

of the Government who had sat in the House and listened to those words could not claim that he was unaware of what the hon. member had done; nor could he, before going out to the aerodrome, have failed to see the correspondence that had passed between the Prime Minister and the Premier or not known about it.

It must be some satisfaction to the member for Cottesloe to realise that there are people in Western Australia who appreciate the big job he did both inside and outside the House, and it may be some satisfaction to his family in years to come to know that the good work of this man lived after him. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 23rd August, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) *Expenditure, Comprehensive and Minnivale-Wyalkatchem Schemes.*

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

(1) What was the total money spent on the comprehensive water supply scheme last financial year?

(2) What is the estimated expenditure on the scheme this year?

(3) What amount has been set aside for work on the extension to Minnivale-Wyalkatchem?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £933,829.

(2) and (3) The proposed expenditure cannot be given until the final allocation of loan funds has been made.

(b) *Narrogin-Wellington Scheme.*

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

(1) Following the date in 1949 given as commencement of work on the Narrogin-Wellington water scheme, what work, other than pipeline laying, was done in each year since then?

(2) What total sum was expended in each year since the project started on any work of any kind, in connection with piping water to Narrogin?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1949-50, commenced construction. 2,000,000 gallon concrete tank at Worsley.

1950-51, completed Worsley tank. Commenced work on 2,000,000 gallon concrete tank at Coolakin. No. 1 pumping station at Wellington dam.

1951-52, completed Coolakin tank. Continued work on No. 1 pumping station. Commenced work on No. 2 pumping station.

1952-53, continued work on No. 1 and No. 2 pumping stations.

1953-54, completed No. 1 pumping station. Continued work on No. 2 pumping station as far as practicable.

(2) 1949-50, £93,308.
1950-51, £418,920.
1951-52, £244,711.
1952-53, £286,992.
1953-54, £163,293.
1954-55, £408,912.

ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL REFINERY AGREEMENT.

Government's Commitments.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

(1) What are the outstanding Government commitments in respect of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Refinery agreement?

(2) When is it anticipated that all expenditure in this connection will be completed?

The TREASURER replied:

	£
(1) (a) Water supply	24,000
Dredging	256,000
Land resumption	20,000
Road construction ..	74,000
Railways	10,000

384,000

(b) Although the agreement provides for the erection of 1,000 houses, the company's present needs have been met by the construction to date of 652 houses. The erection of the remaining 348 houses has been deferred for a period yet to be negotiated with the company.

(2) Expenditure other than for housing is expected to be completed by the end of this financial year. At this stage, it is not known when any further expenditure on housing may be incurred.

MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Tabling of Papers.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

Will he lay on the Table of the House all papers covering requests for assistance to build a medical school in Western Australia?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes.

AGRICULTURE.

Departmental Employees, Bunbury.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) How many employees of the Department of Agriculture are now stationed in Bunbury?

(2) What are the positions that these employees fill?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Fourteen.

(2) Two veterinary surgeons, one stock inspector, one agricultural adviser, Grade 1.—dairying, three dairy instructors, one Agricultural adviser, Grade 2.—irrigation, two irrigation technicians, one horticultural instructor, one fruit-fly inspector, one weed control officer, and one clerk-typist.

DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

Artificially Inseminated Cows, Wokalup.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

How many cows have been artificially inseminated from the centre established at Wokalup to date?

The MINISTER replied:

The artificial insemination centre at Wokalup is still in the process of establishment. So far, 113 cows have been treated.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

(a) Boree Park Settler.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Can he advise the House of the truth or otherwise of the claim that a settler under the war service land settlement scheme on Boree Park near Dinninup was instructed to seed from 300 to 400 acres of land with sub-clover without any inoculation and without any cover crop?

The MINISTER replied:

The statement is correct. The practice of using inoculum for the establishment of clover has been discontinued in areas where past experience has indicated it is not essential.

Cover crops are not used in areas and under conditions where the cropping prospect is poor. Experience has shown that the cover crop as such is not necessary for the introduction of clover. Large areas have been successfully established without cover crops.

(b) Dairy Farmers' Outside Employment.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that war service land settlers on dairy farms are being forced by economic necessity to secure employment away from their farms in order to provide sustenance for their families?

(2) Is it considered that this state of affairs is satisfactory?

(3) What action is being taken by the Government to raise the income-earning capacity of dairy farms occupied by war service land settlers?

The MINISTER replied:

Cases have occurred where settlers have undertaken outside work of a casual nature, but this is not normal and is usually carried out in the off-season.

The basis of commitments ensures that provision is made for living allowance, and no case is known where employment has been necessary to ensure sustenance.

If the hon. member has any particular case in mind, I would be pleased to make inquiries.

Further removal of timber and fallen logs from pastured areas is in progress.

Fencing materials are being made available for further subdivision, and finance for the introduction of additional water points, and for the replacement of stock or purchase of further stock as considered necessary.

VERMIN BOARD.

Doggers and Rabbit Proof Fence.

Mr. O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) How many doggers are employed by the Vermin Board in the pastoral areas (excepting the Kimberleys)?

(2) How many scalps were obtained by the doggers in the pastoral areas?

(3) How many miles of the No. 2 rabbit proof fence were washed away this year by the heavy rains between Yalgoo and the Big Bell section?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Fifteen doggers and three vermin control officers.

(2) During 1953-54—1,026.

(3) Seventeen miles completely washed out, and a further 13 miles damaged.

PARLIAMENTARY PERIOD.

Bill to Increase.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Premier:

Is it the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill during the current session to increase the period of future Parliaments to four or five years?

The PREMIER replied:

No, a good Government, such as the present one, is always assured of at least a second term.

BETTING.

Explanation of Regulation.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Police:

Will he explain to the House the object of the regulation whereby the licensed starting price bookmaker in Donnybrook is prevented from betting on country race meetings outside a radius of 50 miles from Donnybrook, although no such restriction applies in the case of licensed bookmakers in Collie or Bunbury?

The MINISTER replied:

The hours of business for betting shops are not provided by regulation, but by determination of the board.

When fixing such hours it was considered that the business possible, arising from midweek races in places such as Donnybrook, when a race meeting was held more than 50 miles therefrom and the consequent expenses incurred would not justify the licensee being obliged to keep his premises open for betting on such occasions.

However, it was considered desirable to make it obligatory for larger towns such as Collie, Bunbury and others to keep open when a race meeting was held at any of those towns.

Some revision of the above is under consideration.

GASCOYNE RIVER.

Clay Ribbon Site.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has the Public Works Department completed its test boring of the Gascoyne River bed to prove a suitable site for the first clay ribbon?

(2) If this work has not been completed, how long is it anticipated it will take?

(3) When is a final decision likely to be made regarding the placing of the first clay ribbon or other similar structure?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Until information from boring just completed is studied in relation to all previously existing information, it will not be possible to express an opinion as to the advisability or otherwise of constructing a clay bank in the general locality suggested.

It is hoped that the position will be clarified within the next three weeks.

RAILWAYS.

Comparison with Eastern States' Rates.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Treasurer:

(1) Can he confirm news reports of rises in fares and freights on the New South Wales and Victorian railways?

(2) As these two States are non-claimant States for Grants Commission purposes, will the reported rise affect the comparison of rates for consideration at the next sitting of the commission?

(3) If the answers to Nos. (1) and (2) are affirmative, will it be necessary to consider raising rates in this State to ensure maintenance of our financial situation?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes.

(3) Members of the Commonwealth Grants Commission will probably discuss this angle with officers of the Government when the commission next visits Perth.

"SUNSET" HOME.

Excess Payments by Inmates.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Will he lay on the Table of the House details of each case where amounts are being deducted from inmates of "Sunset" in excess of the amount of £2 5s. 6d. per week which is normally deducted from pensioners at "Sunset"?

(2) Will he include those who are inmates of the hospital wards as well as those who are quartered in the ordinary wards and will he also indicate the

source of income or assets from which the additional sums are being deducted each weeks?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, the data is being prepared.

NARROWS BRIDGE.

Safety of Channel.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will he have an examination made of the channel at the Narrows to ascertain if it is safe for navigation by the type of craft which would normally use it, in view of reports that it is unsafe?

(2) Can he give an assurance that it will be kept safe for navigation by such craft during work on the current reclamation programme and building of the Narrows bridge?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Narrows channel is safe for navigation, provided boat owners exercise caution in the zone of reclamation work, as notified from time to time by the Harbour and Light Department.

(2) Yes.

HOUSING.

(a) Area and Extent of Resumptions.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What area of land has been resumed for housing since March, 1950?

(2) In what existing electoral districts did such resumptions take place and what was the area in each?

(3) What was the number of individual resumptions that took place in the Canning Electoral District?

(4) How many of the blocks resumed in the Canning electorate already had houses erected thereon?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 10,265 acres.

(2)

Area.	Electoral District.	Acreage.
(i) Wanneroo—Toodyay, Middle Mt. Lawley, Mt. Hawthorn	Swan,	7,700
(ii) Hamilton Hill—Bibra Lake—South Fremantle	1,207
(iii) South Bentley—Canning	195
(iv) Welshpool—Queens Park—Canning	77
(v) Belmont—Canning	518
(vi) Manning—Canning	207
(vii) Baywater—Morley Park — Middle Swan	335
(viii) Bassendean—Eden Hill — Guildford—Midland	26
Total	10,265

(3) 245 owners.

(4) 106, which includes houses under construction. All were returned to the owners except where owners did not wish a return of the property.

(b) Brentwood Estate.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Was the land for the Brentwood housing estate purchased by negotiation, or resumed?

(2) What is the area and what was the cost?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Purchased by negotiation.

(2) (a) Area—232 acres.

(b) Cost of land (including interest to date), £10,272.

SEAFORTH BOYS' HOME.

Position of Child Delinquents.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

(1) Is it correct that the Government has ceased to send child delinquents to the Seaforth Boys' Home at Gosnells?

(2) If "Yes" is the answer to No. 1, when was the decision arrived at, and why?

(3) To what home, or homes, are the boys now being sent and what financial assistance, if any, is being given to such institution, or institutions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The decision to cease sending delinquent boys to Seaforth was made on the 15th June, 1955, after negotiations with the Melbourne headquarters of the Salvation Army.

The reason for the decision was based on an anxiety to expand the welfare work on behalf of delinquents.

(3) Delinquent boys are now being sent to the Anglican Farm School, Stoneville.

The Child Welfare Department is meeting all reasonable costs of the care of the boys at that institution.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Seventh Day.

Debate resumed from the 18th August on the motion for the adoption of the Address, as amended.

MR. SEWELL (Geraldton) [4.44]: During the course of the debate on the Address-in-reply in this House we have heard a good deal about the increase in the cost of living, and the continued spiral of that cost which is giving so much concern to everybody. If we look back, we shall find that the commencement of this vicious spiral occurred in the days when the referendum put forward by the Labour Government under Mr. Chifley in the Federal sphere was defeated at the ballot box.

On that occasion I contended that the people were wrongly advised by members of the Liberal Party and by the present Leader of the Opposition in this House, because we can all remember the full-page advertisements wherein he, as Premier of the State, told the people that he would control prices and rents. Since then there has been a change in the Government of this State, but unfortunately amending legislation introduced by the present Government was defeated in another place. This left the Government and the people of Western Australia without any control over rents and prices of those goods and commodities that go towards making up the basic wage regimen.

At about the same time the State Arbitration Court pegged the basic wage. This led to a serious situation for the salary and wage-earners inasmuch as their wages were pegged on the one hand, but on the other hand the prices of goods, commodities, rents and services were allowed to soar, without any check or query whatsoever. I believe this led to a very serious situation for the workers in this State. Since the war, because of various reasons, we all know that freights have risen considerably, particularly those applying outside the metropolitan area, and this affected most towns.

It is to be hoped that in the near future towns that can and will be served by the State Shipping Service will have a weekly service because this would help materially to reduce the cost of living in such towns. One centre which would benefit greatly by such a service would be Geraldton, where if a weekly service were to be operated and traders took advantage of it, there is no doubt in my mind the price of commodities would be reduced.

Another matter causing a certain amount of concern in Geraldton at present is the increases made in valuations for the purpose of water rating in the town. Great relief has been felt in the last nine months because the Geraldton scheme has improved, and the quantity of water made available without restriction was increased in some areas because of the installation of larger mains, and pressure pumping facilities were improved. This relief has been offset by the steep increase in the valuations of the area served. The department says that the town had not been valued for the purpose of striking a water rate for a number of years. Now that the new valuations have been made, the residents will be affected to a much greater degree than would be the position if the valuations had been increased year by year as was done by the local authorities.

