

be no loss to the Government or State and there would be considerable advantage in that a great amount of labour would be available. This applies to social service pensioners and those who are 65 years of age—particularly the artisans and technicians—who are still capable of doing a large amount of work.

The pensioners realise, however, that if they do work which returns them an amount in excess of 30s. a week they lose their social service pensions and are not prepared to do anything that will bring them in an amount more than that. Consequently there are thousands of these men who could be used to supplement the tremendous labour shortage in this State if an alteration were made in that direction. From the State Government point of view, a suggestion worthy of consideration is to allow a skilled man—one who is capable of doing a good day's work—though he might have reached the retiring age of 60, to continue in his job and be paid his wages as well as his superannuation.

There would be no loss to the department if this were done. Any such arrangement would of course, be subject to the department having the right to dispense with the man's services at any time. That is all I have to say on the Address-in-reply. There are many other matters on which I could speak, but I will not do so this evening as I shall have other opportunities when the departmental Estimates and the Loan Estimates are under consideration.

On motion by Mr. W. Hegney, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 21st August, 1951.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON. R. M. FORREST (North) [4.36]: I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on the honour that has been conferred upon you

by His Majesty the King, an honour that I am sure you richly deserve; and I trust that you and Lady Seddon will live to enjoy very many years of happiness and prosperity. I also extend congratulations to the new members. I have known Mr. Henning for many years. He has been a successful farmer in the South-West and should be a great acquisition to this Chamber, especially when matters pertaining to dairy farming are being considered. The other new member, Mr. Murray, is not a stranger to Parliament, as he was for some years a member of another place. He is a worthy representative of the South-West and should be very helpful in this Chamber when matters affecting the timber industry are being discussed.

I propose to tell the House something about the proposal put before the Federal Treasurer, Sir Arthur Fadden, in June last for taxation exemption for the whole of our North-West and for the northern part of Australia. I may mention that the first meeting in connection with taxation exemption took place at Whim Creek, about 50 miles north of Roebourne, a few years ago, and was attended by delegates from the whole of the North-West territory extending from Wyndham to the Gascoyne. Following that meeting, a committee was formed, which has been working ever since. Its views were placed before the State Government and explained to one or two Federal members and, in the end, the efforts bore fruit, for in June of this year, the Federal Treasurer invited the members of the committee to go to Canberra.

I must thank the Acting Premier, Hon. A. F. Watts, for kindly inviting me to attend the conference. The delegation was headed by Mr. Watts, and the others were the then Leader of the Opposition, Hon. F. J. S. Wise; Mr. Frank Thompson of Pardoo station, Port Hedland; Mr. W. Leslie of Karratha station, Roebourne; Mr. Lang Hancock of Nunnery asbestos mine in the Hamersley Ranges and myself. We all put our views before the Federal Treasurer, and we had what we considered to be a most successful meeting. I shall now read the proposal which was submitted to Sir Arthur—

It is proposed that a territory north of the 26th Parallel in Western Australia, the whole of the Northern Territory and an area of Queensland to be defined, shall be declared a tax-free area for a period of 30 years for all wage and salary earners. That all business enterprises whatsoever operating in the defined area, be they mining, pastoral, pearling, fishing, whaling, store or hotel keeping, or any other business, whether limited liability companies, partnerships or individual

owners, whether resident or not resident in the area defined, shall have 60 per cent. of their income which is derived from the specified area, free of tax. The remaining 40 per cent. shall also be free of tax providing it is invested at the discretion of the owner or owners within the defined area. However, should this portion not be re-invested in the defined area it would become taxable.

When Sir Arthur Fadden replied, he said that the Northern Territory had not been very successful under taxation exemption. We were not a bit surprised at that; because, as we pointed out to Sir Arthur, the proposition that applied in the Northern Territory is totally different from what applies in the North-West of Western Australia. First of all, the tax-free arrangement related only to primary production in the Northern territory, and it had only a five-year tenure. The salary and wage earners had no benefit whatsoever, and no business houses had relief. Our proposal was that 40 per cent. had to be reinvested in the area, otherwise it would be taxable.

It must be admitted that every Government has failed to keep people in the North. The matter is very serious, and I personally have given it a tremendous amount of thought. We can pay subsidies here and there, but by so doing we do not put one more person into that country. If the North-West and other northern parts of Australia were tax-free, we would find that millions of pounds would be invested there; and where money is invested I think population naturally follows, especially if earnings and profits are tax-free. We can take the Kimberley land—I have mentioned this before in the House—where we have an area of 85,000,000 acres and a rainfall of 30 to 50 inches annually. The country is tremendously rich and will grow anything, but it carries a population of only 1,000 people. Kimberley is twice the size of the South-West Land Division of Western Australia; we could put England and Ireland inside it, and it is much larger than Victoria. Wyndham is 1,683 miles by airline from Perth, and 2,000 miles direct by sea. Only a few miles from our shores in the far North there is a seething population of about 100,000,000 people. Unless something is done quickly to populate the North-West, I do not see how we will hold it; and if we lose it, I do not know what will happen to Australia.

The only way to make the North attractive is to give some relief. I have heard the suggestion in this House that amenities should be provided. I believe that most of the stations in the North have pretty well all the amenities we can think of, even to the extent of having hot and cold water laid on to the huts; but still we cannot keep the people there. I have a

standing booking with the MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Co. every week for station hands to go North, but they return here in three months' time—after they get their fare. I do not see any hope for the North unless we attract people there, and the only way to do that is to make it a tax-free State. The population in those parts today is less than it was 30 years ago, and this is very serious, especially when we have modern developments there in the way of aerodromes and airlines. I hope the Commonwealth Government will view this problem seriously.

