

some members anticipate, will ensue if this measure is taken to the second reading, and the Government is given an opportunity to try to realise its platform of reducing prices. If the Government succeeds, it will be a good thing for Western Australia; but if it fails, I have no doubt in my own mind that it will be a bad thing for the Government. That also appeals to me.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Davies, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 28th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 22nd September, 1954.

CONTENTS.

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Questions : Railways, (a) as to reducing fires started by locomotives | 1773 |
| (b) as to responsibility of Railways Commission for fires, etc. | 1773 |
| (c) as to fires started by locomotives | 1774 |
| (d) as to destruction of telegraph poles, Kulikup | 1774 |
| Education : (a) as to additions to Carnarvon Junior High School | 1774 |
| (b) as to additions to Wembley infants school | 1774 |
| Water supplies, as to Carnarvon plantation area | 1774 |
| Cement, as to reserves | 1775 |
| Timber, as to transfer of Holyoake mill to Dwellingup | 1775 |
| Car parking, city, as to names of permit holders | 1775 |
| Motions : Fremantle harbour, as to extension and railway bridge construction | 1778 |
| Basic wage, as to cost of living adjustments | 1791 |
| Bills : Argentine Ant, Message, 1r. | 1778 |
| Jury Act Amendment, Council's message | 1807 |
| Supreme Court Act Amendment, returned | 1807 |
| Crown Suits Act Amendment, returned | 1807 |
| State Electricity Commission Act Amendment, returned | 1807 |

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Reducing Fires Started by Locomotives.*

Mr. **HEARMAN** asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) In view of the exceptionally dry seasonal outlook, is the Railway Department taking any additional precautions to reduce the number of bush fires started by locomotives?

(2) Can he indicate on which lines it is intended to use Newcastle coal during the coming summer?

The **MINISTER** replied:

(1) The normal programme of fire-breaks and burning off is being accelerated in view of the abnormal conditions. A full measure of co-operation by property owners adjacent to railway lines when burning-off operations are being carried out by railway gangs would considerably minimise the risks.

(2) Clackline-Miling; Geraldton-Yuna; Geraldton-Ajana; Geraldton-Walkaway; Geraldton-Northern Gully (down journey); Narrogin-Pinjarra; Katanning-Boyup Brook; York—Bruce Rock—Merredin. Subject to availability it is proposed to use Newcastle coal also on the sections Narrogin to Albany and south of Bunbury at certain periods.

(b) *As to Responsibility of Railways Commission for Fires, etc.*

Mr. **HEARMAN** asked the Premier:

(1) Has the Government given any consideration to amending the Government Railways Act to make the Railways Commission accept responsibility for fires started by locomotives, in the same way that private individuals are held responsible for damage caused by fires that they light?

(2) What premium would the State Insurance Office require annually to indemnify the Railways Commission against all claims that would be made against it as a result of bush fire damage, in the event of the Government Railways Act being amended as envisaged in No. (1)?

(3) Is he aware that the Minister for Lands recently gave figures for the year ended June, 1953, indicating that for that year only nine bush fires could be attributed to W.A.G.R. locomotives?

(4) Can he say what additional running costs are experienced by the Midland Railway Co. as a result of their exclusive use of Newcastle coal during the summer?

(5) Would the use of Newcastle coal substantially reduce the fire hazard from W.A.G.R. locomotives?

(6) (a) Is not the loss caused by bush fires started by locomotives, borne almost entirely by the farming community?

(b) Is this considered equitable?

(7) If the answer to No. (6) (b) is "No," should not this loss be regarded as a national responsibility?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes, but the matter has not altered materially from the position outlined by the then Premier, Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, in a letter to the Farmers' Union dated the 18th July, 1950.

(2) Premium involved could only be determined after thorough investigation of the facts and probably an actuarial examination.

(3) Yes, but this refers to fires in forest areas.

(4) This information is not available.

(5) Yes.

(6) (a) Not necessarily as certain risks are insurable. Furthermore, if a spark arrester is found to be faulty or the railways are otherwise negligent, the department accepts liability.

(b) Answered by (a).

(7) Maybe.

(c) *As to Fires Started by Locomotives.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Recently, he stated that according to the Forests Department report for the year ended the 30th June, 1953, there was a total of 289 fires of which nine were started by W.A.G.R. locomotives. Can he indicate what area of the State is covered by this report?

(2) Can he state how many fires were started by locomotives of the W.A.G.R. outside the area from which the Forests Department information was compiled?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately 4,000,000 acres of forest country are covered by the Forests Department's fire detection system.

The fires recorded as lit by locomotives, would be those which occurred within or adjacent to State forest.

(2) For the year ended the 30th June, 1953, local authorities reported a total of 120 fires of which 16 were stated to be due to locomotives. These reports would include areas adjacent to State forests.

(d) *As to Destruction of Telegraph Poles, Kulikup.*

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

Further to a question I asked some weeks ago in connection with the destruction of telegraph poles at Kulikup Siding, has the Minister any information to place before the House, or to give to me?

The MINISTER replied:

I have nothing definite beyond the assurance that I gave that the matter was the subject of a departmental inquiry. However, I understand that it has gone further than a departmental inquiry and I will make investigations tomorrow to ascertain if there is a report available which would indicate finality in the matter. I will then report to the House in connection with it.

EDUCATION.

(a) *As to Additions to Carnarvon Junior High School.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Have plans been drawn for additions to the Carnarvon Junior High School?

(2) If the plans have been drawn, can he advise when tenders will be called for the work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The preparation of plans is in hand.

(2) Mid-November.

(b) *As to Additions to Wembley Infants School.*

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is it the intention to build any more rooms on the Wembley infants school?

(2) If the answer is in the affirmative, when will they be commenced?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Education) replied:

(1) Yes, two additional rooms are to be built at the Wembley infants school.

(2) Tenders for the two additional rooms close on the 5th October, and it is hoped that work will commence shortly after that date.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Carnarvon Plantation Area.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) The Government Geologist, Mr. H. A. Ellis, set out two recommendations in his report on the water supply for the Carnarvon plantation area. Has the Government considered these recommendations?

(2) If so, is it the intention of the Government to adopt these recommendations wholly or in part?

(3) If it is the intention of the Government to adopt these recommendations, when is it anticipated that the work will commence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) One of the recommendations has been adopted. Boring has been authorised in accordance with recommendations of the Government Geologist.

(3) As soon as a suitable driller can be obtained.

CEMENT.

As to Reserves.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What reserves of cement existed at the 1st September, 1954, for use by the State Government or Government instrumentalities?

(2) How long has such cement been stored?

(3) What percentage of this cement is usable?

(4) Is any Government instrumentality offering cement for sale?

(5) If so, at what price?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 782 tons.

(2) Varies from February to December, 1953.

(3) 100 per cent. The cement is in drums.

(4) Yes. Some bagged cement which has deteriorated is being offered for sale by the Government Stores Department.

(5) Sale price is £10 per ton.

TIMBER.

As to Transfer of Holyoake Mill to Dwellingup.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) Is it intended to close the mill at Holyoake and transfer it to Dwellingup?

(2) If the answer is "Yes," when is it proposed to start work on the new mill at Dwellingup, and how long will it take to construct?

(3) What is the daily output of the Holyoake mill?

(4) What will be the daily output at Dwellingup?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) The future of Holyoake mill is under consideration but no decision has yet been made.

(3) 20 loads per day.

(4) See answers to Nos. (1) and (2).

CAR PARKING, CITY.

As to Names of Permit Holders.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Lands:

Adverting to Question No. 4 on the Notice Paper of the 18th September, will he make available to the House a list of the names of those persons to whom permission to park vehicles on the Crown land in Irwin-st. has been granted?

The MINISTER replied:

The list is as follows:—

| Reg. No.; | Name; | Dept. |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 322; | W. H. Wyatt; | Government Printer. |
| 431; | F. W. Day; | Tramways Department. |
| 1125; | W. C. Smith; | Correspondence Despatch Office. |
| 1210; | D. N. McDonald; | Education Department. |
| 1501; | J. W. Bridge; | Parents and Citizens' Association. |
| 1532; | A. C. Stephens; | Chief Secretary's Department. |
| 2803; | —; | Child Welfare Department. |
| 4085; | Matron R. I. Smith; | Lemnos Hospital. |
| 4187; | G. R. Meadly; | Department of Agriculture. |
| 5445; | J. P. Gabbedy; | Rural and Industries Bank. |
| 5580; | H. Jeanes; | Education Department. |
| 5830; | W. S. Jones; | Tramways Department. |
| 6096; | Mrs. Bentley; | Tramways Department. |
| 6189; | J. H. Caddy; | Premier's Department. |
| 6231; | Mrs. Laurie; | Parents and Citizens' Association. |
| 6859; | N. Davenport; | Department of Agriculture. |
| 7107; | H. E. Smith; | Under Secretary for Lands. |
| 7750; | D. Fogarty; | Child Welfare Department. |
| 8140; | Dr. E. M. Stang; | Chief Secretary's Department. |
| 8211; | Dr. Fletcher; | Slow Learning Children's Group. |
| 8287; | W. H. Moyle; | Medical Department. |
| 8840; | C. J. Dawe; | Parents and Citizens' Association. |
| 8997; | A. W. Airey; | Rural and Industries Bank. |
| 9729; | D. Currie; | Tramways Department. |
| 9116; | W. A. Tidey; | Tramways Department. |
| 9996; | A. Boylen; | Education Department. |
| 11317; | J. P. Eckersley; | Department of Agriculture. |
| 11574; | W. V. Gray; | Registrar of Friendly Societies. |

- 13041; Miss B. Silk; Education Department.
- 11447; H. P. Rowledge; Government Chemical Laboratories.
- 14817; N. Jones; Education Department.
- 14822; Mr. Butterworth; Wundowie Iron Works.
- 15877; F. G. Logue; Premier's Department.
- 15929; R. P. Donnelly; Government Chemical Laboratories.
- 16541; S. E. Wheeler; Electoral Department.
- 17317; —; Department of Native Affairs.
- 17436; J. T. Slattery; Medical Department.
- 17548; F. D. Mather; Child Welfare Department.
- 18784; G. Kaiser; Medical Department.
- 18810; T. C. Dunne; Department of Agriculture.
- 19527; E. O'Brien; Lands Department.
- 19651; E. J. Britten; Medical Department.
- 19808; T. C. Rowland; Department of Agriculture.
- 19942; J. S. Garland; Rural and Industries Bank.
- 22806; W. King; Child Welfare Department.
- 25676; F. Allsop; Mines Department.
- 25966; Miss B. M. McGowan; Child Welfare Department.
- 27208; —; Child Welfare Department.
- 27220; N. Harris; Child Welfare Department.
- 27877; J. A. Kierath; Rural and Industries Bank.
- 30037; G. H. Burvill; Department of Agriculture.
- 30727; S. Farquharson; Child Welfare Department.
- 30830; W. Anderson; Education Department.
- 32476; J. J. Farrell; 27 Florence-rd., Nedlands.
- 33028; J. E. Munro; Fisheries Department.
- 33787; R. B. MacKenzie; State Housing Commission.
- 33598; E. Fortune; Lands Department.
- 34064; R. Hannah; State Housing Commission.
- 34234; G. H. Cooper; Public Service Commissioner's Office.
- 34693; Miss E. Pollard; Child Welfare Department.
- 35123; C. A. Gardner; Department of Agriculture.
- 35698; W. H. Cover; Rural and Industries Bank.
- 36519; F. C. Smith; War Service Land Settlement.
- 36995; —; Child Welfare Department.
- 37168; —; Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.
- 37511; H. Camm; Lands Department.
- 37868; A. Reid; Government Chemical Laboratories.
- 37918; W. Middleton, Wundowie Iron Steel Works.
- 38359; Superintendent, Dental Hospital; Wellington-st.
- 38819; W. L. McGarry; Department of Agriculture.
- 39193; P. Beeson; Public Works Department.
- 39065; —; State Housing Commission.
- 39228; Mr. Shorter; Education Department.
- 39511; G. R. Hitchin; Child Welfare Department.
- 39358; J. H. Robertson; Chief Secretary's Department.
- 39657; Dr. L. W. Samuel; Government Chemical Laboratories.
- 40624; Dr. Glesinger; Slow Learning Children's Group.
- 40725; L. Worsam; Medical Department.
- 41398; —; Child Welfare Department.
- 41463; J. H. Napier; Tramways Department.
- 41895; A. F. Hoare; Parents and Citizens' Association.
- 44302; A. C. Shedley; Forests Department.
- 44309; A. J. Lynas; Public Works Department.
- 46132; C. E. Flower; Chief Secretary's Department.
- 46203; A. Longwill; Chief Secretary's Department.
- 46284; S. Hale; Lands Department.
- 46478; Miss D. J. Baker; Child Welfare Department.
- 46700; F. M. Kenworthy; Metropolitan Water Supply.
- 46827; E. B. Arney; Child Welfare Department.
- 47624; R. J. Cavanagh; Chief Engineer, Metropolitan Water Supply.
- 47825; G. Morgan; Mines Department.
- 47840; Miss B. M. Lowe; Child Welfare Department.
- 47964; Mr. McLarty; Department of Native Affairs.
- 48346; F. Bradshaw; Education Department.
- 48293; L. P. Hawley; Parliament House.
- 48594; R. Seddon; Tramways Department.
- 48749; J. S. Crawford; Department of Agriculture.
- 48830; J. E. Parker; Metropolitan Water Supply.
- 49620; N. C. O'Toole; Child Welfare Department.
- 51309; R. P. Roberts; Department of Agriculture.
- 51797; A. T. Hobbs; Tramways Department.
- 52055; E. C. Moss; Government Stores Department.
- 52095; J. Noble; Zoological Gardens, South Perth.
- 52150; J. Medcraft; Child Welfare Department.
- 52712; W. Finn; Tramways Department.
- 53550; V. E. Leggett; Parents and Citizens' Association.
- 53713; A. S. Wild; War Service Land Settlement Department.

