

Mr. Oldfield: Who paid for that? Not the Government!

Mr. O'BRIEN: A good deal of diamond drilling is required in the Murchison area which, as some of the old prospectors now in "Sunset" could tell members, will eventually prove to be as rich an area as the Golden Mile. The member for Maylands asked what assistance the Government had given the industry. It has raised the payment to prospectors from £2 to £4 10s. a week and has also paid practically in full for every crushing put through a State battery.

Mr. Oldfield: Which Government increased the allowance to prospectors?

Mr. O'BRIEN: The present Government and it has also paid them in full for the sands which were held by Governments in past years. A prospector now receives practically the full price per ounce for his gold, instead of perhaps £10 only, and that is of great benefit to him. During my last visit to the Murchison I noticed that acreage irrigation was on the move again. In some districts there has been a good season, with the water courses running and the grass two feet high, but in other areas such as out from Cue there is the acreage irrigation with a good harvest of lucerne and grasses to provide for drier times to come. At Wiluna the work of the late Mr. Damon is progressing steadily and I am sure that district will receive favourable consideration from the Government. Under the previous Government we had what was more or less purely a Mullewa line but the present Government will favour no particular area of the State. Many things are required in the Murchison area—houses, for instance—and I am confident we will get them in our turn. The previous Government promised to advance half the cost—approximately £8,000—of a water supply for Mt. Ida. The present Government will extend all these benefits providing it gets a fair deal from the Grants Commission. I ask members to co-operate with the Government so that all may receive their share and a square deal for the electors they represent.

On motion by Mr. Perkins debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

House adjourned at 8.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 13th August, 1953.

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Sleepers, Removal and Renewal.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Railways:

What was the average cost in the years 1910 and 1938—

- (1) Of each new railway sleeper at point of use in the track?
- (2) Of removing each worn out sleeper and replacing the new sleeper?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) 1910, 1s. 9d.; 1938, 3s. 4d.
- (2) Separate details of the labour cost were not kept but the estimated cost is—1910, 1s.; 1938, 2s. 9d.

(b) As to Premier's Statement at Loan Council.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

(1) In view of his application to the Prime Minister, asking that the Commonwealth Government decide the question whether State rail fares and freights should be increased, has Cabinet agreed to his passing over to the Commonwealth Government the handling of the State railways?

(2) Is it the intention, likewise, to hand over the management of the State Shipping Service to the Commonwealth Government?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) The financial destiny of these services is already very largely in the hand of the Commonwealth Government. The State Government would be prepared to give careful consideration to any reasonable offer made by the Commonwealth Government along the lines suggested by the hon. member.

STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION ACT.

As to Amending Legislation.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Transport:

Is it the intention of the Government to amend the State Transport Co-ordination Act for the purpose of permitting road transport hauliers to operate over distances in excess of the existing 20-mile limit?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member, without notice, asked me this question previously, and I did not appreciate the purport of it. In consequence, I gave an answer that was not really relevant. I have now pleasure in giving him a reply, as follows:

No consideration has been given to any amendment of the nature referred to.

DUST NUISANCE.

As to Phosphatic Rock Pile, North Fremantle.

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

(1) Is it the intention of the Factories and Shops Department to take any action on behalf of the residents of Mosman Park to prevent the dust nuisance arising from the stockpile of phosphatic rock at the Mt. Lyell Works, North Fremantle?

(2) If so, what action is likely to be taken?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The matter is receiving the consideration of the Factories and Shops Department and it is hoped that satisfactory arrangements to alleviate the nuisance will be made in the near future.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

FORESTS.

As to Appointment of Conservator.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Forests:

In view of the fact that Mr. T. N. Stoaate possesses the highest forestry qualifications in Australia, and also that he has served the Forests Department in Western Australia for 30 years, will every consideration be given to his reappointment as Conservator of Forests provided, of course, that he makes the necessary application?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

MEDICAL SERVICES.

As to Reducing Fees.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Prices:

Now that medical costs are largely underwritten by the Government and friendly societies, and therefore bad debts are reduced to a minimum, will he take action to ensure that an appropriate downward move is made in fees for all medical services covered by the various schemes?

The MINISTER replied:

Medical fees are not controlled under the prices legislation in this or any other State.

With the implementation of the Commonwealth Medical Benefits Scheme it is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Department of Health to ensure that fees are kept within reasonable limits.

ROADS.

(a) As to Sealing Carnarvon-Northampton Section.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will he inform the House whether the Government intends to seal a further section of the Carnarvon-Northampton road this financial year?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is in the affirmative, what length will be done and at which end?

(3) When will this work be commenced?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Four miles at the Northampton end; four miles priming preparatory to surfacing at the Carnarvon end.

(3) During 1953-1954.

(b) As to Guildford-rd. Rehabilitation.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) When did work commence on the rehabilitation of Guildford-rd. in accordance with the agreement entered into between the Government departments and the road boards concerned?

(2) How much work has been done to date, and how much money has been spent so far?

(3) When did this work cease?

(4) When is it anticipated that this work will be resumed?

(5) What has been the cause of the delay in the progress of this work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) March, 1953.

(2) Improvements to drainage and bitumen seal between Katanning-st. and Fisher-st., Bayswater and Bassendean Road Boards.

Expenditure on above	£2,401
Expenditure on maintenance	£387
		<hr/> £2,788 <hr/>

(3) May, 1953.

(4) In the coming summer.

(5) The need for extensive drainage investigations both by the Main Roads Department and by the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, and the advent of winter which rendered work on drainage or other reconstruction impossible.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Water Supply, Broome, Derby and Wyndham.

Mr. RHATIGAN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

What action is the Government taking to ensure an adequate supply of water to the residents of the towns of Broome, Derby and Wyndham?

The MINISTER replied:

Broome.—The Government is assisting the Broome Water Board by carrying out reconditioning and improvements on its behalf. Reconditioning of the reticulation system has already been carried out and the sinking of a new bore is well advanced.

Derby.—£3,000 has been made available for the installation of new tanks and stands to improve the supply conditions generally.

Wyndham.—Proposals for assisting the water board in obtaining improved supply conditions are under examination.

STATE FINANCE.

(a) As to Balance Owing to English Contractors.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

What was the balance of moneys owing to English contractors at the 30th June, 1953, of the £3,800,000 which was deferred from the previous financial year?

The TREASURER replied:

£286,000 (Aust.).

(b) As to Amount Deferred.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

What was the total sum of money he was able to arrange while in England to be deferred?

The TREASURER replied:

We had discussions with a number of firms in England on the question of deferring payment if, during the current financial year, the necessity arose. Our view was that it would be better for the State to pay accounts in England when they became due if the financial position of the State would reasonably permit of that being done. If we find during the financial year that we require further postponements or deferments of payments, I have no doubt that in the majority of instances it will not be difficult to make the necessary arrangements with the firms concerned.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Grounding of Wires and Transformers.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has any consideration been given to the grounding of electric wires and transformers in the metropolitan area, similar to the action already taken by the G.P.O. with telephone cables?

(2) If not, will he obtain information on this point from other centres?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) See No. (1).

POLICE.

As to Stations for Wembley and Scarborough.

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Were tenders let for the building of the Police Stations at Wembley and Scarborough?

(2) If so, when is it proposed to commence the buildings?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

EDUCATION.

As to Mt. Lawley School Ground.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is he aware of the deplorable state of the Mt Lawley school ground?

(2) Is it a fact that approval was given some months ago for the provision of a bituminous surface for the play-ground?

(3) Is it also a fact that this work has now been shelved owing to a shortage of funds?

(4) When can it be expected that the necessary funds will be available to carry out this work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. A section of the ground is sand; the rest is bituminised and grass.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) Owing to the loan fund restrictions and the great need for classrooms, funds for extensions of grounds improvements are not likely to be available in this financial year.

HOSPITALS.

(a) As to Interrogation of Parents re Means.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is he aware that detailed interrogation of the financial position of parents of sick children has taken place at the Princess Margaret Children's Hospital before the sick children were admitted?

(2) As this practice causes much distress to parents of sick children, would he request the authorities concerned to refrain from such practices in future?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. This is necessary because patients are treated by medical men in an honorary capacity.

(2) This matter will be given consideration.

(b) As to Charges for Ward Beds.

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What is the minimum daily charge in hospitals of the towns large enough for wards of six beds or over?

(2) What is the minimum daily charge in hospitals of the country towns not large enough for six bed wards?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 24s. per day.

(2) This depends on the size of the ward accommodation available. Prices are—

Single bed ward—£2 per day.

2 bed ward—35s. per day.

3-5 bed ward—30s. per day.

Wards over 5 beds—24s. per day.

TIMBER.

(a) As to Ply and T. and G. Flooring.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Housing:

What are the comparative prices per 100 square feet of the new ply flooring, which his department is contemplating using, and the orthodox T. and G. Flooring?

The MINISTER replied:

The use of this flooring is only in the experimental stage and comparative costs are not yet known.

(b) As to Payment of Royalties.

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Lands:

What steps have been taken to carry out the promise made by the Labour Party in the Albany election last February that timber royalties would be paid from the date of the Royal Commission's findings?

The MINISTER replied:

As stated in reply to a question on the 11th August, the matter is still being considered by the Government.

SWAN RIVER.

As to Building Second Bridge.

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Works:

Can he give some indication when the Town Planning Commissioner's report on the building of another bridge across the river near the city will be completed?

The MINISTER replied:

This matter is being investigated in conjunction with the planning of the metropolitan region, and it will undoubtedly be considered when endeavouring to find a solution to the traffic problem in the city area. It is expected that the regional plan will be completed within the next two years.