After our meeting with the Federal Treasurer, I spoke to the Minister for Territories, Hon. P. Hasluck, and asked him if he would get all the Federal members together as we would like to meet them. At 8 o'clock that evening we met the majority of Federal members from both sides of the House and they were most enthusiastic about our proposal. They formed a committee of four members, selected from both sides of the House, and under the chairmanship of Mr. Hasluck. There is not much more I can say about making the North tax-free; but I trust that something will be done about the question, because it could be seen from the one meeting at Canberra that the Commonwealth Government was interested in the proposal. I am afraid that the Government will be more than interested in the North if something is not done about increasing the population there.

I am pleased to see that the State Government is carrying out agricultural research in the Kimberleys. There is a large experimental unit at Ivanhoe station where all sorts of tropical plants are grown, including sugar cane, sorghum and peanuts. The staff at this station is also experimenting with about 40 acres of pasture.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What about rice?

Hon. R. M. FORREST: I was coming to that. Samples of sugar cane were sent to Queensland and they proved to be as good as any of the cane grown in that part of Australia. Small research stations are also starting at Liveringa, Noonkanbah, Fossil Downs and Gogo stations. As Sir Charles Latham mentioned, they are experimenting with 200 acres of rice at Liveringa station. A company has been formed with Mr. Kim Durack as manager; at one time he was the tropical research officer at Carlton Reach, on the Ord River. At Thongool, just south of Broome, 2,000 pineapples had already been planted and a further 5,000 have been planted this year. Therefore, we hope that it will not be long before the efforts of the people concerned are rewarded and another area such as Carnarvon will come into existence.

I trust that the Government will do all it possibly can about stock disease in the Kimberleys—especially disease in horses. Walkabout disease is becoming prevalent, and it seems almost impossible to breed horses in the Kimberleys. I was pleased to hear, a short while ago, that the first shipload of iron-ore has been shipped from Yampi Sound. Over £1,500,000 has been expended there on developmental work, and until recently not one ounce of ore had been shipped. I was talking to the general manager the other day, and he told me that another ship is being built for that trade and the company is hoping to have a continuous supply of iron-ore leaving Cockatoo Island. This supply will amount to about 1,000,000 tons per annum.

The people at Derby are worried about the proposal to shift the town to Point Torment, about 25 miles north of the existing townsite. If anything is done about removing the town, I hope the Government will show a little more consideration than was shown at Onslow when that town was shifted 25 miles away from the old townsite. The town was transferred to Beadon Point; and because some of the people could not afford to move their homes, they were forced to sell them and were practically ruined in the process.

It looks as though the Marble Bar-Port Hedland Railway is doomed, and I trust that the Government will ensure that a sealed road is eventually constructed to Marble Bar, in place of the railway. It has been a shock to the residents of that district, especially those living in Marble Bar, to find that the railway is to be pulled up and the road deviated six miles away from the town.

I now want to mention something about air beef and to give members a little of the history of this enterprise. Last year, Mr. Dimmitt outlined the scheme, but I want to add something to his remarks. Air Beef Pty. Ltd. was formed in November, 1948, for the purpose of constructing killing works at Glenroy station in West Kimberley, and transporting the product by airplane to Wyndham. The bulk of the initial capital was provided by two airline companies—Australian National Airways Ltd. and the MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Co.—and a free-of-interest loan of £10,000 for a period of five years was provided by the State Government. The works were designed to handle 4,000 head of cattle a year. As members know, the season extends from May to September; but very rarely does it continue to the month of September. These works were erected in the wet season of 1949, all materials being freighted to the site by aircraft, thus completely revolutionising the traditional belief that nothing could be done during the wet season in the Kimberleys.

The first load of material was delivered on the site on the 3rd January, 1949, and the first kill was started on the 11th May,

1949. From these operations it was found necessary to have various plant adjustments. The season closed that year on the 2nd September, with a total kill of 1,798 cattle. This figure was materially short of the target aimed at, owing to seasonal conditions suffered by some stations that year—that is, in central Kimberley. But, resulting from the experience gained during the initial season, and plant improvements and alterations, 3,676 cattle were treated in the 1950 season; and the failure of the works to achieve full output that year was due to the inability of some stations to supply, again because of seasonal conditions. The current killing season is progressing according to schedule, and it is anticipated that 4,000 head of cattle will be treated before the season ends. The air beef project should be regarded, not as a competitor of existing port meatworks, but complementary to them.

We know it is going to be impossible to rely entirely on inland abattoirs, but they can act as feeders to works on the coast. There are sections of the Kimberleys and other parts of Northern Australia which have always had insurmountable marketing problems. Cattle stations at Glenroy are badly situated. To go to Derby, one has to cross the Leopold Ranges; to go to Wyndham, one has to cross the Durack Ranges. I should say that the droving track in that part of the country is the worst in Australia—consisting as it does of 300 miles by road and 170 miles by air. Droving is possible only during April and July, and we know that the cattle lose weight and quality in that country. I think, therefore, that the meatworks at Glenroy are a boon to growers in central Kimberley, and in a very short time I hope to see works at Fitzroy Crossing and Hall's Creek.

The age of marketable cattle is restricted to beasts of five years, and cows are allowed to die on the run. It can be seen, therefore, what a wicked waste there is. I know of one station which is over the border with an estimated herd of 90,000. On an average they brand 25,000 calves a year, but only 9,000 cattle are sent away per annum, so it will be seen what an economic waste there is on that station. That applies also to other stations in the Kimberleys. The returns from cattle treated at the Glenroy works are perhaps much lower than those of growers who are able to get space to ship their cattle south, and, of course, they have been getting the one price. It is these stations in central Kimberley and East Kimberley that have had bad prices in the past, besides which they have no outlet for their cattle.

