

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 16th August, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOTELS, DERBY.

Accommodation Requirements.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Government aware of the position regarding accommodation at Derby since the Port Hotel was destroyed by fire?

(2) In view of the fact that the licence for a temporary bar erected on the site of the Port Hotel expires in September, and that accommodation at the only other hotel is taxed beyond reasonable limits for both comfort and health, and as no finance is forthcoming from private enterprise to rebuild the Port Hotel, will the Government consider building a State hotel at Derby?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Negotiations with private enterprise regarding the Port Hotel are continuing. While these are in progress, no consideration can be given to the question of a State hotel. The continuance of the temporary licence will be decided by the magistrate should an application for continuance be made to the court. Materials for the extension of the other hotel are on the site and work is expected to commence soon.

CHAMBERLAIN INDUSTRIES PTY. LTD.

Tractors and Agricultural Machinery.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What types of—

(a) tractors and their relevant horsepower;

(b) agricultural machinery;

are being manufactured by Chamberlain Industries?

(2) What is the respective selling price of each?

(3) What is the selling price of other makes of tractors and machinery of comparable types?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) (i) Type 70DA diesel of 70 draw-bar horsepower Australian made but fitted with a General Motors engine.

(ii) 55DA diesel of 52 draw-bar horsepower, Australian made throughout.

(iii) 55KA kerosene tractor of 50 draw-bar horsepower, Australian made throughout.

Spare parts are also made for tractors already sold but no longer manufactured.

(b) (i) 20 tyne scarifier.

(ii) 24 tyne scarifier.

(iii) 14 disc plow.

(iv) 18 disc plow.

(v) 10 tyne stumpjump chisel plow.

(vi) 18 seed box.

(vii) 14 seed box.

(2) (a) (i) £2,840.

(ii) £2,265.

(iii) £1,755.

(b) (i) £365.

(ii) £395.

(iii) £580..

(iv) £635.

(v) £340.

(vi) £340.

(vii) £315.

(3) (a) (i) There is no make comparable to the 70DA tractor.

(ii) Case 500. 58 draw-bar horsepower £2,400.

International super WD9. 58 draw-bar horsepower £2,445.

Massey 55D. 54 draw-bar horsepower £2,210.

Oliver Super 99. 55 draw-bar horsepower £2,465.

John Deere R. 45 draw-bar horsepower £2,385.

(iii) Case LA. 46 draw-bar horsepower £1,728.

Massey 55K. 49 draw-bar horsepower £1,795.

Oliver 90. 44 draw-bar horsepower £1,875.

Twin City G.T.B. 48 draw-bar horsepower £1,925.

(b) (i) There is no equivalent make comparable to the 20 tyne Chamberlain scarifier.

(ii) Horwood Bagshaw 25 tyne £426.

(iii) and (iv) 8 single disc Wiles £820.

(v) Connor Shea 9 tyne plough £333.

(vi) and (vii) There are no comparable machines to the Chamberlain seed boxes.

BUILDING CONTRACTS.*(a) Deferred Payment System.*

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. J. McI. Thomson) asked the Chief Secretary:

With reference to the reply given by the Minister to my question on the 10th August that country building contractors had not been given an opportunity to tender for deferred payment contracts, can the Minister advise the House why these contractors have not been given this opportunity?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

When the Government was obliged to have school buildings erected under the deferred payment system, it was not intended to continue with this arrangement. However, the continued shortage of loan funds makes it necessary to consider further building under the deferred payment system, for which (other than monocrete construction) public tenders will be invited from builders willing and financially able to carry out work on this basis.

(b) Interest Payable under Deferred System.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. J. McI. Thomson) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What is the rate of interest paid on deferred payment contracts?

(2) What was the amount by way of interest paid to the three contracting firms under the deferred payment system last financial year?

(2) What is the estimated amount of interest that will be paid to the two contracting firms this financial year?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Five per cent.

(2) £1,652.

(3) £840.

