000.

Honestly, I do not know what good purpose will be served by the amalgamation of these local authorities. On the one hand, a substantial body, which controls part of the area proposed to be amalgamated, decides it does not want that at all, and has to be coerced. On the other side, one of the local authorities announces that it does not want an amalgamation; and I believe, from what I can gather, that if its ratepayers are consulted, they will agree by about six to one, that they do not want an amalgamation either. But if the Minister has his way, these authorities will be compelled to amalgamate.

Hon. D. Brand: Is this a step towards a greater Perth?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: And what would be achieved by that?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We will get into a condition like Queensland.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: We will so. I do not think there has been anything detrimental to local government in the areas to which I have referred. It seems to me that the affairs of both the Claremont and Nedlands authorities have been reasonably well handled. So far as I can see, there is not going to be any saving in administrative costs. The net result, so far as I can discover, is that the staffs of both local authorities will be absorbed into the joint authority, and the only thing that will happen is that there will be one local authority, presumably with a mayor, instead of two local authorities, one without a Mayor.

Mr. Court: The administrative cost will be higher.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I was careful in saying that there will not be any saving. I have not gone into the matter sufficiently to be able to say that the costs will be increased, but I have gathered that there cannot be any saving.

Mr. Brady: The man who went into the matter said that there will be a lot of saving.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I think that he is wrong, much as I respect that gentleman, Mr. White, whom I know very well.

Mr. Brady: He is a very good man.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Exactly; but even good men can make mistakes, and I fear that he has made one in this instance. But, above all, I do hope that if the rate-payers of Claremont determine by referendum that they do not want this proposition, the Minister will quickly tell them that he is prepared to listen to them; because, as I have said, it is not a question of amalgamating two tin-pot local authorities not worthy of the name but of amalgamating what in many countries would be classed as two cities. That is about all I wish to say on that subject. Finally, I would like to have a word or two about the metropolitan regional plan.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member will have to be fairly brief, because his time has almost expired.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Professor Stephenson was invited to Western Australia, I think, by my colleague on my left, after the Government of the day had done its best to pass legislation for the creation of a metropolitan planning authority which it realised is going to be an essential and which it thought would be able to attend to the metropolitan planning, leaving the existing Town Planning Board to deal with some of the problems that might arise in the other 950,000 square miles of Western Australia. Parliament did not see fit to pass that legislation and, in consequence, some other alternative had to be found in order to make a start on what was clearly becoming a pressing problem. So, after much inquiry, Professor Stephenson was invited to our shores. I think that Professor Stephenson and his offside—Mr. Hepburn, now the local Town Planning Commissioner—are to be complimented on the very searching and far-reaching inquiries made and, generally speaking, on the results of the report submitted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's time has expired.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move—

That the hon. member's time be extended.

Motion put and passed.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not going to venture, as I did in another place, to say anything concerning Professor Stephenson's forecast about the possible future subdivision of the population of Western Australia. I will leave that to another time, merely saying in passing that, if that prophecy is realised, in my view it will be catastrophic. But undoubtedly the regional plan put up is going to face us with a very great number of problems. One is going to be the very considerable expenditure of money involved, and that will add to the difficulties of Governments for many years. In the main, however, I think we will have to face up to carrying out these proposals.

Naturally, I am quite pleased that the Government saw fit to appoint a three-part committee representing the Government, the Opposition and the local authorities to consider the implications of this plan and to make such recommendations or suggestions as it thought fit. I understand it has had its first meeting and agreed to accept the plan in principle; but nobody has decided, as I understand the position, what is the first thing that ought to be done or when it should be done. Those are matters that have to be dealt with in the future.

But one thing is very apparent to me, and that is that in the carrying out of the plan there will have to be a good deal of resumption. Quite apart from the fact that that resumption will be costly, it is going to disturb a great number of people. I shall not join in any controversy with the Minister for Housing as to what has taken place up to yesterday afternoon in regard to resumptions. That can be the subject of argument at another time if necessary. But there is going to be a lot of resumption if this plan is to be carried out; and this is where I believe we will have to amend our Public Works Act, in order to arrive at some other method of resuming land and compensating the owners—some method that will not be likely to raise friction and unpleasantness with the persons concerned.

The Minister for Works: Amendments to the Act are at present under consideration.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am delighted to hear it. In the past the resumption of land was fairly uncommon. As the years have gone by, because of the demands for improvements of one kind and another and, I suppose, too, because of the surprises we have got in some of our development, we have been induced more and more to resume land for all sorts of public works. I am very glad to hear that the matter is under consideration, because I do think the present law requires alteration to bring it into line with what one might almost call modern thought on this subject. I think that modern thought does contend that a little more consideration, where practicable, should be given to the owner of resumed land, and that more prompt methods of settlement should be devised.

It is impossible, I agree, in a progressive area such as Western Australia, where planning was non-existent in the very early stages of development, to say that we will have no more resumptions; it just could not work. But I think that if we got the matter down to a more co-operative level rather than the only one possible under the existing legislation, in face of the increasing demands we should be doing a very good job.

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

House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.