Air Beef Pty. Ltd., has proved conclusively that there are no physical obstacles to the marketing of station-killed beef by air transport. Additional time is required to prove the economics of the project, and during this period it behoves both the

State and the Commonwealth Governments to assist the company financially as part of the development of the North. The State Government has, in fact, helped a great deal and has taken an interest in the project at Glenroy. But I am sorry to say that the Commonwealth Government has done nothing; and it is the Commonwealth Government that talks so much about what it is going to do to populate the North-West. During 1950, after investigating the operations of Air Beef, the Australian Meat Board recommended that the Commonwealth Government should pay a subsidy of 1d. a lb. on all export beef produced. After much procrastination, the Commonwealth Government rejected the recommendation and the Australian Meat Board found the subsidy from its own funds, but made it clear that it would apply only to the 1950 season. The whole of the subsidy received was passed on by the company to the growers who had supplied cattle for treatment. The only thing the Commonwealth Government is doing is getting a rake-off of £5 10s. for every hour the plane flies with the beef. That is what the Commonwealth is doing for a company that is trying to open up a new industry in central Kimberley. It is costing 15s. per head for every beast carted.

Hon. A. R. Jones: In petrol tax?

Hon. R. M. FORREST: Yes, that is petrol tax. Under the legislation controlling hide prices, the company is denied the right of shipping its hides to the United Kingdom with its beef exports and thus participating in the higher overseas prices for hides. Instead, it is compelled to ship its hides to Fremantle to be marketed locally at relatively unprofitable prices. The loss to producers by such control has ranged from between £2 to £3 per hide. With the elimination of the unjustified petrol tax and the right to sell its hides in the overseas market with its beef, the economics of the air beef project would be virtually assured.

I would now like to mention something about the coastal highway as far as Carnarvon, for a start. I was very disappointed last year when a Bill submitted to this House, the acceptance of which would have made it possible for trucks to carry goods from Carnarvon to Fremantle, was defeated. If the railway involved had been owned by the Government, there might have been some justification for protecting it; but I do not see why a private concern should have that protection. It is a long journey of 270 miles from Northampton to Carnarvon, during which one does not strike a single station. The trucks are allowed to go on to Geraldton, but thence the wool and other produce has to be railed to Fremantle.

Tropical agriculture in the Gascoyne has proved, without doubt, to be one of the most successful of the new industries which have been established in Western

Australia. Up to the 30th June of this year, 45,011 cases of bananas have been sent from Carnarvon—that is, in 12 months—for a return of £185,000. That works out at £3 10s. to £4 a case at present. Those figures were given to me by Mr. Illingworth, who represents the growers in the metropolitan area. In addition to bananas, 243,812 lb. of beans were sent down, mostly by air, and these were worth £30,000. Carnarvon is therefore a very important place, and it is time the Government did something about that road. There is no railway in those parts. I have heard that it will cost £1,000,000 to construct a road. I do not care what it will cost; it should be built, and the cost could be spread not over one year but over 10 years. In the metropolitan area, we have 300 miles of bitumen roads winding to and fro. Why cannot there be a bitumen road from Northampton to Carnarvon, for a start? I should like to see the day when the whole of that highway is bituminised from Perth to Wyndham.

Referring to medical services, I would point out that there is only one doctor serving the whole of the Pilbara district, which comprises Nullagine, Marble Bar, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Wittenoom Gorge and Onslow. I have had various experiences demonstrating the need for more adequate medical facilities, and one occurred a short while ago. One of the children on our station was badly bitten by a dog; and he was rushed to Onslow, where there was no doctor. The matron would not take the responsibility, but said that the child should have medical treatment immediately. A telegram was sent to the flying doctor, but it was impossible for him to come at the time, and the mail plane was not available until next day. It was imperative for the child to have treatment, so a special plane was ordered and the child was taken 350 miles by air.

How can we expect people, especially women and children, to stay in the North, if they are not going to get some medical protection? There should be a doctor stationed at every town on the coast. The flying doctor should be located at Wittenoom Gorge as he could then serve all the back country, including Marble Bar and Nullagine. Most of the northern towns are 200 to 250 miles apart; I hope, therefore, that the Minister for Health will give consideration to stationing the flying doctor at Wittenoom Gorge. I would like to say a few words about shipping.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Do not try to keep the "Kybra"!

Hon. R. M. FORREST: I asked a few questions on this subject recently. I think we have the dearest coast in the world, and I wish to enumerate some of the freight charges from different ports

to Fremantle. I have here figures showing the cost of transport of wool from various ports to Fremantle in 1939 and in 1951. They are as follows:—

	Per Bale. 3/9/39.		Per Bale. 1/5/51.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Carnarvon	8	0	44	0
Onslow	11	0	50	0
Port Samson	12	6	51	9
Port Hedland	13	6	53	9
Broome	14	0	54	6
Derby	14	0	54	6
Wyndham	14	6	54	6

I hope the Government will see fit to place an order immediately for another steamer. We lost the "Koolama," and nothing has been done to replace it. Since then, about 26 cabins in the "Koolinda" have been reserved for the crew, so that the accommodation for passengers is worse today than it has been for 35 to 40 years, to my own knowledge. I have heard it said that a ship cannot be obtained. Certainly, we will never secure one unless we order it. I hope one will be bought to replace the "Koolama." As a matter of fact, we really need two ships, because the "Koolinda" cannot last many more years. I support the motion.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.19]: I support the motion. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the honour bestowed upon you, particularly in view of the fact that you are a Goldfields member. I wish also to congratulate our new members. In them we have men to whom we can look for valuable information. Mr. Henning has considerable farming ability, and Mr. Murray has had Parliamentary experience in another place. I offer congratulations, too, to our new Clerk of Parliaments and our new Usher of the Black Rod. It is nice to see men such as they being promoted, and I know they will prove equal to the tasks which have fallen to them. Reference has been made by previous speakers to the passing of the late Hon. H. Tuckey and the late Hon. W. J. Mann, and I do not propose to add anything further to what has been said about them.