EDUCATION.*Wanneroo School, Conditions.*

Hon. N. E. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Minister aware—

(a) That a copy of a report by an officer of the Public Health Department submitted to the Wanneroo Road Board was forwarded to the Education Department on the 26th July, this year;

(b) that the report revealed very unsatisfactory general conditions at the Wanneroo school?

(2) Has any action been taken by the Education Department in relation to the report?

(3) Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House the relevant file dealing with conditions at the Wanneroo school?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(2) Yes. The Public Works Department has been asked to carry out necessary repairs.

(3) No; but if the hon. member calls on the Director of Education, he may peruse the file.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Third Day.*

Debate resumed from the 11th August.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [4.48]: Before dealing with the Address-in-reply, Mr. President, I would like to join with Mr. Simpson in congratulating you, Sir, and the House Committee, on the excellent manner in which this Legislative Council Chamber has been renovated or rejuvenated. What has been done makes the work of members much easier; and here I refer particularly to the lighting system, which previously was very poor. The general appearance of this Chamber now is such as to give it an air of business and will help us to conduct our business as it should be conducted.

I am pleased that the Government saw fit, on opening day, to introduce a Bill dealing with cemeteries, and I hope that we will be able to bury in the cemetery some of the Bills which we have been advised are to be brought before the House, and so put them in a place from which they cannot be resurrected.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Which ones?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Quite a few, because in my opinion there is no necessity and no desire for them. The Government, in the Governor's Speech, saw fit to refer to the wheat question in only about two lines. The reference was as follows:—

There has been a satisfactory sale for primary products with the exception of wheat.

That was all that was said. Even in that short reference, the Government did not have its facts correct, because the statistical report on the export of commodities for June showed that there was an average decline of 12 per cent. in all our exports. Wool was down 18 per cent.; wheat, 14 per cent.; butter, 4 per cent.; sugar, 9 per cent.; dried fruits, 3 per cent.; hides, 37 per cent.; and gold, 1 per cent. Only three commodities showed a rise—namely: metals, 17 per cent.; meat, 2 per cent.; and tallow, 7 per cent. It seems to me that, with a State such as ours, a little more could have been mentioned, in His Excellency's Speech, of primary production matters. It has been said, and it will bear repeating, that this State, and Australia as a whole, live on primary industry. Therefore, I would have been pleased to see this industry referred to a little more extensively in the Speech.

I know that the economic situation is a controversial subject which many people are discussing; but, up to date, no one seems to have found the answer to the problem. It would appear that we are endeavouring to live on the income we were receiving in 1950-51—which, at that time, was about £1,000,000,000—instead of living on today's income, which is less than half of that amount. As a result, things just do not work out. I will give a few figures on wool alone to prove my argument. In 1950-51, income from our wool exports was £633,000,000. In 1954-55, it was down to £353,000,000, and yet our costs have gone up and up and up and are still rising. So I repeat, we are endeavouring to live on our 1950-51 income instead of on today's income and that is half the trouble with our economic situation.

Next I will mention the Western Australian export figures. In 1950-51, we received £56,000,000 from the wool we exported; but in 1954-55, the figure had dropped to £35,000,000. A decrease of £21,000,000 is a great deal of money in anybody's language, and this means that there is £21,000,000 less in circulation. In 1953-54, we received an income of £41,000,000 for our wool exports and, as I have said, the amount received in 1954-55 was £35,000,000; that is, a decrease of £6,000,000 alone on the sale of wool without taking into consideration any other primary products. So it is no wonder that our economy is getting out of balance; and we are trying to live on past figures instead of present figures.

Even the building up of our secondary industries, which most Governments have been trying to sponsor, has not improved the position. In fact, it has deteriorated, for this reason: The increase in secondary production in Australia has brought about a greater demand for imports, but our exports have not increased accordingly. Therefore, the greater our secondary industries become, the greater become our imports from overseas. The reason for this, of course, is that to increase our production of manufactured goods, we must import more. As a result the primary producer has to pay for the difference between imports and exports.