- 54083; T. Sten; Education Department
 54149; H. Wright; Treasury Department.
 54557; T. C. Cleave; Lands Department.
 54772; —; Slow Learning Children's Group.
 55155; C. A. Cornish; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 55270; F. Ryan; Department of Agriculture.
 55491; E. R. Stubbing; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 55688; J. Lawson; Public Works Department.
 56246 R. J. Bond; Under Secretary for Works.
 56375; A. J. Fraser; Fisheries Department.
 56568; R. Buchanan; Education Department.
 56651; R. De Pellette; Lands Department.
 57244; F. A. Sharr; Library Board, 11 Havelock-st., West Perth.
 57260; E. B. Ritchie; Immigration Department.
 57422; B. Baker; Education Department.
 57720; J. A. Sullivan; State Hotels Department.
 58357; L. Vivian; Education Department.
 58707; K. N. Birks; Treasury Department.
 58754; Mr. Burt; Education Department.
 59962; W. M. Nunn; Department of Agriculture.
 59008; Mrs. J. J. Ellis; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 59083; H. Wood; Child Welfare Department.
 59484; G. Hayward; Department of Agriculture.
 61214; H. Kahan; Education Department.
 61747; G. E. Brockway; Forests Department.
 62308; Mr. Grant; Inspector, Lands Department.
 63936; L. Minchin; Education Department.
 64246; W. Neal; Education Department.
 64248; Mrs. D. R. Bulford; Department of Native Affairs.
 64757; L. Jackes; Child Welfare Department.
 65043; P. Stanley; Lands Department.
 65902; E. J. Munsell; Public Works Department.
 65402; J. McCall; Child Welfare Department.
 65614; J. D. Leach; Public Works Department.
 66779; A. Millen; Treasury Department.
 68693; Dr. Watson; Slow Learning Children's Group.
 69592; J. E. Bramley; Fisheries Department.
 69951; H. Trotman; Education Department.
 69977; A. R. Tomlinson; Department of Agriculture.
 71658; A. A. Pilbeam; Medical Department.
 71973; W. Earnshaw; Premier's Department.
 73823; R. Smith; Registrar General's Office.
 73827; Miss D. Guger; Chief Secretary's Office.
 74799; Inspector Cornwell; Department of Public Health.
 74878; E. Logan; Education Department.
 76537; R. J. Scott; Child Welfare Department.
 76686; J. H. Stoneman; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 77177; J. Newland; Child Welfare Department (used at Geraldton).
 77907; A. F. Hoare; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 78282; Mrs. Heffernan; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 78720; Mr. West; Education Department.
 78932; G. F. Nairn; Government Stores Department.
 78940; Miss G. Paddon; Child Welfare Department.
 79471; —; Slow Learning Children's Group.
 80811; Dr. S. Uusna; Department of Industrial Development.
 81169; C. F. H. Jenkins; Department of Agriculture.
 81421; H. Smith; Medical Department.
 82259; H. B. Angus; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 82291; D. W. R. Stewart; Forests Department.
 82471; W. R. Wallace; Forests Department.
 84239; S. Stokes; Lands Department.
 A1185; W. T. Clarke; Emu Point Reserves Board.
 B887; J. R. Eaton; Child Welfare Department (Used at Boulder).
 BU60; E. A. Miller; War Service Land Settlement.
 BY108; W. Rourke; Education Department.
 DR730; R. A. Wood; Public Service Commissioner's Office.
 DR1259; S. Hoskins; Chief Secretary's Department.
 IR144; Hon. D. Brand; Parliament House, Perth.
 KA65; R. B. Hill; Child Welfare Department.
 KA950; C. Cook; Education Department.
 MY69; A. E. Birch; Rural and Industries Bank.
 N56; S. E. Hunsley; Child Welfare Department.
 N710; W. S. McGibbon; Wundowie Iron and Steel Works.
 PN250; E. Lange; Parents and Citizens' Association.
 RO936; R. Barrett; War Service Land Settlement.
 SW2; Hon. L. Thorn; Parliament House, Perth.
 WAG 456; —; Tramways Department.
 WAG 581; —; Lands Department.

WAG 625; —; Tramways Department.
 WAG 777; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 854; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 1022; —; Town Planning Board.
 WAG 1034; —; Wundowie Iron and Steel Works.
 WAG 1186; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 1283; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 1753; Mr. Forsyth; Harbour and Light Department.
 WAG 1760; —; Department of Native Affairs.
 WAG 2164; M. J. Quealy; Dental Officer.
 WAG 2343; —; Chief Secretary's Department.
 WAG 2444; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 2578; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 2602; —; Government Stores Department.
 WAG 2629; —; Lands Department.
 WAG 2645; —; Lands Department (War Service).
 WAG 2809; —; Lands Department.

BILL—ARGENTINE ANT.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture and read a first time.

MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

As to Extension and Railway Bridge Construction.

Debate resumed from the 15th September on the following motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman:—

That this House requests the Government to go on with the outward to the south extension scheme instead of the upriver scheme for the Fremantle harbour, and also that this House does not agree to the building of a short-life wooden structure railway bridge downstream and adjacent to the present traffic bridge as per Messrs. Brisbane and Dumas's report.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [4.44]: The motion moved by the member for Fremantle has been a useful and beneficial one inasmuch as it has focussed attention on the question of the future development of the Fremantle harbour. I do not suggest that I am necessarily prepared to give unqualified support to the belief that all future extensions of the harbour should be seawards; but I think that the member for Fremantle has performed a useful service in bringing the matter forward. I did not realise how useful it would be until I listened to the Minister for Works last week. The Minister spoke for a considerable time and,

as on most matters, he was fairly clear-cut, but there were certain points about which I felt he was speaking with the studied intention of trying to confuse.

On the 1st September this year I asked a series of questions as regards the Fremantle railway bridge. I asked if it was intended to place it alongside the existing traffic bridge, and whether it was necessary to build a railway bridge over the river at Fremantle, and if the south-of-the-river line would make any difference. The answer I received was to the effect that no decision had been made as to where the bridge would be built; but that it would be necessary to have a bridge regardless of the south-of-the-river project. That indicated that the decision as to the site would be made when the necessity for building a bridge arose.

It seems to me that the question of where the railway bridge is to be built is the keystone to the whole arch of what will happen about future harbour development. Unless the bridge is built upstream there will be no harbour development upriver, with the exception of the new berth at present being built at the North Wharf. The Minister indicated that there are a good many virtues in a limited development upstream, and it seems to me that if that limited development is to take place in that direction the railway bridge will have to be shifted further upstream.

Why the Minister has been unable to say that a decision has been made to shift the bridge, I am not certain. That is the part that rather confuses me. I cannot see any point in not saying what the intention is if a decision has been made, and I think the indications are, from his speech, that he favoured upriver development.

The Minister for Works: Surely you appreciate that the decision to build a bridge must be made by Cabinet, and Cabinet has made no such decision.

MR. HEARMAN: I realise that and I realise also that any further upstream development of the harbour would be a Cabinet decision, too.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

MR. HEARMAN: If the Minister says, in effect, that Cabinet has not decided, we do not know whether we ought to support this motion. If that is the stand the Minister takes, it has clarified the matter to some extent; but I think the Minister led us to believe that he personally favoured upriver development of the harbour. If that is the case, I take it that the natural corollary is that he intends to move the bridge upstream.

Furthermore, he gave us some illuminating figures as to costs and more or less argued the advantages of placing a temporary wooden railway bridge, built at a

considerable figure, alongside the present traffic bridge. He went on to explain how the area between the two present bridges—which as far as the foreshore is concerned is something in the nature of a no man's land—could be cleaned up and usefully employed by the provision of various berths.

I realise that what the Minister said in connection with upriver development in particular was, in principle, the recommendations of successive experts who have investigated this matter. The report of Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, the Tydeman report and the report of Brisbane and Dumas all indicated that a limited upriver development was desirable and that it was the best way of making use of the existing facilities and further developing them. They also thought, however, that subsequently we must go outside. It cannot be said that these people favour any one particular line of development to the exclusion of another.

In the circumstances, I was not surprised at the Minister's remarks being consistent with the advice given to successive Governments by the experts appointed to investigate this extremely difficult problem. I was rather grieved, however, to hear what he said about the railway bridge, because there seemed to be something in the interjection which, I think, the member for Fremantle made at one time, that everything was going to be temporary. We have had a temporary traffic bridge for a number of years and it is now almost past its economic life; it is now proposed to place alongside it at some time in the future a temporary railway bridge.

Before long we will find our traffic bridge has actually reached the end of its economic life. Repairs are already taking place but they, of course, may be superficial. The thought has occurred to me, however, that it would be a good thing if a firm decision could be made in this matter. We should investigate the advantages that would appear to lie in the suggestion that a railway bridge be placed alongside the existing traffic bridge, particularly from the point of view of land resumption and the least possible interference with the existing business areas of North Fremantle and so on.

I do not wish to dispute what the Minister said because I am not as well informed on the matter as he is, but if those factors are, as suggested by the Minister, bearing in mind the fact that the Minister indicated that the time could arise when we would no longer need a railway bridge at Fremantle—he could not say it would arise, but he hinted at it being a distinct possibility—then one wonders how long this temporary bridge arrangement can continue. I do not know what the position will be if we

continue to build temporary railway bridges. It occurred to me, however, that if a new bridge could be built, on whatever site was decided upon, and if it could be made a permanent structure which would incorporate both road and rail facilities, and if the time did arise when a railway bridge was no longer required, possibly we could discontinue with the railway section and the entire structure could be devoted to meeting the requirements of what would then unquestionably be a considerable increase in the road traffic.

I am well aware of the economics involved in the broader sense. I know it would entail the expenditure of more money, and I also know that if we do not go in for any further upriver development of the harbour but go outside, then probably much more money would be involved because of the additional cost of constructing a breakwater and other appurtenances that go with the provision of an outside extension of the harbour. I realise that the Minister for Works cannot now enter into the debate, but I would like to hear some member of the Cabinet discuss the possibility of perhaps grasping this nettle and trying to arrive at a firm decision.

Let us try to erect at least one bridge of a permanent nature which will fit in with future planning and which will be an economic bridge to maintain and use over the years to come. I do not wish to be dogmatic in this matter; it is merely a thought that has occurred to me that if we could make a firm decision about this harbour development it would be most desirable. It would enable future planning to take place on definite lines. As far as I can remember, we have had only talk about future harbour developments and whether the harbour is to be at Rocky Bay or at Rockingham.

This sort of thing cannot possibly be helpful to those people who are conducting businesses in the area, nor is it helpful to any new industries that may be considering the possibility of establishing themselves there. It will not be helpful to them if they do not know the Government's intention. It seems to me that one of the best ways to stabilise the position would be to make a firm decision where the bridge or bridges are to be and what sort they are to be. If possible, let us make them permanent.

In relation to the development at Cockburn Sound, I am well aware that the question has arisen as to whether we should go just outside the existing harbour or whether we should go down to Cockburn Sound. I am also aware that this is an additional question that has been projected into discussions in this House over the last couple of years. Having read the report of Messrs. Dumas and

Brisbane, it seems to me that those gentlemen are of the opinion that the limited upriver development envisaged by the extension of the harbour to the existing road bridge or thereabouts would meet the requirements of the State for the next 50 years or so. If that is correct—and there is no reason to suppose it is not—it seems to me that the time is opportune for Cabinet to make a firm decision in this matter to let people know exactly where they stand.

Future Governments would then be able to make the necessary budgetary provisions for a continuous programme of harbour development, and we would know what our commitments were in that direction. I realise that the more we spend on the Fremantle harbour, the less we will have to spend on other forms of public works such as water supplies, etc. I know that the Minister is well aware of the need to spend additional funds on water conservation, but until such time as we make this decision it will remain in the lap of the gods, and we will not know how to budget.

We might quite easily need a good deal of money very suddenly for some development of an unfortunate nature. The question of the existing railway bridge has got to the stage where a decision must be made because I believe that not only is it long past its economic life, but it is getting to the stage where the question of safety enters into it. I do not want to start a panic, because I feel the bridge is quite safe in its present condition, but unless some considerable expenditure is made on it, it will become unsafe. It is desirable that the bridge be replaced within a very few years, and this means that the decision will be forced on a future Government at some time. I think now is the time to make the decision.

We have heard a lot of discussion about river pollution. I am not particularly well informed on that point. Unfortunately, the study of river pollution does not seem to be a very exact science, and there are all sorts of conflicting theories of what will happen. The problem is a bit too tricky for a layman to delve into to any great extent. Generally speaking, the experts seem to indicate that no great additional harm would result from a limited upriver extension.

I hope that some member of Cabinet will be able to throw further light on the question of when the Government intends to make its decision; and, if possible what the decision is likely to be. I feel that the time has arrived when a decision just has to be made. One thing we can be sure of is that, if it is not made, the member for Fremantle will continue to bring down motions of this kind every year, irrespective of the political complexion of the Government. I do not blame him, because, after all, his electorate is vitally affected.

Unless the Government can clear this matter up a little more than the Minister for Works managed to do, we shall be placed in an extremely difficult position in connection with recording our votes. If we decide in support of the motion, we may appear to be committing ourselves to outside development of the harbour. Of course, that might be the Government's intention; I do not know. Although I am not very happy about such outward extension, inasmuch as all expert opinion is to the contrary, and despite the fact that I am aware of the additional cost that would be involved, and the effect it would have on public works that are very necessary in the country—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I think you will be satisfied with my reply.

Mr. HEARMAN: —I rather think that if a little more clarification cannot be given to us, I would be justified in supporting the motion if for no other reason than to protest thereby against the lack of decision on the part of the Government on what is a most important matter. The subject is one that affects not only Fremantle but the whole of the State. An efficient harbour is something from which all will benefit. In these days of rising costs and increasing competition overseas in the marketing of primary products—under which we are competing with countries with lower production costs than ours—the question of efficient harbour management, equipment and development is one of vital importance to the whole community. It is one with which no Government should trifle, and one on which the present Administration should make up its mind.

If the decision were to take a certain step in a certain direction, and I felt that the decision was sound, I would not object to money being put aside for that purpose because the whole State, and particularly the primary producers, would indirectly benefit. The question is far too important, particularly in view of the state of the existing railway bridge, for the matter to be put on the "too hard" file. I shall be interested in what the member for Fremantle has to say when he replies; and I think the Government should give this House and the public a little more information as to its intentions.

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [5.5]: This matter arose when I first entered Parliament. The people of Claremont at that time were content to support my suggestion that a bridge should be established further up the river than the present one. That was a generation ago, when the Fremantle railway bridge was said to be dangerous. That bridge is still in existence, though it did collapse on one occasion.

The Minister for Railways: It is not dangerous now.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: No, it has been strengthened. Though I think it is silly to make too much point about the various planks of one's platform, I would mention that at that time the people of Claremont were prepared to accept the idea set forth in my programme that a stronger bridge should be constructed upstream. However, there has been a change of attitude in the metropolitan area in regard to certain aspects.

Before continuing in that strain, I would say that I feel humble in the presence of experts in this matter, and I am speaking as a layman. I feel much the same as a husband and wife when they talk to a builder about the construction of their home. They do not pretend to know all the details; they are merely aware of certain things they would like to have incorporated in the home. It is the same when one considers harbour development. The average person cannot discuss details, but has to leave them to those who can provide the requisite advice.

When I made my suggestion many years ago for the construction of a bridge higher upstream, there was not then talk of river pollution. During the years I have been here, pollution has become gradually worse; though it is strange to recall that at that time the Burswood filters were pouring all sorts of filth into the river, following an expert's decision. That reminds me that the previous speaker, when discussing another motion, contended that we should listen to experts and not interfere with their findings. However, the day soon comes when we have to decide between two experts, as is the case in this instance. Over a period of 30 years, I have heard of the river becoming more polluted. Or, if it has not become more polluted, there has come into existence a greater sense of discontent on the part of the public that pollution should be allowed to continue. Some years ago, a move was made, following questions emanating from Claremont—and, later, from elsewhere—to deal with this question of river pollution; and now we have a committee working on the matter.

I can understand members not attempting to deal with the engineering side of this problem, or even with the financial side. They would not claim to be financial experts, except the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier, and certain leaders on this side of the House. But, although we cannot deal with this matter from a technical aspect, we can at least say what the ordinary person would like to occur. I feel that he would like to see put into operation what was originally suggested by Col. Tydeman who, I understand, proposed that there should be outside extension into Cockburn Sound on a large scale, providing eventually for 80 berths in the port, and also upstream extension as far as Point Brown, plus the construction

of a new bridge. In other words, he suggested that there should be both upward and outward extension.

Personally, I cannot see how a vote on this proposition will affect the matter, even if the Government accepted the motion as somewhat binding. However, I take it that the Government would regard it as a pious expression of opinion, as is the case with all Wednesday motions. But I think members can support the member for Fremantle from the aesthetic point of view. Eventually, of course, extension will have to be outside, because we have only 20 berths, and Col. Tydeman's original scheme provided for 80, of which about two-thirds would be outside in Cockburn Sound.