It is claimed by the Water Supply Department that the financial loss on the Geraldton scheme was so great that action had to be taken in this regard. I think

that an inquiry into the rating system right throughout the State would bring good results, and I would favour a system of flat rating. This would materially help towards decentralisation, of which we hear so much.

Northampton people also have their water problems and it is the desire of the residents that they be given a domestic supply. At present they depend on the local wells to supply them with water, and some of the residents have to cart their requirements. It is hoped that during the next financial year some provision will be made to commence a domestic water supply for Northampton. The department has tested the old shafts at the Gwalla mine and I understand that the quantity and quality of the water are quite satisfactory; in fact, almost all that could be desired. This supply could be supplemented from Waneranooka, and then Northampton would be another country town with a decent supply of water for domestic purposes.

Another step forward has been taken in the northern comprehensive scheme of which members have doubtless read in the newspapers. Various meetings have been held, the latest of them this year. Delegates attended from all parts of the Midland, Geraldton and Northampton districts. The idea behind the scheme is to supply water to the areas from Gingin to Northampton including Geraldton and along the Wongan Hills and Midland lines. Anyone who is acquainted with those districts can visualise the wealth that would be produced for the State, the improved trade it would bring to the port of Geraldton, and the consequent growth of that town.

I say without fear of contradiction that in the areas that would be served—the Midland and Wongan Hills areas, including Mullewa and Northampton—there would be a considerable increase in mixed farming. It is understood that something in the vicinity of £14,000,000 would be needed at the outset for such a scheme. I consider that the Federal Government should bear a large portion of the cost of such a scheme because, in my opinion, it is of national importance and should be regarded from a national point of view.

The housing programme in Geraldton has had its ups and down. It has been lagging behind schedule, and I hope that a marked improvement will be forthcoming in the immediate future. Geraldton is still in need of more houses because we realise that it will continue to grow. I should like to see more houses being built under the State Housing Act and under the War Service Homes Act.

At Northampton we have a Government battery that has been doing excellent work for the producers of lead ore and copper, and the Mines Department is to be commended on its action in providing a battery there and seeing that it is kept at

work. It is to be hoped that the industry will be given a fair chance. Any assistance that can be made available should be given because the Northampton field has a wonderful future and all that is needed are time and a little encouragement. The people interested are mostly concerned as to the probable attitude of the taxation authorities. They are looking forward to the Federal Budget in the hope that some relief from taxation will be given to mining ventures such as the lead and copper mines at Northampton.

The Main Roads Department is doing an excellent job in the district. It is proceeding with the construction and sealing of the Northampton-Carnarvon-rd., and I can assure members that the department deserves to be highly commended upon the work that has been done to date. The engineers and workmen have done a very good job and the residents are very pleased, as also are the people in the far North who use it.

Unfortunately, the Geraldton district has not a great number of industries to keep the port going. We are mostly dependent upon primary production. I should like to pay a tribute to the people engaged in the crayfishing industry and in the fishing industry generally, and also the people engaged in the tomato industry. Only by hard work, concentration and continual improvement in their methods and energy in seeking fresh markets have those engaged in these industries been able to continue and prosper.

The tomato growers are very grateful for the assistance and advice given to them by officers of the Department of Agriculture. I have previously spoken in this House—as have other members—of the very good work done by the agricultural advisers, and it is considered that more money should be made available to the department so that more officers might be maintained in the field to advise primary producers. I have a letter from the Tomato Growers' Association of Geraldton, a portion of which I should like to quote—

The association appreciates the work which has already been instituted and notes with particular interest the proposal to employ a full-time officer in the tomato industry alone.

It is felt that an officer, fully conversant with the practical application of research information in both the metropolitan and Geraldton districts, is essential to the development of this industry.

That was written in connection with representations made to the Minister, to which he agreed. It shows that the growers are grateful for what these officers are doing for them.

Much has been said, and doubtless more will be said in future, of the need for regional hospitals in various districts. I

am a firm believer in the establishment of these hospitals, and I believe that 100 per cent. of the people consider that a regional hospital should be built in Geraldton. A large amount of money has been spent on improvements and repairs to the existing hospital, for which everyone is grateful. The staff is doing an excellent job, but it is the desire of everybody to see a regional hospital erected in the district. An excellent site has been set aside for the purpose, but it would appear from information received from the department that this is another case of funds not being available to do the job.

Recently the department controlling flora and fauna undertook to take over as a reserve a piece of territory extending from south of the Murchison River to well into the Shark Bay area. No objection can be taken by people in the district to the territory north of the Murchison River being so used, but they take great exception to the inclusion of any area south of the river. Anyone acquainted with the country will understand the position. In the springtime the natural flora is a sight to see, particularly on the road leading to the mouth of the Murchison River, which is a holiday resort, but as regards fauna, it will become merely a breeding ground for vermin, mostly kangaroos and emus.

Kangaroos and emus which breed south of the river cannot travel further than the rabbit-proof fence. The result is that they follow the river and travel along the fence till they come to the farming areas at Ajana, Galena and Binnu. I leave it to the farmers in this Chamber to imagine the damage that can be done by vermin which are allowed to breed under circumstances such as I have mentioned. It is to be hoped that the department will ease the restrictions as regards the territory south of the river, so as to allow hunters to have an open go at beating the kangaroos and emus in that area.

The cultivation of light lands in my electorate has progressed favourably during the past twelve months and a lot more of this class of country has been brought under cultivation. It is to be hoped that this development will continue in the future as it has in the past few years. Those who are familiar with the country of which I speak know that it must be handled carefully and by men who know what they are about; otherwise ruin and trouble can follow in the wake of any attempt to open up the light land. This development is particularly pleasing to those who hope for the establishment of abattoirs and freezing works in the district.

The more light land that is brought under cultivation the more will the sheep population of the area grow and that in its turn will in time necessitate the establishment of abattoirs and freezing works

in the district. At present the farmers producing fat lambs in the area I have mentioned have to rely on the metropolitan market for their sales and it is considered that with sufficient increase in the sheep population of the northern areas, the time is fast approaching when recognition will have to be given to the need for establishing a freezing works in the Geraldton area.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [5.3]: I wish first to have something to say on the question of soldier settlement and to point out to the House the slow progress that has been made in the settlement of returned soldiers on the land in the last two and a half years. In His Excellency's Speech he stated that 900 ex-servicemen had been placed on farms under the war service land settlement scheme and that the work of developing approximately 350 farms, which should meet the requirements of the remaining applicants, was proceeding. When the McLarty-Watts Government took office, roughly six months was occupied in developing the organisation which the previous Labour Government had started under the agreement with the Commonwealth. In the following five and a half years we placed 846 men on their holdings under the scheme, and that indicates that in the past two and a half years only 54 settlers have been placed on their farms.

One question that is worrying the soldier settlers considerably is the matter of their final valuations. We do not seem to reach any finality in advising these men where they stand. So long as this matter is neglected, the costs of these properties are piling up and the day will come when, as is laid down in the agreement, the properties will have to be written down to an economic value. It must be clear to the House that when that time comes—it cannot be left much longer—the properties will have to be valued on a falling market, and the Government will therefore be committed to a larger sum than would have been involved had the question of valuations been dealt with promptly.

Under the agreement made by the previous Labour Government—I do not disagree with it at all—the State must bear two-fifths of the cost of writing-down and the Commonwealth three-fifths. It must therefore be clear that when the time for writing-down arrives there will be a large sum of money for the State to write off. The Minister mentioned dairymen and I know that there are a lot of dairy farmers in his electorate and those of the members for Blackwood and Vasse. Those members are concerned about the position of the dairymen, quite a number of whom are soldier settlers.

In spite of the falling markets and the other troubles that they are having, it must be clearly understood that had their

properties been written down to an economic value, these dairymen might have had a chance of carrying on. The position today is such that many of these men are seeking outside work in order to keep the pot boiling—

The Minister for Lands: You do not know what you are talking about!

Hon. L. THORN: I expected that from the Minister. When he was on this side of the House he was responsible for the appointment of a select committee which inquired into the settlement of these men on dairy farms. He said then that he had all the remedies in the bag and contended that if given the opportunity he would very soon straighten things out. Later, the recommendations of that committee were brought into this House and submitted to it, but what has the Minister done in this regard? Nothing, yet he is in a position to remedy the faults that he then said existed and to implement the findings of the inquiry. In spite of that, he has done nothing.

The Minister for Lands: He did. He brought every one of them in, bar one.

Hon. L. THORN: If the Minister has corrected the faults as he says, why are the dairymen in such a plight today?

The Minister for Lands: For a number of reasons, but not that reason.

Hon. L. THORN: The most important matter upon which the present Minister attacked me when I was Minister was the subject that he did not deal with.

The Minister for Lands: Which one is that?

Hon. L. THORN: Clause 51A of the agreement. The present Minister condemned it and then came to this House and plausibly presented a Bill, just as I told him he would have to. After all, the people who find the finance are the ones to call the tune, and that was the position in those days. The Commonwealth Government insisted on that clause being implemented and it had to be done. That is why I am concerned with the slow progress of the undertaking. Actually it is one of the finest schemes ever set up in Australia.

The benefits to be derived from soldier settlement are enormous. Particularly in Western Australia there are huge areas of undeveloped land and here we have an opportunity of developing it. From the defence point of view, development of our virgin land is essential, and commercial interests would gain equally from the settlement of this country. The working man also stands to benefit. I know that when I was down in that area we were always short of labour, and there were always opportunities for workers to get reasonably good jobs.

The Minister for Lands: That was not the only thing you were short of. You were short of brains, too!

Hon. L. THORN: That sounds funny coming from the Minister, because if ever a man illustrated to this House that he is short of brains, it is he. I do not think that in his position he should pass remarks such as that as they will always boomerang back on to him. As I have said, he never stopped talking about the McLarty-Watts Government and the way we were handling soldier settlement—

The Minister for Lands: You made a complete mess of it.

Hon. L. THORN: The present Minister is carrying on and making an even bigger mess.

Mr. Bovell: The position is infinitely worse under the present Government than it was under the previous Administration.

Hon. L. THORN: Some of the soldier settlers have not a ghost of a chance of meeting the debts with which they are loaded today, because the man who was fortunate enough to go on to an improved property could go straight into production and so is all right now. He is the man that the present Minister was continually growling about as regards equalisation of the cost of development and the spreading of the costs. He said it was most unfair that these men should bear any of the cost of developing the rest of the farms in the scheme.

At Broomehill, Williams and over towards Wagin there were big estates that were bought, containing perhaps 2,000 or 3,000 acres of cleared land and good homesteads. The result was that the fortunate applicants got those developed properties; but they were not prepared to bear a share of the cost of developing the rest of the properties in the scheme. I always said, and still maintain, that there should have been an averaging of the costs. It is high time that the Governments of the agent States conferred with the Commonwealth Minister in an endeavour to arrive at an economic value for these properties in order to let the settlers know where they stand. That would benefit the Treasury, no matter what Government was in power, because the price of primary products is falling and it is on wool, wheat, milk and so on that we depend. Those are the economic values that have to be considered.

The Minister for Lands: Up to now the economic values have been very fair, with the exception of dairy farms and no final valuation has been given for them. Wheat and wool have been stable and their prices have been high; consequently many of those farmers have paid off all their debts.

Hon. L. THORN: Exactly; they are the fortunate ones of whom I have been speaking. But what about those who have not

yet commenced production, or are just coming into production? Many fine properties are being developed along those lines.

The Minister for Lands: Apparently you do not know that in the dairying industry it does not matter how much money has been spent on development. Those farmers cannot be asked to pay more than £2,800.

Hon. L. THORN: They are still in trouble over that.

The Minister for Lands: Your knowledge is fairly poor, the same as it always was.

Hon. L. THORN: During this Government's term of office it has spent £672,000 on soldier settlement out of a total of over £13,000,000 which has been spent in developing the scheme. As a result of the Minister's agitation for a select committee, and his success in having one appointed, a meeting was held at Wagin when the Commonwealth Director of Soldier Settlement visited this State. These were his remarks reported in the Press—

The Commonwealth Director of Land Settlement, Mr. R. W. Wilson, said last year that every available source was being used to expedite land settlement in Western Australia and the projects in this State were larger and more developed than most of those elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

So, although the Minister says that the McLarty-Watts Government made a considerable mess of soldier settlement, the Commonwealth director thought otherwise.

The Minister for Lands: It just shows how bad were the other States.