In 1933, the manufacturing industries were responsible for employing something like 20 per cent of the total number of employees in Australia; and the primary industries, 24 per cent. Today, secondary industry employs about 30 per cent. of all workers, and primary industry has shown a decline in regard to employment, because the figure is now 15 per cent. Therefore the burden of carrying the economy of this country is being placed on fewer and fewer as the years go by. Only time will tell whether these chosen few will be able to continue to shoulder that burden. Unless our exports both from secondary industry and primary industry are increased,

I am afraid our unfavourable trade balance must continue. I repeat that there is a marked decline in the price for wool this year. Although the first wool sale has not been held, private buyers are offering at least 10 per cent less than they were this time last year. If that trend continues, we must again look forward to decreased spending power both in Western Australia and Australia as a whole.

What is more, our costs are still rising. The increase in margins, and the rise in the basic wage only last week can do nothing else but increase our costs of production, and the only logical conclusion is that the home consumer will have to pay exorbitant prices for commodities if our export trade is to continue. It is found that we cannot export today at a price which will enable us to build up credit with which we can help this country along.

Earlier in my speech, I mentioned that the Government had not made much reference to wheat, and likewise I do not intend to say very much on that subject either. I will leave that question to Mr. Diver. Nevertheless, I have noticed that some people are anxious to give away the wheat which belongs to the wheat producer. Only recently a witness, giving evidence before the Royal Commission on eggs, said that the farmer should sell his wheat cheaply to the poultry producers; and even Mr. Barker made a similar statement the other evening. It would be very nice to give someone else's money away, because that is what it amounts to. It is very easy to say, "We will give his money away," but I have not heard anybody say that he will take a reduction in wages to counteract such a move. Therefore, I do not think people should put forward such suggestions unless they are prepared to contribute a similar amount.

The wheat problem is not an easy one to solve and cannot be overcome in five minutes. Farmers probably need 12 to 18 months to enter into wheat production. Many of them have commitments to banks and other financial institutions, and they cannot reduce their wheat acreage at short notice. What is more, even if Western Australia decided to reduce its wheat quota, it would not make one iota of difference on the world's wheat market, because our exportable surplus represents less than one per cent. of the world's wheat supply. So people who are advocating that Western Australian wheatgrowers should reduce their acreages are trying to put the growers of this State out on a limb, and I shall fight that to the utmost.

If reduction of acreage is to be on any basis at all, it must be Commonwealth-wide and not applicable only to Western Australia. Otherwise, we shall find that the grower of wheat in other States will receive a first advance, and the wheat will be stored for him either by the Government or some community storage;

while the wheatgrower here, under some of the schemes propounded in Western Australia, will receive no first payment at all. Furthermore, he would be forced to build a silo on his farm to store the wheat. That would be a most uneconomical method, and one which I hope will not see the light of day in this State. It is much easier for the Government to control and store wheat in large quantities than it is for an individual to store it in small quantities.

In answer to those people who seem so anxious to give the wheatgrowers' product away, I make them an offer on behalf of the wheatgrowers of the State. We are prepared to reduce the price of wheat by 20 per cent. if every other producer in the community will reduce the cost of his product by 20 per cent., and every wage-earner will have his wages reduced by the same amount. If that happened then I am sure the wheatgrowers of this State would be able to reduce the price of their product.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: That will have to come about sooner or later.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If the reduction is not made voluntarily, it will be forced on us very shortly, and we will return to the same state of affairs as existed in 1931 when Sir Otto Niemeyer made a recommendation to the Federal Government that a compulsory cut be made, which was subsequently done. It appears to me that we will have to accept a reduction so as to enable exporters to compete on the world markets, because at present the products of this country are costed right out of any chance of gaining a foothold on those markets. I can give an illustration.