However, we have heard from the Minister for Works that, on account of the shortage of finance, there is no likelihood of money being found to give effect to the desire of the member for Fremantle. Nevertheless, if the hon. member could secure the support of the House for his motion, it would mean that the Government would realise there was a strong feeling that the House did not favour upstream development because members felt that there should be no further pollution of the river; that such pollution should be checked in every way; that the best way would be to extend development outwards; and that if upstream development were envisaged, it should proceed only a relatively short distance, as far as Point Brown.

I understand from the remarks of the engineers that, when they talked of two wooden bridges—the existing traffic bridge and that which is proposed—they were speaking of temporary structures that were to exist for only 30 or 40 years; and that the matter was left open for further review, with the prospect of upstream development taking place as far as Point Brown and outward development into Cockburn Sound. We, as representatives of laymen, have a right to add our point of view, not on the technical but on the aesthetic aspect. That point of view is that there has been a great growth of interest on the part of the public in the matter of river pollution; and, because it is desired to protect our river from further pollution, upstream development should be very limited.

At one time I was in New York, and I remember—though I have not checked the matter since—that there they had hopper barges which took sewage out to sea and dumped it hundreds of miles away. I have heard it suggested that if we desire to pay attention to the aesthetic side of the problem and are anxious to remove the effluent trouble in our harbour, we should try to afford the provision of smaller hopper barges—and this might be possible if we become rich through the

development of our oil resources—to collect the outgoings from ships that come into port, take them out to sea and dump them well past Rottneest. That would entirely eliminate the trouble which exists in the harbour today. I strongly urge the Government to give consideration to that matter, particularly in view of the fact that the provision of extra berths is contemplated.

I support the member for Fremantle, not because I consider he will succeed in preventing upstream extension to a limited extent, but because I would like to indicate the attitude of the Claremont people, which is that they do not wish to see much upriver development. They will agree to only as much development in that direction as is considered absolutely necessary.

MR. YATES (South Perth) [5.15]: The member for Fremantle should be congratulated once again for bringing this matter before the House and also for the manner in which he presented his case on this occasion. Much has been said about experts giving advice to Governments, and we have been told that Governments ought to follow the pattern set down by experts. Usually we do so. It is not always necessary to be an expert in order to understand a problem affecting the affairs of the State, and we as members of Parliament who study and investigate the various problems of the day have a knowledge, not altogether equal to that of experts, but one that should be considered in the light of proposals put forward by experts and others in dealing with these problems.

It is well known that some people who attend football matches for years have not played the game, but are experts in their knowledge of the finer points of the sport, and so it is in the working of government. We have our departmental heads and experts to guide Ministers, and usually Ministers accept their advice, but on occasion a conflict of opinion occurs. Here there is a conflict of opinion between the various experts who have been consulted by present and past Governments on the conditions at the Fremantle harbour.

The member for Fremantle has given full details of the proposals and read extracts from various reports by Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane, Col. Tydeman and others. Those opinions at times have differed. Why should they differ? They differ because each of them has a different point of view. Consequently, the Government has had to decide which of the views of the experts should be accepted for the future extension of the harbour. The member for Fremantle, in common with other members of this Chamber, has spent many hours in studying the reports of the experts and trying to work out which scheme would be the most beneficial to the people of the State.

Mr. May: Have you worked it out?

Mr. YATES: In my humble way, I have endeavoured to assess the capabilities and advice tendered by the experts.

Mr. May: How can you do that when they differ?

Mr. YATES: Of course they differ, but we can only judge by the reports presented to us and by the past performances of engineers and others who have been appointed by the Government to investigate these problems.

The future development of the port will involve the expenditure of big money. The State at present could not possibly finance work of the magnitude that is envisaged in port development, not only at Fremantle but also at other harbours. We must not overlook the fact that Fremantle is not the only harbour with which we are interested. We are also concerned with the harbours at Albany, Geraldton, Bunbury and with the smaller ports in the North, and it would be futile and foolhardy to spend all our money on local port development and deny other ports of their share in the State programme of public works. Thus we must take an overall view of the future of port development.

The one major problem confronting us at present is that of the Fremantle harbour, and it would entail a lot of careful thought and planning for the Treasurer to devise ways and means of providing the huge amount of finance needed for the development of Fremantle and at the same time providing finance for the other ports of the State. The member for Blackwood mentioned the Fremantle traffic bridge. I do not think he told us of the amount of traffic by road from Fremantle. I have been informed—though the information may be wrong—that not less than 80 per cent. of all goods lifted from Fremantle are conveyed by road transport and the balance by rail. If that is so, I can foresee the time when the percentage will shorten and only a very small proportion of the actual traffic from the shipping will be forwarded by rail.

In any future port development at Fremantle, we must take into consideration whether we are going to build our future railway requirements on the north side of the harbour or carry on with the present overburdened railway system within Fremantle itself. I should think that, if we are going to extend the harbour upstream, we should make provision for greater railway facilities on the north side of the harbour so that we could practically do away with railway transport on the other side. This would mean doing away with the railway bridge and relying upon road transport to shift all the goods from Fremantle. That point should be considered. If this were done, the vexed question of the railway bridge and the very costly replacement of it would disappear.

Now we have two problems confronting us. One is the extension of the present harbour facilities either upstream or seaward. My opinion is that Col. Tydeman has submitted one of the best reports that has been received by this House for many years.

Mr. Oldfield: It took him a long time.

Mr. YATES: It does not matter how long it took to present the report. It is an authentic document and shows evidence that much careful planning and designing went into his investigations before the report was submitted. But he did not condemn a seaward extension of the harbour; in fact, in many parts of his report, he expressed himself in favour of it.

If we examine port extensions not only in Australia but also throughout the world, we find that all upriver or internal harbour extensions have been followed by pollution of the more stagnant waters upstream. The Port of London Authority, as the member for Albany could tell us, speaks of pollution within the harbour where the water is stagnant or static or has not a big rise and fall of tide. The only reason why there has not been great pollution in the Sydney harbour is the great depth of water there.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is occurring there now.

Mr. YATES: That is so, and it is indicated in recent reports of pollution at Rose Bay and those parts where the waters from the centre of the harbour are creating a dirty foreshore and where smelly conditions permeate the area in the summer months. We in Western Australia know of that condition only too well, because in the summer we find the banks of the river covered with algae, and where the algae banks up, especially on the South Perth and Como foreshore, the conditions are filthy and are accompanied by an awful smell with which we are only too well acquainted.

It has been argued on many occasions that river pollution does not arise from shipping. Well, the experts say that it does tend to create its share of pollution in the river, and I should say that in the Swan River, it would be a very large share. The filthy banks of the Swan have caused local authorities great concern, especially since the end of the war. During the war, not much attention could be paid to the cleanliness of the river, but at that time there was congestion of shipping in the harbour. There was a large volume of war shipping and underwater craft all discharging offal, tins and debris into the harbour and that tended to create dirty conditions.

Then the tides—I understand that the rise and fall in the Swan River reaches 1 ft.—are sufficient to create disturbance in the bed of the river and carry the deposit

of filth from the Fremantle harbour upstream. If we construct further berths upstream, with the consequent resumption of land against the wishes of the people affected—we shall be taking vitally needed land in the Fremantle district from people who have great use for it—we shall be interfering unduly with the rights of people, seeing that the berths could be constructed seaward. Berths constructed downstream would also do away with the danger of further pollution.

What is the pollution as we know it today? Very few people have studied it and its cause. It is caused by microbes which are living organisms that live on the filth of the river and create more organisms to live on the filth and so disturb the peace of the people by causing disease and skin eruptions on those who use the river for swimming. There are four types of microbes—the bacteria, the moulds or fungi, the actinomycetes and the protozoa. The three first mentioned are classified in the plant kingdom, and the last one in the animal kingdom.

The protozoa, being a member of the animal kingdom, frequents the Swan River and all harbours throughout the world. They are single-celled organisms, the largest of which are just visible to the naked eye. They feed on bacteria and small particles of organic matter—seaweed and other forms of life found in harbours and rivers. Bacteria are usually the most numerous of all the microbes and are so tiny that one may see them only with the help of a high-powered microscope. The protozoa is much larger and can be seen by anyone with good eyesight.

Given suitable conditions, bacteria multiply at a phenomenal rate. One cell splits into two, those two into four, and those four into eight, and so on. In 24 hours with one generation every hour—and that is a comparatively slow rate of reproduction for bacteria—one bacterial cell could give rise to over 16,000,000 bacteria. This briefly describes the type of nuisance we have to contend with in the river. In view of the evolution of the bacteria, its rapid growth and its feeding on all forms of filth, it must tend to create a further nuisance. In this matter we should all be interested.

A hundred years ago, the Swan River was completely free of any form of filth or of bacterial life that feeds on filth, but today we are faced with the problem of having not only this filth in the river but also the disease that arises from it. There are various industrial concerns that make use of the river into which to discharge their effluent. Some years ago we had the filter beds on Burswood Island, but fortunately they have gone. We have the East Perth power house using salt water for its turbines and churning up the river. This power house should disappear when

the station at South Fremantle is vast enough to meet the needs of the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Housing: That is a long way off.

Mr. YATES: Possibly, but eventually I can see East Perth disappearing.

The Minister for Housing: Surely not!

Mr. YATES: I offer the Minister my apologies. I was referring to the East Perth power house. That utility has fulfilled a need of the community for many years, but should now be pulled down as soon as it is practicable to do so. Reverting to the problem confronting us at Fremantle—

The Minister for Lands: Were you still referring to bacteria when you said that?

Mr. YATES: —we have the picture of a congested port and a dirty river, with a prospect of further pollution if the harbour extension is made upriver. The problem of pollution at least would not increase if the port were developed seaward. The member for Fremantle went into great detail and, I am sure, convinced the majority of members in this Chamber that seaward expansion of the Port of Fremantle would be best in the interests of the people of this State. Almost all of our ports, with the exception of Albany, are artificial. At Geraldton it was necessary to build large breakwaters in order to secure a safe anchorage for the shipping using that port. At Bunbury there is the ever-recurring necessity, not only to maintain the breakwater, but also to dredge the harbour because of the rise and fall of the tides bringing in large quantities of sand.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Bunbury has its troubles.

Mr. YATES: Of course. At Fremantle, in wet and windy weather the elements constitute a danger to shipping because of the awkward position in which the harbour was originally placed. It was built where it is because of the direction in which the river flows. The construction of the harbour had to conform to the flow of the river but, as members know, during the winter months the wind blows right across Fremantle harbour and on occasions ships caught by the wind have caused great damage to the wharf. At times the masters of vessels have refused to take them to sea because of the danger involved in pulling out from the wharf in the teeth of a gale.

Many of those problems could be overcome today by the seaward extension of the harbour because if that course were followed, ships would be able to find safe berths all the year round in spite of the weather. There would then be safe anchorages at all periods of the year for the ships visiting the port, and especially for the overseas liners,

whose stays in port are brief and which have to maintain a strict schedule that necessitates their leaving port at a certain time irrespective of weather conditions. On occasions such ships have been the cause of accidents in various ports owing to the necessity for them to take the risk of getting out of harbour in spite of the weather. That risk would be, to a great degree, obviated at Fremantle if the harbour were extended seawards. I believe that is a point which was taken into consideration by Col. Tydeman when he made his investigation. He admitted that a safe anchorage would be found for most of the shipping using the port if we extended the harbour seawards, because the type of construction of the harbour would be such as to gain the greatest possible advantage. The harbour would be built to conform, not only with the weather, but also with many other factors that were overlooked a century ago when the port was established.

From where is the finance to extend our harbour facilities to come? Let us look back 50 or 60 years and ask from whence the finance came in those days to put in hand the huge public works and undertakings which the very small band of people then in this State were able successfully to accomplish. It is amazing to see what the people of this State did 50 years ago even in building this Parliament House which today is still considered large and modern. Such examples as that constitute an epic of the courage of those who went before us and are a permanent record of their foresight in looking not only to the needs of the day, but also to those of the future. The money expended on the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme was well spent as that undertaking is for all time a feather in the caps of the people who in that day looked more to the future than the present.

The deeds and activities of our past Governments prove to me, and I think would prove to most other members, that those who went before us always had the future in mind. Let us do likewise. The wealth of Western Australia is such that we could extend not only Fremantle harbour, but also the rest of our ports together with a great many other public utilities, and the State would still not be bankrupt. Our wealth exists in the will of our people to produce and to work for the benefit of others. We, as members of Parliament, have a duty to perform. We must preserve the deeds of those who preceded us and yet realise the necessity of building for those who are to come in the future.

I regret to say that since the end of the war our outlook, mainly because of lack of finance and other disabilities, has tended away from that viewpoint. Today we are not looking so far ahead in our attitude towards the expansion of public utilities, and there is this catch cry about

the lack of finance, which will continue indefinitely because we are now living under conditions differing from those of the past. At present we are experiencing an age of plenty, with full employment and confidence in the community. There is now very little unemployment in this or any other State of the Commonwealth. If with plentiful employment and reasonably satisfactory conditions all around, we cannot provide finance for necessary public utilities, how can we hope to do so in the future? We will never be better off than we are today.

The Minister for Works: Can we provide the money?

Mr. YATES: No, because the catch cry in relation to all our public works today is that we must defer them because of lack of finance.

The Minister for Works: Is that true or not?

Mr. YATES: Yes, it is.

The Minister for Works: Why are we short of finance?

Mr. YATES: I am not going to endeavour to answer that.

The Minister for Works: You must be able to if you say it is just a catch cry, because that would indicate that it is not true at all.

Mr. YATES: I did not mean that it was a catch cry in that respect. It is the cry of the Government, and a true cry.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It has been the cry of all Governments for the past 30 years.

Mr. YATES: Yes, to the effect that they never have enough money to undertake all necessary public works and the building of all the schools, hospitals, roads, etc. that were required. We must remember that this is a growing country and not an old-established community like those of the U.S.A. or England. We are still experiencing growing pains in Australia, yet today, when we have a reasonable amount of worldly goods, when almost all our people are working and there is a considerable degree of harmony in the community, if we cannot provide the finance required, how can we expect to do so in future unless we take steps to alter the present position?

I can remember that Governments of this State in the past were able to borrow money for themselves, although that practice ceased when we had to go to the Commonwealth Government and operate through the Federal loan market. This State borrowed to the extent of £99,000,000 up till 1947. That was our national debt in that year, taking into consideration our borrowings, interest payments and so on and most of that money was expended on public utilities, roads and so forth. We must continue to mortgage our future as did those who went before us. They could

not pay for all that was required to be done in those days. If they had found it necessary to provide all the money for the building of Fremantle harbour at the time when that work was commenced, or for the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, those works could not have been undertaken. The money certainly was not available, but those in authority committed the people of the future to pay for those works, and we today must commit the future citizens of this State to pay for works such as the extension of Fremantle harbour. Whether the work is to cost £1,000,000 or £5,000,000, if it is necessary in the interests of the State we, as a Parliament, must provide the finance and must explore every avenue to see that the money is made available.

The Minister for Works: What should we do—shoot Mr. Menzies?

Mr. YATES: As the member for Fremantle said, this has been the catch cry of Governments for 30 years. It has always been difficult to provide the finance needed by the Government of the day to fulfil all its promises and obligations. I am not complaining about the present Government finding it difficult to provide all the finance required because it is doing the best possible under the circumstances. But are we following the pattern that has been followed throughout the years in providing finance? There must be other ways by which to procure it. I am not a financial expert and perhaps the Treasurer could answer the question. Probably he has explored all available ways of raising sufficient finance to meet the needs of the State.

Mr. Oldfield: He could tax the s.p. book-makers.