BETTING.

(a) As to Minister's Statement re Two-up.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Justice:

Was he correctly reported in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" in the statement that it was a very great injustice that the previous Government had acquiesced in stopping the two-up schools on the Goldfields? Did he intend to imply that the then Minister for Police, which happened to be myself, should have exercised pressure on the Commissioner of Police to ensure that the two-up schools at Kalgoorlie were permitted and thus to allow a breach of the law?

The MINISTER replied:

I was correctly reported. I feel that, as the game has been played since the inception of the Goldfields, it is really an amenity, and I think that the Minister at the time should have given consideration to this point.

(b) As to Repealing Gaming Act.

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Justice:

In view of his opinion regarding the playing of two-up, is it his intention to introduce a Bill to repeal the Gaming Act? If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

There is no intention of that sort so far as I am concerned, but I feel that amenities that have been enjoyed on the Goldfields for the last 50 or 60 years should be permitted to continue.

(c) *As to Legalising Two-up.*

Mr. ACKLAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Justice:

In view of the fact that he has confirmed the report in this morning's paper regarding two-up, is it his intention to introduce a Bill to legalise the playing of two-up throughout Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

It is very evident that some members of this House have not been on the Goldfields. If they had, they would have realised that two-up has been played from the inception. Theoretically it may be illegal, but everybody knew where it was played and this is the first occasion when there has been any interference with the playing of two-up on the Goldfields.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: No; that is not true.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £16,000,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [2.33]: I think most people realise that under our system of constitutional government the Speech which the Governor delivers at the opening of Parliament does not necessarily contain his own views. In effect, it is prepared by the Government of the day and is merely delivered by the Governor as an indication of the views of his responsible Ministers.

The Speech which we have before us in printed form is an extraordinary document. The member for Stirling has already drawn attention to some of its peculiar features and I desire to mention one or two others. If members look at page 4 they will notice that a passing and very general reference was made to the fact that we have had rather too much rain in our agricultural areas. Turning to page 6, we find the Governor's advisers telling us that 300 tons of pearl shell produced last year realised nearly £200,000. Further down we are told that there is a steady expansion in the State's secondary industries, which now employ over 45,000 persons.

Then we are informed that the proceeds from 1,187 whales taken last season were approximately £1,200,000; that the production of crayfish in 1952 reached the record of £8,500,000; how gold production has been getting on; and what drilling operations on the iron and pyrite ore bodies at Koolyanobbing have disclosed. Then coal production is dealt with, and further on we are told about hopes of finding oil in the North-West. But the point that astonishes me is that through-

out the whole document there is no specific mention either of wool or wheat. I hope that is not an indication of the importance that this Government attaches to those two industries because, if it is, it seems to indicate that all sorts of complications are likely to develop in this State.

Mr. Brady: Is there any reference to water supplies?

Mr. PERKINS: I was talking about production. The point is that those two industries at present produce more than 75 per cent. of the export income of this State. I propose to quote a few figures to emphasise how important these industries are to the State's economy. In 1938-39, the immediate pre-war year, the total exports overseas from this State were valued at approximately £22.3 million. Of that, wheat (including flour) and wool produced £6.9 million. At that time the gold-mining industry was a very big earner of overseas credits and was responsible for more than wheat and wool put together. It earned £10.6 million. All of us here know just how important was the gold-mining industry during the depression years of the thirties.

When we come to the year 1950-51, we find that the position has changed somewhat. In overseas credits we earned £108,000,000 and of that wheat and wool were responsible for £88,000,000, leaving only £20,000,000 for other exports, including gold, meat, butter and other smaller items. The latest figures obtainable from the Commonwealth and State statisticians show that the total overseas earnings from exports from Western Australia were £93.2 million, of which wheat and wool found £63.5 million. Those figures indicate the importance of those two industries to the economy of Western Australia.

In order to give members a clear picture of the position of Australia as a whole—because, when all is said and done, these overseas credits are interchangeable to some degree between one State and another—I will mention comparable Commonwealth figures. In 1938-39 the total overseas income of Australia was £135.5 million, of which wheat and wool found £55.9 million. In 1950-51 the figures were £97.6 million and £740.3 million respectively; and in 1951-52 the figures were £667,000,000 and £411.7 million respectively.

I stressed those figures because I believe that Governments in power, in either the Commonwealth or the State spheres, have to pay very careful attention to those industries that are earning our overseas income, if the Australian economy is to be kept on a satisfactory basis and if the prosperity of the Australian people as a whole is to be maintained. I think that has been brought home to our people in recent times. Members will recall that only two years ago there was a rather sharp fall in the price of wool and the Australian export earnings contracted very

sharply, and that produced a minor depression in Australia. Fortunately temporary emergency arrangements were made and the price of wool recovered to a reasonable degree fairly quickly, and the Australian economy recovered its prosperity. That did bring home to members the vital necessity, if all the other industries in Australia which at present are paying good wages and providing good conditions for their workers and earning quite good profits for the owners are to continue, for the other export-earning industries to be kept in a prosperous state.

Unfortunately the position is still drifting inasmuch as in years gone by we had a considerable number of industries which were earning export credits. I think members will have noticed statements in the Press quite recently by the Minister for Commerce to the effect that Australia is now 75 per cent. dependent on wool. I suggest that members think a little about what may happen if there is any recession in the wool industry. If they do that, I believe they will have considerable cause to worry about many of the other interests that they represent in their electorates. All the trade information available at present seems to indicate that for the next 12 months, at least, we can expect the wool prices to maintain a satisfactory level, but we have to realise that many large and powerful overseas firms are spending many millions of pounds on research to try to develop the various types of synthetic fibres in which they are interested.

The responsible leaders of the wool industry in Australia are much concerned about the position. Up to the present wool has had no difficulty in pacing it with the substitutes that have come on the market, but it does not necessarily follow that more dangerous substitutes may not become available in the not distant future. The point I am trying to make is that if Governments in Australia are going to have a proper regard for the continuing prosperity of the country, then they should not get into the position where, if some serious threat to the wool industry develops, it will be necessary for the wool producers to accept considerably less for their wool than they are today, and so put Australia into some sort of a depression. I believe the position is serious enough for not only the Commonwealth Government, but also the State Governments, to give the wool industry more assistance than they have given it up to date by way of research into the further uses of wool, and also by doing anything else that is possible to combat the threat of synthetic fibres. The position is serious indeed, and it is one to which in a State such as Western Australia—primarily a primary producing State—we should all, no matter what electorates we represent, give considerable attention.

Hon. C. F. J. North: There is not enough room for both!

Mr. PERKINS: I do not say that. Up to the present the expansion of synthetic fibres has been colossal, but it has not damaged the wool industry at all because wool has been used in conjunction with the synthetic fibres. But the information we have about the research in the United States is that the large corporations there are trying to develop fibres to replace wool entirely; and that is a serious threat. Up to now wool has been used in conjunction with the synthetic fibres, and I hope the position will continue to develop in that way in the future, because there is probably tremendous scope for the use of wool in the clothing of the more backward peoples of the world.

Wool could probably be used to better advantage than it is at present if its use were more widespread, but there are all sorts of economic difficulties in the way of doing that, and it is not a subject that I desire to go into at the moment because, obviously, there are many sides to it. It is, however, one to which all Governments, including our own State Government, should pay considerable attention. I wish to speak on the income earned by the other major exporting industry I have mentioned, namely, wheat. Unfortunately the production of wheat in Australia has been falling.

The wheatgrowers have some definite ideas of their own on the matter of wheat production. If they relied on Government statements, I think they would be thoroughly mystified because on the one hand we see pronouncements by Governments departments—both Federal and State—about the need for building up the production of Australian wheat, whilst on the other hand, and in almost the next breath, we are told it is vitally necessary to have some sort of stabilisation scheme to secure the Australian producer against a sharp fall in price. Both these points of view cannot be correct. Obviously, if there is a great need for the product the prices are not likely to fall. I suggest to the various Government officers who are preparing these statements that they try to take a somewhat more objective view of the position than they have so far.

I can appreciate the difficulties of a Government officer who is trying to view the matter in a broad way, and can understand his thinking it wise to expand wheat production in Australia in the interests of our economy—for the reasons I have just mentioned—inasmuch as we should be trying to encourage whatever industries are available in order to maintain our export income on as high and stable a level as possible. The wheat industry, of course, is a major export earner, but our overall production of wheat has tended to fall rather than to increase. I will give members the acreage figures as I think they are more important than the bushelage, which varies according to the

season. For the Commonwealth as a whole, the acreage sown to wheat in 1938-39 was 14,346,000 acres. By 1950-51, the total had fallen to 11,663,000 acres, and in 1951-52 it was down to 10,384,000.

Mr. Ackland: Do not forget that it was 18,000,000 acres in the early 1930's.

Mr. PERKINS: Admittedly, it was higher at an earlier stage, but I have dealt with the immediate pre-war period, which I feel gives the fairest comparison. The figures for Western Australia show a similar drop from the 1930's to the present time, although we have maintained our wheat production to a greater degree than have the other States. For various reasons, and notwithstanding a widely-held opinion that the whole of the farming community is extremely prosperous—particularly the wheatgrowers—the amount of wheat being produced in this State and elsewhere in the Commonwealth is now considerably less than it was in earlier years.