A shipload of wheat left Geraldton for Japan. The Japanese bought this for £13,000 less than the price charged to local flour mills. The wheat was taken to Japan, manufactured into flour by machinery bought from America on a long-term programme of repayment, manufactured by labour on a basic wage of £6 a week compared with £13 paid in the flour mills here, and sold on the world market at £7 10s. per ton less than the price at which we can produce flour. That is the sort of competition we are up against. We simply cannot compete against it. If we want to maintain this high standard of living, then everybody must be prepared to pay for it, and that can be done only by paying much higher internal costs so that we can discount our exportable products in order to compete on the world markets.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you think the Australian Wheat Board was wise in not selling wheat on long-term credit?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It did not decline.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It has up to date.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is not the case. All the board asked for was some guarantee against giving away the product of the wheatgrowers. It cannot give the wheat away because it belongs to the farmers. When the board sells wheat, it must make sure that the credit is good.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Do you not think it is better to sell the wheat a little cheaper than to store it?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is a very big point. We now come to the stage where we should ask workers, "Would it not be better to work for £5 a week than to be unemployed?" The answer might be, "Yes". In that event there would be some justification for the board to reduce the price. The best solution that occurs to me would be to sell all our barley and oats overseas where there is already a market, and to replace the oats and barley thus sold with wheat for stock-feed purposes at a slightly lower figure than the existing price.

In regard to the talk about weevils, they do not do as much damage as most people seem to think. We might see a heap of wheat with many weevils on the outside and think considerable damage was done. In reality the percentage of damage done by weevils in Western Australia is very small. If the C.B.H. does its job, and I believe it does, the damage done by weevil infestation will be negligible. With wheat one never knows what will happen next. The position could change overnight. Our exportable surplus is so small that it takes only one decent-sized order to dispose of it. If we were to reduce the acreage of wheat we would not be able to fulfil orders which might come in subsequently, and thus our markets would be lost. With a commodity like wheat we must take a risk. Not only would it be hard to find markets again once they had been lost, but it must be remembered that wheat affects the economy of Australia more than any other commodity does.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What about raising the quality of the wheat grown?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It has already been proved that raising the standard of wheat will not increase sales. We sell wheat on an f.a.q. basis, and the buyers purchase the wheat on that basis. There is no ready sale for any other type of wheat in Australia at present. Should such an occasion arise and should there be a ready market for a higher quality wheat, then the wheatgrowers of this country would be prepared to supply the market. It is of no use trying to grow something for which nothing extra will be received, because that is what it amounts to. To grow the high protein wheat which some people are advocating, we will have to reduce the average yield, and therefore reduce the

return. That is not the answer at present; and until such time as there is a demand overseas for that type of wheat, we should carry on as we are doing.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I was only asking that in a constructive sense.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I admit there is room for improvement in some types of wheat grown. But that again is difficult. If I were to grow one type of wheat in the Geraldton area it might be assessed at a very high protein content in one year; but the following year, with the same type of wheat, a lower protein content might result. The same applies throughout the State. According to the district, the variation in one type of wheat grown is often very great. Even with those types of wheat advocated by the department, high protein content has resulted only in certain areas. It is very difficult to do anything about it.

While on the subject of agriculture, I would again like to make an appeal to the Government for some policy of giving assistance to farmers. By that I do not mean giving something for nothing. Many farmers who started on light lands are finding themselves in difficulty today. Some method should be evolved to give financial aid to enable them to carry on, particularly to those working light country. This applies to all the area west of the Midland line, and from Minnewa to Mullewa. The terrific cost to an individual starting today makes it almost impossible for him to fence the land and find water in the first year. Yet they are the main essentials, because farmers on light land cannot carry on by growing cereals alone. They must have finance for fencing and for finding water. In my opinion these are the two first essentials; and that is where the Government can come into the picture by making available some money on a long-term repayment policy to enable the settlers in their first year to make the improvements referred to, so that they can carry stock. The settlers could find the rest of the money required.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We have the same obstacle at Esperance.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I mention that this applies in my area because I know the position there. I would also like to see more roads being built by the Main Roads Department in those areas. Before any soldier settlers take up blocks, roads are built throughout the area concerned; but when civilian settlers take up blocks, they have to battle over some of the roughest roads imaginable, and some of these settlers have done that for years. If it is good enough to build roads for one type of settler, then it is good enough to build them for another type.