Mention has been made of fair rents, and I feel that I cannot let this opportunity pass without saying a few words on that subject. I consider that people who have worked to provide homes for themselves in later years should be able to obtain possession of those homes immediately they require them. I know several people, both in Perth and on the Goldfields, who have been unable to secure the homes which they had bought for themselves. I submitted a case to the Minister on one occasion; and although it was not possible to evict the tenant, the owner of the home was able to secure a cottage in the vicinity of Fremantle.

I know a railway employee who was transferred from the Goldfields. He had a house here and lived in the city for a few months. Then he was transferred to another part of the State. He let the house to a couple who, I think, had one child. All his furniture and other possessions were left in the house. It was a beautiful home. Within a few months of his leaving the place, the couple approached the court and had the rent reduced. Something went wrong with the kelvinator, so they sent for a mechanic and he repaired it. I think the door was pulled off, amongst other things. The cost of the mechanic's work was charged to the owner of the property. He went to see the couple, or his wife did, and she was subjected to plenty of abuse and was nearly charged with the offence of being on her own property. I consider that such persons should be able to obtain immediate possession of their homes. However, after hearing letters read out in another place, and knowing myself of instances in which there appears to have been a good deal of underhand dealing, I suggest that the magistrate should have a little more discretion to question both owners and occupiers with a view to ascertaining the exact position.

Hon. H. Hearn: What would he do then?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We put him in a position of trust and I think that the decisions he would reach in such cases would be fair to everybody. I think justice would be done.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you not think he would be swayed by his own personal views?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I think that men put into such positions are likely to be fair to both sides. They would weigh the pros and cons and give decent decisions.

Hon. L. A. Logan: They had an opportunity before and did not use it.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, but the situation has been tightened up. I think it might be an improvement if discretion were given to magistrates. Reference has also been made to inflation; and the 40-hour week and basic wage increases have been blamed for it. The increased basic wage is due to the increased cost of living. Every quarter, figures relating to the cost of living are considered and the wage is based on those figures. If the court finds that a rise of 6s. is necessary, it is granted, but the increased rate is then three months overdue.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What makes the cost of living increase?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: As Mr. Watson said the other night, stockpiling for war has a lot to do with it, but a percentage is allowed for business people and industry to work on. I am afraid many people exceed that allowance and, being hungry for extra profits, they unfairly increase the

price of their commodities, with the result that the next quarter the basic wage has to be further increased. Recently the rise was as high as 13s.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How do you suggest it be kept down?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: A referendum is to be held soon in connection with communism. I think that is a smoke-screen for the failure of our Prime Minister to halt inflation. It is all a bogey, and will do more harm than enough. It will cripple all the unions. The intention seems to be to give power to 19 Cabinet Ministers to control all the courts of Australia. I have never known goods to be so scarce or so high in price as they are at present.

Hon. A. R. Jones: That is because of the 40-hour week.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. We have proved that to be untrue on the Goldfields. The output on the Golden Mile has been greater since the introduction of the 40-hour week than when we had a 48-hour week.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That applies to coal-mining, too.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Are they not on contract?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There were contracts on the mines in those days, too. I am a believer in a man's being paid a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. I am not in favour of go-slow methods. If a man is doing a job, he should do it in such a way as to give the boss a little interest on what he pays. I am not a believer in communism. If our land were free of communism and everybody did his bit, we would have the best country in the world.

The goldmining industry has been the backbone of this State and has pulled Western Australia out of many depressions. At present the industry is going through one of the worst periods it has ever experienced. The reason is that the farmers are having a good time. They have had the best time of the lot. I am pleased to see that, because many of my friends left the Goldfields and took up farming but met with adverse times because they did not know, when they sowed a crop, what they would get for it when it was harvested; or, if they had sheep, they did not know what they would be likely to receive for their wool. As a result of help given by a Commonwealth Labour Government, however, farmers have been placed on a sound footing and know what they are farming for.

People on the Goldfields expect the Government to give some consideration to assisting the mines to keep open. When the farmers were in a bad way they were helped, and we expect them to help us on the Goldfields. There are 28,000 people on the Goldfields; and if the mines were to close tomorrow, the onus would be on

the Government to feed and house the people who depend on mining for their livelihood. Recently freights were increased on commodities for the Goldfields and that is a burden on the mining industry. For example, we were getting lime for about £7 a truckload, but on account of the increased freights it jumped to £11. I think it was either an increase from £7 to £11 or £9 to £11; I am not quite sure. Firewood recently cost 2s. 6d. a ton on a 10-ton truck, in shunting charges from the woodline siding to the mine siding, it now costs 30s. In addition to that, it used to cost 14s. a ton to bring wood about 150 miles from a point on the Esperance line, and that charge has now jumped to 28s. That will give members an idea of the effect of the increased rail freights on the mining industry. I understand there is also to be an increased charge, within the next few weeks, for the power supplied to the mines from the electricity undertaking in Kalgoorlie.