There must be something wrong with the reasoning of the man in the street, or else some other factor enters into the situation; otherwise there would not be such a drop in our production. The reason for it, of course, is that other avenues of production have become either more profitable or more congenial, and there has been a switch away from wheat production, particularly in our main wheat-growing areas, to wool and, to a lesser degree, to meat. The ordinary wheat-grower feels that he is being used as a pawn in Government policy and that the final decision regarding his wheat is taken not on what is fair and just to him, or even what is ultimately best for Australia, but rather on what complications might ensue if a higher price were paid for wheat for human consumption, or for stockfeed.

Those are points upon which wheat-growers feel strongly, and they have undoubtedly been a factor in the switch from wheat to other lines of production. In the 1930's, the wheatgrowers clamoured strongly for a higher price for wheat consumed in Australia than they were obtaining for that sold on the export market. They maintained that the wheat sold overseas had to be sold in competition with that produced by cheap labour and coloured labour under sweated conditions. The Australian producer had to sell his product in competition with wheat produced under those conditions.

The Minister for Lands: Is that not an argument for stabilisation?

Mr. PERKINS: The conclusion to be drawn from that—for the information of the Minister for Agriculture—is that if the wheatgrower was expected to sell his product in competition with wheat grown under all sorts of conditions, he should be permitted to buy the things used in wheat production on a comparable basis.

The Minister for Education: What percentage of the world's wheat is produced under cheap labour conditions?

Mr. PERKINS: I cannot say offhand, but it is a large proportion.

The Minister for Education: Not as large as you seem to think.

Mr. PERKINS: The Deputy Premier would be surprised to learn the total amount of wheat produced in China.

The Minister for Education: I would not be surprised at all.

Mr. PERKINS: The vast majority of the wheat entering into international trade is produced in the more mechanised countries.

The Minister for Education: That is the point I am getting at.

Mr. PERKINS: That is not the question the Minister asked. During the war period, the demand for wheat rose rapidly, and its value on the international market increased sharply. It was not long before the arrangement, whereby the Australian producer provided wheat for human consumption in Australia at a special price, penalised him in that he could have sold the wheat for a much higher price on the international market. However, little objection was taken to that as the producers realised that they had had the advantage at one time and must therefore put up with a disadvantage, in turn. That position has continued for so long, however, that the producers of wheat have paid back the benefit they gained, many times over. Unfortunately other ideas have crept in and influenced the methods of computing the human consumption price, until at present the wheatgrower feels that he is not being treated justly, and that is having an effect on his total production of wheat. The man in the street seems to think that if the wheatgrower is getting the average cost of production for what he sells in Australia, he is being fairly treated. That has been put to me by members in this House.

Mr. Ackland: With no margin for skill.

Mr. PERKINS: If we analyse this average cost of production theory, it must be obvious to members that, to have an average cost of production, there must be at least as many farmers whose figures are below the average cost of production as there are those whose figures are above it, and I do not think there is any field where the cost of production would vary as greatly as it does in the wheat industry. I do not think it would be possible to find any two wheatgrowers with exactly the same cost of production, and those costs would vary between wide limits.

There is another theory held upon which I intend to touch and that is that the man who has a figure higher than the average cost of production has something wrong with his production methods. Some say that it is to his discredit that his costs are so high and that it should be possible for

him to bring them down equal to the level of the most efficient people in the industry. That opinion is not held by anybody in close touch with the industry because it is absolutely fallacious. There are so many factors which enter into it. Fertility of soil on farms differs a good deal, the rainfall varies from district to district, and the different periods when the farms were established have a big effect on their costs of production because obviously the capital costs of equipment have varied over the years.

Obviously the man who established his property during the depression period has a tremendous advantage over a farmer who is just commencing to open up a holding. The man who starts now has to buy his equipment at a cost considerably in excess of that ruling during the depression period. I would like to say in passing that if a man has a high cost of production it is no discredit to him and one must carefully examine all the factors which go to make up the cost of production. I want to emphasise the point that the consuming public of Australia is receiving the product of the labour of those who have a cost of production higher than the average at less than it costs to produce. I suggest that members think over that point. No other industry would put up with it and would not be asked to do so.

The Minister for Lands: What about the dairying industry?

Mr. PERKINS: The dairying industry is not very happy about it and I do not blame those engaged in it for not being happy. Take the manufacturing industries in Australia! In the Governor's Speech, compiled by members of this Government, there is a statement to the effect that there has been a steady expansion in secondary industries in the State and that they are now employing over 45,000 persons. I ask members, which of the secondary industries in the State would be prepared to sell any portion of its product at less than the cost of production? Not one of them would, and if it did it would go out of business.

The farming industries have been through hard times in the past and in many cases, I am afraid, they are rather used to accepting less than that to which they are entitled or less than is necessary to maintain a proper standard of living and proper conditions in their industry. However, that point of view has changed sharply in recent times, and the result is that these various experiences have caused the people to change from an industry which is expected to sell portion of its product at less than the cost of production and to engage in other more profitable lines.

The Minister for Lands: You do not suggest that the community should pay a higher price for wheat which is produced by bad management? You suggest that some of the prices result from bad management.

Mr. PERKINS: I would not say that.

The Minister for Lands: But you inferred it.

Mr. PERKINS: I would not say it is as a result of bad management. I tried to make the point that because a man's costs of production were high it was no discredit to him.

The Minister for Education: It could be.

Mr. PERKINS: There are factors other than bad management which enter into it. But I would like the Minister to name one secondary industry in Australia that would sell any article it produced at below the cost of production. I do not think one would find any more bad management in the primary industries than in the secondary industries.

The Minister for Lands: The words "average cost of production" will be left out of it and I think it will be the "ascertained cost of production."

Mr. PERKINS: If the Minister is to get the "ascertained cost of production" I will be interested to find out how he arrives at the figure. He has a job in front of him.

The Minister for Lands: It is not in front of me.

The Minister for Education: Do you think the cost of production should be that of the most inefficient farmer in the district?

Mr. PERKINS: I do not say that, either.

The Minister for Education: Then what do you say?

Mr. PERKINS: I wish to draw a comparison with secondary industries.

The Minister for Education: What country would put up with your theory?

Mr. PERKINS: In the city of Perth, where manufacturers are producing all types and classes of goods, the least efficient manufacturer has to make a living and pay his staff Arbitration Court rates of pay. He must at least pay his way, if not make some profit.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The Arbitration Court lays down the minimum and they always make it the maximum.

Mr. PERKINS: That is another aspect which the hon. member can discuss when he speaks. If secondary industries are to function then the least efficient secondary industry must pay its way.

The Minister for Education: You have it the wrong way round. If the people are not prepared to pay the price that a manufacturer wants for his product then he goes out of business.

Mr. PERKINS: He does not go out of business.

The Minister for Education: Yes, he does.

Mr. PERKINS: No, he does not, because if he cannot make it pay he approaches the Government of the day and asks for

greater tariff protection or a bonus for his product. That is what is happening and I am not blaming the manufacturers for it. They are up against all sorts of special difficulties, but because the manufacturer has high costs of production it does not necessarily follow that he is inefficient. But there is a marked difference in dealing with primary industries and secondary industries because, when dealing with primary industries, one talks about the average cost of production, but when dealing with secondary industries conditions are such that the least efficient manufacturer is at least able to keep going. I defy anybody on the Government bench successfully to contest that point.

The Minister for Education: That would be easy.

Mr. PERKINS: I will be interested to hear the Minister discuss it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You make yourself believe it.

The Minister for Lands: What do you suggest in regard to wheat? Should the consumer pay a price for wheat—

Mr. PERKINS: I was just coming to that. There are various proposals concerning wheat that are likely considerably to improve the position, and I am glad to see that our Western Australian Minister for Agriculture supports the suggestions for an improvement on what the position has been. But other factors come into the situation as well. Dealing with costs in the industry, one of the first suggestions I have to offer is that the State Government should do all it can to keep down costs to the industry. Costs on a farm are largely the responsibility of the producer himself, but possibly the costs of many articles he buys come within the control of the State Government. One of the most vital is the cost of transport and we have heard it said that there will be an increase in railway freights.

Before the Government agrees to increase railway freights I think it should have a careful look into the effect it will have on the primary industries, particularly the wheat industry because that industry pays more in freight charges than any other in the country. The volume of wheat to be transported from what we in the past have thought as a normal harvest has been a greater tonnage than any other type of produce carried, and the requirements on a farm that produces wheat bulk largely in the goods to be transported from the metropolitan area or the seaboard into the country districts.

Obviously, if we are to have any percentage increase in freights it will be exactly the same as reducing the return to the producer for each bushel of wheat by that amount. Before the Government agrees to any such increase it should examine the position extremely carefully, because I am certain that if a decision is left to the Railways Commission the only

one it will make is to increase the freights. I notice in the latest report of the W.A. Government Railways Commission that the following appears:—

The obvious, even if an unpalatable solution, to mounting deficits, is the raising of charges to bring earnings and operating costs more into line with each other.

I often wonder whether the Commission has ever looked at the possibility of reducing costs. I suppose it has paid some attention to that aspect, but the ordinary man in the street can cite innumerable instances of the lack of efficiency shown by the Railway Department which can be more strongly criticised than anyone on the Government bench can criticise any lack of efficiency that may occur on the farms. I noticed recently that a certain branch of the Farmers' Union asked that a small space be filled up between the railway lines to enable the people to cross to the siding to pick up their goods. To do that the method the Railway Department adopted was to get three railway trucks of cinders which presumably were loaded by men wielding shovels, because the department seems to do most things by manual labour.

The Minister for Railways: The hon. member knows that that would not be right. They would be filled with grabs taken from the loco. shed.