It is too much to ask civilian settlers to pioneer farming areas, which will be to the benefit of this State, under these hard

conditions. It is too much to expect them to battle their way over rough, sandy roads. The maintenance on their trucks is terrific. I consider they are entitled to the same treatment as soldier land settlers, and that is, to have the roads leading to their farms built and maintained in good order so that they can get access to their properties and transport the products therefrom. I trust that the Government will evolve some policy to provide the two needs I mentioned; firstly, finance for fencing and water; and, secondly, roads built by the Main Roads Department.

On the subject of agriculture, I must take the "Daily News" to task. I have a cutting from that paper, dated the 18th May, 1955. At that time, every farmer in Western Australia was hoping for rain, and had been for weeks previously, yet we found this headline, "Depressing News. Rain tomorrow." If that is all this newspaper can do to get a headline for the "city slickers," instead of worrying about the condition of the State, it is doing a very poor job. It can do a lot better. That type of journalism annoys me. As most people know, at that time, after the early rains following a very dry spell, every farmer was waiting for rain to enable his cropping to go ahead. When it came there appeared this headline of "Depressing News", because somebody living in the city, and wanting to go to a football match complained of rain. Journalism is getting very low when it has to go to such lengths to create headlines.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You must not interfere with the town settlers' sport!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: In this State many reserves are held by the Lands Department which were set aside in days gone by for certain purposes. Those purposes are no longer necessary, and the holding of those reserves is unwarranted. It is about time that the Lands and Surveys Department carried out a complete overhaul of all the reserves in Western Australia. I know that would be a big task, particularly when the shortage of trained men, such as surveyors, is very acute. But I think it is time the department made a start on reassessing all the reserves. I know it would still be necessary to retain a large number of them, but many could be leased—there is no need to sell them—and our agricultural industry thus furthered. I give that suggestion to the Government also.

Another subject I want to discuss—and I am sorry the Minister for the North-West is not present—is the State Shipping Service as it affects Geraldton. The Geraldton flour mill has almost reached the end of its tether. That could be headlined in the Press as "depressing news" because to find one of our industries, in an outport, declining so that it is almost going out of existence, is depressing indeed.

Whilst this state of affairs is not entirely the fault of the State Shipping Service, much of it is. Had the State Shipping Service given a service to Geraldton, then the trade which the Geraldton mill had with the North-West towns would have been sufficient for it to retain its identity and carry on the manufacture of flour. This letter is typical of many that I have received—

Referring to your letter of the 13th April. As it is some time until the next ship from Geraldton, we find it necessary to obtain our requirements from Fremantle. Therefore, would you please cancel this order.

This has been going on for years. I do not blame the present Government any more than I blame previous Governments, but it is time something was done to give a regular shipping service to the port of Geraldton, to enable the industries there to carry on as they should. These letters have been coming to me regularly since I have been a member. I pass them on to the State Shipping Service, but I do not get anywhere.

The Chief Secretary: They will not be coming much longer.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I hope not. But the trouble is that it will be too late; the mill will be gone. Every time a State ship bypasses Geraldton, another order from the North is cancelled.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: How many tons per trip would be carried?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think that comes into it. The State Shipping Service loses £500,000 a year, and another £100,000 would not hurt. By doing what I request, the Government would be keeping the outports alive rather than closing them down.

I do not think the cost comes into the picture. At present I could not give a figure, but over the years the tonnage has been considerable. The Geraldton flour mill had customers throughout the North. We should be prepared to spend money to retain our outports so that they can function as they should.

Another crying need in Geraldton is a residence for our magistrate. I know the Government has given some consideration to this matter; but unfortunately it did not go on with the purchase of a property which was offered—I understand this is correct—because it said the price was too high. A private individual has bought it since. It would have made an ideal residency. At the present time the magistrate is in a Commonwealth-State rental home, but I do not think it is good enough for a magistrate. It is time we built him a home which we could call the Geraldton residency. We had one there in the past, and surely the State is interested enough to see

there will be one in the future! I ask the Government to give consideration to this matter.