Hon. L. THORN: I understand that in the Rocky Gully project no interest is being charged to the settlers. Is that correct? Apparently the Minister does not know. I understand that in order to help the settlers to make some progress interest charges have been waived. However, I am afraid that when it comes to valuing these properties the interest charges will be added to the capital value. I tried to get whatever information I could regarding the indebtedness of these soldier settlers and I believe that one property in the Wagin area has been valued at £30,000. What hope has that man?

A settler from Frankland visited me on opening day of this session to pay his respects and he informed me that his indebtedness up to date, in interest and other charges, was £6,000. He said, "I cannot find one penny of it." So I believe that it is high time that the scheme was looked into. I do not want a select committee or a Royal Commission because they always seem to have the same results. I want the Government to act and

go as far as asking for a conference with the Federal authorities in order to arrive at some determination so that these men will know where they stand.

The Minister for Lands: They cannot go beyond the economic value of the farm, in any case. You should know that. It does not matter whether a property is valued this week or next week; they cannot go beyond that point.

Hon. L. THORN: The whole point is that they are struggling along—

The Minister for Lands: That has nothing to do with it. You were talking about valuations.

Hon. L. THORN: I was.

The Minister for Lands: I am telling you that they cannot go beyond the economic value of the farms.

Hon. L. THORN: I know what the Minister is trying to tell me. I know, as does the Minister, that these people have not had their valuations and yet, under the terms of the agreement, an economic valuation must be arrived at.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: When will they get their valuations?

Hon. L. THORN: That is what I want to know. It is high time something was done. When the McLarty-Watts Government went out of office, it was pressing hard for some finalisation.

The Minister for Lands: It was impossible for you to do it in those days because the ordinary developmental work had not been completed and some of it has not been completed yet.

Hon. L. THORN: It is high time it was. The Minister has had 2½ years in which to do something. So far as the Rocky Gully settlers are concerned, that project was started during the McLarty-Watts Government's term of office and surely to goodness those settlers should know where they stand after a further 2½ years under the present Government. I would now like to deal briefly with one or two other subjects. Firstly, the wine industry.

The Premier: Now you are talking.

Hon. L. THORN: Some time ago representatives from the wine industry in this State met the Minister and I was present when they requested him to amend the Licensing Act to allow light wines to be sold in our restaurants. The Minister gave us a sympathetic hearing, but we have heard nothing from him since. This is a most important matter because the distilleries and wineries are like an insurance cover to the grape growing industry of this State, and, in fact, to the industry throughout the Commonwealth. If the grapes are damaged by storms, the wineries will always take the damaged fruit and treat it. That ensures that the settler gets something for his labours.

Over the last few years the overseas markets have been most disappointing. The wine industry in Australia built up an export market of 30,000,000 gallons a year. That market has been completely upset and, according to the latest statistics, the total exports from Australia have been reduced to 500,000 gallons. But there are reasons for that. British investors favour investments in the wine industry and a good deal of money has been invested in the industry in South Africa. The wines from that country seem to be displacing the Australian product, and it is a serious matter for the producers here. They thought that if they could persuade the Government to permit restaurants to sell light wines it would help the industry. I think that is the proper way to use our wines; it is the proper time to drink them. I do not think the Government would upset anyone if it amended the Licensing Act and allowed light wines to be sold in our restaurants.

Mr. Mann: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. THORN: I also took a deputation to the Minister for Lands and Agriculture in regard to storm damage. Last season there were some severe storms in the Swan district in February and tremendous damage was caused. The Swan River flooded and many vineyards were completely under water. In many cases whole crops were lost and, in addition, the new fruit buds for the coming season were destroyed or weakened. This meant that when the vines recovered, the crops, on the average, would be considerably lighter. In this case, too, the Minister was sympathetic but I do not think anything has yet been done about it; at least I have not heard of anything. I think some of these men deserve assistance. One always notices that if any damage is caused to the larger industries, someone will render assistance but once again the viticulturists have been left high and dry.

The Premier: They are fairly wet at present.

Hon. L. THORN: Yes, I stand corrected. However, I was not referring to the present.

The Minister for Lands: According to my recollection of that deputation, they did not ask for any amendment to the Act—not through me, at any rate.

Hon. L. THORN: I have dealt generally with primary production and in conclusion I would like to stress its importance. If the primary producer fails, it will be a poor look-out for this Commonwealth of ours. The labour and efforts of the primary producers build up our overseas credits and what a wonderful country Australia would be if our manufacturing costs could be brought down sufficiently to enable us to compete with countries like England and America. We have the capacity to manufacture and we have

some wonderful factories in Australia. Yet we have to use almost the whole of their output within Australia. If we could compete with overseas manufacturers and export our manufactured articles, we would be able to establish a bigger overseas credit and that would place us in a better position than we are in at present.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [5.27]: Most members who have spoken in this debate, particularly those on the Government side, assume that there will be continued prosperity in the State. Of course, the Speech delivered by the Governor and prepared by his advisers builds up that angle and it is most noticeable, as one reads through the Speech, that only passing reference is made to the difficulties of our primary industries. Anyone who did not know the position in the State would assume that we were not likely to face any difficulties, or at least not serious ones, in our primary industries within the next 12 months. But those who represent the dairying industry have stressed the serious difficulties facing their constituents, and I believe that the outlook for the dairy farmers is far from bright. I certainly would not like to be a dairy farmer in this State at present.

When speaking to the Supply Bill, I said that our other primary industries are not nearly as buoyant as they were, and if members stop to think they will realise that as our primary industries provide the major part of our overseas funds any decrease in the prosperity of those industries will, as a natural corollary, mean lower production or lower overseas prices, and that will seriously affect our overseas exchange position. And, of course, any shortages in overseas balances will cause trouble in the general economic position of Australia. I do not think it is necessary to stress that particular angle. Members have only to think of the difficulties that faced England immediately after the last war.

Mr. May: But that situation will arise in any case if the wheat is not sold.

Mr. PERKINS: I am merely making the point that those difficulties are here, and, in my opinion, too many members are assuming that the same easy prosperity to which we have become accustomed in recent years, is likely to carry on even if we do not take stock of our costs position. The point I would like to make is that it is necessary at the present time to take stock of our costs basis in Australia, not only in primary industry where the difficulties will be felt first, but throughout the whole of industry and throughout the whole of the economic set-up in the Commonwealth.

It is quite evident that if there is a very severe check to primary industry, it could quite easily be reflected back through the economic fabric generally. All I am trying to do is to stress that it is not merely

a problem affecting those directly concerned with the land, whether they be in actual primary production or not, in those particular areas, but that it is a problem of vital interest to every person within this community. Unfortunately, I do not believe that sufficient people are worrying as much as they should be about that position.

I do not think there is anything very seriously wrong; the trouble is that it has been possible for too many people to obtain very good incomes, and to obtain all they require—or most of what they require—without working unduly hard, or putting their best effort forward, since the war ended. What I am trying to say is that I think the end of that holiday has come, and that we will have to see a great deal more efficiency in industry in every direction. I do not say it applies to only one section of the industry. I think it applies right throughout.

Personally, I wish the Minister for Native Welfare were in his seat, because on looking through His Excellency the Governor's Speech I noticed something that affects his department. On page 7 of His Excellency's Speech there is the following:—

The Native Welfare Act passed last session marks a progressive step in the welfare, advancement and assimilation of the native population and many restrictive and punitive measures derogatory to the interests of the natives have been removed.

Financial assistance has been rendered to religious missions in their important work for native welfare.

That is all very well as far as it goes, but I believe that the Department of Native Welfare in particular can do very much more for the native at the present time, than can the mere alteration of Acts of Parliament.

That particular viewpoint was stressed very strongly in this House when those Bills were under consideration. While I think most members will agree that the amendments referred to in the Governor's Speech were quite desirable, further action is required to really improve the lot of the native. I would say that at the present time the Department of Native Welfare is showing less interest in the welfare of the natives than it did in the time of the last Government.

The Minister for Housing: Never.

Mr. PERKINS: I hear the Minister for Housing muttering. I wonder whether he knows, or whether the Minister for Native Welfare knows, that there is a very serious attack of trachoma among natives right throughout our agricultural areas. I would like to refer particularly to two centres I know very well in my electorate. At Kwoiyin there are six cases at the school, and 20 among others in the district, which are known to the local health authorities.

At Shackleton there are also six cases among the children at the school, and 19 cases among other residents of the district; they may be either children or adults.

The Minister for Health: The Health Department is doing everything possible to alleviate that.

Mr. PERKINS: I agree, and I am not criticising the Health Department at all. I also know that at another centre which is not in my electorate, the teacher has the disease, and there are a considerable number of children in the school who also have trachoma. I do not suggest they are all natives, but the point I am working round to is that the real seriousness of the position lies in the difficulty of controlling and clearing up a disease such as this, while it is prevalent among the native population.

Further, it has an extremely bad effect inasmuch as it causes the white population to criticise the conditions under which the natives live. That may not be a bad thing in itself, but they are also inclined to suggest that it is not desirable that the natives should come to school with the white children. That is a viewpoint I do not support, and one which I am sure most members of this House do not support. But we must realise that if the native children are to be educated with the white children, the parents can reasonably ask that the health of the native children should be such as not likely to cause a spread of a serious complaint such as trachoma.

I understand that one of the difficulties of this complaint is that in very many cases the patient does not know he has the disease until he is examined by a doctor, and, so far as I am aware, most of these cases have been discovered by routine visits of inspection by doctors employed either by the Department of Education or the Health Department. I think it is all to the good that those visits have been made. But the treatment of the disease is also difficult. I understand that in order to treat the disease successfully, it is necessary to give sulfa tablets twice a day. In the school this has been handled quite successfully because the teachers have been supervising the giving of these drugs. I have no doubt that all the children affected do get the drugs.

The Minister for Health: They are doing a wonderfully good job.

Mr. PERKINS: But what is the Department of Native Welfare doing to see that the other natives in the district receive the drugs? It is hard enough in many instances to get other people who are living under better conditions, and who, presumably, have been better educated to observe and accept higher health standards, to carry out a course of treatment like this. So one can quite understand that for many natives it is a very difficult problem indeed.

My information is that at Shackleton not only is the teacher treating the children at the school but, in conjunction with a notably public-spirited lady in the area, he is going out and treating the cases in the district as well. That is, of course, to their credit, but I doubt whether it would be possible to arrange something as comprehensive as that in most other districts. While the children at Kwolyin are receiving attention in school, I doubt whether the treatment of a few of the other natives affected is being supervised.

There is a tendency on the part of the Department of Native Welfare to wash its hands of the matter and say it is not its responsibility. It pushes the responsibility on to the Health Department which, in turn, passes it on to the local health authority.

The Minister for Native Welfare: How long has the position you have just mentioned been going on?

Mr. PERKINS: I do not think it has been going on in the past. I certainly have not heard of it, because there has not been such a widespread epidemic of trachoma, if one might use that term in relation to the seriousness of the outbreak of this disease. But the Department of Native Welfare does not appear to be taking any action on its own account at all, other than to suggest that it is health problem with which the Health Department or the local health authority must cope.

The point I wish to make is that that is not a reasonable approach to the problem. I think we must agree that while the Health Department is doing everything possible, it is not feasible for that department to recruit sufficient personnel to go into these areas and stay there for perhaps a fortnight or three weeks, or whatever the duration of the treatment is, in order to supervise the treatment being given to the patients. It is equally impossible for the local health authority to do that.

In this particular instance the local authority employs a full-time health inspector, but it is unreasonable to expect that health inspector to spend all his time in one particular area seeing that the treatment is being taken by these little native patients. But the Department of Native Welfare has inspectors travelling through these areas, and I cannot see any reason why one of its men should not be stationed in an area where there is a bad outbreak of trachoma to see that the disease is cleaned up among the native population in that area. If the Government is going to force the responsibility back on the local authority, while that local authority is charged with the responsibility of the public health in its own particular territory, it will work most unfairly between one local authority and another.

Quite obviously if a local authority is trying to improve the lot of the natives in its area, and if other public-spirited citizens are doing what they can, it is likely that there will be a disproportionate number of natives coming to that particular area. All of us know how natives migrate from one area to another, and if they are able to obtain better treatment in one district than in another, it is quite reasonable to expect that a disproportionate number will migrate to the area where the better treatment is being meted out. Judging by the speeches made by the Minister for Native Welfare, I would have thought that we were going to see a new outlook in the department. It was going to be a department of native welfare.

The Minister for Native Welfare: There has been a big improvement.