Mr. PERKINS: When it came to unloading the cinders the three trucks were shunted off the line to the spot where the cinders were to be placed, and a gang was then detailed to move the cinders from the truck to the space to be filled in, shovelful by shovelful. Each man picked up a shovelful of cinders, dumped it on the spot where the cinders had to go then walked back and picked up another shovelful. No private concern could possibly stand that sort of efficiency.

The Minister for Railways: What does the hon. member suggest should have been done at a small outback siding?

Mr. PERKINS: If the Railway Department had had any imagination it would have contacted some local contractor or the local authority in an endeavour to have the work done and if that work could not have been accomplished at a fraction of what it cost the department I would have been greatly surprised.

The Minister for Railways: Does the hon. member know what it cost the department?

Mr. PERKINS: No.

The Minister for Railways: No, the hon. member is only having a wild guess.

Mr. PERKINS: I know that it took a gang approximately one day to fill up that gap and members can work out the wages for themselves. Another instance of excessive cost is contained in the reply the Minister gave to a question I asked

within the last day or two. I know, of course that the Railway Department has had a great many difficulties to contend with in endeavouring properly to organise that public utility, but even so one wonders how much imagination is brought to bear in coping with a great deal of the work which has to be performed to keep the system operating. That is borne out by the figures the Minister for Railways has given me on the cost of re-sleeping. According to his statement the cost of a railway sleeper in 1910 was only 1/9d. and in 1938 it was 3/4d. but now it has risen to 17/-. That is not the fault of the Railway Department, although it does emphasise the difficulties encountered in regard to the cost of the re-sleeping programme. However, what is really startling are the labour costs involved in replacing a sleeper. In 1910 they were only 1s., in 1938, 2s. 9d., but the present cost is 9s., That shows a rise from 2s. 9d. to 9s. since prewar years.

The Minister for Railways: In 1910 the basic wage was £2 8s. 0d. but now it is £12 10s. 0d. per week.

Mr. PERKINS: I was not referring to 1910 but to the difference in costs between 1939 and the present day. I merely cite that as an instance so that the Railway Commissioners might use some imagination in an endeavour to mechanise the system and to reduce some of these costs. If they do not do something along these lines it could easily be that by increasing freights, and with the wheat price showing some recession at present, they could drive a larger section of producers out of the wheat industry into wool and other production. One hesitates to think what the complications will be for future Governments in railway finance if they are going to lose the major portion of their traffic which the wheat industry provides in the cartage of grain or requisites for its production from the farm to the seaboard and vice versa, if such a change as that is brought about.

Mr. May: The hon. member knows that that is not very likely.

The Minister for Railways: Of course he does.

Mr. PERKINS: I take it that that is what is happening at the present time. Figures have shown a reduction in wheat acreage which has taken place at a time when probably we have developed more new ground in our agricultural areas than at any previous period in history.

The Minister for Railways: They switch from wheat to barley, oats and wool because there are better profits in such production.

Mr. PERKINS: There has been a greater switch to wool and meat production, but surely the efforts of the Minister for Agriculture should be towards keeping a balanced production throughout our agricultural areas rather than have producers concentrate on the growing of one

product. That is why I stress that more consideration should be given to decreasing the difficulties met with by those in the wheat industry as well as trying to build up the net return that producers receive. The Minister for Railways is smiling. I wonder whether he will be smiling when he has to consider the mounting railway deficits.

The Minister for Railways: The treatment farmers have received from the Railway Department in the past has been extremely generous.

Mr. PERKINS: I think the Minister has some extraordinary idea that the wheat industry is not profitable to the Railway Department. He will be a sadly disillusioned man if the day comes when the production of wheat will seriously decrease, and he has to operate his railway system without the benefit of freights obtained from the carriage of wheat plus those received for the carriage of the requisites necessary for the production of it.

Mr. Ackland: He will still have the goods trains running in the same way as he has empty passenger trains running in order to keep the drivers in their jobs. It will not worry him very much.

Mr. PERKINS: I notice that my time has almost expired.

The Minister for Native Welfare: That is a pity.

Mr. PERKINS: However, I strongly recommend to the Government that careful consideration should be given to the proper development of each of our primary industries. I have dealt particularly with wool and wheat. Some of our other primary industries, with which other members are more closely in touch than I, are already in difficulties. I would say without fear of successful contradiction that if the Government allows our primary industries to get into an unprofitable state it is paving the way for the worst depression that Australia has ever experienced. We have other examples to guide us and to show us what happens when a country loses the advantage of a profitable line of production, or a particular advantage it might have in any line of production. We have only to look at Great Britain to see what has happened there since the war.

Previously, by reason of the skill of her artisans and the efficiency of her industries, Britain had built up a very prosperous economic export trade by means of her manufacturing industries. But because of the dislocation caused during the war we know the difficulties Britain is in today and the very serious problem they have caused in the standard of living in that country. An equally serious position, and a similar position, could develop in Australia if anything went wrong with our major exporting industries. We had experience of it two years ago when wool showed a comparatively small recession, taken over an average clip.

But if we are going to damage the ability of the other export industries to open overseas credits—and the Minister for Commerce has said that 75 per cent. of our overseas trade is coming from wool—then we are placing Australia in a position where a recession of prices in one industry can provoke a very serious position throughout Australia. I do not think I need dwell on that particular aspect because one knows that if the goods cannot be imported to service the various industries, complications are caused throughout the whole of our economic structure.

In conclusion I would stress that whereas in the 1930's the primary producers were in a position where they had to continue to produce because of the debts they owed and the interest they had to pay—whether they produced or not—the position is altered entirely and a very small proportion of the producers at the present time have any considerable debts. From my very close contact with the farming community, I would say that if there is a serious recession in agricultural prices the reaction of the producers will be to reduce the scale of their operations so that they can get by with the minimum of employed labour, and with the minimum of expenditure, thus keeping themselves financially sound until the day comes when the price wheel turns full circle.

But, of course, the consequences to the rest of Australia have only to be thought about to make one realise just what a catastrophe it would be. It might produce an even worse depression and more difficult conditions for Australia than those which Britain has had to face in recent times. Therefore I do suggest to our State Government that when it prepares the next address for His Excellency the Governor to read at the opening of Parliament, it has a much closer look at the great primary producers that have been producing the export credit for Australia, and see if it cannot suggest some measures which will be instrumental in keeping them on a sound and prosperous footing and of promoting contentment.

MR. NORTON (Gascoyne) [3.25]: I have listened with great interest to members opposite while they have been describing their disabilities in regard to transport and primary production. It appears that they have everything and that we in the North-West have nothing in respect to such disabilities. For the past six years the North-West has apparently been forgotten and those members opposite have not heard of it. But I would like to bring before this House a few of the disabilities and a few of the matters that go to make up that vast country which holds so much potential wealth, and which could produce so much for this State if given the opportunity. When the rest of this State was being developed it was done by putting in transport ahead of the population; in that case the transport was railways.

In the North, however, railways are not practicable and, therefore, in order to develop the North the first thing that should be put in is good roads. It is also necessary to give certain other benefits to those people who are to be placed in that part of the country to encourage them to stay there. It is necessary for them to have schools on account of the distance they are from Perth. They should also have hospitals and a medical service so that they may have at least some of those things which the people in the south of the State enjoy.

As far as Western Australia and the rest of Australia is concerned, the North-West is considered the back-door, but it is very much the front door to all those people in the Asiatic countries who are looking for somewhere else to which to migrate. The North-West of Australia is producing such things as uranium, columbite, tantalite and other base metals which, because of the atomic age, are becoming exceedingly necessary for every country to possess. Therefore if we are to keep the North-West we must defend it, and the best method of defence is to populate it. To populate it we must provide something to encourage the people to go there, to invest their money there so that they will get a return for a gamble which they propose to undertake. I say it is a gamble because they have to transport all their materials many miles before they reach a centre.

One thing that would help, and help very greatly, would be a reduction in taxation. This can be done in many ways. For purposes of the North-West, taxation could be taken as a defence proposition. Last year the Commonwealth budgeted for a £2,000,000 defence estimate. If the Government were to give a remission of taxation on the defence angle this would encourage capital to be spent. Whenever capital is spent it naturally takes the workers with it and, if the amenities are provided, the workers will take their families along with them. It is very interesting to compare the population figures of the North-West—that is from the 26th parallel North—with those of the Northern Territory and Australia since 1901. It will be noted that since 1901 Western Australia has increased its original population by 150.2 per cent., whereas that of the Northern Territory increased by 342.4 per cent. and that of the Commonwealth of Australia increased by 226.1 per cent. The comparative population figures for the North-West of this State, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth as a whole, as disclosed in successive census statistics, show the following:—

Census.	North-West.	Northern Territory.	Commonwealth.
1901	5,527	4,673	3,824,913
1911	6,494	3,233	4,573,786
1921	5,419	3,759	5,510,944
1933	6,934	4,827	6,656,695
1947	6,494	10,991	7,638,628

From these figures it will be seen that by April, 1921, the population of the North-West of this State had dropped by over 1,000. It rose again in 1933 but dropped once more in 1947, whereas the population of the Northern Territory had jumped very appreciably.

It was at that time that some incentive was given to the North by the opening up of the asbestos mines and the development of the iron-ore deposits at Koolan Island. As a result, it was estimated in December, 1952, that the population of the North-West was 8,200, that of the Northern Territory 16,101 and that of the Commonwealth 8,648,735. Thus it will be seen that when money is invested in an area, the population there will increase. This follows whenever the incentive is apparent. I do not say that everything should be given away as happened in connection with Koolan Island, but at least the Commonwealth should provide the requisite incentive to induce people to go to these outer parts and help develop the North.