Mr. YATES: We could further tax the people, but that is not always the best answer to the problem.

The Minister for Works: Do you advocate further taxing the people in order to get money to extend Fremantle harbour outside?

Mr. YATES: I would be interested in any scheme under which the people were to share the burden equally. I can remember the financial emergency tax—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The people will be taxed to the extent of £7,000,000 if we bring the harbour up to the bridge.

Mr. YATES: I can remember a time when the State found the money it required by means of a special tax which was paid in those days. If the Government today has any taxing powers, I can see no objection to a special levy or tax being imposed on the people in order to assist in paying for the expansion, not only of Fremantle harbour, but also of our other ports. I have visited all the ports of the State and know the need for expansion and the provision of modern facilities is great, and that the people living in the vicinity of the ports are

asking that something be done. Of course, some of them are more fortunate than others. Geraldton is a more fortunate port than most of the others in the North-West because it has modern facilities, fine wharves and practically everything else that is desirable in order that the provision of further extensions may make it possible to handle the tonnage that will come forward if our wheat acreage in that part of the State is enlarged.

With more wheat, wool and other agricultural production to be shipped overseas from the various ports in this State, the Government must consider all the ports when dealing with the financial aspect of harbour expansion. If it is not possible to tax the people of Western Australia directly to provide finance for port expansion, let us explore other avenues. Unfortunately the Lotteries Commission is tied up in providing finance for hospitals and other institutions that care for the sick and needy. Otherwise that would have been an excellent avenue for the provision of money to meet interest on the sums borrowed to complete harbour expansion. Another scheme similar to that could probably be investigated. There are always ways and means of providing finance. During war-time Governments always seem to have greater power to provide finance so that we can kill each other.

The Minister for Works: Not State Governments.

Mr. YATES: No, the Commonwealth Government. However, in times of peace Governments always find difficulty in providing finance to keep people alive. That has always been so and will continue to be so. As I have done previously, I again commend the member for Fremantle for bringing this matter forward.

I do not say that the extension of the harbour seaward is the perfect solution, but I am of the opinion that all future harbour extensions upstream would be to the detriment of the future welfare of the people of Western Australia. Therefore, before we come to a decision as to where the harbour extension should go, the reports of all experts that have been submitted to Governments, both past and present, should be carefully considered, because once a decision is made it will be binding for all time. Do not let us play around with temporary extensions and spend millions to provide four or five berths which, in effect, would only be tinkering with the problem.

If we make a start, let us build 50 which will be sufficient for the next 50 or 100 years in the same way as the engineers of the past did when they planned and built the Fremantle harbour 50 years ahead. The existing harbour has fulfilled all that was expected of it according to plan, and there is no doubt that careful planning went into the construction of

that harbour. Most authorities on harbour extensions and facilities who have inspected the Fremantle harbour have agreed that the requisite provisions are excellent; that the foundations and the wharves were well laid by our public works engineers and their staff in the early days when the harbour was designed and built.

Therefore, let us follow their example today and not play around with the problem. Instead, let us decide that once we commence building we shall make it a solid job that will last for many years to come. Of course, that will impose a great financial burden on the State. However, in the past, similar steps were taken and they can be taken again now in planning for the future. The Minister for Works told us that the Narrows bridge could be paid for in a much shorter time than four years, but because of the lack of finance that cannot be done. In one or two years it is not possible to provide millions of pounds for one project. Of necessity, the cost must be spread over several years.

If finance could be made available for all such projects when approved, the ultimate cost of the schemes would be greatly reduced and would make the burden on the people much easier. However, when there is a lack of finance, or it is hard to obtain, the work proceeds at a much slower rate, costs pile up and in the final analysis it is found that the total expenditure has far exceeded the original estimate. That would probably apply also to the work of extending the Fremantle harbour. No accurate estimate could be given on the final cost of that work.

Nevertheless, I do not think that that should worry us unduly because in the past most public works—especially those that have taken many years to build—have finished up costing the State much more than was originally estimated. I know the Causeway cost a great deal more money than the amount anticipated at the start because of rising costs of material, increases in the basic wage and so on. Such circumstances will recur in the future with all our large undertakings.

However, let us be courageous and face the problem as those in the past faced those that were put before them when they built our major public works. The construction of the Mundaring Weir and the laying of the pipeline to Kalgoorlie have been regarded as among the wonders of the world. Even today the undertaking is regarded by engineers all over the world as one of the outstanding achievements of the century. Many other great public works which were undertaken by our forefathers have left their mark not only on those who reside in this State, but also have impressed people who have come here from overseas.

Engineers from all parts of the world, on visiting our State, have expressed their admiration of the public works they have

inspected. So let us proceed with the same courage and determination that were shown by those who have preceded us. Let us decide whether we are going to build a railway bridge at Fremantle further upstream at enormous cost because of land resumption, or whether we are to go seawards and leave the land around Fremantle to those who rightfully own it. There would be plenty of room seawards and we would be able to build a large harbour along the lines that we want, and something that we desired before the Kwinana construction project was envisaged.

Let us be courageous on this question. Let us build on the lines that the experts finally agree upon and with the advice of those in government whose general knowledge might be the deciding factor on making the decision upon where the actual harbour extensions are to be. Once that is done, the experts are in their own field and they can go ahead and build a solid job. They could construct the extensions to the harbour on solid foundations which would last us for hundreds of years. Their job is to plan and provide the extensions and decide where the foundations are to go.

The member for Fremantle is on the right track when he asks the Government to give every consideration to the future harbour extensions going seaward. If they do not go seaward, at least they should not extend any further than the site of the present berths under consideration. From then onwards, all future extensions should go seaward. I venture to say that the overall plan to extend our harbour seaward would prove to be the better, both in peacetime and in war.

The further upstream we go the more congested will our port facilities become and in time of war they will be extremely vulnerable. If the extensions to the harbour were built seawards, a great deal more of the civilian population would be saved from the horrors of bombing. During the last war the people living around the ports suffered more than those who resided inland because of the desire of the enemy to destroy our lifelines. Here, one of our lifelines is the Fremantle harbour.

Mr. Hutchinson: Do you think the railway line could be removed from North Fremantle?

Mr. YATES: I suggest that consideration should be given to the removal of all railway facilities on the south side of the harbour and that all goods transported from the wharf could be done by road. I am not an expert on that question, but I know it would save a great deal of expense. If we could do away with all the railway facilities in Fremantle itself, the land and all railway buildings in that area could be sold by the Government for

a large sum of money. That would help to pay for the future extensions to the harbour. I commend the member for Fremantle for bringing forward this motion which I fully support.

MR. OLDFIELD (Maylands) [5.54]: I support the member for Fremantle on this motion because possibly he knows more about this subject than any other member in this House. In fact, he knows more about the question than any other member of the House past or present. The member for Fremantle is to be congratulated upon the manner in which he has conducted his research into the problem.

The development of the Fremantle harbour is an extremely important question. The member for Fremantle has persistently brought to the attention of this House the problems confronting the future development of our principal port. During my short time here he has brought forward a similar motion on four occasions. I well remember the occasion in 1951 when the then Minister for Works was quoting the Meyer report in support of upriver development in conjunction with seaward development. The present Minister for Works, who was then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, did his utmost to discredit this report, and his sole aim was to prevent any further upriver extension of the port.

My reasons for supporting the member for Fremantle are, mainly, that the time has arrived when a halt should be called to upriver development. For years it was thought by many people that upriver development was correct but in more recent times they have become conscious of river pollution and of the inherent danger that during wartime ships may be sunk at the mouth of the harbour and thereby bottle up the port. As a consequence of this, a considerable change in attitude has taken place and many people today are anxious for seaward development to be undertaken.

As the Minister pointed out, and as has been indicated by advocates of upriver development, the idea is to proceed upriver for three or four berths to the site of the traffic bridge, to put up a temporary structure at a cost of £2,000,000, and then at a later date to proceed with seaward development. Most members will realise what the position will be in 10 to 25 years' time. The same cry made by Governments today will be heard in future. Governments have always been short of money, and always will be.

The Minister for Works: I can remember the time when the previous Government was not short of money.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Governments have always been short of money. The previous Government was short of the necessary materials and labour on which to expend available funds.

The Minister for Works: Then it was not short of money.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The point is that no one can honestly deny that in the future some Government will not be short of money, especially when projects of this kind are undertaken, involving the expenditure of millions of pounds. Irrespective of the political colour of any Government, there will always be the plea that insufficient funds are available. I can visualise in 20 years' time, after upriver development has taken place, the Government saying that there is insufficient money to develop seaward. It will probably contend that the structure being used is temporary and remove it, and then erect further temporary structures by putting in another three or four more berths upriver to meet the requirements of the port for another 20 years. Consequently over two or three generations the harbour will finish up at Blackwall Reach.

The present is the time to call a halt to further upriver extensions and to proceed immediately with seaward development. I cannot see any valid reason why the funds that are to be expended on a temporary structure—the railway bridge—cannot be spent to make a start on seaward development. A plan with that object in view, making available three berths immediately, would be of great assistance to the port authorities. On the subject of temporary structures I am becoming alarmed at the attitude adopted in this State.

It will be interesting to find out by way of questions how many temporary structures are owned by the State Government and what amount of the taxpayers' money is bound up with them. This Parliament is sitting in a building which is as yet uncompleted. Just to the rear of the building which will ultimately be the front of the House, is the Public Works Department. It is interesting to ascertain how much money is involved on temporary structures on that piece of land alone. There is a temporary brick structure in St. George's Place and another in Malcolm-st. costing between £50,000 and £60,000. Now it is proposed to use £2,000,000 of the taxpayers' money for a further temporary structure.

The Minister for Works: Who said this?

Mr. OLDFIELD: The proposed railway bridge will be a temporary structure.

The Minister for Works: Who talked about building a railway bridge?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You did.

The Minister for Works: No, I did not.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How is it proposed to get the trains over? Notices of resumption of land have been given.

The Minister for Works: Do not forget that we must have a bridge.

Mr. OLDFIELD: This debate has taken a very astounding turn.

The Minister for Works: You would do better by sticking to what I have said. I did not mention £2,000,000 for a bridge.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I understood that was the position. I do not think I am far out in saying that £2,000,000 will be spent on a temporary railway bridge at the north-eastern end of Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: I did not say anything about building a temporary railway bridge.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I shall leave it to the member for Fremantle to quote what the Minister did say.

Mr. Heal: Why do you not quote it?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I know the member for Fremantle will be able to give the Minister more than he has bargained for.

The Minister for Works: The Minister can look after himself.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I have not got the Minister's speech so I shall leave it to the member for Fremantle. He is more able to handle the Minister than I am. If there is any alteration, the Minister might have changed his mind in the last fortnight.

The Minister for Works: There is an obligation on you to prove what you contend I said. I did not make the statement you referred to.

Mr. OLDFIELD: From all the speeches that have been made and from the remarks of the Minister, it is reasonable to assume that there will be a temporary railway structure to span the Swan River.

The Minister for Works: Did you hear the speech of the member for Blackwood? What did he complain about?

Mr. OLDFIELD: He was complaining that it was to be a temporary structure?

The Minister for Works: No, he was not.

Mr. OLDFIELD: He complained that a decision had not been finally made on the site of the bridge.

The Minister for Works: He said no decision had been made to build a bridge. That was what he complained about.

Mr. OLDFIELD: What does the Minister propose to do to get the trains across the river?

The Minister for Works: You get out of that fix.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I shall leave that to the member for Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: It is just as well to get off it.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Unfortunately I have not a copy of the Minister's speech before me.

The Minister for Works: What sort of bridge would you build under your scheme?

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the Minister will be courteous enough to allow me to continue my speech, he will ascertain my ideas on the matter.

Mr. Hutchinson: He is very persistent.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I was speaking of temporary structures erected by the Government. At the rear of Parliament House, many thousands of pounds have been spent on temporary structures, and I am wondering what the future of the State will be if we continue to erect such buildings at the rate we have been erecting them in the last two or three years. I can foresee the possibility of the interest on our loan moneys absorbing our revenue to pay for the cost of temporary structures, and we shall have nothing of a permanent or worth-while nature to show for the expenditure.

Reference has been made to the pollution of the river, and it has been argued that upriver development would clean up what is now an eye-sore at Fremantle. Possibly so, but that eye-sore could still be removed at very little cost. The unsightly foreshore between the railway bridge and the traffic bridge could be reclaimed, cleaned up, and converted into gardens such as we have on the Esplanade and such as have been created along the foreshore near the Sydney harbour bridge.

When people say that the harbour refuse does not greatly contribute to the pollution of the river, my mind goes back to a time three or four years ago when the Grayden brothers set some small floats adrift at the Fremantle bridges. I notice that the Minister for Works is laughing. If he is laughing at my mention of these floats—

The Minister for Works: I am laughing at something of which you are not aware, but the member for Blackwood understands.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Those floats indicated how far upstream the flotsam and jetsam were carried by tidal influence and how pollution was caused. It may be of interest to members to be reminded that some of the floats set adrift below the railway bridge were found as far upstream as the foreshore at Applecross and Como. Thus it is only natural that the further upstream we carry harbour development, the more effluent will be carried up the river. For every 100 yds. harbour development is carried upstream, so must the effluent discharged into the harbour cause pollution to penetrate further up the river.

I understand from Col. Tydeman's report that he favours an extension upstream to provide for three or four berths, but that his ultimate plan is to carry development seaward with provision ultimately for about 80 berths on the Cockburn Sound side of the harbour. I do not know whether the State will ever warrant the construction of a harbour of that magnitude. No member could say with any degree of certainty

that Fremantle some day will be so busy a port as to require 60 or 80 berths, and I doubt whether anyone would be in error if he regarded that as an exaggeration of the future requirements of the State. Be that as it may, if we started on seaward development and made provision for only 10 berths, which is all at present required, no harm would be done. Then if ultimately additional berths were required, there would be no chance of an error being made, as any foundation thus laid for seaward development would always stand us in good stead and would entail no waste of money.

If three or four berths were constructed upstream, they might serve the needs of the State for 10 to 25 years, and then if we proceeded with the seaward extension, we would realise that the money spent on the upstream berths could have been well and truly applied in the first instance to the Cockburn Sound scheme. The Minister must decide where he is going to put the new bridge. I feel worried about this matter. The Minister evidently has decided to put a bridge across the river, and I have no quarrel with that, but I would prefer to see the £2,000,000 spent on building a railway on the south side of the river.

The Minister for Works: I did not say that I was going to build a bridge.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The Minister does not know what he is going to do.

The Minister for Works: Yes, he does.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He knows all right.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I think we, too, know what he will do; he is going to spend nearly £2,000,000 on a temporary structure.

The Minister for Housing: I think you may take it that that is the last thing he would do. You are proceeding by a process of elimination.

Mr. OLDFIELD: We seem to be getting somewhere. Let us assume, for the sake of my argument, that he intends to build a temporary bridge across the harbour. I would prefer to see the £2,000,000 spent on a railway on the south side of the river to serve the growing needs of the Cockburn Sound area, including Kwinana.

The Premier: How would you get the trains across the river?

Mr. OLDFIELD: They would go to the port on the south side of the river. All of the bulk installations would be at Cockburn Sound.

The Premier: I think that you and the member for Fremantle may be parting company now.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Prior to the tea suspension I had reached the point of assuming, for the purpose of argument, that if the recommendations of Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane were put into effect, and a temporary structure at a cost of almost

£2,000,000 were put across the river, it would be a waste of public money. I was proceeding to point out that the money could possibly be far better spent in proceeding with the plan for a south-of-the-river railway to serve the area adjacent to Cockburn Sound, which is being rapidly developed for industrial purposes and where, in the near future, I trust new berths will be established for Fremantle.