I appeal to members in this House to do everything possible to assist in keeping our goldmines going. Our prospectors are the people who have been and are responsible for the opening up of the goldfields and they still have a great contribution to make in that direction. I might go further and say they are essential to the continued life of our goldmining industry; and for that reason I believe they, also, should be given all possible help. When representations are made to the Commonwealth Government in the near future for assistance to the goldmining industry, I believe a delegate from the Prospectors' Association should be included in the party, as he would be able to give information of considerable value during such discussions. My people, like those represented by Mr. Forrest, live in remote areas and consequently receive very little consideration. All the main amenities are concentrated either in the metropolitan area or the South-West and Goldfields people are now beginning to say that the present Government is a metropolitan and South-West Government, because all the worthwhile developments are taking place in those two portions of the State.

A booklet was recently distributed to members and to many persons outside Parliament giving details of the new home for the aged at Mt. Henry. The amount spent on that home up to date is in the vicinity of £200,000, accommodation being provided at present for 20 people. I believe the home is to be extended to accommodate 50 persons and that, when completed, it will have cost £400,000 or £500,000. I would remind members that this home for the elderly has been built in the metropolitan area, in addition to "Sunset." A home for native girls was opened recently in Mt. Lawley and, I am informed, houses at present about six or eight natives. It is a most elaborate place

which, together with the fittings installed, probably cost the Government about £15,000 or £20,000. I believe it is essential to have some sort of a home on the Goldfields to accommodate pioneers who need some attention and assistance; and in this regard I will tell members of one instance that occurred during the present winter.

I will not mention names, as the persons concerned might not like it; but one of our pioneers, a man who has been on the Goldfields since 1894, and who has taken part in a great deal of charitable work on the Goldfields during both world wars, as well as in peacetime, is now no longer able properly to look after himself. I would remind members that this person raised a considerable amount of money over the years to assist our hospitals and in that way saved the Government a great deal of expenditure. He has no relations in Kalgoorlie, and about three weeks ago I was asked to do something for him.

On making inquiries, I found that on the previous Thursday he had been discovered ill in his camp with no one to look after him. He was weak and in a filthy state through lack of food and the fact that he was not able to get about—this during one of the coldest weeks experienced so far in the present year. A young man nearby had given him a little food each day, but he needed more attention than that. When the police arrived on the scene they called a doctor who, in turn, rang for an ambulance to take the old man to hospital. On arrival at the Government hospital, it was found that he could not be accommodated, so he was taken to St. John of God hospital. That, in turn, had not a bed available and the old man had to be taken back to his camp.

Members will realise what must be the condition of these old people on the Goldfields. Because firewood is so short, the dealers will not supply a small load. They refuse to deliver anything less than about half a ton, which means that the pensioner is unable even to keep himself warm, as he cannot afford to buy wood in such quantities. One chemist in Kalgoorlie, knowing of half-a-dozen such cases, went out to the bush with a trailer and brought in a load of wood, which he distributed among the old people concerned.

When I found what had happened in the case of the old man to whom I have referred, I went straight to the police station and was there told what had occurred. On going to the Government hospital I found that the secretary knew nothing about the case, so I told him to ring the doctor concerned, in order to get the facts. He did that and then rang the various wards and found that there was only one bed, an emergency bed, available in the hospital. He was not able to do anything in the matter until Dr. Davis, the man in charge, came along, and I then made arrangements to ring the police in order to

have the old man picked up in an ambulance and conveyed to the hospital. That was done, and he was placed in the bed that had been made available.

I went to the St. John of God hospital and discussed the matter with the sister in charge. She told me that there were many such cases on hand and that they were not really hospital cases at all, but persons for whom a small home of some sort should be provided on the Goldfields. She said that in the St. John of God hospital at that time they had at least four old people who had no homes and no one to care for them. They did not really require nursing, but only decent accommodation and food. There are also on the Goldfields many old people who are in need of glasses or dental treatment. The sister in charge at the St. John of God hospital told me that the best they have been able to do is to try to find glasses, suitable for such cases, from among those left by deceased persons.

In view of all our pioneers have done for the State it is, in my opinion, shameful to see the treatment being meted out to them today. On the Goldfields we do not require an elaborate home such as is provided in the metropolitan area, but rather a little colony in which these old people could live in comfort and receive a small amount of attention during their latter days. I am fully seized with the fact that we must do everything possible to uplift our natives, but that does not alter the fact that our own old pioneers must be assisted.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Is there not a pensioners' league in Kalgoorlie,

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. If a pensioner in the metropolitan area wants a pair of glasses or dental treatment, he can go to the Royal Perth Hospital and receive attention without any trouble. That service is available also to old persons on the Goldfields, but only if they are able to come to Perth and attend the hospital. Members will realise how difficult it is to get aged persons down to Perth from the Goldfields or perhaps from Esperance. They must be suitably clothed and, on their arrival in Perth, accommodation must be found for them. Those establishments providing accommodation in the metropolitan area today are not interested in making room for old-age pensioners, but only for people who can pay big prices. The pensioner is not wanted today, having outlived his usefulness.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: I do not think that is right.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I say it is. One has only to look at the pensions received by these old people today. I met an old lady only last week, through an introduction by another old person in Kalgoorlie. She asked me what the Government was doing with regard to pensions and I told her I had just asked the

Premier whether he was aware of the conditions of pensioners on the Goldfields and in other remote areas and whether, if he were aware of their hardships, he would put their position before the Premiers' Conference.