Next I shall deal with the individual industries of the North-West, the main one being the pastoral industry. It has certainly retrogressed and I cannot quite ascertain the reason for it. I am inclined to think that, in all probability, it is due to high taxation. Like other people, the pastoralists endeavour to run their business on economic lines. That being so, they conduct their properties in an endeavour to make as much as they can economically. It is interesting to note that in the Gascoyne electorate the sheep population since 1934 has decreased by nearly 1,000,000. As a matter of fact, the actual decrease was 848,061 causing a drop in the clip of 7,476,480 lb. of greasy wool, which represents a large proportion, considering that the total clip in 1952 was 9,779,069 lb., and the number of sheep shorn was 1,060,286.

Thus in that small area—it is small by comparison with the whole of the North-West—there was that large drop in the sheep population, which so markedly affected wool production. Some steps should be taken to ascertain why that decrease has come about. Statistics also show a decrease in the number of persons employed in the industry. In 1934 the total number employed in the rural industries—I might explain that the pastoral industry is not separated from other rural industries in the figures relating to the Gascoyne area—was 656 males and 115 females. Of course, practically all those people were employed in connection with pastoral pursuits and only a few were working on the banana plantations.

Now we find that in March 1952 the population, including Gascoyne River where there are 163 planters, plus many employees, was actually 24 less than it was in 1934. That shows that the number of employees in the pastoral areas is now much depleted. As I said before, I think

a review of the pastoral leases and an inquiry into the reason for the decrease in production should be carried out and, where it is found that leases are not being run in accordance with the requirements of the Act, the pastoralists concerned should be reminded of that fact and be requested to increase their flocks so as to comply with the terms of their leases. As a matter of fact, some of the properties have not been more than half used and some have not even been completely fenced.

Passing from the wool industry, I shall next touch on the Gascoyne closer settlement area which, as members know, is the only closer settlement area in the Gascoyne, apart from Shark Bay. To give the House some idea of the wealth that is produced there, I shall quote some figures to indicate what is taking place at present. The number of growers on the river is 163. The estimated area under bananas is 495 acres, under beans 197 acres, under peanuts 7 acres, under peas 5 acres, and under tomatoes 14 acres. The growing of tobacco is also to be tried this year. Twelve growers are taking an interest in it and are putting in sufficient plants to test the value of the leaf. Should the quality prove to be satisfactory, tobacco-growing might develop into a very large industry for Carnarvon. Other crops being grown are pumpkins, cucumbers and capsicums. The peak year for the production of bananas was 1949, when the yield was 109,225 bushels. Production fluctuates according to the season and the quantity of water available for irrigation.

Last year, 17,535 bags of beans were produced, and when I mention that each bag holds approximately 28lb., members can gain some idea of the weight of beans transported to Perth. This year is proving to be an all-time record. I have not the full figures, but in July we had the highest yield of any month, the total having been 11,219 bags. This is equivalent to 332,800 lb. of beans which are sent to the metropolitan area, 60,000 lb. having been transported by road in one week. In June, 83,970 lb. of beans were sent to Perth. Surely this industry, as well as the other industries being carried on in the Gascoyne, is worthy of all possible consideration, financially and in other ways!

There are many directions in which the Government can help. Since Parliament assembled, I have asked the Deputy Premier two questions affecting my electorate, and the answers have been a definite "No." I ask him to reconsider those answers in the light of the promises and statements made to the electors of Kimberley and Gascoyne. One of the questions related to the sealing of the road from Northampton to Carnarvon. This road is the lifeline of the Carnarvon industries, carrying, as it does, the perishable products to the Perth market. If these products are not transported to the market expeditiously, they

deteriorate and can result in substantial losses being sustained by the growers.

At the beginning of the bean season, heavy rains occurred and the roads were closed for a week, and it was more by good luck than good management that the aircraft coming south were lightly laden and were able to lift most of that freight. Had the heavy rains occurred in July, or even in June, the planters would have sustained substantial losses and these, following on the severe damage done by the cyclone, would have been a crippling blow. I therefore ask the Government to treat with the utmost urgency my request for an all-weather road to facilitate the cartage of our perishable produce to the Perth market. I also request that all perishable produce may be transported to the Perth market as required, without the haulier having to obtain a special permit from the Transport Board.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4 p.m.

Mr. NORTON: The Carnarvon industry should be allowed at all times to have through transport for its perishable goods so that they can reach the market in the shortest possible time. At present bananas are permitted to be carted by road as far as Geraldton and thence by the Midland Railway. Beans are carried, under special permit, right through to Perth. Shark Bay fish, Geraldton fish, and such perishables, are allowed at all times to go through. I see no reason why the Carnarvon industry should not be allowed to carry its products direct to Perth. Seeing that the Midland Railway Co. whose main shareholders are in England, is allowed to transport goods of any description over roads which are paid for with taxpayers' money, why not allow the taxpayers I am representing to carry their perishable produce right through to the metropolitan market?

I am aware that an individual is allowed to carry his produce direct to the markets, and that there can be two other shareholders with him in the truck, but no more. Where there is a number of small growers, such as we have at Carnarvon, it is not practicable for them to own their vehicles, and so do this. Therefore I say that every consideration should be given to the Carnarvon industry, by waiving the regulation and so allowing the perishable produce to be carted direct to the metropolitan market.

Adverting to the sealing of the highway between Northampton and Carnarvon, I omitted to say that if this highway were sealed it would save the growers a considerable amount of money. The transporters have indicated that if and when this road is sealed they would be able to transport the produce at a cheaper rate. At the present time, where special permits have been granted, the carriers have

carted, in emergencies, from Perth to Carnarvon at the rate of £15 per ton. The road cartage from Geraldton to Carnarvon—a distance of just over 300 miles—is £10 10s. per ton, and 270 miles is over unsealed roads. From these figures it will be seen that carriers in the past have been prepared to cart for as low as £5 per ton over an equivalent distance of 300 miles of sealed road from Geraldton to Perth. A sealed road would not only give us all-weather cartage of perishables but also a saving on freights which at present are terrifically high.

Another thing of importance to the industry is water. It is, in fact, the lifeblood of the industry. At the present time the plantations draw all their water from the river bed or from subterranean streams where the plantations are away from the river. The river bed and the subterranean streams are replenished when the river flows, which is approximately once a year if we are lucky. It has been found that the supply of water, under normal circumstances, will last just over 12 months without the river flowing. It is, therefore, necessary in this drought area, as it is termed, to have a reserve. Some 18 miles east of the Carnarvon plantations is a gorge known as Rocky Pool. This has been surveyed and it has been found that it could impound 12 thousand million gallons of water.

When it flows, the Gascoyne River carries a tremendous volume of water and, when in flood, the amount that passes through the Rocky Pool section and eventually out to sea is 50,000 cubic feet per second or, in other words, 300,000 gallons per second. That is the normal flow. The river which flowed this year was a very small one and flowed at the rate of only two miles an hour, but produced over 300,000 gallons per hour in its flow to the sea. The volume of water that comes down that river and goes to waste is tremendous. If a dam could be built at Rocky Pool it would impound 12,000,000,000 gallons of water, which would serve the industry—at its present size—for two years; allowing for a loss of 50 per cent. through evaporation and seepage.

If the river did not run in that time the growers would be able to pull on the subterranean supplies that they are at present using. With that reserve—and the industry at its present level—we would have over three years' supply of water which would stabilise the industry. I ask the Government to have a full investigation made of the feasibility of damming water in Rocky Pool, and of its economics. We know that once water has to be pumped over a distance and cement channels or drains laid it becomes much more expensive, but if a sure water supply is to be provided as an economic stabiliser for this industry every effort should be made to complete this project in the near future.

The Gascoyne research station has done great work towards the development of the industry by the carrying out of necessary experiments. There is still much work of that kind to be done but the research station is hampered by lack of a laboratory. I believe that the whole of the Agricultural Department is similarly hampered. A laboratory at Carnarvon has been promised. We need only a small one there, with an officer qualified to do the necessary experimental work, particularly with regard to soils. It would not only serve the Carnarvon banana plantation but also the whole of the North-West, and would be of great help to those departments further north which now have to send all their samples to Perth to be dealt with at the Government laboratories.

Many tests will be required in the near future to see whether the water supplies the minerals needed by stock in the pastoral industry. Tests are required to find out whether the stock are getting the requisite minerals from the herbage in order to get the best possible production from those areas. It is only by attaining 100 per cent. production from the rural industries that the North-West can be made payable.

A smaller industry, but one which can be developed greatly in the North-West though it has not been investigated to the extent it deserves, is fishing. Shark Bay is the only town in my electorate, apart from Carnarvon, and is practically dependent upon fishing for its livelihood. That centre produces approximately 1,000,000 lb. of fish per year. There is a small amount of fishing done further north in the Exmouth Gulf area. It is pleasing to see the C.S.I.R.O. sending its boats north again to investigate the fishing grounds of that area and the possibilities of the prawn-fishing industry, with particular relation to the king prawn and the tiger prawn which are known to exist in those waters and which should prove a very substantial source of revenue when their grounds are located.

People hear of Shark Bay but do not read about it and do not realise what it is like or how those who live there and help to populate this vast area of the north exist. They have none of the things which everybody else in the State takes for granted. They have no water supply, no regular means of transport, no aerodrome, no regular mail service and rarely see a newspaper. We could do much towards providing them with those amenities.