Many experts at different times have reported to various Governments on this vexed question of harbour development. Naturally, they have conflicting views, because one expert does not always agree with another. The job of the Government of the day is to sift the views of the various experts and go ahead with what it considers to be the soundest scheme. It is obvious from the tone of this debate that many members do not think that the soundest scheme is being adopted in this instance. Col. Tydeman himself has pointed out at great length the many advantages of proceeding with a scheme to develop the harbour and Cockburn Sound, although he did suggest that it would probably be preferable to go ahead with upriver development in the early stages of enlarging the port of Fremantle.

But if my memory serves me correctly, the main motives of Col. Tydeman in suggesting upriver development in the initial stages were, firstly, in regard to cost, and, secondly, because it would be completed at a much earlier date than would seaward development. However, sometimes the matter of cost should not be taken too much into account, unless the saving is going to be very considerable. When the Minister was speaking last week, he mentioned the sum of £1,000,000 for breakwaters. Well, £1,000,000 is a considerable amount of money if it has to be found in one year, but where a scheme such as this will extend, as will the Narrows bridge, over a period of time, it is not such a heavy burden to bear.

The sum of £1,000,000, spent over five years, represents expenditure in the vicinity of £200,000 a year. If the ideas of the member for Fremantle are acceded to, there will also be a considerable saving in what would be spent on the erection of a temporary railway bridge.

The Minister for Works: How do you make that out?

Mr. OLDFIELD: To erect a railway bridge, as recommended by Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane, will cost in the vicinity of £2,000,000.

The Minister for Works: But the scheme of the member for Fremantle also requires a railway bridge.

Mr. OLDFIELD: A permanent structure.

The Minister for Works: That is dearer.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Of course it is, but it is something that is established permanently and so is there for all time—or for a reasonable time. It would be standing for a hundred years, or whatever is the life of a steel and concrete structure. Various lengths of time from 10 to 25 years, have been suggested as being the life of a temporary structure costing £2,000,000. If 25 years is the longest life for a temporary structure, then £2,000,000 is a lot of money for it. That sum would go a long way towards building a permanent bridge; and the Minister is aware of that.

The Minister for Works: Is this temporary bridge for £2,000,000 your idea?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I am merely speaking on the assumption that the Government is going to carry out the recommendations of Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane.

The Minister for Works: So it is your idea.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The Minister intimated in his speech that the Government was going to carry out the recommendations of these two gentlemen.

The Minister for Works: Not with regard to the building of the bridge.

Mr. Hearman: It is a mystery.

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is a mystery as to what is going to happen to this bridge; and whether we will have a bridge or not.

The Minister for Works: You had better indulge in a few more assumptions.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the Minister is not prepared to say what the Government's intentions are, member can only presuppose.

The Minister for Works: How can I tell you the Government's intentions before the Government has declared them?

Mr. OLDFIELD: The Minister must have some idea of what its intentions are. He knows that there is going to be a bridge, otherwise—

Mr. McCulloch: Why not a tunnel?

Mr. OLDFIELD:—I do not know how the Minister for Railways will move his trains backwards and forwards across the harbour. The point at issue appears to be whether the bridge is to be of a temporary or a permanent nature. If the decision is that it is to be of a permanent nature, I do not think anyone will quarrel with that, provided the structure is put in the correct place; but I fear that, because of the immediate saving of a few pounds, the recommendations of Messrs. Dumas and Brisbane will be agreed to. It is an inescapable fact that sooner or later the time will come when we must proceed with the outward development of the harbour. When something is inevitable, the sooner one faces up to it the better, in the long run.

If we proceed now with upriver harbour extension in preference to seaward development, we will simply postpone the commencement of seaward development. Five new berths have been suggested to serve the needs of the State for the next 20 years, but when the time comes the Ministry of that day will probably think that perhaps another four berths are all that are required, and it will then be found more expedient, for economic reasons, to sneak still further up the river. As I have said, for a period of perhaps four generations there will probably be no seaward development, apart from that at Kwinana, and eventually the port of Fremantle will extend upriver at least as far as Blackwall Reach.

Members can visualise the congestion of ships entering and leaving the harbour if that state of affairs ever comes about. I thing Col. Tydeman pointed out in his report the maximum number of ships which could leave or enter Fremantle harbour per day, owing to the time factor in getting a ship from its berth to the fairway, or vice versa, in view of the fact that the channel is so narrow that only one ship at a time can negotiate a passage. We must realise also what a deathtrap Fremantle harbour would be in the event of war, if we extend it further upstream, whereas with seaward development, according to the plans outlined in Col. Tydeman's report, 60 ships could be sunk in the harbour without it being blocked and some berths would remain available for use by the vessels which could still enter or leave the port. I strongly support the motion moved by the member for Fremantle.

On motion by Mr. Nalder, debate adjourned.

MOTION—BASIC WAGE.

As to Cost of Living Adjustments.

Debate resumed from the 15th September on the following motion by Mr. Brady:—

That in the opinion of this House wage and salary-earners and their dependants, by being deprived of all "cost of living" adjustments are being called upon to bear more than their fair share of whatever burden it might be necessary for the community as a whole to carry to maintain economic stability.

to which Hon. Sir Ross McLarty had moved the following amendment:—

That all the words after the word "House" in line 1 be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—on amendment) [7.44]: This motion, Mr. Speaker, is a very important one. The amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition is an old-time method

of trying to reverse a motion so that it does the opposite of what the mover intended it should do.

Mr. Oldfield: The Premier had experience of that a fortnight ago.

The PREMIER: Yes, indeed. I am not condemning the practice but am drawing attention to it. The amendment before us at present has not, I think, been ruled out of order, nor is it likely to be, because it seeks to delete all words in the motion after the word "House." You, Mr. Speaker, did indicate some days ago that in the event of this amendment being agreed to, you would have to rule out of order the foreshadowed amendment by the Leader of the Opposition. It is my intention tonight to stick fairly closely to notes which I have prepared in connection with this amendment which seeks to strike out most of the motion. I have done that because it is essential, in debating a matter of this kind, to say for sure what one really wants to say and has made up one's mind to say before commencing.

Mr. Hutchinson: So long as the member for Collie does not raise a point of order.

The PREMIER: For the benefit of the member for Cottesloe, I can say, right away, that I do not propose to read my speech but merely to refresh my mind rather liberally from the notes I have made. There is no doubt that wage and salary-earners and their dependants are now being called upon to bear more than their fair share of any burden which it might be considered necessary for the community to carry in order to maintain economic stability in Western Australia. It would be possible, of course, to indicate other sections of our population who are, to some degree, also carrying burdens. We could mention certain sections of the primary producers, which would be comparatively minor in number when compared with woolgrowers and wheatgrowers, although it could be said that the wheatgrowers are not as happily situated at present in regard to markets, as they were a year or two ago.

I think it could also be claimed that those people in the community who are on small fixed incomes are carrying some burden because the effective purchasing power of their incomes has been reduced to the extent that the cost of living has risen over the last year or so. However, these burdens upon sections other than wage and salary-earners have not been deliberately imposed upon the people concerned. Rather are they burdens that have arisen because of the development and operation of certain circumstances. Everyone recognises and admits the importance of maintaining and safeguarding economic stability. We all know that most, if not all sections of the community, would suffer in the event of economic instability setting in and becoming worse from, say, month to month.

We could also say, I think, with every justification, that economic stability has existed in recent years. I think we could say that Western Australia today is prosperous and, all in all, it is probably more prosperous than ever before; although, as I suggested previously, there are spots which could be pinpointed in the community and in the economy which are not as favourable in the economic sense as they were a year or two, or may be three years ago. The total value of the State's production in all primary and manufacturing industries for the last year for which figures are available, namely, 1952-53, was £140,000,000.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is in Australia?

The PREMIER: In Western Australia. I should say that the total value of all similar production during the last financial year would be as high as that figure, and probably higher. Therefore I think it is pertinent to ask whether it was really necessary, in order that economic stability might be maintained in Western Australia, to impose the burden of freezing the cost-of-living adjustments upon workers when that burden was first imposed upon them, and through them upon their dependants, by industrial tribunals last year.

Members will recollect that when the freezing of the cost-of-living adjustments was first initiated, the increase in the cost of living at that time was not large. If any member would argue that the imposition was necessary at that time, and was therefore justified in order that economic stability might be maintained, he has to face up to the question of whether it was right, fair and just to impose the whole of the burden thought to be requisite upon only one section of the community—namely, the wage and salary-earners and their dependants. Economic stability in a community is of tremendous value, but it is not of value only to wage and salary-earners; it is of tremendous value to everybody—to all groups—because it confers benefits and advantages upon every individual and every section of the community.

Therefore, surely and logically, if some burden or sacrifice has to be imposed in order to maintain economic stability, the necessary burden, or the necessary sacrifice, ought to be spread fairly over the whole community; or at least upon those people in the community who are in a position financially to bear a share of the burden or sacrifice.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you consider that an increase in the basic wage might have alleviated the sacrifice you are suggesting? Are you sure of that?

The PREMIER: I am sure of this: Had the initial cost-of-living adjustment, which was frozen, been granted, the workers and

their dependants would not have suffered the same burden as they have suffered because of that fact.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I hope you will be able to produce some evidence, because it is a moot point. I suggest you give us some facts to support your argument.

The PREMIER: I will give plenty of facts to support my argument, but whether they will satisfy, wholly or partly, the hon. member is something I am not able to be definite about. However, the overriding and vital consideration in relation to this situation is, firstly, whether it was necessary to impose a burden to maintain economic stability and, related to that, the question as to whether in the event of such a burden being necessary it should not have been spread scientifically and fairly over the whole of the community instead of being imposed upon only one group.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And whether a burden was actually imposed. That is one question further, you know.

The PREMIER: Surely there is no doubt about that. Surely if the cost of living, in connection with commodities which workers need to maintain themselves and their families with the necessities of life, rises to the extent of, say, 10s. a week, and the workers receive no additional payment in wages or salaries, they are immediately and automatically that much worse off!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you suggesting that that was imposed on all workers or only on some?

The PREMIER: I am not suggesting anything.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I thought you were.

The PREMIER: The answer to the interjection of the hon. member is that the imposition—if he cares to call it such—or the burden fell upon the shoulders of every wage and salary-earner covered by an Arbitration Court award or agreement.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not think you can argue that.

Mr. Hutchinson: Even the rent increases?

The PREMIER: So far I have not discussed the question of rent increases. But if it is a point in the forefront of the minds of some members opposite I am quite happy to discuss it immediately. I know, as well as anyone else, that the rent increase figure in the cost of living figures as a whole, which were presented to the court by the Government Statistician, was a figure which every wage and salary-earner in the State was not called upon to meet by way of increase in his weekly rental. But surely members opposite do not want it both ways.

I never heard of any parliamentary member of the Liberal Party, back in the years when the cost of living was falling, saying that the whole of the rent figure,

which represented a reduction in average rents, should not be cut out of the worker's wage or salary because he, as an individual worker, was still paying the same rent to his landlord as he was paying before the average reduction was worked out and presented to the Arbitration Court. In fact, those who have carefully studied this problem of basic wage adjustments over the years will know that the Liberal Government in this State in 1930 fell over itself to inflict downward cost-of-living adjustments upon wage and salary-earners in this State, including average rent reductions.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It was acting in a very extraordinary time, was it not? And what did Labour Governments do in the other States? Tell us that. They accepted the Premiers' Plan.

The PREMIER: They did not do what the Government of the day in this State did. They did not amend their industrial arbitration legislation to have the basic wage adjusted quarterly whereas previously it was capable of adjustment no more than once a year. In fact, in 1930 the Government of which I am speaking, kept members of Parliament in this House all night to get the second reading of the Bill through and, on the succeeding day, kept them here all day to get the Committee stage through. The Leader of the Opposition, who was then the member for the Murray district, was one of those who supported that Government at every stage of the Bill as it passed through this House.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And you will remember that in those days the Government could not even pay the basic wage; not only this Government, but also all Governments.

The PREMIER: As the late Hon. P. Collier said during the debate at that time, whenever things become tough it is the workers who suffer the infliction of the first burden and, commensurate with their ability to bear burden, suffer the most in such a situation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Many people suffered in those days.

The PREMIER: There is no argument about that whatever. In Australia at present we have a strange phenomena of large taxation concessions being given to wealthy companies and individuals whilst, at the same time, wage and salary-earners are being deprived of cost-of-living adjustment to their wages and salaries, the granting of which would preserve the effective purchasing power of those wages and salaries—

Mr. Hutchinson: That would be doubtful.

The PREMIER: —and would safeguard also their previously established standard of living.

Mr. Hutchinson: I would say that that is very doubtful.

The PREMIER: Why is it doubtful?

Mr. Hutchinson: It could start inflation off again, and they could be in a worse position.

The PREMIER: Evidently the member for Cottesloe considers that only wage and salary-earners and their dependants should be selected to bear the burden necessary to prevent inflation.

Mr. Hutchinson: Yes, but you missed the point in regard to what proportion of the wage and salary-earners missed out on the rent figure and therefore missed out on that rent increase.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I missed no such thing. I dealt with that point immediately it was raised by pointing out that members opposite cannot have it both ways. They cannot be in favour of the average rent figure in a period of rent reductions being applied to all workers, whether they get the benefit of the average rent reduction or otherwise, and then, in a period when rents are rising, start to argue that only those who have to pay the higher rent should get the adjustment in regard to the increase in the average rent.

The unfortunate and unjust situation for the workers and their dependants—to which I referred before the member for Cottesloe interjected—has come about probably because industrial tribunals—the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in the first instance—have taken upon themselves the responsibility of deciding economic problems which should fundamentally have been the responsibility of the Parliaments in Australia and particularly the Commonwealth Parliament. Industrial tribunals have evidently considered it to be their duty to take drastic steps to maintain economic stability and thereby to prevent further inflation. The great weakness and the great unfairness of such an approach is that these tribunals, in trying to handle that type of situation, are able to place burdens and deprivations only on wage and salary-earners.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They are about 90 per cent. of the population, are they not?

The PREMIER: What is the point in that?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I mean the wage and salary-earners represent 90 per cent. of the population and produce 90 per cent. of the economic wealth.

The PREMIER: They do not get 90 per cent. of it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Oh, yes, they do!

The PREMIER: Oh, do they?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes.

The PREMIER: There is no point in the interjection just made by the member for Mt. Lawley. It would not matter whether they represented 50 per cent. or 95 per cent.; it still would not be fair

and reasonable to impose only upon them a burden which it was thought necessary to impose upon the community to maintain economic stability. Does the member for Mt. Lawley think that it is a fair proposition to impose the whole of the required burden—if one is required—upon only wage and salary-earners?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course I do not.

The PREMIER: I am sure the hon. member does not think that that is fair and reasonable. I am sure the hon. member would agree with me that, if it is fair and reasonable to impose some burden upon wage and salary-earners and their dependants to ensure that economic stability is maintained, it is at least equally fair to place burdens of a like or greater character upon the more well-to-do sections of the community.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you suggesting that the Arbitration Court can do that under its existing powers?

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member! I said, only two moments ago, that the great weakness in the existing situation of industrial tribunals trying to handle this problem of maintaining economic stability is that they have the power to impose burdens only upon wage and salary-earners and, of course, through them, upon their dependants.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Premier will surely agree that, before the Arbitration Court gave its decision, it made a most comprehensive review of the whole of the economic position of this country.