Mr. PERKINS: There is no evidence of it in the areas that I know well.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Ask any of the 27 missions.

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister talks about the missions. I would point out that only a limited number of natives live at the missions. The greater number are spread around the countryside. Is it not the policy of the Government to see that the natives are absorbed into the community as a whole? Surely he does not want all the natives to live at the missions! If he is not going to take the necessary steps to see that the natives, when they are dispersed throughout the local community, can receive help and treatment when some trouble like this occurs, he is defeating what he states is the objective of the Government, namely, to see that they are absorbed into the local community.

We cannot expect the local community to accept the natives if serious diseases like this one are going to be spread in the process. I know one family whose children are attending school; and only in the last day or two I heard that one of the white children had contracted trachoma and, so far as is known, it was contracted from a native child.

Hon. C. F. J. North: Is it hard to cure?

Mr. PERKINS: I do not think it is hard to cure with sulfa drugs. I do not know much about the medical aspect. I think it takes a fortnight's course of sulfa given twice a day to effect a cure. It is a very unpleasant disease.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Is that the only complaint you have against the department?

Mr. PERKINS: I am using this matter as an instance. If the Minister wants a debate on the subject he can have one; there is plenty of criticism on that score. When he tries to move me from something concerning which I have concrete evidence, it should make members

realise that the Native Welfare Department is open to criticism. The point I am making is that if the department is really a department of native welfare, then when such troubles at these occur, one would expect its officers to be getting out into the districts affected and seeing that the necessary help is given to the native patients. I understand that if no action is taken with respect to trachoma, blindness eventually results. It can be a very serious disease indeed; it is certainly serious enough for the native population.

We have had endless arguments in the past about native children going to the same schools as white children attend. The criticism from the white parents has been that native children have not observed the ordinary health standards of the whites. There has been a general improvement. Most people in the country districts, I think, are anxious to see the natives in their area enjoy improved living standards. But I am afraid that such an objective will receive a very bad setback indeed if troubles like the one of which I have been speaking occur too often. I think the Minister for Health must have heard something of this, because I understand that the officers of the Health Department have been quite concerned. I have no criticism to offer concerning that department; I think it has been giving all the help possible.

The Minister for Health: We have spent thousands of pounds in an endeavour to eradicate the disease. We have had Professor Ida Mann here and have sent to India to get more information on the subject. Our officers have been through the South-West and to the north of this State.

Mr. PERKINS: The problem is very serious indeed, I know. It is not easy to deal with. I am stressing the difficulty of coping with it in our agricultural areas if some patients are going to be given treatment and others are not to receive any. I have provided concrete instances; and I know that I have given facts, because I have had them from the local health inspector. In the district of Shackleton, I think that all the patients are being treated largely because the schoolteacher and a public-spirited lady are going out and attending to them.

The Minister for Health: The Health Department co-opted them and instructed them accordingly.

Mr. PERKINS: But in another area it has not been possible to obtain that co-operation. I am not criticising the people in the area; they are doing all they can. Although an officer of the Native Welfare Department has been in the area, he has done nothing to help. Why could he not have stopped there and spent a fortnight seeing that these patients were

treated, rather than have the treatment carried out on a hit-and-miss basis, and obviously prolong the infection in that area? It would be money well spent to send an officer there and at least clean up that particular district. I shall be very interested to hear what the Minister for Native Welfare has to say about the problem, and how he plans to tackle it. If he has any proposals for dealing with it, I think it is time we heard about them.

In the Governor's Speech there are a number of references to housing. I have not any real criticism to offer concerning the administration by the Minister for Housing of his department. When I have taken problems to him, he has been quite co-operative and has examined them sympathetically. Basically, however, criticism can be levelled justly at the policy of the State Housing Commission generally. I refer particularly to the operations of the commission as they affect our rural districts.

In a number of our larger country towns, a great many houses have been built; and probably the housing situation there is comparable with that in the metropolitan area. Possibly it is even a little better, because I think the commission has always given a little more sympathetic consideration to applications from country towns as against those from the metropolitan area, since it has been realised that it is very difficult for a person to live in a country town in any sort of temporary accommodation pending a house being made available to him. Whereas makeshift accommodation of one sort or another is available in the metropolitan area, that accommodation is available on a more limited scale in most country towns.

The tendency, however, has been for the Housing Commission to allot houses on the general basis of need. Quite obviously, as a greater number of people can live in temporary accommodation in the metropolitan area than is the case in country towns, and particularly in the smaller towns, there has always been a disproportionate number of applications for houses in comparison with the need in the metropolitan area contrasted with those from the country towns. It has been suggested from time to time that if various concerns in country towns—whether they be retail trading concerns, or local authorities, or any of the other business enterprises to be found in such towns—want married employees, they should erect the necessary houses so as to be able to attract employees by reason of the fact that housing is available to them. Unfortunately, the same yardstick is not applied to the metropolitan area.

If one of the large departmental concerns in Hay-st. or Murray-st., or one of the local authorities in the metropolitan

area, requires staff, an advertisement is published in the Press, and it is possible to draw on the general pool of labour which is available throughout the metropolitan area. The result is that in very few instances do any of the large business concerns, or the local authorities in the metropolitan area, or the various other people who employ labour, provide housing for any of their employees. The corollary to that is that it is very much more attractive for a businessman to operate in the metropolitan area than to conduct an enterprise in a country district.

Probably the capital required for building or renting his shop and for stocking it, is much the same whether it is in the metropolitan area or in the country. But if he operates in the country, and we accept that line of reasoning, he not only has to provide capital for stocking his shop, and the ordinary circulating capital which is required in each case, but also the money to provide houses for at least some of his employees. I think this particular point has been a factor in causing further centralisation particularly in the metropolitan area, and, probably, to a lesser extent in our larger country towns.

It is not easy to suggest a remedy in view of the legislation, both Federal and State, governing the Housing Commission, but I do not think it is beyond the ingenuity of the Minister for Housing to find ways and means of overcoming the problem, to a degree at least, if he has the will. In many instances, perhaps, applications for houses are made and the officers of the commission have a suspicion that the applicants may not be available when the houses are complete.

I think, however, it would be sufficient for the Housing Commission if some guarantee were given by country businessmen who require further employees, so that if by any chance the house is left on the commission's hands, they would see that the rent was paid. A number of country businessmen have said to me that they would be very happy to do that. While they realise that if some more needy case came along, it would be difficult for the Housing Commission to show preference to their particular employee, they are prepared to do what I have said. In practice it might work out quite well.

The Minister for Housing: What would you think of a scheme under which an employer built one house and the Housing Commission matched it with another; or whatever the number the employer built, the Housing Commission would build an equal number?

Mr. PERKINS: I still say that the metropolitan area has been treated rather favourably compared with the country areas. On the other hand, I would say to the Minister that a scheme such as he has suggested would be a tremendous improvement on anything that we have known in the past.

The Minister for Housing: If you bring in cases like that, it will be done.

Mr. PERKINS: I am very glad to hear what the Minister says, and I think it will be an improvement. I wanted to raise the problem publicly in the House because I think far too many people are inclined to overlook the difficulties which businessmen in the country work under as compared with businessmen in the city and suburbs. The question of obtaining suitable labour is a very big factor indeed.

If a business concern were considering establishing a service depot of some kind in the metropolitan area, or in a country town, preference would, looking at the proposition from a cold-blooded business point of view, be given to the metropolitan area, I think, largely because of the ease of drawing on the metropolitan labour pool as compared with the much more limited if not non-existent pool which exists in most country areas. I commend the problem to the Minister for Housing. Apparently he is having a look at it, and I am grateful for the suggestion he has made by way of interjection which, I think, can be used to improve the position to some degree at least.

The only other point I want to deal with is primarily an agricultural problem—the question of our wheat surplus. This is mainly the worry of the producers of wheat, but it also affects everyone else in the State. It does look now as though the season can be at least an average one—it could be rather above average—and it is certain that the wheat surplus is going to be a continuing embarrassment to us. I think all those engaged in the wheat industry realise that it is highly desirable that the further building up of the wheat surplus in Australia should be avoided from now on.

Unless the marketing prospects improve considerably that may mean the limiting of production. I have heard it suggested that, in order to limit production, the first advance on the crop should be reduced materially. Personally, I think that is a very clumsy way of tackling the problem. The first advance last year was about 10s. a bushel which is below the average cost of production according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Canberra, which has carefully examined this particular problem.

Mr. May: Has your own experience proved that?

Mr. PERKINS: It is dangerous to examine costs of production on the basis of the operations of a particular individual.

Mr. May: But you know how it affects you.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not wish to go beyond that statement. This is a problem which has affected agriculture for a long time; that is, the question of looking at the average cost of production on the

basis of the operations in a particular area, or of a limited number of individuals. It is just as sensible to examine the problem in that way as it is to examine the operations of a set of businessmen who are operating the same class of business in the metropolitan area. I think the member for Collie must realise that it is not a sound approach to the problem. My point is that any further reduction of the first advance will cause severe repercussions in the industry—most severe on those least able to stand them.

A great deal of hot air has been talked, over a long period, about the wheat industry, but a certain line of policy has been accepted by the State and Federal Governments and by a majority of the growers—that is, for some stabilised marketing scheme. When Governments arrive at a decision such as that, we must expect individual growers to accept it as policy; and I think they are entitled then to plan their operations on the basis that the policy will remain for the period of the agreement, at least.

That being so, there are probably a number of men in the industry who have started to develop properties from virgin Crown land, or who have bought other properties, in the belief that they were working on a sound commercial proposition; but if we are going to pay only what the Bureau of Agricultural Economics has decided is little more than half the cost of production, as a first advance, one can visualise the capital difficulties that will be caused to people such as I have mentioned.

I fear that it might not have the hoped for effect of cutting down production because it will mean plain bankruptcy for a number of the men to whom I have referred. That is no exaggeration; it will mean bankruptcy for them. On the other hand, producers who are in a stronger financial position and do not need the cash advance will be in the happy position of being able to wait for the Commonwealth to honour its guarantee of the cost of production on at least 100,000,000 bushels of the crop and a reasonably payable price for the balance.

All those individuals will be doing will be to wait for portion of their money for a time with the expectation of funds drifting in as the crops are eventually sold. If there is considerable loss on them, the stabilisation fund will stand whatever shortage there finally is and so those growers who are in a strong financial position will be comparatively happy, with a low first advance—

Mr. May: In effect, they have nothing to worry about.

Mr. PERKINS: I would not say that, but they will be in a comparatively happy position.

Mr. May: Do you agree that a man in a big way is sitting pretty, with 10s. per bushel?

Mr. PERKINS: I am interested to hear what the hon. member is putting up, but I will not stick my neck out in that regard. I repeat that both the State and Federal Governments will have to face up to this problem and I believe it may mean the eventual limiting of production by statute and regulation. I understand that it is not legally possible for either the Commonwealth or the State to do the job alone but that, acting in conjunction with one another, they would be in a position to tackle the problem.

Unless there is a considerable improvement in the marketing prospects, I think we will continue to build up surpluses while we pay 10s. or a little more as a first advance, with the promise under the stabilisation scheme that the Commonwealth will make up any deficiency on up to 100,000,000 bushels export. If we just carry on in that way, we will eventually run into a very difficult storage position and there will probably be physical limitations on how much wheat we can store. From the growers' point of view that would be extremely unsatisfactory because surpluses, whether held in Australia or elsewhere, must have a depressing effect on the market.

I desire to stress the difficulty that must be associated with any sharp reduction in the first advance. I probably represent a large proportion of those producers who have started to develop wheat farms from virgin Crown land, and they are the ones who are in the most unhappy position of all. The man who has bought additional property in order to start his sons off is not in a very happy position either, and I do not think it will be helpful to the economy of the State to pursue any policy that must produce bankruptcy or near bankruptcy for any considerable proportion of our primary producers.

This is a problem that must be discussed between the Commonwealth and State Governments, because neither has the power to regulate production single handed. It is a problem that the Minister for Agriculture should examine carefully in order to be as well informed on it as possible when it eventually has to be discussed at Canberra. I feel that so far the Commonwealth Government has been rather hoping that the problem will solve itself. Obviously the Commonwealth is in great need of more funds to build up overseas exchange balances and while the wheat is here in store there is always a chance that it may be sold and that would be a material factor in building up overseas balances.