Dealing with our regional hospital, the reply I received to a question I asked the Chief Secretary the other night was almost the same as the one I got in 1950. It looks as though no forward move has been made to bring us nearer to the building of the regional hospital.

The Chief Secretary: It has not deteriorated then.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No, but I can vividly remember the promise given not long ago that the hospital would be started during the period of this Government, and it does not look as though that promise will be fulfilled.

The Chief Secretary: It may be.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Well, good luck to the Minister if it is; but from the answers given it does not seem possible. If the Government is not going to build the hospital, then let it be honest and say so. We have been playing around with this for a long time; and every time we ask about it, we are told the plans are still in the experimental stage. We are not getting anywhere. The money spent on renovations to the old hospital is proof enough that there is no intention to build a new one; but all the alterations in the world will not make it a hospital, and the money put into it is just being wasted to a certain extent.

Hon. J. Murray: That does not apply only to Geraldton.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No; it applies to Albany and Bunbury with equal emphasis. When the question came up in 1950, I understand that the member for Bunbury at the time was told that tenders would be called the following year for the erection of the Bunbury hospital. It is probably in the same stage as ours—the drafting stage.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: The same applies to the regional hospital at Albany.

Hon. H. Hearn: A big draft.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member is not in his seat.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Last year the Government was very enamoured of a Bill that it brought forward dealing with the State Housing Act, but despite the fact that the Bill was passed, no one has yet received any financial benefit from it. I am hoping that before many months are out some people will be able to get assistance under that Act. It is also rather disquieting to note that no further State money is being used for workers' homes. The only workers' homes to be built this year are those that had already been promised—unless there is a change of attitude

on the part of the Government. The only others that will be constructed will be built with Commonwealth money. I do not think we should depart from the workers' homes that we have had in the past, and I hope the Government will change its attitude in this respect. Apparently it thinks it has not sufficient money for the purpose but wants it for something else. Housing is just as important as most other things. Mr. Teahan stated that the average rental for a home in Western Australia was £4 a week. That does not give a true story, because the statistics show that 70 per cent. of the houses in Western Australia are let at a rental of £3 and under.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I wonder how the amount of £4 per week compares with the rent of three years ago.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That does not give the story, because 70 per cent. of the houses are let at £3 a week and under.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I would like to get one.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The statistical officer, not I, gives that figure. He has proved it. The other 30 per cent. are over £3, and in that 30 per cent. are a lot of Commonwealth rental homes. I do not know what argument Mr. Teahan is trying to advance, but when we get down to the basic facts, it makes a lot of difference. The position is not as bad as he tried to convey.

I have noticed a few service stations on railway property. I am not attacking the service stations, as I think the companies concerned should have the right to build them when and where they like; but I think it would have been much better had the Railway Department put up some kind of shelter and so made a car-park of those areas, in order to encourage the owners of the cars to go to the stations concerned and catch the train into the city.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But look at the revenue from the service stations.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The department could get revenue from the parking of cars, and by the owners riding in the trains. It would get revenue both ways, and would render a much bigger service if it did something along those lines. The parking problem in Perth comes up for discussion at all times and at all hours of the day. The suggestion I put forward will help to relieve the congestion in the city. The department need not build an expensive type of structure, but merely something that will keep the weather off the cars. It could be floored with bitumen so as to induce the car owners to drive to the station and catch the train to town. I believe the Railway Department has a

lot of ground close enough to the stations for that idea to be carried out. I hope the Minister will take some notice of this suggestion and pass it on to the Minister concerned.

For a good many years I have endeavoured to wake Parliament up to the fact that our food-producing areas within the metropolitan or suburban districts are gradually being whittled away.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Not so gradually.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Unfortunately I cannot find any reference in the regional plan—I admit I have not read the whole report—to any attempt to hold this land for the purpose I have mentioned. It looks as though once again the opportunity will be lost to retain these food-producing areas, because they will eventually be rated out of existence, from a producing point of view, and will become housing or building projects. It is not too late to retain some of them, but not much time is left. Once they go, we will never get them back again. It would be a sin, and detrimental to the State—and particularly the City of Perth—to lose these food-producing areas, and force the production of food out into districts that are not so good for the purpose. If that occurred, it would involve a greater cost in getting the produce to the market. Unfortunately that is the trend. Despite the fact that quite a few people, beside myself, have endeavoured to awaken somebody in a responsible position to what is happening, no one is taking any notice.