The PREMIER: It would not matter whether the court did or did not; it would still finally have power only to inflict whatever burdens it considered necessary upon one section of the community, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that as well as his colleague sitting next to him.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But in the best interests of all concerned.

The Minister for Works: A burden on one section in the interests of all!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: In the best interests of all.

The PREMIER: Industrial tribunals cannot, in such a situation, place a similar burden on the employers who individually are far better situated financially than the workers and their dependants.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I thought that is what the court had under consideration, namely, just what burdens industry could carry, and maintain economic stability.

The PREMIER: Does the Leader of the Opposition think that the workers and their dependants are able to carry the burden that has been imposed on them

by these industrial tribunals in relation to the freezing of the cost-of-living adjustments?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not think the rest matter.

The PREMIER: That is question No. (1) that the Leader of the Opposition cannot, or will not, answer.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I did not get a chance.

The PREMIER: It is not my responsibility if the Leader of the Opposition cannot keep his colleague next to him in order.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I say that the court took all the factors—every possible factor—into consideration and decided what burden the worker could carry.

The PREMIER: No, it did not, the Leader of the Opposition is completely wrong.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

The PREMIER: Completely wrong. The court did not take into consideration at all the measure of burden that the workers and his dependants could carry. What the court took into consideration was what the court considered to be a necessary burden to impose upon the workers in order to maintain economic stability.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not think that at all.

The PREMIER: That is the point.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It was not the point in the Federal court.

The PREMIER: It was the justification given by all the industrial tribunals in Australia that acted in this way. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition another question. Does he think it reasonable and fair and necessary in all the circumstances to impose this situation upon the wage and salary-earners and their dependants in order to maintain economic stability and prevent inflation?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What I think, or what the court thinks?

The PREMIER: Does not the Leader of the Opposition think that those sections of the community that are better off than the workers, should have some share of the burden imposed on them? The only tribunal clothed with powers wide and varied enough to place burdens fairly over the whole community in such a situation is the Commonwealth Parliament. Yet that Parliament is so satisfied with the existing degree of economic stability in Australia as to have authorised in the last two years substantial taxation concessions and also increased social service payments.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You do not suggest they affect the decision of the court here?

The PREMIER: Certainly not.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I thought that was what you were arguing.

The PREMIER: I am surprised at the lack of lucidity of the hon. member this evening. Usually he has no difficulty in appreciating the essence of what has been said. Yet, tonight, deliberately or otherwise, he is adopting an attitude which makes it appear that I am saying or suggesting things which I am neither saying nor suggesting.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are telling us what the Commonwealth Government did. Do not lose sight of the fact that that Government told the electors that it would do these things.

The PREMIER: What has that to do with it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is as well to remind you.

The PREMIER: What has that to do with this situation? It has no relation to it whatever. I cannot understand what has come over members on the front bench opposite.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are offering criticism of the Commonwealth Government.

The PREMIER: I am offering no criticism of the Commonwealth Government. I am stating a fact which the Leader of the Opposition admits. I say that if it is a fair and reasonable proposition for industrial tribunals to impose a burden upon workers and their dependants to safeguard economic stability, then it is fair that the better-off sections of the community should have the same burden placed on them to help safeguard the economic stability. Yet, as I say, the Commonwealth Government—and I am not criticising that Government at all—considers the financial and economic situation of Australia to be so good that it is taking burdens off the well-to-do sections of the community.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do the tribunals agree with your point of view?

The PREMIER: They might agree with my point of view. But, as I said earlier, and as the Leader of the Opposition knows only too well, their powers are limited; they deal with only one section of the community. They can impose burdens upon the employees or the employers, or both, and in this instance they have chosen to impose burdens only upon the workers and their dependants.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you linking this with the motion? What I cannot get into my mind is whether you are attacking the decision of our local Arbitration Court, whether you are attacking the system, the Commonwealth Government, or what. I am like the people in the Petrov Royal Commission.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley had better let the Premier make his own speech.

The PREMIER: Fortunately, I am not responsible for the fact that the hon. member does not know where he is.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are!

The PREMIER: And fortunately I am not responsible for the fact admitted by the hon. member that he is unable to get something into his head.

Mr. Lawrence: You should feel sorry for him.

The PREMIER: I am not attacking any industrial tribunal; I am merely trying to give a frank and unbiased statement of how I see this total situation. Surely we are entitled to discuss this total situation as we see it, without it being suggested, as was suggested by the hon. member a moment ago, that we are attacking someone, or some tribunal! Surely we are not to have an iron curtain pulled over this matter! Surely it is not to be said that members of Parliament should be silent upon these vital questions—because they are vital, especially to those who are so directly and so vitally affected!

As I have already suggested, the Commonwealth Government is so satisfied with the existing degree of economic stability in Australia as to have authorised substantial taxation concessions, and also to have increased, substantially, social service payments. One of the arguments put forward by the Opposition in this House against the motion moved by the member for Guildford-Midland is that neither the Government's representative nor the representative of the trade unions in the Arbitration Court, put up a case to show that Western Australia's economy—including its industries—could afford to bear the pressure of the cost-of-living adjustments for the April-June quarter, as supplied to the court by the State Statistician.

Superficially that might impress some people. Let us carefully examine the position and see how much merit there is in it. Until a year ago cost-of-living adjustments had been granted consistently by the court and by other similar tribunals in Australia. In practice, therefore, at least, those adjustments were regarded as something to which workers were entitled to enable the effective purchasing power of their wages and salaries to be maintained, and also to enable their standard of living to be protected. That seems to me to be a vital point.

When the organised employers asked the Arbitration Court not to grant the cost-of-living adjustments, as they have done on more than one occasion during the last 12 months, they were in effect trying to influence the court to reduce the effective purchasing power of the wages

and salaries of workers, and they were trying in effect to reduce the standard of living of the workers and their dependants. Surely in that situation it was the task of the employers to prove to the court that the workers should suffer those deprivations! Yet some members opposite work in reverse! They say that the representative of the workers should prove a case to demonstrate that workers should not have their standard of living reduced, and should not have the effective purchasing power of their prevailing wages lowered.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Would they?

The PREMIER: I have no idea what the hon. member means. Whenever workers seek increases in wages and salaries or improvements in working conditions, the representative of the worker has to prove to the court that they were justified in obtaining such increases or improvements. That has been the procedure. Why should any member opposite say that in regard to cost-of-living adjustments, the workers' representative ought to prove to the court that the existing wage and its effective purchasing power should be maintained, and that the existing standard of living should not be lowered? If it is fair, reasonable and logical in this case, then we must admit that the employers' representative should prove to the court that the workers should have their standard of living lowered and have the effective purchasing power of their current wages and salaries reduced.

Mr. Court: During the Federal consideration of the basic wage, both parties, employers and employees, made very exhaustive submissions. They both made full-scale attacks on their respective arguments. The arguments advanced then prevail today.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member think that, without any qualification, it is fair and reasonable for workers and their dependants to be the only group in the community to shoulder the whole burden considered necessary by the Arbitration Court in order to maintain economic stability?

Mr. Court: That is not the point. You asked why the employers should not make a submission and adduce evidence to prove the increase should not be passed on. That is the proposition you were discussing.

The PREMIER: I was pointing out that in the recent application before the State court in regard to cost-of-living adjustments, the responsibility, at least in the opinion of some members opposite, for proving that the effective purchasing power of wages and salaries should not be reduced and the standard of living should not be lowered, rested with the representative of the employees.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You know very well that the Act was amended in 1950 to alter the method of decision.

The PREMIER: What was it altered to?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It was altered to decide the maximum economic capacity of industry to pay.

The PREMIER: The court did nothing about that in its consideration of the recent cost-of-living adjustments. All the court said was that the workers' representative and the Government's representative supporting the application for cost-of-living adjustments to be granted, had not proved that the economy and industries of the State could afford to do this. I am saying that it should have the responsibility of those who opposed the granting of cost-of-living adjustments to show that the economy and industries of the State could not afford to meet the additional costs which would be involved, if a cost-of-living adjustment were granted.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: In that case the Act should be amended. The Act does not provide for that at present.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member suggest for one moment that the court was doing something illegal? The court should have said to the employers' representative, "You and your principals must adduce evidence before the court to prove that the economic situation and the condition of industries in this State are so bad as to make it undesirable for the court to grant this cost-of-living adjustment."

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes—

The PREMIER: I have been tremendously patient with the member for Mt. Lawley over the years, but at this stage I must give him away.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I realise you have a very difficult argument to put forward. I know that.

The PREMIER: Surely whenever the course to be followed in the Arbitration Court is one which will worsen the industrial and economic position of workers, the employers should prove by evidence that the worsening process is necessary and justified. Even the member for Mt. Lawley privately agrees with me in that regard. Before action was taken by various industrial tribunals to deprive workers of all cost-of-living adjustments, employers surely should have been called upon to prove, if they could, that such a course was fair and essential to the maintenance of economic stability! I am confident, in view of the general prosperity of industry, that they could not prove such a proposition.

Let us look at the general situation of industry today. The year 1953-54 was for trade, commerce and industry generally, a wonderful year. Trade was very active, turnover was rapid, bad debts were few, and profits were very high, certainly much

higher than in the previous year. Surely the men and women employed in trade, commerce and industry should have shared to some reasonable extent in the greater profits which were obtained! But did they? No. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, they did not share in any degree whatsoever.

Mr. Court: That is a debatable point because many of them did get the benefit of prosperity in their own firms.

The PREMIER: Here comes the member for Nedlands, the official spokesman for big business in Western Australia!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Surely that is not a fair comment!

The PREMIER: What is wrong with it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: When was he appointed as official spokesman for them?

The PREMIER: Surely there is no need for him to be appointed! One could, by upward gravitation and natural fitness or something else, reach the position.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Would not that bring a man down?

The PREMIER: I am afraid the Leader of the Opposition is becoming somewhat narrow-minded, and that does not become him. I am simply saying that the member for Nedlands is trying to turn against me the point I have been making by suggesting that the employees of some firms under some bonus systems have shared to some extent in the greater prosperity and the greater profits that have been experienced by some firms. I am sure that the member for Nedlands would agree that the percentage of all workers in the State who participated in that way is extremely small indeed.

Mr. Court: That is not so.

The PREMIER: It is not a large percentage.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I should say 99 per cent. of the men in the building trades.

The PREMIER: No matter how large the percentage might be, it does not dispose of the fact that other workers have not similarly participated. Not only did the great majority not share in the higher profits, but they were penalised as compared with their position in the previous and less prosperous year. They are worse off today than they were in the less prosperous year 1952-53. The fact is that the purchasing power of their wages and salaries was reduced and the standard of living of themselves and their families was lowered.

Let us now look at the existing situation in this State as the worker himself views it. He has seen industrial tribunals give decisions that have deprived him of all cost-of-living adjustments equalling in all nearly £1 per week. At the same time, he has

seen the Legislative Council refuse to allow any legal control over prices and therefore over profits.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That has not been decided yet.

The PREMIER: It has.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Not this year.

The PREMIER: It was decided, and the decision then taken is the one that is operating today. So the worker has seen a total situation in which he and his family have been penalised allegedly to maintain the economic stability and to prevent further inflation, and in which many of those who own and operate trade, commerce and industry are free to charge whatever they please for the goods and services they supply, and free also to amass as much profit as they are capable of doing. The existence of that situation confuses the workers to a large extent, and leaves them with a strong feeling that they are not getting a fair deal compared with the treatment being received by other sections of the community, and especially by employers.

Workers generally are willing to shoulder burdens and suffer deprivations so long as they are sure that the burdens and deprivations are fair and necessary in the interests of the community as a whole. However, when they see only themselves being singled out for burdens, while the better-off sections are allowed to escape any share of those burdens, and even to make more and more profits, they naturally become strongly resentful.

Admittedly, and most unfortunately, the prevailing wage and salary situation in this State in relation to cost-of-living adjustments has been made very difficult indeed because of the substantial increases that have taken place in the cost of living in the last 12 months. Naturally, members of industrial tribunals have to think hard before granting in full, or even in part, the larger cost-of-living adjustments that develop from time to time. Among other difficult questions considered by them is the important one of interstate competition in relation to our own manufacturing industries, and another question is the one of competition experienced by our goods in overseas markets.

Nevertheless, it could hardly be argued logically that no part at all of any of the cost-of-living adjustments that developed during the last 12 months should have been granted. Why has the cost of living in Western Australia risen so seriously during the last 12 months and so little by comparison in the other States? This question is of tremendous importance. The other States, including even the Liberal Party-governed State of South Australia, have all during the period maintained a strict legal control over rents and prices. In our State, unfortunately,

Liberal Party members of Parliament, particularly in the Legislative Council, supported by Country Party members, have imposed the wish and will of the wealthy sections of the community upon both the Parliament and the public.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What socialistic jargon is that? It reads wonderfully well.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition has turned beet-root red, which seems to indicate that there is a considerable amount of truth in it, enough at least to embarrass him greatly.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Not at all.

The PREMIER: It is absolutely true. We know what happened to the Prices Control Act Amendment and Continuance Bill when it went to the Council in December of last year. If it was a good thing for the Liberal Party members of the Legislative Council to vote out control on that occasion, why was it not good for the Liberal Party Playford Government in South Australia to vote it out there? The Leader of the Opposition is indulging in a silence that could be heard even at Pinjarra!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We did not always agree with what Mr. Playford did.

The PREMIER: Had the hon. member been Premier in December last, he would have believed in the same policy.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You do not believe in everything that Dr. Evatt says.

The PREMIER: And I do not believe in everything the member for Mt. Lawley says in his endeavour to throw me off the track. As a result of the action of the Legislative Council, legal control over prices was abolished last December, and effective legal control over rents was undermined at the same time by the same forces. That undermining process was intensified in April of this year. Fortunately, since then, rent control has been re-established, although not on the most effective basis possible. If the freezing of cost-of-living adjustments in connection with wages and salaries is essential for the maintenance of economic stability and for the prevention of further inflation, effective control of prices and rents must be even more essential. It is much more essential because, if rents and prices are not allowed to rise, no upward movement in the cost of living could possibly occur.

There is another point that is of considerable importance. If members of Parliament, particularly some of those in the Legislative Council, know that the industrial tribunal of the State is pursuing a policy of no cost-of-living adjustments, the members concerned could develop a degree of irresponsibility about the cost of living which from time to time could place additional heavy burdens upon the working people and their dependants. The

workers of Western Australia have established a remarkably good record of industrial peace, and they, in the great majority, are men and women who possess and display a great amount of goodwill in their industrial relationships.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I think we all agree with that.

The PREMIER: To agree with it is not sufficient. If members agree with it, they should try to influence the people they represent to do something in a practical way to show some appreciation of the attitude that workers in this State have adopted over the years.

Mr. Hutchinson: Is it your view that the workers of Western Australia are worse off than their Eastern States confreres?

The PREMIER: I would not be in a position to know; nor do I think it is a point of great importance in this debate. It would be easy to think that the organised employers of the State would have shown in the recent cost-of-living adjustments hearing which took place in the Arbitration Court, some practical appreciation of that record of industrial peace and that goodwill. It might have been that they would, as a gesture of appreciation, have advocated the granting of at least part of the 13s. cost-of-living adjustment for the April-June quarter. That would have shown in practical form that they were prepared to share some of their increasing profits with their employees.

As things are now, wage and salary-earners see expressed in the increasing profits of their employers, the cost-of-living adjustments which should be put each week into their own pay envelopes. It is reasonably certain that not every employer approves of what has taken place—nor, should I hope, does every member opposite approve of what has taken place—but the organised employers are unrelenting, apparently, in their total opposition to the payment of any cost-of-living adjustments to workers, and are opposed also to any legal control of prices and rents. Large profits are built mainly by charging higher prices to the public than it is fair or necessary to charge.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is that so in regard to those companies to which you refer? Have those increased profits been obtained through higher charges?