Hon. G. Fraser: And you got no reply?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The Premier's reply was that this was a Federal matter. I already knew that, but I asked the Premier whether he would raise the question with the other Premiers at the Premiers' Conference and draw the attention of the Prime Minister to what was happening in this State.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: For how long has that kind of thing been going on?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It has become worse in the last couple of years.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why did you not put it up to the previous Premier?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is much worse now because the basic wage and the cost of living are increasing daily, while the pensioner's income remains static. The old lady I mentioned was the wife of a farmer who had passed on. They lost their money, and she is living in a room for which she pays £1 per week, which means that she is unable to buy food and clothing from what is left of her pension.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It has been stated that pensions are going to be increased.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is so; but many of these old people on the Goldfields should be assisted through the provision of a small home by the Government.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Quite right, too!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have also been trying to have a hostel erected at Kalgoorlie for children attending the High School. Such hostels have been established at many other places throughout the State.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Where?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I understand there are several in the South-West and that Geraldton is to have one in the very near future. I hope I shall be able to impress the Minister for Education with the need for taking steps towards the establishment of a hostel at Kalgoorlie and for giving effect to a petition on that subject which has been signed by a great many people. Up to date, I have been having a hard struggle.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The Minister does not agree with the petition?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: He will have to. The question is being evaded with the statement that there are not sufficient children in the area to warrant a hostel. Our schools in general are long overdue

for attention. As members know, hospitals throughout the State, especially those in the outback areas, are working under extreme difficulties, and that applies in particular to the Kalgoorlie hospital. A major cause of the trouble is the inadequate salaries that are being paid to the nursing staff, and something will have to be done in the near future to increase them.

This is an example of what happened a short time ago in Kalgoorlie. In the maternity ward at the Kalgoorlie hospital there were two triple-certificated sisters who had come from the Eastern States. The sister in charge told me that at that time the hospital was in a better position than it had been for months previously, and that the two sisters concerned were the best she had had on the staff and were happy to remain on the Goldfields. I might point out that it is unusual for a nursing sister to wish to remain in any hospital in the outback. On receipt of their first pay, although they were nurses holding triple certificates, they received only a "B" class sister's rate. I was informed that the reason was that there was already one "A" class sister in that ward, which meant that the others had to revert to a "B" class rate, despite the fact that they had spent a great deal of money and time to make themselves more efficient and to render greater service to the public. If a person exerts himself to qualify for a higher degree, I consider he is worthy of every consideration.

When I inquired into the matter, the secretary of the hospital told me he could do nothing about it. The sisters stated that if the position remained as it was, they would not stay on the staff, because sisters in general hospitals who held only a single certificate were paid a higher rate than an "A" class sister in the Kalgoorlie hospital. The rule at the hospital is that if an "A" class nurse works in the maternity ward she reverts to the rating of a "B" class sister and receives a salary in accordance with that rating. I cannot understand it.

However, I wrote to the Minister, who was ill at the time, and I received a reply from the Medical Department in a similar strain to that which I received from the secretary. Another member came to Kalgoorlie and I persuaded him to meet these girls and obtain particulars from them for submission to the Minister. On his return to Perth, he submitted the case to the Minister who agreed to increase the girls' salaries. However, in the meantime the two nurses had submitted their resignations, stating that they were abandoning the nursing profession and would take up other work; so, unfortunately, the Minister's assurance arrived too late.

I do not know whether the onus was on the matron or on the secretary of the hospital to acquaint them with the fact that

the Minister was willing to grant them an increase in salary; but in any event the information was not passed on, the sisters resigned, and they have now been lost to the nursing profession. Such a case proves that salaries should be increased. I would like to see a committee appointed comprising, say, Dr. Hislop and other members of this House to ascertain whether something can be done to help our nurses by granting them a remuneration in accordance with the services they render to the community. I now wish to speak of the East-West road. Many members in this House have passed over the road and know its condition.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: I doubt if many have been over it.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know that one or two have travelled over it, including, of late, the Minister for Transport. On a recent trip to the Goldfields I was in the Ministerial party; but unfortunately the Minister selected the good section of the road on which to travel and had a comfortable ride, whilst others of us had the bad piece and suffered a bumpy trip. Included in one party was an engineer of the Railway Department. At one section of the road they became bogged and had to put their shoulders to the wheel to extricate themselves. I therefore hope, after that experience, that we will get greater consideration and the road will be put in a better state of repair. At the moment, little progress is being made; and I sincerely trust that the work will be continued until it is completed. I hope also that some consideration will be given to a flat rate for water in Kalgoorlie. Water and railways are, in my opinion, the two most essential requisites for the development of this State. Until recently, railways were laid for the development of the outback areas.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Do you not think that road transport has developed the State at all?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes; I will deal with road transport shortly. Nevertheless, we must have railways to develop the country; and it is only within the last few years that we have looked to the railways to pay for themselves. In the past they were constructed with a view to keeping people in outback places. In Kalgoorlie we have enjoyed a good water supply, but over the last few years the first centre to be placed on a restricted service has been Kalgoorlie. In view of the recent heavy rains, we may be fortunate this year and not be subject to restrictions so early in the summer as has been the case in the past. But I can visualise that, with the increase in the number of stations and other pastoral properties, together with the development of the Bullfinch goldmining centre, the restrictions will be in force again this year.

I am a little perturbed, too, over the free milk scheme for children, which has already commenced in the metropolitan area. In my opinion, the children who require this extra nourishment are those in the outback areas. We expect to have milk distributed on the Goldfields in the near future; but when, I do not know, because I am doubtful whether we will be able to obtain enough to meet our normal needs. In fact, those people who are forced to use powdered milk are in a very difficult position. I am not all in favour of the Milk Board. To a certain extent it might be doing a good job; but, on the other hand, I consider it has forced quite a number of small milk producers out of the industry. A few months ago I visited Adelaide and Port Pirie. Admittedly, Port Pirie was experiencing a slight drought, but it was the first time that that centre was deprived of a good supply of fresh milk, and the residents were forced to obtain it from Clare. Whilst in Adelaide, I made inquiries into the production of milk and I ascertained that the Milk Board there was a menace to the milk producers.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The hon. member is not going to say that the Milk Board here is a menace?