On the other hand, if through some scheme of restriction of production the grain is not produced, wheat will simply

not be there to sell. I think we have now arrived at the stage where we have sufficient in store to satisfy even the most optimistic individual as to what marketing prospects there are overseas in the next year or two. The problem is a difficult one and I hope the Minister will examine it carefully, bearing in mind my suggestion that reducing the first advance is a very clumsy way of bringing about the necessary reduction in acreage.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [7.30]: Firstly, I would like to place on record my regret at the untimely passing of Hon. C. H. Henning and Hon. R. J. Boylen. By the very nature of things I came into contact more with Mr. Henning, but that is not to say that I am not aware of the loss Parliament has suffered through the death of Mr. Boylen.

During the debate on the Address-in-reply it is usual to discuss, first of all, the information contained in the Governor's Speech. I noticed that the Speech this year contained some 60 odd paragraphs and only half a dozen of them referred in any way to agriculture or agricultural pursuits. I would have preferred to see the Government more aware of the importance of this industry; in other words, I think it should take agriculture more into its reckoning.

The third paragraph of the Governor's Speech reads—

The economic condition of the State continues to be sound. There has been a satisfactory sale for our primary products, with the exception of wheat.

I find great difficulty in believing that wheat is the only primary product that we have found difficult to sell. A week or two ago I mentioned certain difficulties that confront the dairying industry, and I think most people are now aware of the fact that those difficulties are by no means completely unconnected with the problem of falling overseas prices. It would seem, from the tone of the Governor's Speech, that the Government was apparently completely unaware of the position that confronted the dairying industry.

The Minister was asked a question as to whether, in view of the costs survey investigation into the management problems of the dairying industry of Western Australia, any of the findings of the survey conducted in 1953 were unexpected. He replied that they were not all unexpected. I do not know what the Minister meant by that. However, I think we could read into his answer the view that some of the findings were unexpected. I feel that there is no real excuse for the Government to be surprised at any of the findings. It seems dreadful when one realises that it requires an investigation by a Federal department to advise the Government on

the position of dairy farmers in this State. It seems even worse to think that the findings of the survey should be in any way surprising to the Government.

It seems all the more remarkable when one knows that the Government has in the Superintendent of Dairying a man who is well aware of the position of the industry. I have known him for 20 years or more; he is a capable officer and I am quite satisfied that he was not in any way surprised by the findings. In fact, from the conversations I had with him long before the report was published, I am satisfied that he was well aware of the position and I find it extremely difficult to believe that he did not tender some advice to the Government, or at least to the Director of Agriculture. Furthermore, I find it extremely difficult to come to the conclusion that the Director of Agriculture, who, in his time, was Superintendent of Dairying, was unaware of the position disclosed by the survey and that he, in turn, also did not tender advice to the Government.

The Government has capable officers in that particular department; they would be well informed of the position and there is no reason to suppose that they did not advise the Government accordingly. Even more amazing is the fact that the Minister represents an area which the survey shows to be one of the more unfortunately situated, so far as the dairying industry is concerned, and I am at a loss to know whether the Minister was not aware of the position or has been ineffective in impressing the Government with the seriousness of the situation. These things become inexplicable, particularly when it is appreciated that the general tenor of the 1953 survey was known long before its actual publication.

The officers of the Farmers' Union and the Department of Agriculture did a good deal of work in helping to compile the necessary data and it seems surprising to think that the Government had no inkling of the findings. If the Government did have some indication of them, it certainly did not mention the fact in the Governor's Speech and it seems to have been ineffective in taking steps to meet the situation. This problem has been growing for the last few years and has not arisen only over the last three or four months. For the information of members, the cost of production increase was not handed on to the dairy farmer for the first time in July, 1953. So there is nothing new about the findings that additional costs have to be borne by the dairy farmer and to date the Government has taken no steps to deal with the situation.

The Minister for Agriculture: What steps did your Government take during its six years of office?

Mr. HEARMAN: One step it did take was the one which the Minister tried to take credit for when he said that the

Government was extending the scheme for the establishment of pasture through funds made available by the Rural & Industries Bank. After asking questions about this matter, I find that the Government is merely carrying on a scheme that was initiated by its predecessors. Furthermore, the McLarty-Watts Government established a system of making Government bulldozers available to dairy farmers at a cheap rate. The Minister is well aware of that and he knows that his Government has merely continued that practice, but has increased the charges.

The Minister for Agriculture: I know the mess your Government made of it.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think that this Government has done any better job than its predecessors in that regard; it has continued the practice but with increased costs to the farmers concerned. Does the Minister seriously suggest that his Government is completely exonerated when he says, "Well, what did the other people do? We are no worse than they were."

The Minister for Agriculture: It is amazing! When you sat on this side you did not open your mouth in connection with bulldozers.

Mr. HEARMAN: The amazing thing is that there are records of my speeches in "Hansard" to show that when I was on the other side of the House I frequently discussed the dairying industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, but not to the same extent as you are doing now. Did you ever say these things to your own Government?

Mr. HEARMAN: I think I can take some credit for the establishment of the bulldozing scheme. I was one of those who approached Cabinet to get that scheme operating. The Minister would be much wiser if he told the House why the Government has been completely unaware of the situation, because it is not new. We have been aware of the position for a long time. I even suggested to the Minister that the position in regard to overseas markets was by no means something out of the blue. It is something that could have been foreseen and if his Government had been interested, it would have foreseen the difficulties that lay ahead in this connection.

On this matter I would like to quote a short paragraph from the review published by the Bank of New South Wales with reference to the dairying industry in New Zealand. It reads as follows:—

The dependence of the New Zealand economy on the United Kingdom market for the disposal of export surpluses of meat and dairy products has been thrown into sharp relief in recent months. With the end of the bulk contract system of marketing for these products, the movements in the United Kingdom commodity markets are now of more significance.

The outlook for dairy products is still not clear, although a fall in prices is expected, and the guaranteed returns to dairy farmers have been reduced slightly for the season.

It would seem that the Bank of New South Wales was informed of the likely trend of the London market and, through its review, warned people of the position. One might say, "We all know that now," and that is perfectly true. However, the date of this publication is November, 1954, and the copy that I hold has a rubber stamp on it which states, "Not to be published before the 17th November." So it seems that the publication was written and printed well before November, 1954.

Therefore, I do not think the Government can claim that it had no warning or indication as to what might happen or could be expected to happen. It seemed that the market trend was readily discernible and the likelihood of a fall in overseas markets and butter exports had already been made quite clear by the fact that the cost increase had been granted to the dairy farmers in 1953. So I do not think the Government can justly claim that the facts at least were not available had it cared to take advantage of the information that was offering both from its own department and other sources.

During his reply to the debate on the Supply Bill, the Premier indicated that he had a hazy recollection of the position. He talked about the profits that might be due to the middleman and the profits that might be made in selling the products of the industry and was not apparently aware that the largest single business that is done in the industry is carried out by a co-operative firm which, if it were making large profits, would be giving portion of them back to the shareholders and, furthermore, it is not the policy of any co-operative to encourage the making of big profits at the expense of shareholders.

So it seems to me that the Premier was extremely hazy regarding what the difficulties were and their causes. For the Premier's information, in view of the fact that he did not know that the sale of dairy products overseas is still conducted through the Dairy Products Marketing Board—as it always has been done in the past—I can inform him that the selling system is no different. The fact is that the world parity price has dropped. The Premier did suggest that the waiving of Government agreements might have been the cause of this.

We know that, under the Government agreement of the last two or three years at least, the industry agreement price was higher than the world parity price, which again indicates that the Government should not have been surprised at the recent fall in prices. However, I will point out to the Premier that, in years gone by, particularly in those years shortly after

the war, the world parity price was considerably above the agreement price. While I am not one of those who has any particular quarrel with Australia for accepting some responsibility for providing Great Britain with butter at reasonably cheap prices under the conditions existing then, I still think that the dairy farmer has probably lost on the Government-to-Government agreement far more than he has gained.

In any case, I suggest that whatever set-up is established by the Commonwealth Government for stabilising prices, there are definite matters which are the responsibility of the State. In this instance the State appears to have been singularly uninformed as to its responsibility or even as to what the problem was. I scarcely think the Government is completely justified in suggesting that there has been a satisfactory sale of primary products, with the exception of wheat. I think that statement requires some qualification. The Minister has said that some £68,000 is to be spent on additional work to be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture.

From his newspaper statement, I think he would indicate that the £68,000 was to be spread over all the activities of the department. I do not think it would indicate that it was to be confined to the dairying industry alone. The Minister may care to correct me by interjection, but I take it that that money would be spent on all work undertaken by the department. Today I gave notice of some questions to be placed on the Notice Paper—

The Minister for Agriculture: That money was to be spent in connection with dairying alone.

Mr. HEARMAN: Very well. I was not quite certain of what was indicated in the newspaper article. The point I want to raise, however,—and I believe I voice the sentiments of many farmers—is that I think the Department of Agriculture is by no means as efficient as many of us would desire it to be. I cast no reflection on individual officers of the department. Generally speaking, I think the standard of the officers, in the eyes of the farming community, has improved over the years, and deservedly so. However, I think the department can be compared with Topsy; it is just growing and no one seems to know why or how.

It seems that money is spent by the department without any clear-cut idea of where it is going. We have now 14 officers stationed in Bunbury and I believe that at the time the decision was made to appoint additional officers, the move was held up as an example of decentralisation. In actual practice, I think we could decentralise, but in some ways I think such a move tends to centralise. The stationing of officers at Bunbury, in effect, is no better than having men posted in

various parts of the South-West. However, it does raise the question as to whether Bunbury is a good place to have all these officers. It is on the seaboard, which means that they can only radiate out from Bunbury, in a half-circle, as it were, whereas if they were stationed further inland, they would be able to do so in a full circle.

One particular instance of the lack of wisdom, as I see it, of putting everyone into Bunbury is illustrated by the fact that the horticultural instructor who was living in Donnybrook—he was living in an orchard area; in fact, he only had to look out of his back-door to see a couple of orchards—has been shifted to Bunbury, where the closest orchard he will strike will be at Capel, which is about 20 miles away. He is not nearly so centrally situated. To get to Bridgetown he will have to cover 60 miles or more, whereas previously he had only 35 miles to cover. It seems to me that he is going to travel this extra mileage by being stationed at Bunbury, and consequently he will not have the same amount of time to spend on the job on the orchard.

Apart from the obvious administrative convenience, I ask: What practical advantage can it possibly be to the fruitgrowing industry to station that officer in Bunbury? As a matter of fact, I think the Department of Agriculture has suffered a great deal by being an unwanted political baby. Our contact with the Department of Agriculture is generally in connection with the policing of certain laws, such as fruit-fly baiting and so on. It is not a department which can make a splash in its activities, as can the Housing Commission, which is able to attract publicity by building numbers of houses.

Nevertheless, the Department of Agriculture is every bit as important as the Housing Commission, if not more so, particularly in these days of falling prices and the call for greater efficiency on the part of the man on the land. On page 4 of the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor, I notice the following:—

The activities of Government Departments, particularly the scientific services of the Department of Agriculture, will be intensified in an endeavour to assist growers to meet the problems involved.

I am very pleased to see that the Department of Agriculture's activities will be stepped up, but I would like some information from the Minister as to just what he has in mind. I think the department has suffered through having no permanent head doing a full-time job. Under the previous Government we had an acting head, a policy with which I did not agree, although I cast no reflections on the officer concerned.

Now we have an officer who is Director of the Land Settlement Board and also Director of Agriculture. Either of those jobs is a full-time one if it is to be carried out properly. Furthermore, we have reached the stage where the Department of Agriculture has to be tackled very much more thoroughly and realistically. I think the department should be overhauled from top to bottom. For a start, it should be properly housed, and judging from some of the utterances of the Minister for Housing, the problems of housing that department should not be as great as they were a year or two ago.

On top of all this, we have reached a stage in the Department of Agriculture where it has become over-specialised. It has been said that a specialist is a man who knows more and more about less and less, until eventually he knows everything about nothing. I think we are moving a little that way in the Department of Agriculture. For instance, in this list of officers who are stationed at Bunbury, there is nobody who is qualified to advise on potato-growing, and, of course, the Donnybrook, Manjimup and Marybrook districts are big potato-growing areas.

There is not one among those 14 men who is even qualified to inspect a sack of potatoes or examine a crop of seed. It is necessary to get a man from Harvey to do that. We have the fruit-fly inspectors who inspect cases of fruit to see whether or not the consignment has fruit-fly, but they cannot inspect a sack of potatoes to see if it conforms to the necessary standard. I do not think it is a difficult job to see whether or not potatoes are the correct grade.

The Minister for Works: I think a housewife could do it.