The PREMIER: I did not say that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I think that is what you read.

The PREMIER: No. I shall read it again.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do.

The PREMIER: This is what I read—

Large profits are built mainly by charging higher prices to the public than it is fair or necessary to charge.

In other words, had the employers—the men of trade, commerce and industry in this State—been anxious to safeguard our economic stability and show some gesture of practical appreciation to the workers for their great record of industrial peace and goodwill, they could have reduced prices. Had that been done, it would have been a magnificent contribution, and not a sacrifice, by the employers. Why should they go on building up greater and greater profits in a period when workers are penalised to maintain economic stability? Is there any justice in that?

Mr. Wild: Were these profits not made in the financial year prior to this decision?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. Wild: They must have been, in the main.

The PREMIER: They were made in the financial year prior to the most recent decision in regard to the cost-of-living adjustments.

Mr. Wild: That is the one you are talking about.

The PREMIER: That is not the only one I am talking about at all. If the member for Dale had been listening all through, he would know that I started at the beginning and dealt with the initial freezing of cost-of-living adjustments which took place, if I remember rightly, about October last year.

Mr. Wild: That was only a minor one compared with the last one.

The PREMIER: I know, but there have been some since. The most recent cost-of-living figure for the April-June quarter was approximately 13s. The net increase in the cost of living for the previous eight or nine months was, I think, about 6s. 3d. So, in part of the financial year in which these much higher profits were made, the cost-of-living adjustments had been frozen. It seems to me that the employers—the men of trade, commerce and industry—instead of concentrating on the making of greater profits than in the previous year, would have shown much better qualities of citizenship, and would have done something much more in the interests of maintaining Western Australia's great record of employer and employee relationship, if they had reduced the price of goods and services.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Perhaps they have.

The PREMIER: If they have, and where they have, they could have done even better.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you suggesting that about the State Electricity Commission? It made a profit.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member cares to investigate the State Electricity Commission profit, he will find that it is mortgaged to the Treasury in regard to

the heavy losses it made in earlier years. I am simply submitting that the employers, instead of building up higher and higher profits, particularly in a period when cost-of-living adjustments are frozen, ought to give back to the workers and their dependants, some of the real effective purchasing power which has been taken from their incomes. They could do that by reducing prices for the goods and services which they make available.

That, surely, is a fair and reasonable proposition. If workers have to suffer this deprivation to maintain economic stability, which benefits everybody, and especially the owners of industry, trade and commerce, then surely in the name of all that is reasonable, sensible, fair and just, those owners of industry, in their turn, ought to give something back to their employees and to the public generally; and they can best do that by reducing prices whenever it is possible for them to do so, instead of going ahead, building up more and more profits for themselves and their shareholders.

If employers individually, and as an organised group, intend in the future to oppose the granting of cost-of-living adjustments as they become due from quarter to quarter, then it is to be hoped that their individual and collective consciences will move them to reduce prices for goods and services, thereby making a material contribution themselves to economic stability and assisting also to restore a greater measure of effective purchasing power to the wages and salaries which they pay to their employees.

I have tried to sum up the total situation, and to see it from everybody's point of view. I have endeavoured not to reflect upon anybody, and certainly I have not attacked anyone.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I think you have gone very near reflecting; and to attacking, too.

The PREMIER: Where?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: In your general speech.

The PREMIER: Reflecting and attacking whom?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The employers; who else?

The PREMIER: I have simply been trying to make the employers see the injustice of the present situation. I am not one of those who hates the employers and if the Leader of the Opposition cares to carry out a Gallup poll among the men of trade, industry and commerce in this State, he will find from many of them that I have assisted them to a substantial extent through the machinery of the Government. And I will continue to do so because by helping them to expand their industries we are helping to increase the wealth production of the State and are

creating more employment opportunities and promoting the total progress of Western Australia.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is true.

The PREMIER: I am appealing to the employers to look at this situation from the angle of the workers and realise that the fair thing for them to do is to share whatever burden is considered necessary to maintain economic stability.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Everyone would agree with that.

The PREMIER: But what do we do to give effect to it? It is not sufficient just to agree, because if we do that and do not do anything practical in the matter, the worker will continue to bear the full burden and the employers, while bearing no burden, will continue to build up increasing profits. The member for Mt. Lawley could help in a practical way because he is in the confidence of the people of whom I have spoken, the owners and operators of industry, trade and commerce.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Not as much as you are.

The PREMIER: He has more influence with them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Not as much as you have.

The PREMIER: I am interested to hear that. I did not know until now that the hon. member was in the black books of the employers.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You might be in their good books.

The PREMIER: I would very much doubt that. That would be an outsider coming home first past the post.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They do it occasionally.

The PREMIER: Perhaps we had better skate away from that one, as I am beginning to feel somewhat embarrassed! I think every member in this House who is capable of discussing this matter with individual employers should do so, and everyone who is capable of influencing individual employers should do so. I do not take the view that the employers generally are hard-hearted or one-eyed, or that at every opportunity they exploit and rob the workers and their dependants, but every one of us becomes conditioned to some extent by his own ideologies and associations. We all tend to become rather one-eyed and to see in bright colours the case for our own people and in rather drab colours that for the other side. It seems to me that what is urgently required in this total situation is an appreciation by both sides of the other fellow's circumstances and point of view.

Mr. Perkins: Do you think the workers would be very much better off if the basic wage were raised by £1 per week?

The PREMIER: No, I do not.

Mr. Perkins: That would be the immediate effect of this motion, if it were implemented.

The PREMIER: I have not even advocated that the wage should be raised by £1 per week immediately. As a matter of fact, I think it is an outsize in tragedies that the cost of living in this State should have risen to that extent in the last twelve months.

Mr. Perkins: But would not that be the effect of this motion?

The PREMIER: No. The effect of carrying the motion as it is now worded would be just an expression of opinion by this House of Parliament. The expression of opinion set out in the motion is clear and its essence is that this House considers it to be unfair and unjust that only wage and salary-earners and their dependants should be called upon to carry the burden considered requisite to maintain economic stability in Western Australia. Every member here would support that, in essence. All members on the other side of the House would support it in principle and would agree that it is not fair, reasonable or just that the workers and their dependants should carry the total burden considered to be requisite to maintain economic stability in this State.

During my speech the member for Mt. Lawley admitted, by interjection, that he considered quite frankly that if a burden had to be imposed upon the community to maintain economic stability, all sections that were financially capable of bearing some part of the burden should be called upon to do so and that, in effect, is what the motion says.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: No, it does not. However, that does not matter as I do not want to interrupt.

The PREMIER: It says, quite clearly, that in the opinion of this House wage and salary-earners and their dependants by being deprived of the cost-of-living adjustments, are being called upon to bear more than their fair share of whatever burden it might be necessary for the community as a whole to carry in order to maintain economic stability. The member for Mt. Lawley agrees with that in principle. So does the Leader of the Opposition, and so, I hope, does every member opposite. It appears to me to be essential that we should so express ourselves in connection with this total wage and economic situation.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley—on amendment) [8.56]: The Premier has just made a propaganda speech, but not a good one. Although I have been in this House for many years, this is the only occasion on which I have ever heard a Premier read a speech and it would be most interesting to me to know who wrote it, because I have an admiration of the Premier

and have never disguised it, and I think he could do much better if he compiled his own notes and did not get them from somewhere else.

The Premier: The hon. member is far less than just.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is my guess, at all events.

The Premier: You are not just.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I try to be just.

The Premier: Only just.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I tried to get the Premier to declare what matter he was really debating. He certainly read the motion but did not deal with it because its essence is that the worker is being asked to carry an unfair share of the burden by being deprived of the cost-of-living adjustments. That is what the debate is about and what I should have expected the Premier to deal with mainly. However, first of all he dealt with it by saying that the responsibility of maintaining economic conditions should not rest so much on the Arbitration Court, and, in particular, the Federal Arbitration Court. What has that to do with this motion?

The Premier: The Premier did not say that.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I think he did.

The Premier: I did not.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Did he not discuss the Federal Arbitration Court?

The Premier: The point of view you are now expressing had relationship to what I said about Parliaments and especially the Commonwealth Parliament, but you are talking about Arbitration Courts.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Premier said the Commonwealth Parliament could have done something in connection with this matter. What it could have done in regard to the quarterly adjustments in Western Australia, I just would not know.

The Premier: The hon. member is impossible, because I was not at that time talking about cost-of-living adjustments in Western Australia, but about maintaining economic stability.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is another matter altogether, but hardly the subject of this debate, as the subject of the debate deals with the cost-of-living adjustments. There were many points raised by the Premier with which I entirely agree and in that I think I speak for all members on this side of the House. First of all, we agree that if any burden is to be placed on the community—if there is to be a lowering of our standard of living—it certainly ought to be shared by every individual in the community.

Mr. Brady: Hear, hear!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: There cannot be any argument about that, and members will never hear me raise any argument against that proposition. The second is, of course, that Parliament has to decide, and should decide, the method by which this burden is to be shared and by what means economic stability is to be maintained. No one can argue about that. But what I suggest is that while Parliament has placed the responsibility on the Arbitration Courts of Australia so largely as it has done, and on the judges who have to decide, the courts have to carry out that duty to the best of their ability on the information that is available to them.

There may be better systems; I think the Premier suggested there were. I am not saying that there are not because it must be admitted that economic stability—and, in my view, we cannot separate the economic stability of Western Australia from the rest of Australia because our economic life is so closely interwoven that one must rest with the other—must be maintained. As I said, there may be better methods, but while we have imposed the responsibility on the courts, and they have come to a decision, it behoves us not to criticise it but to accept it as it has been given.

I understood this motion to say that the State Arbitration Court had failed to award an adjustment in terms of the prices indices on the last two or three occasions. That seems to be the only matter for discussion, and in discussing it I think we should consider the duty imposed upon the court. When the State court first came into existence its duty was to award a basic-wage earner the minimum wage on which it was reasonable to expect him to maintain himself and a small family. That was the duty imposed on the court, rightly or wrongly, by Parliament, and it came to be known commonly as the needs basis of determining the basic wage. The Commonwealth Parliament has no jurisdiction to give such a direction to the Federal court because it is outside the Constitution, rightly or wrongly. The only jurisdiction of the Federal court is to settle disputes on an interstate basis, and in doing that it is necessary for it to decide on a basic wage.

Mr. Brady: Do you think the State court should follow that court in its judgments?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I think it must, largely, because our economic life is so wrapped up with all other parts of Australia that we cannot exist as a separate economic unit. Having the duty to settle disputes, the court, very early in its existence, decided to fix the basic wage on the same basis as I have just stated—that is, the minimum needs of the average worker in a civilised community.

Mr. McCulloch: That is all that is being paid now—the minimum.

Mr. Brady: They are not paying the minimum.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That was the principle known as the needs fixation of the basic wage, and it existed for many years. Then the Federal court altered the principle. It was not bound by any directions in its Act because its only jurisdiction is to settle industrial disputes; so it was free to alter the principle upon which it gave a decision. The court altered its principle in this fashion: It said, "We are not going to accept the principle that all we should award is the minimum requirements that we feel a worker should be paid in a civilised community." It was altered at the instigation, and I say rightly, of the union, and agreed to by the employers. It was altered to a better principle—the economic capacity of industry to pay.

But our court did not have authority to alter its principle and could not have done so, because our Act clearly sets out that it had to fix the basic wage on the needs basis. So it was necessary for this Parliament to give fresh authority to the court to follow the altered principle that had been adopted by the Federal court, and I am pleased to say that I was responsible for introducing the necessary Bill into this House in 1950. Had it not been for the introduction of that Bill, the increase of £1 a week that the Federal court held was within the economic capacity of industry to pay, could not, I submit, have been awarded by our court. Willingly, the Government, of which I was a member, took steps—Standing Orders were suspended for the purpose—to have the Bill passed through Parliament so that the workers would not be deprived of anything at all.

Mr. McCulloch: That was part of the bargain, too.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The amendment was passed and the system altered, with the approval of the Opposition. The court was given power to decide the basic wage, and it was to take into consideration—

the economic capacity of industry and any other matters which the court deems relevant and advisable, but so as not to reduce the basic wage below an amount deemed necessary by the court to meet the requirements of paragraph (a) of this subsection and determined without regard being had to the matters mentioned in this paragraph.

That is the duty now imposed upon the court by Parliament and with the approval of the Premier, because he supported the Bill introduced at that time.

Mr. Brady: But it has been reduced below the needs at the moment.

Mr. McCulloch: You know why the Opposition agreed to it too, do you not? It was because of the female basic wage.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Premier pointed out that he had his speech written out and he placed great importance on that fact. He said that he did not usually do this and, in view of that, I hope that members on the other side of the House will do me justice by not interjecting so that I can make an adequate reply to the Premier's speech.

The Minister for Housing: Who prepared this?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: This particular one is Mr. Justice Jackson's judgment.

The Minister for Housing: I just wanted to know.

Mr. Brady: Tell us why the Arbitration Court allowed £1 6s. for rent when people are paying, in actual fact, £2 or £3 a week?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I will tell the hon. member all he wants to know if he will let me.

Mr. Brady: Well, explain that to me first.

Mr. Hutchinson: We will initiate an inquiry.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: What I want to point out is that, rightly or wrongly, that is the duty imposed upon the Arbitration Court of Western Australia by Parliament. The court is not competent to go outside that jurisdiction. It had to make a decision within it, and it did so. I do not argue whether the court was right or wrong. When we repose great trust in our judiciary, it does not behove people of great responsibility, once the court has given its decision, to so attack it that it must inevitably bring disrepute on the court. If we have no faith in the court and its members, we must abandon the system, but if we have faith in the system and in the persons who are appointed to perform this important duty, it behoves us to accept their decision in a proper and fair manner.

Mr. Johnson: Does not the legal profession take appeals to a higher court?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: But there is no appeal from the Arbitration Court, or does the hon. member want it that way?

Mr. Johnson: In this case I would like an appeal.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, when the hon. member loses he wants an appeal. That is a good idea. I think the hon. member who moved this motion agreed with that proposition because he said, "The Arbitration Court of Western Australia; a most responsible body" I think that that is his view of the court.

Mr. Brady: This House is more responsible, though.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: It has greater responsibility, of course, because I agree that, by law, we have delegated certain duties.

Mr. Brady: We want justice.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The hon. member is not suggesting that the court did not attempt to do justice?

Mr. Brady: I am suggesting that we will be doing the workers an injustice if the House does not carry this motion.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Of course, the Premier's speech was full of platitudes. I could agree with most of the propositions he put forward. He said that it was unfair that the whole burden should be borne by one section of the community.

The Premier: That is what the motion says.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Oh no, it does not!

The Premier: Yes, it does.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Premier is leaving out the most important words, because the motion says, "By being deprived of all cost-of-living adjustments."

The Premier: But read the balance.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know what the balance is.

The Premier: Well, read it!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I will. It reads—

That in the opinion of this House wages and salary-earners and their dependants, by being deprived of all "cost-of-living" adjustments are being called upon to bear more than their fair share of whatever burden it might be necessary for the community as a whole to carry to maintain economic stability.

The essence of the motion is that the increased burden has been imposed by the Arbitration Court on the workers by depriving them of quarterly adjustments. That is the point on which the real argument should proceed.