The Minister for Agriculture: Tell us what is wrong with the Milk Board.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It has caused dairy farmers to go out of production. I have a newspaper cutting here from the Adelaide "News" dated the 15th February, 1951, which reads—

Dairymen say they will run sheep. Several hills dairymen say they will change over to sheep farming if the State Government carries out its instructions on the re-building of yards.

Mr. A. V. Kemp of Oakbank, said today he had been told to re-build his yards under threat of losing his milk license.

"I would have to spend about £800 on materials and labour I cannot get," he said.

He needed that labour and material to repair his yards. Along with many others, he decided that he would cease producing milk and commence running sheep; and I think that is what will eventually happen in this State.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you know of any cases?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do know of three of my friends, but I cannot disclose their names at present. One of them is at Fremantle.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Is it because they have to repair their yards?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Recently I made a trip through my district from Kalgoorlie to Baandee and I called at Nos. 8, 7, 6

and 5 pumping stations, in addition to Westonia, Nangeenan and Walgoolan, Marvel Loch and other centres, to interview various business people.

Hon. H. Hearn: Big business?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, little business. That is why they have not the goods; big business has the lot. All these little places along the line have found that stocks of powdered milk have become as scarce as hen's teeth. A letter I have here, which is from Mrs. Margaret Potter, of No. 7 pumping station, and is dated the 6th August, 1951, reads as follows:—

Dear Mr. Bennetts, No doubt you will get a surprise to hear from me but I have a grievance to bring to you. Yesterday I received a £13 order from Bairds which will last us for a month—

They obtain a monthly order from Bairds at this pumping station because it is so isolated and they are not in a position to visit the town to obtain their supplies. Included in the order mentioned in the letter were six tins of powdered milk, but they received only one. Mrs Potter goes on to refer to the fuss being made about giving free milk to schoolchildren in the metropolitan area while "we in the country cannot get enough milk for our young children." It is certainly difficult to rear babies in these outback places when the milk they require is in such short supply. One tin was sent to tide that family over a month, and nobody can claim that that was sufficient. Though I was aware of the position, I called on the firm and ascertained that various lines of baby food, including powdered milk, are in very short supply. The fact remains that these people living in the back country are suffering severe handicaps.

The Minister for Agriculture: Whom are you blaming for that?

Hon. H. Hearn: City people, too, are short of powdered milk.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have mentioned this to show what the people in the back country have to contend with. Yet they are the people upon whom the State is so greatly dependent. I feel considerable concern at the continued shortage of homes for our young Australian people—the young folk just married or about to be married. In my judgment, it would be a move in the right direction, not only in this State but throughout Australia, to cease bringing migrants here until our own people are properly housed. To my mind there is no question that the young Australian is far worthier of consideration in this respect than are many of the people being brought out under the migration scheme.

Three years ago I took up the question of the Coolgardie hospital with the Minister for Health and, during a recent visit, I found that still nothing had been done. As I have pointed out previously, a hot

water system is badly needed. To provide hot water, the nurses have to boil a couple of kettles on a stove. The building, too, is in no better state of repair. I trust that something will soon be done to provide the requisite facilities at Coolgardie. There is a shortage of salt coming from both Esperance and Widgiemooltha. Many of the orders received are for four-ton lots, but the minimum truckload of eight tons is causing difficulty, unless the supplier is able to get additional orders to fill the truck.

I regard Norseman as being one of our outstanding country towns. This is on account of the deposits of pyrites there. Mr. Henning, in his speech, referred to the important part that pyrites were likely to play in the manufacture of sulphuric acid for making superphosphate. Pyrites exist in these deposits in huge quantities. I understand that one ton of pyrites will produce 1½ tons of sulphuric acid. If arrangements are made to utilise these deposits, it will make an important difference to the production of superphosphate. The industry needs to be placed upon a proper footing in order that the farmers may obtain the maximum benefit.

Press reports have informed us of the shortage of superphosphate, and I gather that many farmers are without the supplies they need. The Minister for Housing recently visited the Norseman district and I am hopeful that he will make an effort with the Government to get the pyrites industry established. Homes are required for the employees and they should be provided on the instalment plan. Twenty-five houses are needed and I believe the number will increase to 250. In the pyrites deposits, there is 50 years' supply in sight.

Norseman is in need of additional school accommodation. Since I made my notes for this speech, I have received word from the Minister for Education that he intends to provide a prefab. building. That will be of great help to the district and will be fully appreciated. Situated 125 miles from Norseman is Esperance, which is one of the best ports in the State. It is regrettable that greater use is not made of this port by shipping. The waterside workers there are efficient and can assure vessels a quick turn-round, and there has never been any trouble through stoppages.

I give credit to the Minister for Agriculture for the service he is rendering the people of the Esperance District in the work of opening up the land. This is valuable land, having a rainfall of 28 inches within a distance of 14 miles of the seaport, and the soil will grow practically anything. Recently we have read of the shortage of onions and of their having been imported from Egypt and other countries. This is not as it should be, seeing that the soil in the Esperance district grows excellent onions and could produce them in great quantity. Water is

obtainable at six to 12 feet below the surface, and it is excellent in quality and abundant in quantity. The people who have settled on the land have spent their own money on the development work and they have good plant on their farms. One man recently cleared 1,200 acres and in six weeks had rolled down 5,000 acres.