Water is essential in the areas to which I have referred. I know it will be difficult to provide adequate water supplies, yet many smaller centres in other parts of the State have been provided with dams and catchment areas. Nothing of that kind has been done at Shark Bay and nothing to assist the fishing industry. When the fishermen desire to repair their boats

some manage to get them up on the shore at Shark Bay but others take them to the other side of Peron Peninsula, a distance of 16 road miles, to beach and repair them. They have then either to camp there or travel that distance over sandy roads each day to do that work.

It is time that a slipway was supplied at Shark Bay. It was promised six years ago and that promise remains. I am sure that the present Government will honour the promise of its predecessor and build that slipway. I know that aerodromes are a Commonwealth matter, but to indicate how inconsiderate the Commonwealth Government is and how little it acknowledges the North-West—and even Western Australia as a whole—I will read out portion of a letter received from Mr. Anthony, Minister for Civil Aviation, with regard to the general policy in relation to aerodromes in the North-West. A portion of it reads—

Enclosed is a copy of the policy adopted by the Commonwealth in the provision, maintenance and operation of aerodromes as a Commonwealth responsibility.

It is thought that this policy will be self-explanatory but, broadly speaking, it means that unless and until it has been proved by actual airline traffic over a period that an airline service is an economical and lasting requirement, the responsibility for the provision of an aerodrome must rest with the local authority.

That letter indicates that the local authorities are responsible, but, as far as Shark Bay is concerned, a local authority does not exist. The local authority has to put down an aerodrome and maintain it for 12 months to prove to the Commonwealth that it is a necessity and a payable proposition. Shark Bay has a population of over 100 people in the town and serves five stations as well. If that does not entitle the town to an aerodrome, I do not know what does.

Shark Bay is 85 miles from the main road and over 200 miles from the nearest town, and in cases of sickness an aerodrome is an urgent necessity. There is a hospital in the town but the Government will subsidise a nurse only up to the paltry sum of £100 per annum. Last year, during the election campaign, I took a census of the number of accidents and urgent sickness cases at Shark Bay over the previous 12 months. Most of the people concerned were taken to Geraldton, but an odd one or two went to Carnarvon. During the 12 months ended the 1st February this year, 49 cases had to be transported from Shark Bay; 34 were taken by Geraldton taxi at a total cost, for one way only, of £1,088. Others less urgent, nine in all, were transported by fish truck at a total cost of £45 and six others went in their own vehicles. I did not include any charge in those cases.

In other words, it cost the individuals concerned £1,133 to be transported to hospitals and on top of that they had to pay medical expenses. If we are to assume that those people paid the same sums to be brought back again to Shark Bay the total cost would be £2,266. Surely that in itself is sufficient evidence of the need for an aerodrome with a regular aerial service which MacRobertson Miller Coy. Ltd. is prepared to give. One of the cases concerned was a man suffering from a severe stricture and I leave it to the imagination of members as to how much pain that man must have suffered while being transported on the back of a utility for 285 miles over an earth road. According to the doctor he arrived at the hospital just in time and, had he been 20 minutes later, it would have been too late. Since that time one who was being taken to hospital died 30 miles out on the road.

There is only an obsolete telegraph line, a one wire system, connecting Shark Bay with the outer world and at the best of times it is difficult to communicate with Carnarvon. The people in these areas suffer many disabilities and it would not be much to ask the Government to grant them some relief. When reading Mr. Anthony's letter I omitted the portion which said that the department would generously make available its mobile outfit should the district find a suitable site for an aerodrome and, provided, the equipment was not being used for other purposes. A very generous offer especially as this service would have to be paid for!

The whaling industry seems to have hit the headlines and there is not much I can say about it except that it is a great dollar earner for Western Australia. It has proved that large sums of money can be made in those areas from industries which, in the past, have been given to oversea interests. The two sections interested in the whaling industry, when operating, employ 340 persons, 70 of them being employed permanently. Those permanently employed are not all in Carnarvon as some of them are employed in offices in the metropolitan area. Last year the two whaling companies caught between them 1,136 whales and produced 10,558 tons of whale oil. A total of 1,252 tons of manure were produced as well as 5,622 tons of poultry and stock food. I have not any figures as to the actual monetary return for the 1952 season but the return, per whale, during the 1951 season was £1,022 9s., and the gross takings for the industry, during the same year were £1,244,878.

As regards minerals, there is an auriferous belt which runs right through the Gascoyne electorate but very little has been done in this area because of its isolation. This year, however, gold has been discovered at Lyndon Station but whether this field will continue to be as good as it looks now, remains to be seen. The first crushing yielded three ounces to the ton. Mica, lead, bismuth and beryl have also

been discovered but the main interest at present centres on Exmouth Gulf where oil boring is almost due to commence. If, in the near future, this area should turn out to be an oil field, we in the North will have no further worries and we will not need to beg and pray for Governments to acknowledge us. They will be looking to us and will be only too pleased to give us those things about which they have hummed and ha'd in the past.

I will now deal with the questions of housing, water, education, and so on, which are essential in order to encourage people to settle in the North. This year, I understand, Carnarvon is to have four new workers' homes, plus two which are to be completed. I am pleased to say that the Government has taken steps to reduce the rentals of those homes. With what I am about to say I know that other North-West members, particularly the member for Pilbara, will be in accord, namely, that all Government departments, whether Commonwealth or State, should provide houses for their employees. At Carnarvon, 25 per cent. of the houses built under the Commonwealth-State rental scheme have been let to civil servants. If the Government departments supplied houses for their employees, this would greatly assist in solving the housing problem in the North-West.

It is the permanent resident who builds up a community and helps to populate the North. Departmental officers are only there for a specific period, following which their place is taken by someone else. Therefore, more houses should be made available to permanent residents. Water is absolutely essential in the home, the more so for the person living in the country than in the town. For domestic purposes water should be declared a national necessity and delivered at a standard rate throughout the State, a commercial rate being charged according to the district and the industry served. The water rate in Carnarvon is 3s. in the £1, and it amused me to hear some members opposite complaining about the small increase in water rates in the metropolitan area.

My constituents would gladly pay the price that is being charged for water to people in the city. Those in the North get nowhere near the same amount of water per rental value as do metropolitan residents. The charge to people in the North is 3s. per 1,000 gallons, or 3s. 3d. if the account is not paid within three months. One case which I may cite is that of an elderly couple who are old age pensioners and do not pay the normal rate, but have to pay for excess water. They have no garden and there are only the two of them in the home, and they therefore use the minimum amount of water; and yet it cost them £11 for excess water over the year. There is no

doubt that an elderly couple such as that cannot afford to pay for excess water at that rate.

Education for people in the country, and particularly those in the North, becomes an expensive proposition when they have to send their children away from home to attend school. However, those living on stations have no alternative but to send their children to Perth, as little opportunity is presented to send them to Geraldton, and they are faced with a very large education bill. The majority of those affected are station managers. One manager quoted to me the figures of what it cost him for the education and transport alone of his child, taking into account also that the child is allowed one free trip to his home town per year. It cost him to educate one child £330 for the year. It cost £8 alone to have an aircraft land and put the child down at the station. On several occasions during my election campaign, it was suggested to me that a school hostel should be built at Carnarvon so that parents could educate their children at a more reasonable cost than at present.

Just over six years ago, plans for the Carnarvon school were prepared by the present Minister for Education to cater for such children. These provided for sufficient classrooms, a domestic science and manual training centre, and a hostel but unfortunately, before the plans could be implemented, a change of Government took place. Admittedly, we now have a new school but it is barely half the size originally planned, and today it is far too small for the number of children at present in attendance. It is a seven-teacher school, with five classrooms. I asked the Minister for Education if it were the intention of the department to expand it and provide additional accommodation, but his reply was that such was not anticipated at present, because it was as well off as any other school. He added that the department would provide a domestic science centre when money became available.

I claim that Carnarvon has a better right to a new school over any other centre if for one reason alone, namely, that the cost to parents of sending a child away to be educated is excessive. If better school facilities were available at Carnarvon a great saving would be effected by those parents who are endeavouring to give their children a proper education, which is their just right. I urge the Education Department and the Minister to reconsider their decision and to give to Carnarvon the school which was planned six years ago so that the people, not only of Carnarvon, but further North may obtain the advantages of cheaper education which they are not able to do at present.

I am very pleased to see that a summer school or camp school, is being held at Carnarvon, and other centres, throughout

the North. I have been requested by the people of Carnarvon to say that the Minister's presence would be very welcome and I, too, would like to see him go there so that he may see for himself at first-hand what is required, for then I feel sure we would get a very sympathetic hearing as far as our schools are concerned. At present one of the classes is housed in the old school which, as far as I can ascertain, is well over 50 years old. When I inspected it last the verandah all around it was badly perished and there were large holes in it. A number of the boards were in a dangerous state and I feared that some of the kiddies might fall through and break their legs while they were playing.

I understand that these boards will in all probability have been repaired by now. But the whole floor is in that condition. In my opinion it is dangerous and provides still another reason why we should have a further classroom or two. The mission school, which is a Government one, run and staffed by the Government, is totally inadequate and, I believe, has been condemned not only by the inspector, but also by the school doctor, as being unsuitable. This school was only built three or four years ago. The Government of the day supplied the materials and it was put up by voluntary labour. It is just a shell; it is not lined or ceiled. It has not even got a division in it.

Last year the average attendance at this school, which measures 18ft. x 50ft., was 71 children, which is beyond the prescribed limits. It is very draughty and the wind absolutely tears through it, as one might imagine, because there is no ceiling. It amazed me how the teachers were able to teach at all when one realised the noise the wind made during the afternoon. There is no shelter whatsoever for the children and there is no verandah to the school. Admittedly these children are natives, but I still feel they are entitled to a fair deal. They squat in the narrow strip of shade along the walls in order to get respite from the sun. I think that if we are to teach these children it is only fair we should provide a reasonable building in which to do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that he has a minute or two before his time expires.