Mr. HEARMAN: She might not know the particulars of the grade, but I would say that any member of this House would be able to do a reasonable job of inspecting potatoes with an hour's tuition. But not one of the 14 officers in Bunbury is able to do the job. Potato-growing is an important industry in the South-West. It is particularly important in Bunbury and also, of course, north of Bunbury. We also have the position where a horticultural instructor can advise a man on matters appertaining to his orchard, but if he happened to see a sheep with foot-rot, it is not his business and he has no interest in it whatever. That must be done by the sheep branch, or one of the vets. It seems to me to be a hopeless duplication of well-trained and able officers.

I have attempted to get some information as to how this problem is being tackled in other lands. I find that in America, which is supposed to be the land of the specialist, they have gone in the other direction in an endeavour to contact the farmer. We know that an individual may specialise in one particular line, and if

in America they have him specialising in anything, they do so in contacting the farmer and giving him advice. It is well known that if the farmer were to take all the advice that all the Government specialists give, he would probably go broke in six months.

If a farmer who had a mixed farm were to do everything that the Government expert advised him, he would end up in a hopelessly uneconomic position. Members can imagine the position if he were to do everything that the horticultural or dairying adviser told him to do; or if he were to do everything that the plant nutrition officer or the animal nutrition officer wanted him to do; or if he did all that the weed man or the entomologist advised him to do. Apart from the fact that he would be working 36 hours a day to do it, he would not be able to finance it.

While all these specialists give farmers advice in complete good faith, it is impossible for the farmer to accept all that advice; he still has to decide what is good and what is not. The whole approach to this matter needs to be looked into and overhauled. We have to get away from too much specialisation. We will never get to the stage—nor, I think, does the Minister expect to get to the stage—where he will have sufficient officers for all those various departments to give adequate coverage over the whole of the agricultural areas of the State. We will never live to see it, nor will our children's children live to see it.

The idea of specialisation was probably a good one 30 years ago, but today it is outmoded. How it is to be replaced and how far we can go along the lines of America or other nations remains to be seen. I certainly think that we should look into this matter and we should make a start. It might require the sending of some officer overseas for the specific purpose of making a recommendation, preferably one who has a knowledge of our problems. Even with 14 officers stationed in Bunbury all the branches of agriculture are not covered.

The Minister for Agriculture: A pretty fair start has been made.

Mr. HEARMAN: All the branches are not covered. I do not think they ever will be. No one can suggest that the 14 persons in Bunbury can cover the whole of the South-West.

The Minister for Agriculture: The present Government, at any rate, has made a start towards decentralisation. There are 12 such officers.

Mr. HEARMAN: The sending of the officer stationed in Donnybrook to Bunbury means compelling that officer to travel 50 miles a day. He was quite happy where he was. The Minister can direct his officers to investigate how far we can go to reorganise on modern lines. I think we have been over-specialising and we are

not getting our money's worth from the officers concerned. If a country like America, which has far more money to expend on these things, has departed from over-specialising, then we can with advantage get away from that idea.

The Minister for Agriculture: This Government has a pretty good record in its two years.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have no quarrel with any individual officer in the department, but the Minister must realise that there is a spirit of frustration evident in a number of his officers. They have a feeling that they are not doing the job they would like, and feel able to do. That is the spirit which can be found in all good officers because people of that type will not be satisfied if they are not able to do a job properly. If the Minister will talk to them, he may find that they have ideas of their own.

The Minister for Agriculture: There are not too many I have not met.

Mr. HEARMAN: If the Minister will talk to them and find out what they are thinking about, he will discover that many of the officers have good suggestions to put forward as to how the department might render more efficient service than it is now doing. I do not know if the Minister objects to learning from other countries. We can do well to copy their methods.

I would like to know the Minister's interpretation of the term, "extension service." What does he envisage by this extension service and how money can be expended on it? Every member in this House might not be aware that the term "extension service" is used in America, and only to some extent in Australia. It is not used at all in England; there it is called an advisory service although the general functions are much the same.

In the United States this matter has been gone into very fully, and their universities now have a course in scientific extension work. It does not only include agricultural extension, but industrial and other types of extension work. They have made very rapid strides in this science as have also the English. I have more information about the American set-up and I am not trying to depreciate the English methods which appear to be just as efficient.

The need for pamphlets prepared by the various departments of agriculture to be printed and worded attractively, is appreciated in America. They are very much like the advertising pamphlets which we see. These are set up attractively so that people will read them; so should information in agricultural department pamphlets be presented. This can be done by persons other than those interested in the scientific dissemination of information. Some of the material turned out by the Cornell University to illustrate certain

points is used quite commonly in advertising. It has proved to be sound, and we can learn from such an idea.

In America the pamphlets are printed more attractively, not on a flimsy piece of paper as is done here; there the pamphlets are properly covered and are more widely read than are ours. The general matter contained in the bulletins published by the department here is good, but at times the presentation could be improved. I see no reason why that should not be done. I do not know whether the Minister is pleased with what I have to say or whether he thinks that everything done by the department is beyond criticism. If the Treasurer has any idea of spending extra money within the department and about extending its activities, I would like to hear his views.

What I am suggesting should have been done long ago. It is of no use for the Minister to say that I have not suggested this before, because I did so in my first speech in this House. I urged the necessity for having the Department of Agriculture housed adequately. The office accommodation and equipment of the department must be improved if it is to attract and retain the best officers available.

The Premier: That is quite right.

Mr. HEARMAN: I hope the Premier does intend to go ahead and do something for this department. The first thing is to decide what lines are to be developed and extended, not merely to let everything grow as it is at present without any definite direction. We can give a lot more thought to this subject.

I am pleased to see that there is a motion on the notice paper in connection with school buses. This subject has been a festering sore in many country electorates for a long time. I realise that the problems are not inconsiderable; I realise there has been a shortage of teaching staff and school rooms, and there has been a great deal of consolidation of schools. But all this has increased the problem of the school bus considerably. I consider there are many anomalies in the various rates that are paid. I believe that we should encourage bus contractors so that they can purchase more modern vehicles for such a service by giving them additional security.

At the moment there is one school served by six or seven buses. The oldest bus is a 1938 model, there are two or three 1942 models, and only three which can be regarded as modern. When I discussed this matter with the department and with the bus proprietors, I found that the former had entered into a contract which enabled the outdated buses I referred to, to operate on long runs over bad roads. Of course, the service rendered is not satisfactory. One bus was off the road for

three weeks this year. In some cases the children did not attend school, and in others the parents had to take their children over long distances to be educated. It is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs, and one which should no longer be permitted to exist.

While it was difficult some years ago to acquire buses of the right type, that difficulty does not now exist. Let me mention particularly a child about seven years old who has to have his breakfast at a quarter to seven and be on the bus by 7 o'clock. He travels 43 or 44 miles to school and the same distance back and reaches home about 5 o'clock. By no stretch of imagination can that be regarded as satisfactory. I am not blaming the Government entirely for this, but I think something could be done to alleviate that sort of thing. A great objection is that the bus frequently breaks down and parents have to take their children to pick-up points perhaps five miles away, and sometimes the bus does not run or is a couple of hours late. This is the sort of frustration with which parents are confronted.

There is another point I wish to raise—the peculiar circumstances attending the Cranbrook-rd. in my electorate. This road was originally built to replace a railway and it is built on railway property. The bridges are built to railway specification and the road is now carrying a great deal of traffic. In fact, the amount of traffic is increasing, anything up to 100 tons of timber being regularly carted over that road. It is a road lightly constructed and a big problem is presented.

I have been endeavouring to find out from the Minister for Local Government what the actual position is. The road board contends that, because the road is built on railway property, it is not authorised to spend any of the ratepayers' money on it. As it has no authority to spend its money on the road, all the money for maintenance must come from the Main Roads Department. The department, in turn, contends that it will not accept full responsibility for the maintenance of the road as it is a matter for the local authority, though the department admits that it is beyond the capacity of the local authority to deal with it. Consequently the department has been of considerable assistance to the local authority in making money available for maintenance work.

The point is that all the money for maintenance is coming from the Main Roads Department. I have been informed by letter today from the Minister for Local Government that in the opinion of the department, the local authority may legally spend its own money on the road, but the local authority says it has legal advice to the effect that, if the ratepayers' money is spent on the road, the members of the board will be individually responsible to

the ratepayers. This is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. I notice that the Minister for Works is listening to my remarks and I hope that some finality can be reached in the matter.

There is no satisfaction in going to the local authority only to be told, "It is not our job, but if the Main Roads Department gives us the money, we can do it," and to be told by the Main Roads Department, "It is not our job; see the local authority." I admit that it is difficult to convince the local authority that this is its job and that the legal advice is wrong. I am not a lawyer and am not prepared to enter into a legal argument on the point, but this state of affairs has continued for a number of years.

With the increasing volume of traffic on the road, the problem is becoming accentuated, particularly in consequence of the very heavy loads that are now being carted over it. Speaking from a road point of view, I doubt whether the type of vehicle being used for carting the timber is the most suitable, but I do know that such a vehicle is not so hard on the road as is a lighter vehicle. I believe that the bridges are equal to carrying the load that any road vehicle is likely to impose upon them, and I think there should be an opportunity to see what can be done on the road if the carters are allowed to do it.

There are some 40 or 50 miles of this road and I believe that under certain conditions we could permit larger loading. This is done on private roads in other parts of the country where roads have been built into forest areas in place of the old tramlines. Tremendous loads are being carried on those roads. I would refer the Minister to the Donnelly River area where 50-ton loads are frequently carried.

The Minister for Works: You will not find them on the main roads.

Mr. HEARMAN: This is a gravel road. It would be a good idea for the Minister to see it for himself because this is the time to make an inspection when it is well and truly wet.

The Minister for Works: I doubt whether it could stand up to that load.

Mr. HEARMAN: If the Minister for Works went down with the Minister for Agriculture, he would find that to carry a 50-ton load on the tandem axle is normally possible and is being done.

The Minister for Works: The world standard provides for a 7½-ton axle load as the maximum.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am not speaking of the world standard; I am speaking of what is actually happening. The Minister should satisfy himself on this point and have a talk with the Commissioner of Main Roads, Mr. Leach.

The Minister for Works: Do not you think that I have had many talks with him?

Mr. HEARMAN: I know that Mr. Leach went down there and was surprised at what he saw. He himself told us. He believed that these heavy loads were having a drying and consolidating effect on the road. Very heavy loads are being carried on very light construction. There is no doubt that in this State we are confronted with a transport problem. The Minister for Railways has told us that we have too great a railway mileage and too little freight going over it, and he knows that the railways stand in need of considerable improvement.

The Minister for Works: What happens to some of those 50-ton loads that you are talking about when they leave the gravel and get on to the bitumen?

Mr. HEARMAN: If the Minister will bear with me, I will tell him. I do not intend that they should go on to the bitumen.

The Minister for Works: Do you think they would taken any notice of you?

Mr. HEARMAN: Yes, and I will give the reason why.

The Minister for Railways: You are a super optimist.

Mr. HEARMAN: As I mentioned earlier, the Minister for Railways must realise that from an economic viewpoint we should curtail our railway services in some areas, but, of course, as a Government and a State, we have an obligation to maintain some efficient transport service in those districts. I believe that with relatively light road construction and heavy axle loads on modern motor transport, within certain limits, we could provide just as efficient a service as the railways are giving, and at no greater cost to the user, but with considerable financial saving to the State.

I suggest that the Cranbrook-rd. provides an excellent opportunity for the Government to try out this idea. We have overcome the bridge trouble there because most of the bridges are built to railway specifications, so that the question of loads does not arise. If the Government would inquire into this matter and put the Cranbrook-rd. into a state of repair so that it could be regarded as a fair test for modern road transport, we could see what could be done by carting to the railhead at Boyup Brook from where the present subsidised road service operates.

There would be no need to put these people on bitumen roads; and they would not want to go on to them because they would know they would have to go back to the 7½-ton axle load that the Minister is so concerned about. I can understand

his concern because if we overload a bitumen road that is lightly constructed, it goes to pieces very quickly, particularly in the wet areas of the South-West. On the other hand, it is possible to carry heavy loads over a gravel road without doing a tremendous amount of harm to it; and the cost of maintenance is no greater than it is with the more lightly loaded vehicle which, economic considerations insist, should be driven very much faster. If we allow a man with a big vehicle to carry a large load, he goes at about only 20 miles per hour, and that is largely the secret of it.

The Minister for Works: Are you advocating that we should build special roads for heavy vehicles and other roads for light vehicles?

Mr. HEARMAN: No.