The Premier: It is the burden that the court puts upon the workers in comparison with the burden placed on other sections of the community.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Premier says that that is what causes the burden. I say that the judge carried out his duties to the best of his ability so as to comply with the Act that defines his duty as making the basic wage as high as the economic capacity of industry can carry and in accordance with other matters which the court considers relevant.

Mr. McCulloch: He never mentioned anything about the capacity of industry to pay.

The Premier: That is in relation to the annual inquiry.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Oh no, it is not. If this House had determined that there should be automatic quarterly adjustments, it would have said so. At present, rightly or wrongly, Parliament has imposed a different duty on the judge because, in effect, it says, "You shall exercise a discretion." It is his duty to exercise that discretion because the word "may" is used. If one reads the latest judgment of the court it will be seen that the judge virtually followed what I have pointed out to members tonight. Amongst other portions of the judgment he said—

In 1950 the Act was amended to abolish the annual inquiry and to substitute a general inquiry to be held at the request of the workers or employers or at the instance of the Court. Since the declaration of December, 1950, no such general inquiry has been requested or held.

The 1950 amendment also made an important change in the definition of the basic wage under Section 123. Until then it had been defined as meaning, "a sum sufficient to enable the average worker to whom it applies to live in reasonable comfort, having regard to any domestic obligations to which such average worker would be ordinarily subject." The amount fixed in accordance with this definition was commonly known as "the needs" basic wage. The 1950 amendment defined "basic wage" in very general terms, viz. "a wage which the Court considers to be just and reasonable for the average worker to whom it applies." It then provided that in determining the basic wage the Court should take into consideration, firstly, the "needs" of the average worker as previously defined and, secondly, "the economic capacity of industry and any other matters which the Court deems relevant and advisable" but so as not to reduce the basic wage below "needs."

Mr. Brady: Which the court had done.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is the law as it exists now, and it was on that basis that the judge gave his decision after considering the matter. The Premier disagrees with the next portion I propose to quote. After all, a court of law has the responsibility of deciding important matters. This is particularly so in the case of the Arbitration Court because its decisions affect a great many people in the community. I do not think anyone should hold that a judge should give his decision

by guess or by God. He should do so only after considering all the relevant facts that are authoritatively placed before him and properly verified. Do members opposite suggest that we should decide issues which are not tried under oath after careful investigation by cross-examination?

Mr. Johnson: It is not a criminal court.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know it is not, but does the hon. member suggest that it is not more important than a criminal court? I say that the matters the Arbitration Court has to decide are infinitely more important than those of the average criminal court. The decisions of the Arbitration Court affect the whole community, not merely one section of it. Accordingly, it is most important that the judge should decide these issues on the best possible information authoritatively placed before him and properly verified under oath. I now propose to quote a further extract from Mr. Justice Jackson's judgment—

If there is a change in standard, it is for the parties to adduce evidence of it in the court in an endeavour to persuade the court to adopt a higher figure for the rent element in the needs basic wage.

He is charged with having to do these things.

Mr. Johnson: He is also charged with having to get evidence.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I suggest that is not the idea. It would have been a good idea had the Government made the evidence available to the judge; but no, the Government did not think fit to do so. I have always felt that the people should be represented and should give evidence, but this has not been done. At present, the only facts tendered are those between employers and employees.

Mr. Brady: The Prime Minister said the country was prosperous, and, when opening Parliament, Field Marshall Sir William Slim also said the country was prosperous. What more do you want?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Mr. Justice Jackson continued in his judgment—

I am clearly of the opinion that the economic capacity of industry is an implied consideration under Section 127 as well as an expressed consideration under Section 123. In this I find considerable support in the views of the late Sir Walter Dwyer in 1942 on the two occasions when he refused to adjust the basic wage on the then quarter's price index numbers. His principal reason for that refusal was clearly an economic one, namely, that he feared the increases would add an impetus to the inflationary trend then apparent.

Mr. McCulloch: That was in 1942.

Mr. Brady: I think the basic wage was increased.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: After all, we are deciding principles. The court then took into consideration whether, having in view that principle, it was a fit and proper course for an increase to be given. The judgment continued—

It is, I think, obvious that before we do so we should be satisfied that this State can afford to pay that additional wage. The next question is, how is the court to determine whether such an increased wage is within the economic capacity of industry? It is unnecessary for me to answer this question in detail because it is sufficient to say that, in my view, the court is entitled to, and indeed bound to, rely primarily on the evidence and other information which the parties to a basic wage adjudication care to place before it.

Mr. Brady: He is wrong there.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The judgment continued—

In fact, they really have not attempted to do so. I think, when this hearing commenced, I expressed my views fairly clearly from the Bench and the matter was then adjourned to give Mr. Stannard, Mr. Reeves and Mr. Chamberlain and their principals an opportunity of presenting such information as they thought fit on that topic to the court. On the resumption of the hearing, however, Mr. Stannard, with whom Mr. Reeves concurred, contented himself by saying, firstly, that the Ministers of the Crown desired the court to grant increases; secondly, that direct costs in wages, based on a 40-hour week, would be just under £1,000,000 to Government employees, and, thirdly, that he agreed that the court should take into consideration the capacity of industry in this State to pay the increases.

That was the Government's point of view. It entirely agreed with the principle, and I think it is evident that the court must take into consideration, and should take into consideration in these quarterly adjustments, the capacity of industry to pay.

Mr. McCulloch: Who is going to prove that?

The Minister for Housing: To pay profits.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The capacity of industry to pay any increases.

Mr. McCulloch: Should not the employers' representative have told the judge that they could not pay?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I will discuss this later with the hon. member in the corridor, if he wishes.

[*Mr. Hill took the Chair.*]

Mr. McCulloch: Let us discuss it now.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Rightly or wrongly, the judge stated his point of view quite clearly, and before the hearing he said, "I think it is your duty to give some evidence to support your submissions." Not only did they not do so, but the representative of the Government said, "Yes, I think the court should take into consideration the capacity of industry to pay the increases." What possible opportunity would the judge have to decide that issue unless some facts were put before him? Rightly or wrongly, the Government decided to give no evidence at all.

Mr. Brady: The employers did not, either.

Mr. McCulloch: What did Mr. Cross say?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Government did not give any evidence at all, in spite of what the judge had said.

Mr. McCulloch: The onus was put on the employees' advocate.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: There was no disagreement by the employees' representative; he agreed with the views of the chairman, because he did not contradict them.

Mr. Brady: Neither did the employers. Tell us both sides of the story, not just one side.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I shall repeat myself again, if the hon. member will permit me.

Mr. McCulloch: Tell us what Mr. Cross said.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The court acted in a proper and logical fashion. It told the representative of the Government about the method it was going to adopt when deciding this issue, and the representative of the employees agreed because he said, "This is the proper way to do it." He did not contradict the method.

Mr. Brady: He could not make his own laws.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: If the Government thought it was justified and advisable, one would have expected it to support with some evidence the case for an increase. But it did not give one bit of evidence. The Government, through its representative, thought that it was the duty of the court to decide whether it was within the capacity of industry to pay under existing circumstances. The court found that an increase was not justified. If an increase was justified, then the Government was very lax in presenting its case. It was aware of the attitude and the method to be adopted by the court to decide the

issue, but, rightly or wrongly, it made no effort to adduce any evidence which would justify an increase. Naturally no increase was granted.

No one, including the Premier, will deny that the economic life of Western Australia is bound up with that of the Eastern States. The Tariff Board has said that the quarterly adjustment of the basic wage is one of the greatest impetuses to inflation. It said—

The continued increase in costs and the development of what is known as the price spiral, have subsidiary spirals each of which is in the same direction and adds to the impetus and volume of the main one. There is, for example our wage system which is largely responsible for the current spiral of wages costs and wages again.

Mr. Brady: What are you reading from?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Tariff Board report of 1953.

Mr. Brady: That report also refers to inefficiency of management. Read that out.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: We must admit that the automatic quarterly adjustments have a very great effect on the spiralling of costs and on the economic situation.

Mr. McCulloch: Who is to blame for that?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No one will deny the fact that a grave responsibility in that direction was placed on the court. It had a great duty to perform, but the Government did not make any effort to assist the court in any way. I do not think the Government really wanted any increase. It had to appear before the court and support the increase. I the Government thought that industry could pay and if it really desired this increase, would it not have given some evidence? Do we imagine that front bench members opposite are so lacking in intelligence, when the court expressed the view that if an increase is desired evidence must be given, that they omitted to furnish this evidence?

Evidence is available to the Government; all the Treasury officials could have given evidence. There are many competent men in the employ of the Government—including Mr. Mathea, the Prices Commissioner—who were available to give evidence, yet not one of them was called. I can only conclude that the Government was very doubtful as to whether automatic adjustments to the basic wage were advisable, bearing in mind the fact that the Federal basic wage could not be increased. If an increase had been granted in this case, a worker under a State award would receive a higher basic wage than another worker under a Federal award.

Mr. McCulloch: That has always been the case. It is not new.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That would have a very bad effect on industry.

Mr. McCulloch: Such a situation has existed for years.

The Premier: There is no such thing as an automatic adjustment.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: We all agree that the national wealth should be increased as much as possible, and we all want it to be shared as fairly as possible. But where does this national wealth lie? It has been suggested that it is retained in the hands of a few people and that if this wealth were split up it would mean a great deal more to the workers. Just listen to these figures.

Mr. Brady: What are you quoting from?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: From the 32nd report of the Commissioner for Taxation. It discloses that there are 2,867,582 taxpayers whose incomes are £1,000 or under. I am taking this figure as the average earnings of persons referred to in this motion; in other words, the salaried and wage-earners.

Mr. Brady: The average is £1,000 a year?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, but the hon. member earns a lot more than that?

Mr. Brady: I earn it, but I do not receive it all.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Dealing further with the report, it will be seen that their share—I refer to the taxpayers—of the national income is £1,592,197,000 and they pay the sum of £110,064,000 by way of income tax and social services contributions. The remaining taxpayers in all Australia, amounting to 524,984 receive £997,455,000 and these contribute a total sum of £241,954,000 in taxation, which is more than twice as much as the other group.

If we reduce the income of this higher group to £1,000 each and redistribute the excess amount among the other taxpayers, we will get the following result:—The total income from the higher group equals £997,455,000. From this deduct £524,084,000, which brings them down to £1,000 each and leaves a balance of £473,371,000 for redistribution. If we divide this amount by the total number of taxpayers, each would then receive only £2 13s. 5d. per week more, and it must be remembered that the Government would have to recover still the £241,954,000 that is now being obtained from the higher group in income taxes.

So it is apparent that in considering these matters, the court has not a vast sum of money to play around with. If basic wage rises were granted, who would contribute most of the money? Would it be a gain to the worker? If it were, I for one would not grudge it, but the

money is not there. The national capacity to pay is not there, as those figures prove, and that is what the court found.

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

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I move—

That the member for Mt. Lawley be granted an extension of 15 minutes.

Motion put and passed.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I thank members for the extension and for being so patient. It will be seen that there is not a vast source of income that is not already in the hands of the worker or the salary-earner. I do not know whether members of this House would be prepared to have their remuneration reduced to £1,000 a year and share the extra £2 13s. Would the member for Leederville vote for that? I am not saying that it would be right to do so. I always believe in a margin for skill.

Therefore I say that our duty is to do a fair thing. I submit that the court made every endeavour to do a fair thing, but a vast source of income was not available. The court had to decide whether it would have been of any advantage to the worker to give this increase, having in view all the circumstances. To do that is the duty of the court, and the court decided that it would not. I submit that the court's decision was quite right. If the Government had been serious about the matter, it would certainly have submitted evidence on the last occasion to justify the court in increasing the basic wage.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison—on amendment) [9.44]: I oppose the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition and support the motion of the member for Guildford-Midland. I wish to refer to the effect of the pegging of the basic wage and the discontinuance of adjustments on the goldmining industry in the Murchison electorate. In my opinion, wages have always been pegged, because the cost of living has been the factor by which wages have been adjusted for a considerable number of years.

Members will agree that costs have increased from time to time, not only the cost of up-to-date machinery required by mineowners in order that the mines might be operated by modern methods, but also the cost of essential foods required by the miner to enable him to operate that modern machinery. Thus there have been increased costs on both sides. Now let me explain the unfair part as I see it. I could quote details of the profits that have been made by the vari-

ous goldmines, not only in the Murchison electorate but also in other districts where the industry is carried on.

The member for Mt. Lawley mentioned the other evening that the Big Bell mine would have suffered greatly through an adjustment of the basic wage. The miner is the producer. In order that he may produce it is necessary for the mineowner to employ, say, two men on the surface. Under that arrangement, success could be achieved, but if, through bad management, the employer increased the number on the surface to five, the producer—the miner—would be overburdened by this additional overhead expenditure. Thus heavier costs would be incurred.

Mr. Wild: Is that happening at the Big Bell?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Yes, and I daresay in other industries, too. To blame the miner for the additional overhead or for excess expenditure is definitely wrong. Furthermore, it is damaging to the goldmining industry, as it would be if the same thing happened in any other industry. One may safely say that this applies to many industries, and if it be not checked, could result in disaster.

Regarding the rise in costs there are many things to be taken into consideration. One mineowner, whom I know, received 1s. per ton on the ore produced—this applies to Big Bell mine—which represented a very large sum of money over the period of a month. The quantity of ore produced was 35,000 tons, which meant for the month an approximate expenditure over and above other costs of £1,750. Therefore that additional overhead expenditure would have produced a net margin of profit. Yet all of this is considered to be the responsibility of the worker on that mine.

To show the economic capacity of the industry to pay, I quote "The West Australian" of the 15th of this month, which recorded that the Central Norseman Gold Corporation in the four weeks ended the 7th September, had treated 12,043 tons of ore for 6,445 oz. of gold. The Goldmines of Kalgoorlie Ltd. treated 13,981 tons for 4,079 oz.; and New Coolgardie, N.L., treated 5,412 tons for 2,691 oz. These mines are sound producers and could stand the increase of 19s. 11d. if the basic wage were adjusted.

To solve the production problem, I suggest that experienced miners be paid at the correct Arbitration Court basic wage, plus qualified award rates and adjustments. But what do we find since the Arbitration Court has withheld the basic-wage adjustments? Many miners with years of experience have decided to leave the industry because they have found their wage to be inadequate to permit of their keeping their home and family, and living respectably.

Members opposite should wake up and not blame the present Government for not controlling meat, but should blame themselves for not allowing it to be controlled and for opposing sound, sensible, legislation. They should learn to say "Yes," and forget the word "No."

Hon. L. Thorn: We are not Yes-men.

Mr. O'BRIEN: Members opposite seem to say, "No, no, a thousand times no." If they said "Yes," the problem no doubt would be solved. Money knows no one, and it has no ears or heart. We must manage to produce cheaper and sell cheaper. The producer or middleman must forget the huge profits he has been making, and be prepared to accept a fair margin of profit, and so reduce his prices accordingly. If he is not prepared to reduce his prices, he cannot expect the wage-earner to accept a lower wage and suffer hardships.

The Leader of the Opposition, and his colleagues, should make every effort to support the motion and have the basic wage adjusted without delay; and, furthermore, they should co-operate with the Government to ensure that prices remain static in order to maintain economic stability in the State. The economic capacity of industry to pay is sound, and at the present time, industry, especially the goldmining industry, can afford to pay this amount of 19s. 11d. I consider that what has occurred is an injustice to the workers of this State, and that every effort should be made to bring about an adjustment of the basic wage.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned.

BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

- 1, Supreme Court Act Amendment.
- 2, Crown Suits Act Amendment.
- 3, State Electricity Commission Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.