Mr. NORTON: There are one or two matters on which I would like to touch and I will be as brief as possible. One is that I feel that the people of the North are entitled to some concession to enable them to have a holiday. They are entitled to their holidays as cheaply as anybody else, and I consider that the State ships should provide far more passenger accommodation for the people in the North than is already available.

Taking a family unit of four, i.e., a man, wife and two children under the age of 14, I would point out that to go from Carnarvon to Perth for a holiday and return costs £75 by air, but if sufficient passenger accommodation were found on the boats that family could travel to Perth and return at a cost of £32 16s. 9d., and have five days holiday on the sea at the same time. The Government should do all in its power to assist the people in the North so that they may have reasonable means of getting to the city for their holidays. In conclusion I consider everything should be done to give medical, dental and hospital treatment to all the people so that they may live happy healthy and useful lives.

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [4.47]: May I congratulate you on your appointment, Mr. Speaker, and wish you good hunting in the future. May I also congratulate the Chairman of Committees and his Deputies and wish them a happy time in their jobs even though it might only be for a short while. I have now to try and re-establish myself on the floor of the House—

Mr. J. Hegney: That should not be hard.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: —after spending six years in the position you now occupy. I would begin by thanking the Premier who is not here at the moment, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, for their kind remarks when I was being liquidated so that you, Mr. Speaker, could take over. In trying to re-establish myself on the floor of the House I intend to take what may perhaps be a slightly novel course by identifying myself with the member for Fremantle as we are the only two members who now remain from the Parliament of 1924, of which Phil Collier was Premier. In 1953 we know a lot of things that were not known then.

The member for Fremantle and I could say that in 1924 we were probing into the secrets of the future in regard to what we know today. Perhaps I ought not to speak for him because it would be a one-man orchestra instead of my blowing my own trumpet. But I would like to point out that in 1924 the member for Fremantle warned this House about the Fremantle railway bridge and not long after that it collapsed just in time to avoid an accident. It collapsed five minutes before a train was to have passed over it. For my part I came here with the backing of the people of Claremont. I entered the House full of enthusiasm after addressing the large audiences which we used to have in those days. I probably came here suffering from what I might call delusions of grandeur.

Mr. J. Hegney: Were you not a financial reformist in those days?

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: No! I arrived here with delusions of grandeur, with a feeling of having conquered large audiences

in the district. I thought of all the things I was going to do when I got into Parliament. But like so many others I found facing all those hardened members of the day a very desperate experience. Looking back, and having dealt with the member for Fremantle and his warning with a few scrappy remarks, I realise how nervous I must have been because I failed to say all the wonderful things which were said on the hustings. But one does say a few words during the Address-in-reply and I have found it most interesting to look through one or two of the remarks that were made in 1924 by the hon. member and myself. To me, the hours we spend here are something like a jig-saw puzzle in which, when harking back, one finds members grappling with different views and trying to fit them into a pattern.

I propose in my few remarks to mention some of those matters for the information of hon. members. In those days the people at Claremont, the House might think, were not country-minded, but they were certainly very proud of the record of Sir James Mitchell and also, in 1924, welcomed the Governor's Speech which dwelt almost entirely upon rural affairs, the development of the country and the expansion of primary production. We agreed in those days with the claim that primary production was the foundation of the country's prosperity and we had a group in Claremont that worked to achieve a balanced economy. In those days Sir James Mitchell, although he was sitting in Opposition, did all he could to secure the development of primary industries, and I will admit that the then Premier, the late Philip Collier, held much the same view.

After looking up the volumes of "Hansard," I can say without fear of successful contradiction that in 1924 we, at Claremont, were among the earliest sections of the community to advocate a balanced economy. We advocated the development of asbestos production. Today one can endorse the views expressed by a previous Premier, Mr. Wise, who said that asbestos would overtake gold in the millions it would produce for the country. Further than that, we at Claremont advocated the establishment of an iron and steel industry in the State. In those days such a proposition was regarded as absolutely futuristic and fantastic. I am glad that I have lived long enough to see what has gone on in connection with those matters and to note what is taking place at Kwinana today, which is a topic I will deal with at a later date.

In those days we also urged the establishment of an electric power scheme in the South-West situated as near as possible to Colliie, and that transmission lines should convey power to Perth. I would not pretend that the details of the proposal then were similar to those that apply to what is being done today, but the fact remains that in those days we did advocate the con-

veyance of electric current across country to Perth—and we see that development in contemplation today. These four topics represented very valuable contributions to the economy of the country, but I shall not say in this year of grace, 1953, something that we often hear—"them were the days." However, those works I have mentioned are even today topical and urgent.

Another matter brought forward on behalf of the people of Claremont in 1924 and still topical today, is that this country should look to America for an indication of how to produce in our factories and how to promote as much production per head as possible. I have lived to see not only Australian trade union leaders going to America to study that problem but British commissions going there in droves for the same purpose. It was a very wise move and although Australia is now able to produce in her factories commodities that compare with the American output, I claim that advocacy of such a step was important and urgent in those days just as it is today. The next proposition we put forward was that an enormous effort should be made to encourage migration to the State. Again that move was regarded in those early days as fantastic.

At that time the most we could do was to secure a few hundreds of immigrants for the group settlement areas and that was an effort that stands greatly to the credit of the late Sir James Mitchell. Now we have lived to see the tide of migration to Australia in full swing, and I may perhaps be pardoned for claiming a little credit in that direction. I confess I have always been a very poor politician but I have always been happy when advocating matters aimed at securing the progress of the State. However, I notice that in my maiden speech the final matter I dealt with was political and is still fresh today. The point I raised was in the form of a suggestion to the then Government that it should announce in advance any undertaking it intended to nationalise in order to enable private enterprise, in its own field, to hold up its head and not be discouraged.

That is the position today. There is no Government in the Commonwealth at this moment that will say it is out to crush private enterprise. The day has come when we can say that all over the country there is a realisation that, no matter what can be said from the State point of view, private enterprise is still regarded as the foundation of our economy. In that respect I will quote the last few words I uttered in my speech. These were to the effect that:—

Civilisation should be as solid as concrete but the sand of State enterprise should not be too freely mixed with the cement of private enterprise.

I believe those words meet the situation today. I will now leave that speech and refer to two other matters that are still fresh today as they were in past years. The first I have mentioned before and I hope the Leader of the Country Party will not accuse me of having said it twice, for I desire to repeat what I urged in 1925. It is that the people of Claremont believed in child endowment. They thought that scheme was better than any effort to make the basic wage unduly high so that it would tend to restrict a married man to two or three children.

We know that today the principle of child endowment is accepted and indeed effect was given to the scheme by Mr. Lang, the then Labour Premier in New South Wales two or three years later on. There is one thing about parliamentary life, namely, that it is quite possible to be happy in politics even without attaining any high position. I have had the experience of being happily in Opposition for 20 years. I do not take the line that over a long period, even though part of the time was spent in the position you, Mr. Speaker, occupy, during which I listened to the speeches of others, one would necessarily prefer being in Opposition, but one can be happy in seeing the affairs of State moving and the country developing into a progressive, living entity. To see that opening up is attractive, and therefore one can quite readily spend a period in Opposition and remain quite happy.

One of the other matters I advocated on behalf of the people of Claremont in later years was the conversion of 40 cycle current to 50 cycle. That proposition was raised in the Claremont electorate in 1926, and unfortunately steps in that direction are only just being carried out. What it has cost the State over the past 17 years or more during which the change-over was not made, I would not like to say. Neglect to undertake the step must have occasioned a tremendous cost in outsized fittings and in other directions. Now we are doing the right thing, and alas in consequence everyone affected is quite uncomfortable for the time being. However, it was a good move even in those early days, and I am glad the people of Claremont advocated the change at that period.

The years passed by and new members entered this Chamber. I can remember the present Leader of the Opposition, now Sir Ross McLarty, entering this Chamber as a member in 1930 and making his maiden speech. He entered Parliament in the middle of the depression and his efforts were directed to building up a balanced economy. I am pleased to record that fact because members might think that his views would be expressed regarding other matters, but I can assure them that he did not always speak mainly about milk production and dairying generally. In his maiden speech—I am taking the first speeches delivered by members in the

House because, in my opinion, they indicate what those members really think, seeing that they are nervous and it comes out, just as it does with drink—he said that he wanted this State to be opened up by means of more irrigation schemes. That was a statesmanlike start. He said he wanted to cure the slump by encouraging the support of local industry. To my mind that covers everything.

Then he said something which is of vital interest today, namely, that motorists should pay for their own roads, a statement that was greeted with "Hear, hear". But we have lived to see the day when motorists pay not only for their own roads but also for roads that do not exist at all, in addition to subscribing to the revenue in the Federal sphere in a most unfair way. I am quite sure that motorists today would support the earlier remark of the member for Murray-Wellington, as it was then, that they should pay for their own roads, provided it ended there and they were not called upon to pay double the amount and receive nothing in return for the extra money. That is a very important aspect.

Then we had another new arrival—the present Deputy Premier who entered the House in 1933 and stated his belief that local industry should replace imports. The present Premier supported him. In other words, both they and the ex-Premier, the member for what is now known as the Murray electorate, expressed a belief that local industry should be encouraged as a cure for the slump. Now I come to the Leader of the Country Party who came here in 1936. By him we were told some things that we had not been told before, at any rate not to my knowledge, and I had listened attentively to the debates. We were told that water was needed in the wheat-belt, and that if the people of the metropolitan area were treated in the same manner as were the people of the wheat-belt, we would hear something about it. True, the big country water scheme was initiated from the Government side, but there we have an example of an important contribution from a member in the course of his first speech in the House.