The Minister for Works: Those who have light vehicles are clamouring for bitumen roads. They are not satisfied with gravel roads because they corrugate badly.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is true, and when we get proper bitumen roads everywhere, it will be a good thing; but it will be a long time before we get them and in the meantime we have the problem of providing satisfactory transport services to the areas not served by the railways, such as the one I have referred to where the heavy traffic to be carted is considerable and, I am advised by the forester, is likely to continue for another 60 years. This problem is not just a passing phase.

It is not like carting wheat by road, which we did for a few years. We have no railway in this area and, as I have said, we have a lot of heavy transport to come out of it over a long period. The sawmilling companies at present are not availing themselves of the full permissible cut, and it is estimated that it will be about 80 years before the area is cut out. I would like the Minister to look at this question to see whether he can find some virtue in the use of the Cranbrook-rd. as something in the nature of an experiment to ascertain what can be done with relatively light construction carrying heavy axle loads.

This furnishes an opportunity for the Government, without prejudicing the railways in any way, to conduct an experiment and see just what can be done and what conditions must be imposed to render the whole idea effective. I know there will be curves, and such like, that will require further attention. At the moment the Main Roads Department is doing something about them. I commend this matter to the Minister for Works, and I hope the Minister for Railways will lend his support towards instituting a road policy which will enable us to take advantage of the increase in the efficiency and size of modern road transport.

This is not a problem peculiar to us in Western Australia, although it is probably a rather bigger one to us than to others because of our size. Countries all over the world are confronted with the problem of modern road vehicles outstripping the engineering and building of roads. The people who make motor-vehicles are not unaware of it because they have gone to considerable lengths to get the load distributed over a big area of road, and generally they build vehicles that can work economically with big loads at low speeds. That seems to be the general answer that the engineers all over the world are providing.

We, as a State, should endeavour to take full advantage of such advances as are being made in road and vehicle engineering. We have the experience in this State of heavy loads being carried satisfactorily over relatively light construction, but certain safeguards have to be watched. Those safeguards are not beyond the reasonable limitations of general policing. I would like the Government seriously to go into the question of the Cranbrook-rd., which presents a peculiar problem in maintenance, to start with, and which is singularly well suited to the type of experiment I have in mind because the bridges will stand up to the necessary requirements, and, I believe, we have there a big area of timber that will take many years to cut out.

Of course, we know there will be heavy haulage over that road for many years. I will be pleased to take the Minister down there, and to other milling areas, where big loads are being carted quite satisfactorily over light construction. That is a fair offer, and I will be pleased to assist the Minister in that direction if he is willing to be assisted. I seem to have wandered on quite a bit. I wanted to discuss water supplies in places like Donnybrook, Balingup and so on, but I wonder whether there is any value in that because I think we do much better by interviewing the Minister concerned than by making speeches on the Address-in-reply.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: The Ministers do not take any notice of you.

Mr. HEARMAN: I hope the Minister for Works will take some notice of my last suggestion. He does not seem very receptive, but I am still living in hopes.

Hon. A. F. Watts: You will be surprised!

Mr. HEARMAN: I hope so.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It might not be in the way you want.

Mr. HEARMAN: Does the hon. member mean that the Minister will take full credit for it himself? I will be quite happy so long as he does something about the Cranbrook-rd.

The last matter I wish to mention is that the Minister placed me in a slight dilemma by his answer to a question I

asked today about starting price betting, although I do not think he intended to do so. The question I asked is not dealt with by regulation but by a condition of the licence. The regulations have now been tabled and I have been into this matter and find that the only way I can deal with it is to move to disallow the regulations under which the licence is granted. Unfortunately, although the regulation is tabled, the conditions are not and so the only course open to me is to move to disallow the regulations which allow the licence to be granted. The House, in its wisdom, passed the Betting Control Act and I would draw attention to the fact that I did not speak to the Bill at any stage, so I think I am entitled to say something about it now—

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

MR. MAY (Collie) [8.32]: I wish at the outset to express my deepest sympathy with the relatives of the late Hon. R. J. Boylen and Hon. C. H. Henning, and my sincere regret at their passing. They were both gentlemen who I was happy to know and of whom I thought very highly. Mr. Boylen was a representative of the Goldfields and was well liked and respected in both Houses. I knew Mr. Henning for many years—long before either he or I entered Parliament—and so I again express my regret at the passing of those two members.

As regards the opening of Parliament, at last my repeated objections to the arrangements made in the Legislative Council for the seating of members of this Chamber, have received attention and the seating accommodation provided in this instance was a 100 per cent. improvement. I do not know how many other members were in the same situation as I was, but I was told that His Excellency the Governor opened Parliament, and apart from that, I would not have known. This was because I happened to be one of the last out of this Chamber and consequently one of the last to enter another place.

By the time I got there the only seats available were down in the dungeon, in the front row. Because I had to sit there, listening without being able to see what was going on, I had to take the word of others that His Excellency did open Parliament. As the result of the 30 minutes or more that I sat there, I claim to be an authority on the various hair-dos of the lady visitors and I passed some of the time away counting the number of stitches in the seams of the coats of people sitting above me. Altogether I spent a rather interesting time while the Governor was opening this session of Parliament.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did you not listen to the Speech?

Mr. MAY: I did.

Mr. Heal: It was the best Speech he ever heard.

Mr. MAY: Possibly, but any member would enjoy knowing who was making the Speech. Just as I have on many occasions voiced my objection to the poor seating accommodation provided in another place for members of this House, so I desire now to raise my voice in protest at visitors to both Houses of Parliament taking up the foremost positions to the exclusion of members of this Chamber, and I make no apology for saying that. Were it not that such action might have been misconstrued had any member remained in this Chamber when called upon to attend another place, I for one would have remained in my seat here. The fact that I did not do so was due to my knowledge that such action might have been misconstrued as a slight upon Her Majesty, who was represented by His Excellency the Governor, and consequently I went along and sat out my 30 minutes in the pit, noticing, I repeat, the various hair-dos and the modes of fashion of those sitting above me.

During the course of his Speech, His Excellency mentioned a variety of industries, both primary and secondary, covering the length and breadth of the State, but before touching on those matters I wish to refer to what happened in Collie last night. Last week the town was flooded out and it has been raining practically ever since then. Last night Collie became absolutely flooded and it was impossible to cross the streets. At midnight I saw men carrying their wives out of their houses and across the road to other accommodation on higher ground because their own homes were flooded.

Such a state of affairs had not arisen since 1926, until this year, but knowing the winter weather that is liable to be experienced in the South-West, I have continually agitated for steps to be taken to obviate a recurrence of the happenings of 1926. However, action has been put off from year to year with the result that last night the centre and lower parts of the town of Collie were completely flooded, giving a picture of the utmost desolation.

People knew that their furniture and the lower part of the woodwork of their homes was being ruined, but they were forced to vacate their premises and seek other accommodation simply because whoever was responsible for ensuring that the conditions of 1926 did not recur had not done so. I want to know how far the Railway Department, the Mines Department, the Public Works Department and the Minister for Housing are responsible, not forgetting of course, the Collie Coalfields Road Board. It is just a circle. When I inquire from one, I find that the next is responsible, and so on.

As most members know, the Railway Department is developing huge assembly yards west of the town and as a result of that work a large flow of water has been directed into the main channel which is supposed to take the flood-waters of Collie.

The owners of the Co-operative mine also pump large quantities of water into that channel day and night, and as a result the pipeline is full before any of the floodwaters reach that point. In consequence of this, the town has become flooded. Somebody is responsible and I would like each of the departments I have mentioned to make sure that it is free from any blame in connection with the matter. If, on investigation, any one of them finds that it is in any way responsible, I hope it will get busy and do something about the matter. At this stage of the State's development such a state of affairs should not be allowed to continue.

The Speech with which His Excellency the Governor opened Parliament, covered almost every main industry in the State, both primary and secondary. It referred to the economic position and also to the unsatisfactory state of the wheat and coal industries. Most members who have spoken have made only passing reference to those subjects and, as one member said tonight, apparently they are afraid of sticking their necks out. In regard to the wheat industry, I would like to refer to a sub-leader in "The West Australian" of the 25th July this year. It dealt with the prospects of the industry and, in my opinion, summed up the position very well. I quote—

The outlook for wheat is becoming gloomier every day, and it's time Australia faced that fact.

I believe that, too, but not one member on the other side has so far faced up to that fact. Continuing—

On one hand, wheat importing countries have boosted their own productions since the war and can now afford to be selective as to quality. On the other, exporting countries have continued to encourage over-production, with little thought to quality, and have been caught flat-footed in the rapid change from a sellers' to a buyers' market. As a result they have amassed mountains of surplus wheat which is never likely to be sold.

I wish to stress that point because we have in this State another industry—and I refer to the poultry industry—which is being starved for the want of wheat at a reasonable price.

Mr. Perkins: How much could it use if the wheat were sold at a reasonable price?

Mr. MAY: To get back to the statement—

Although Australia's share of the world wheat surplus is insignificant in volume, our growing stockpile is just about as embarrassing to us as is her 1,000,000,000-bushel surplus to the United States. There is nothing to

indicate that Australia will appreciably reduce surplus stocks before next harvest. What chance will we have to quit two-seasons-old wheat then?

However, there is a bright spot in this picture of gloom. Since we must accept that much of our wheat in store at present may never be exported, why not relieve hard-pressed poultry and stockfeeding industries by providing cheap feed-wheat?

Not one member has dared to make the suggestion that some of our wheat could be used in that way.

Mr. Perkins: It would not amount to much, would it?

Mr. MAY: I am not talking about the quantity: I am talking about the principle. The extract continues—

This would do more than relieve stockfeeders and poultrymen. It would improve the storage position and do a lot to remedy the unhealthy economic situation which has been created by paying farmers substantial advances—on overdraft—for an unsold product costing money to store. Even when we reach the stage where we can offer buyers a grade of strong wheat, there will still be standard wheat which will be hard to sell. So a more liberal stockfeed policy could continue, to the ultimate benefit of wheat-growers. Handled decisively and imaginatively, it could mean the birth of a new stock-fattening industry to provide top quality meat we lack. When overseas countries were anxious to buy wheat it was unfair to call upon the Australian wheatgrower to subsidise other Australian primary industries. But today the wheatgrower is in need of markets.

So far as I am concerned I will let the matter rest there. However, I think that some consideration must be given to the price factor, storage and the consequences of such storage.

So far wool has been the salvation of the farmer. But I think it would be beyond the bounds of possibility to expect the price of wool to remain anywhere near the peak it has reached over the last few years. At present the price of wool is abnormal but, in view of the circumstances facing the wheat industry, it is lucky for the farmers of this State that the price of wool has remained at such a high level.

No major industrial disputes have occurred during this Government's term of office. I want to substantiate those remarks with a statement which appeared in the "News Review." I understand that that publication is not a Labour paper but is connected with the Liberal Party. If I am wrong, somebody can say so.

Mr. Court: I do not know that it is, but if you say so—

Mr. MAY: Is the hon. member denying that it is?

Mr. Court: I did not know that he was; if he is—

Mr. MAY: This is the "News Review." There is no "he was" or "he is" about it.

Mr. Court: He has been doing a pretty good job by you in that paper in recent times.

Mr. MAY: If the hon. member will be patient, I will read something to him.

The Premier: The editor has been busy trying to ginger up the Opposition.

Mr. MAY: I have purposely left that out because I do not like to take advantage of any member of the Opposition. I do not know whether this article was published in the journal by mistake because it is certainly not a Labour publication, but in view of the industrial position that has obtained in this State over the past 2½ years, I feel that I am entitled to quote from it. It reads as follows:—

State Government Shows Energy.

In several matters lately the State Government has shown commendable energy.

The Minister for Lands: That must be a Labour paper!

Mr. Yates: You ran him down a fortnight ago.

Mr. MAY: I cannot hear too many "Hear, hears" from the Opposition.

Mr. Hearman: Hear! Hear!

Mr. MAY: That is better. Continuing—

Particularly pleasing is its decision to send the general manager of the Electricity and Gas Department (Mr. F. C. Edmondson) overseas to investigate the development and use of atomic energy for the generation of power.

Mr. Edmondson is the right man for the job and is not likely to miss any point of importance to Western Australia.

The Government's quick move to get supplies of the Salk anti-poliomyelitis vaccine from the United States is also praiseworthy and furnished proof of keen awareness of day-by-day developments.

Moves, also, which the Government is discussing to put potato supplies on a better basis will earn widespread appreciation.