Another industry I want to touch on briefly is that of our grape producers. The grape industry is one which cannot insure against rain. Most other industries can insure, so that if rain or hail spoils the crop they have some cover; but the grape producer has none. I suggest that some insurance, such as the war damage insurance which operated during the war, could be introduced to help the settlers, or some fund could be created, so that if they ever suffered the disaster of having their crops spoiled by rain, as has occurred at different periods in the past, they would be compensated to some extent.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They had it this year.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, but they have no redress when they suffer a loss. That setback is a loss to the State also, and therefore I hope the Government will give some consideration to the creation of a fund to help this industry.

Now I intend to castigate the Government because for some time it has been crying about costs and profiteering, and about the fellow who does not play the game.

The Minister for the North-West: A lot of the farmers are crying about it, too.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: What has the Government done?

The Minister for the North-West: What is it trying to do?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Recently, in Geraldton, a Labour-sponsored committee—all its members were supporters of the Government—was set up to inquire into prices. After four weeks, the members of that committee admitted that they were wrong. Yet at no stage during the discussions did they protest about the 35 per cent. increase in railway freights imposed by the Government two years ago, and not once did they protest about water charges. I would like to quote a few of them for the information of members.

The Government said that it would generously reduce the water rate from 3s. to 2s. 6d., and this is what it did: A valuer was sent to Geraldton to revalue properties. One hotel, which is typical of others, was valued in 1954 at £823, and the water rate was 3s. in the £; and the sewerage rate, 1s. 9d. In 1954 the management paid a total of £196 19s. 3d. for water rates; and in 1955 the valuation was increased to £1855. Therefore £350 6s. 3d. was paid, an increase of £153 7s., or £3 a week.

The Minister for the North-West: On a hotel?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes.

The Minister for the North-West: A trading concern.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Government talks about extra charges and the high cost of beer.

Hon. H. Hearn: They had a strike over it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Those prices cannot compare with the increased water rates, which are exorbitant.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: It looks as though the Government is charging too much for water.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Let me quote the case of another hotel, the valuation of which was £1,029 in 1954. The management was paying 3s. in the £ for water rates, and 1s. 9d. for sewerage rates, a total of £244 7s. 9d. But in 1955 it paid £478 12s. 9d. or an increase of £234 5s. Yet this Government talks about increased charges and costs!

Hon. J. D. Teahan: The price of bed and breakfast has gone up 600 per cent.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It has not; it has remained the same. The increase for that hotel was £4 10s. a week. I have many other examples, but I do not intend to growl about the valuations.

The Minister for the North-West: Have any of the hotel managers in Geraldton gone broke?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not talking about their going broke, but about increased costs and charges. The Government has had a good deal to say about them; but does it not think that the examples I have quoted show excessive charges?

The Minister for the North-West: Things have gone up everywhere else.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Even in today's paper there was an article which showed that the Fremantle City Council will pay a further £30,000 a year in water charges. The private person is also paying anything from 40 to 150 per cent. more this year than he did last year.

The Minister for the North-West: That is general.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is a terrific increase.

Hon. J. D. Teahan: Valuations made years ago were not sufficient.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not growling about the valuations. But the Government should have reduced the rate from 3s. to 2s. instead of 2s. 6d. That would have been a fairer method and would have given some satisfaction. Yet this is a Government which is always growling about costs and about someone else making a lot of money. I could quote my own case if necessary, but I do not intend to do so. Mine is typical of many more. So this Government should be the last to growl about increased costs to the general public!

I think I have covered all my points; and I hope the Minister will give some thought to the questions I have raised, and that something will be done to reduce the water rates, particularly where they are excessive. Some of the issues I have raised are worthy of consideration, and I hope they will get the consideration they deserve. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. W. D. Barker, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.