The last one I wish to refer to is the present Deputy Leader of the Opposition who is acting in the absence of the member for Murray. He made a statement that pleased me greatly because it was something that had been in the minds of many people in the metropolitan area for years. He told us that he did not see that it was of any use trying to develop marginal areas when we have so much coastal country with a good rainfall still untouched. We have lived to see that matter dealt with; we have lived to realise what can be done with that land by the use of fertiliser and trace elements. Thus those various members made very important suggestions.

Relating to Claremont's viewpoint, the next Parliament found it necessary to deal with the teaching of nutrition of school children. Everyone will have noticed that our doctors in the intervening years have been doing 100 per cent. of service for the school children, which justifies the motion we carried before many of the present members had been elected to this House.

Then we had to deal with the question of buses and an awkward question it proved to be. There was quite a fight to get buses on the road, mainly because of the opposition from the railway and tramway authorities. I suppose that many of the troubles we are encountering today have really resulted from the invention of the motor car. However, we have to accept the present situation.

The people of Claremont were anxious to obtain these facilities but the Minister of the day, the late Mr. McCallum, presumably out of loyalty to the railways and tramways, opposed the introduction of buses. I recall that on one occasion there was quite a fight and the sitting of the House was extended till about midnight owing to our efforts to get the buses back on the road. That development has led to an enormous increase in bus traffic all over the State. Probably my action, together with that of other members at the time, resulted in the wrecking of the metropolitan suburban railway traffic. At any rate, I was one of those who was guilty of having helped to keep the motors on the road. We all agree that the position existing today is very difficult indeed because we have to decide whether we shall have more suburban traffic carried by trains, whether we shall have more buses, or whether the wiser course would be to work along both lines.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You will remember our having had to rush to West Perth station to catch a train after the House rose.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: Yes. Now I come to the slump of 1930, as a result of which we had some very harrowing experiences. At that time there were many hard-fought elections and many strenuous debates in the House. Members assisted the Government to reach a very important decision. The present Deputy Premier contributed to the original motion and the late Mr. McCallum was able to have it amended to a form that was actually sent to the Federal Government. This led eventually to the appointment of the Royal Commission on banking, which did a tremendous amount of good, not only for Western Australia and Australia, but also for the world. Previous to that time, lack of employment was a constant fear in all countries, whereas today, I think we can say without hesitation that, as a result of the Banking Commission and the subsequent White Paper issued by the Commonwealth, mass unemployment has been

scotched and will never occur again. We know that there are blue-prints extant in the Government archives representing hundreds of millions of pounds worth of public works waiting to be given effect to in the event of serious unemployment occurring. At least that is what we were told some years ago, and I am trusting enough to believe that the statement still holds good.

Let me now refer to other things. After the Banking Commission and the hard times experienced, I still had my seat in the House and things had grown a little easier. It was then that we put up a question to the member for Northam, as a Minister in the then Government, as to whether it was proposed to revive the whaling industry after the war. The Minister replied that that was the intention and that the whaling industry would form part of the post-war employment policy. This came to fruition with the result that millions of pounds worth of wealth are being produced from whales caught off our coast.

Members may wonder why I have mentioned these matters. My desire is to show that we have endeavoured to suggest ways and means by which wealth might be produced. I have a feeling that the average member is regarded by the electorate as a person who is not producing anything for his country. He is regarded as somebody who attends meetings and enjoys himself, but is really a burden on the community. We hear criticism of Parliament; we hear some people saying, "Let us get rid of these Parliaments; let us have one Parliament." On a former occasion I produced figures to show that the actual cost of the Parliaments of Australia—I refer to the Governor General, State Governors and the whole framework of Government—is only a million or two.

I have not a copy of the Commonwealth Year Book to refresh my memory; members are not provided with copies, but I can say that out of a national income of £3,000,000,000 a year the cost of government is only a million or two, which works out less than a farthing in the pound of our production. What it costs to run the country from the point of view of Parliament is infinitesimal, and no one would dare to go on the platform and attack the system in face of a figure so small. I have not looked at the Commonwealth figure for the last two or three years, but let us say that £3,000,000 is required to run all the Parliaments. If that is divided amongst the population income it will be found to be a very small sum, and we have a cheap system of Government compared with that of the Soviet which is out to depress us and take our place.

I now come to the time when I was last on the floor of the House, before I had the honour of being elevated to the honourable position which you, Sir, now hold.

The speech I made then is the only one which seems to me to have had some continuity, the sort of speech one could read without feeling awful. I read it through and said, "That is not bad Charlie! After 20 years you had something to give that someone could read!" I was critical of all the other speeches I had delivered, but that speech made some contribution to the debate which I considered interesting.

In my remarks I suggested that after the war we should try to do something to raise the standard of living of the eastern countries so that they might have smaller families, because of the menace of their growth to the food front of the world. The only part of my proposal that has not since been adopted under the Colombo Plan is that there has been no reference to those countries having smaller families. I was working on the general idea which has been argued in western countries, that when the standard of living is raised, families are smaller. I think that is the only hope we in this country have—apart from the protection of the United Nations Organisation if that succeeds—of being able to continue on our way as a white continent; namely, to raise the standard of living of the Eastern races by means of the Colombo Plan. In that way those countries should be able to maintain their population without increasing it at the same rate as previously.

When India was run by the British, the effect was not to improve the standard of living of the people but to enable more people to live on the lower standard, and that is what none of us here want. I am still hoping that by means of the Colombo Plan we shall see the people in those countries having a better standard of living and that thereby the size of their families will be reduced. I hope the stage will be reached where they will be able to hold their country and leave the food front in such a position that it can meet the demand. Many writers have warned the world that the population is increasing much faster than food production. Of course, that is to some extent quite good from the point of view of Western Australia. So far as we are concerned, it is a case of "Go ahead 100 per cent!" It is the green light; we can never grow enough because there is always the demand.

That is one side of the picture. On the other hand there is the deadly menace of the contraction of area on which it is possible to grow anything, and the decline of soil fertility and the erosion which is taking place. Again there is the failure of some countries to put back into the soil what has been taken out. However, all that is known to, and is being handled by experts of many kinds, with the result that I am not so anxious about the situation as I was 15 or 20 years ago when this sort of question was left to members of Parliament and the experts did not seem to show up.

I would like to make a remark which I think is true and in which I think the member for Fremantle will bear me out. When we first came into this House members were supposed to be much more responsible to the people than they are to-day. They were sort of Pooh-Bahs who had to know everything about everything and everybody. But we have lived to see the day when that situation has changed. Not long ago the Prime Minister of Australia made a speech in which he said that he had noted that Professor Copland had said the exchange rate against England should continue, and the late Professor Wood had said from the Melbourne University that it should be wiped out and we should go back to sterling. The Prime Minister was able to say how interested he was in those two views.

That shows a completely different outlook from that which prevailed when the member for Fremantle and I first came to this House. In those days members of Parliament would stake their whole lives and careers upon a certain line of argument. They would go out to the people and say, "We are going to have the exchange rate wiped out"; or, "We are going to have the exchange rate continued." They would make an issue of it; but we have reached the stage where Ministers can stand up and say, "I will refer that to the experts." I am wondering where it is getting us, and whether we are as well off now, with all our modern improvements as we were when members of Parliament had to thrash these things out themselves and make decisions. Things are certainly more complicated.

For six years I have been listening to the speeches of other members and I have been humbled to find how well Parliament was able to continue without the member for Claremont. It went on very well indeed. I had to tell the Claremont electors that for six years I had been gagged; not even a question did I ask! However, they sent me back with a bigger majority than before! Maybe I am making rash statements this afternoon, but I wanted to take advantage of the Address-in-reply to say things that I have often said before. I think there are those who agree—though many do not—with my opinion that more valuable contributions can come from the Address-in-reply than from any other phase of our work here. Why is that? It is because the Address-in-reply gives private members an opportunity to air their views.

When one is elevated to the Ministry he is in a responsible position. He is helping to run the country. However, he can only make decisions, though they are very important decisions; whereas all the rest of us can make suggestions. On the floor of the House private members, both on the Government and on the Opposition side, have often made very valuable

contributions to debates which have been adopted at a later date by the Ministry. There is no reason why private members should be depressed or feel that they are not quite in the front of the picture. I have heard a great many useful proposals submitted by private members over the years. There are many that I would have liked to bring forward this afternoon that have been made by others apart from the four stars I have referred to. But the point of all my remarks is that I do not think outsiders realise how much the progress of this country has been due to the contributions of individual members of Parliament.

I think I would have to be here in 1983 to see things come to pass which I would advocate now, assuming that the same length of time were required to have those ideas put into effect as has been needed for ideas to bear fruit which were first suggested in 1924. However, that is something in the future, and I do not think I will waste any time looking ahead. Reading through "Hansard," I find that quite enough things have been said by the member for Claremont to last anybody for a lifetime! I conclude by saying that I shall continue to support the Opposition to whose ranks I have been elected.

On motion by Mr. Johnson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.21 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 18th August, 1953.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the 11th August.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.38]: In speaking to the Address-in-reply, I wish to congratulate the Government on assuming office and, just briefly, to express the hope that during its term at the Treasury Bench it will prove as efficient in safeguarding the interests of the people of the State as was the Government which it followed.