I had to look twice at this publication to make sure it was not a Labour paper but a publication that supports the Liberal Party. I consider that the industrial position in the State over the past 2½ years has been entirely due to the understanding nature of the Government we now have which has been shown in its dealings with industrial troubles.

The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech, referred to rising prices. To date the argument has always been put forward by those on the other side of the House that prices rise because the basic wage rises. However, members of the Opposition must have had a shock over the past fifteen months—during which period the basic wage was pegged—when they found that prices were still rising.

Mr. Yates: There are other factors, too.

Mr. MAY: How does the Opposition account for that?

Mr. Court: What went up?

Mr. MAY: That has completely cut the ground from under the feet of Opposition members and I do not want to hear the argument raised again in this Chamber—

Mr. Yates: A No. 1 dictator!

Mr. MAY: —because if they start to argue along those lines again they will be the laughing-stock of the people. Every year, when members of the Opposition were sitting on this side of the House as a Government, we were told, "Do not blame the retailers for putting up the price of commodities; blame the rise in the basic wage!" The then Government was always told by us that it was the rise in prices that caused a rise in the basic wage. The basic wage did not rise first; it was always the increase in the price of commodities that caused an increase in the basic wage. Further to that, the court pegged the basic wage and yet the price of commodities still continued to rise. As I said before, Opposition members should not argue along those lines again after having had that experience.

The Premier: That has quietened the Opposition! A real knockout blow!

Mr. MAY: I did not intend to flatten them so completely, but evidently they have taken it to heart.

Mr. Court: I did not think you could be so dictatorial.

Mr. MAY: I believe that most of the prices today are controlled as a result of an unholy alliance between the wholesalers and the retailers. I am not speaking of the small retailers, but those who have the game by the throat.

Mr. Brady: Those who support the Liberal Party.

Mr. Wild: Would you say that that applies to groceries?

Mr. MAY: It applies to most things.

Mr. Wild: I suggest that you go to Victoria Park today and have a look around one the stores out there.

Mr. MAY: I know; I have been there.

Mr. Wild: Why did you go there?

Mr. MAY: I did not go there just for the sake of curiosity. I believe we are in the midst of circumstances created by—

Mr. Wild: Competition!

Mr. MAY: —the unholy alliance between those people who are interested in the wholesale and large retail distribution of commodities in this State. All this talk of price cutting does not belie the fact that the establishment in Victoria Park, to which the member for Dale has referred, is only trying to give the people a reasonable deal by offering goods at cheap prices, and this only confirms my suspicions that there is an unholy alliance between the wholesalers and large retailers.

Mr. Yates: Name some of these members of the unholy alliance.

Mr. MAY: I could name all of them. It is a poor thing to try to criticise those people in Victoria Park who are trying to do the right thing by the the public. The member for Nedlands, the other evening, made a remarkable speech with reference to General Motors Holdens. I think it was repetition of a speech he made elsewhere and apparently he decided to re-iterate it in this House for our benefit.

Mr. Court: I never had a chance to put it over before.

Mr. MAY: Over where?

Mr. Court: Anywhere.

Mr. MAY: The hon. member is quite sure of that?

Mr. Court: My word!

Mr. MAY: It would appear that these days there is a perfect understanding among wholesalers and large retail organisations on the fixation of prices.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Would that apply to the meat industry?

Mr. MAY: Yes, it would; goodness knows it is dear enough!

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I do not think you will find an unholy alliance between the wholesalers and the retailers in the meat industry.

Mr. MAY: No matter what the hon. member says, one has only to accompany the housewife on a Friday or Saturday morning, when she has to do her shopping, to obtain sufficient evidence to convince anyone. Perhaps the hon. member does not have to bother about that sort of thing, but many people do.

The Minister for Railways: No; he has plenty!

Mr. MAY: During his speech, the Leader of the Opposition made a great deal of reference to strikes and raised the question whether a worker should have the right to strike. Of course, the worker has the right to say whether he will work

for a certain employer or whether he prefers to seek employment elsewhere. It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is not in his seat because I will now give the House an illustration for his benefit. I would venture to say that in the hon. member's own particular sphere, when he takes his cattle to market, he places a reserve price on them before they enter the saleyard.

If the auctioneer is unable to get that reserve price, I bet all the tea in China that the Leader of the Opposition will not let his cattle be sold. He would take them back to the farm and keep them until he was able to get the price he wanted. Is that not tantamount to striking? It is worse; it is denying the people what they need in their daily lives. On the other hand, I do not mean that anyone should get rid of his produce at a figure which would not cover his cost of production plus a reasonable margin; he should get a reasonable figure.

Mr. Wild: Do you put a reserve price on your wheat?

Mr. MAY: The same applies to the man who has only his labour to sell. He naturally tries to sell it on the best possible market.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What about the market gardener who ploughs in his crop when he cannot get the price he wants?

Mr. MAY: That has nothing to do with it. He can plough in his crop if he wants to. Everyone is entitled to a fair return for his produce.

Mr. Yates: Most of them accept it.

Mr. MAY: They still have the right to say whether they will sell it or not.

Mr. Yates: That has nothing to do with the man's employment.

Mr. MAY: It has, when one considers the other side of the picture; when one considers the man's wife who has to provide the wherewithal for the family. Any worker has the right to say whether he will sell his labour at a certain price, just as the other man has the perfect right to say at what price he will sell his commodities.

Mr. Hearman: You do not want them to have that right; you want prices controlled.

Mr. MAY: I cannot understand what the member for Blackwood is saying, so I will let it go at that. A situation has developed in this State in relation to prices which really warrants the Government's attention and the need for the re-introduction of price control on certain commodities.

Mr. O'Brien: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAY: I have another article from the "News Review" of Monday, the 8th August, 1955, and I would like to read the

following extract from it. It is headed, "Taxpayers Should Insist on Far-Reaching Concessions." The article states:—

Every effort needs to be made by bodies interested in the promotion of trade and general prosperity to persuade the Federal Government to plough back into industry the whole of its 1954-55 surplus of £70,000,000.

I think the member for Cottesloe said something about ploughing back just now, but I do not think he was referring to this. The article then goes on—

The abolition of the pay-roll tax and an easing of the sales tax would have a salutary effect on costs and prices.

I believe it would, too.

Such action would show that the Commonwealth was prepared to go some way towards a realisation of its plea for a reduction in the high cost structure of Australian industry. Much of the talk from the Federal Treasury on taxation is misleading.

For example, last year, they said they were cutting individual income tax in the aggregate £23½ million. But the Commonwealth Government benefits from inflation of wages and costs which increase the incomes on which the Treasury levies toll.

They give with one hand and they take back with the other. To continue—

Departmental expenditure goes up, too, but this is small compared with the taxation levy on the whole community. The cut of £23½ million on individual income tax announced in the last Budget has turned out to be a cut of only about £7 million. With increased population and higher money incomes, there would have been an enormous surplus had that tax not been made. On all aspects, except that of expediency, the pay-roll tax is unjustifiable. This tax should be abolished forthwith. Now is the time to do it whilst the Commonwealth has a huge surplus on hand. The pay-roll tax produces little over £40 million a year. It could have been abolished twelve months ago and the Commonwealth would have still had a surplus of £30 million.

I do not know whether anybody has sent this paper to Sir Arthur Padden, but I think he should see it.

Sales tax obviously should be heavily pruned as a means of reducing the cost of living. Beyond a doubt, a lot of the talk from Canberra sources about high costs of production is plain humbug.

I agree with that.

The first and simplest way to reduce the cost of living is to reduce taxation. Abolition of payroll tax and a heavy

cut in sales tax would immediately reduce the price tickets on most lines of goods. Besides deploring the high cost of living, Canberra tells us from time to time that productivity—apart from production—must be increased.

There we have a paper that supports the Liberal Party, showing that party where it has failed.

I would now like to say something about the effect which the action concerning the Wellington Weir is going to have on the South-West. I have not heard any South-West member make reference to it, although several of them have spoken. Yet the situation will affect their electorates as it will my own! We are absolutely blanketed from any further settlement of any kind in any direction for miles and miles around Collie. We are subject to the conditions imposed by the Mines Department, the Lands Department, the Forests Department and the Water Purity Committee.

The whole of that country for miles around has been completely shut down in relation to additional settlement because of the possible contamination of the water which will run into the Wellington Weir. After last night's demonstration, I would say all sorts of water, etc., must be going into Wellington Weir; it will all eventually go there. The purpose of the authorities in refusing to allow any further settlement in catchment area is to avoid impurities from reaching the weir, and that in one way is quite understandable.

I would point out, however, that the settlements in this area, which has been proclaimed a water catchment area, are already there. We have a large town like Collie and also Boyup Brook, Darkan and other such places. Any additional land allowed to be taken up will be used only for farming purposes and not for closer settlement, as applies to the towns I mentioned. I agree that all marketable timber in the State under the control of the Forests Department should be preserved and I am all for it, but it was never intended when the powers were given to that department in the first place that any land, previously occupied by someone and subsequently forfeited, should be immediately included in the State forests, even though such land may have no timber on it. That is wrong.

The Forests Department was brought into being to preserve the natural timbers of the State. I support that principle, but when three or four blocks of land which are forfeited are immediately taken over and included in the State forests, I must protest. I do not think that was ever intended, and as long as I am in this House I shall protest against such action. When there is good ground for an application for a parcel

of land and the Forests Department cannot raise an objection, it does not worry. It merely refers the matter to the Water Purity Committee.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests is a member of that committee, and he can reject the application when it appears before that body. Such a state of affairs angers me, when I see what happens to a genuine applicant for land. In most cases the applicant is a man who has taken over his block and improved it. With a growing family to provide for, he desires more land, and asks for a piece of adjoining area. The answer seems to be always "No." Even if an applicant should get through the Water Purity Committee, he still has to face the Mines Department. Generally that department contends that the land applied for is in the mineral area, and the application is refused.

Without fear of contradiction, I say that land in this portion of the South-West is the best in this State. Why should it be tied up absolutely and kept in an unproductive condition merely to supply water to the Great Southern, which I do not deny at times is stricken with drought? It is a fallacy to close some of the best land in this State which has an assured rainfall, merely to supply water to a similar type of country which sometimes is stricken with drought. That does not make sense. Another solution, other than closing down such a vast area, must be found. I am making this appeal on behalf of people who are badly in need of land, and I hope that some attention will be given to their plight. Some other solution should also be found to overcome the danger of salinity affecting the water entering the weir and eventually finding its way to the Great Southern, other than by closing down this vast area of the best class of country there. If there are no engineers in the department who can overcome this position, then we should find other engineers.

I intended to speak on the coal position, but the Leader of the Opposition was kind enough to inform us that there is a crisis in the coal industry. A person must be pretty deaf and dumb not to realise that. The Leader of the Opposition did not suggest some remedy to alleviate the situation. In view of the fact that the Government is at present taking steps to cope with the crisis—I feel sure it will deal with it in a manner that will result in a better outlook for the industry—I intend to withhold my remarks till later in the session so that I may see what transpires.

There is only one other matter I wish to mention and it refers to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition relating to the dairying industry. I do not pretend to know anything about the intricacies of that industry. I know the farmers work very hard and for seven days a week,

and I know they are entitled to every consideration. The only suggestion which the Leader of the Opposition could make was that the present Government should provide £500,000 for the dairying industry which today finds itself in an awkward position from which it is difficult to extricate itself.

I would like to know from the Leader of the Opposition from what portion of the funds provided to this Government would the £500,000 be taken—the vote for water supplies, schools or hospitals? The Leader of the Opposition very conveniently overlooked that aspect the other night when he was speaking in Bunbury. He said that if he were the Premier today he would give the dairy farmers £500,000.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I did not say I would give that amount to them. I said I would make it available by way of loan. I said it was a matter of the utmost urgency.

Mr. MAY: If the hon. member were to make it available by way of loan, there would be less money available for building hospitals, schools and country water supplies.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: In short, your Government is not going to do anything for the dairy farmer.

Mr. MAY: That is not true.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Can you tell me what it will do?

Mr. MAY: The Government will tell the hon. member.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You want to see hundreds of dairy farmers walking off their farms.

Mr. MAY: It is very easy for the Leader of the Opposition to say, "Yes, I will make available to you £500,000."

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: To which you are strongly opposed.

Mr. MAY: It is easy to say that when one does not have to find the money.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I can find it.

The Minister for Agriculture: You did not when you had the chance.

Mr. MAY: Rather than start a heated controversy, I conclude by thanking members for listening to my remarks.

On motion by Hon. V. Doney, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.20 p.m.