The Minister for Agriculture: Was that the clearing done at Fanny Cove?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, it was done by the Sampsons. They have modern equipment and are hard workers. The Kirwan brothers left Widgiemooltha to settle there, and other settlers include people from Kalgoorlie and various parts of the State. Subterranean clover, rye grass and other fodder plants thrive in that soil.

Hon. A. R. Jones: A regular garden of Eden.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is. I should like the Government to arrange for members to inspect the district and, if they did so, I should not be surprised if a number of those interested in farming took up blocks and patted me on the back, with the remark, "Thank you for suggesting this trip and showing us what you have here."

Another important question affecting the Esperance district is that of provision for the bulk storage of petrol. That is the place where bulk storage should be provided, for it could be easily handled and could be readily distributed to the whole of the Goldfields. Motorists on the Eastern Goldfields are paying 4s. 4d. a gallon for petrol; whereas, if bulk facilities were provided at Esperance, they could be supplied at the same price as is charged in the metropolitan area.

The Government should seriously consider the advisableness of establishing superphosphate works at Esperance. Those works would be distant from the Norseman pyrites deposits only 120 miles whence ample supplies of one of the basic requirements could be drawn. I do not suggest that one plant for the manufacture of the whole of the superphosphate needed in the State should be established at Esperance. I do not think such a proposal would be wise, because the distance over which it would have to be transported to some of the agricultural areas would be too great. According to some figures shown to me, the shipping charge to Esperance from Fremantle works out at 70s. per ton whereas the charge by rail is 37s. per ton. If superphosphate works were established at Esperance, not only the immediate district but also the mallee areas further north could be supplied from that point. The mallee district last year experienced one of its best seasons and some of the wool and wheat produced was amongst the best in the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: Production there is always good.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I hope that the Minister will give consideration to the advisableness of establishing super. works at Esperance. In the hinterland there is a vast area of land suitable for the growing of pines. The plantings on the farm of Mr. Bow is an illustration that pines will grow well in that soil. All through that country, pine plantations could be established.

During the last five years, I have kept in touch with the Minister for Health, urging that the hospital buildings at Esperance should be renewed; but they remain in the same condition. Some amenities have been supplied, but the hospital buildings need attention.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What is the accommodation?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It was an 11-bed hospital, but the number was increased to 22. This was made possible by a loan of beds obtained from the Fresh Air League.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have to thank the Minister for Health for coming to my assistance when I made application for a school dentist for the Goldfields. The present man is doing a wonderful job throughout the Esperance district. The area he has to cover is rather large, so I have made application for another dentist for the Southern Cross-Yilgarn district. As members know, in these places there are no dentists to whom the children can go for attention. There is no dentist at Southern Cross, which means that the nearest one available is at Merredin. The district to be covered now would be in your area, Mr. President, running up to Laverton. If another man were appointed, he would deal with that area.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Do these men attend to all the children attending the schools?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, only the children up to eight years of age. At present we have a dentist to cover the district from Esperance to the north country, including all of Yilgarn, Boulder and Kalgoorlie. I was pleased to see the present man give first consideration to the small places where there is no dentist. The children at Kalgoorlie, and similar centres, can get attention in any emergency.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Do you not think it would be better for the dentist to treat the children up to the age of 14?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That cannot be done until we get more dentists. A member of the medical profession told me that children above the age of eight do not require dental attention so much as the younger ones.

Hon. L. A. Logan: In the small schools they do the lot.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Not in my district. I also wish to mention the grasshopper pest in and around the Merredin-Southern Cross district. The secretary of the Yilgarn Road Board has continually put up suggestions to the Agricultural Department, which is now beginning to overcome the menace. For a long time we have been putting forward the case for a sulphide mill for the prospectors in the Yilgarn and the Norseman districts. At one time, when Mr. Parker was Minister for Mines, it was suggested that a mill should be erected at Spargoville, but that has gone by now. I suggest that with the large amount of sulphide available in the Southern Cross district, Southern Cross would be a suitable place for such a mill. In and around Marvel Loch and Southern Cross there are huge lodes, and the mill would serve a good purpose there.

I wish now to touch on the question of hospitals. During my last visit to the Southern Cross hospital, about three weeks ago, I found the nursing staff consisted of only the matron and one girl assistant. These two people attend to the 10 beds which are available. What I am about to relate is interesting because it shows what the people in the remote areas have to endure. A few weeks ago a young child was operated on for appendicitis, and owing to there being nobody available for night duty, the parents of the child had to remain at the hospital all night after the operation to look after their child. The assistant has to have two days off a week, which means that the matron has a 24-hour job. On the two days that the assistant is off, she does as much as she can, and then has to rest, and the hospital and the patients have to look after themselves. It is expected that two nurses will be going there; but as with other outback places, we cannot get the girls when there is so much work offering in the city, with better amenities and conditions.

Hon. H. Hearn: What is the remedy?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The girls do not like going to the outback places. I suppose there will not be a remedy until there are more girls than jobs. There are quite a number of amenities at Southern Cross; but even so it is, like the other outback places, very quiet, and the young people like to have some recreation, which is not always available there. I think the only way to overcome the difficulty would be to increase the remuneration in these places. The railways pay allowances to employees according to their distance from a particular place, and that might be a way to overcome this trouble. We are going through a bad time with the hospitals. If a committee were set up it might be able to suggest a remedy. At present the position is a headache to the department and the Minister in control.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Did not Dr. Hislop make a report?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, but nothing has been done about it. He spoke last session about a Royal Commission of inquiry into hospitals, but nothing came of it. I was pleased the other day to see the improvements made to the State battery at Marvel Loch. I also visited Coolgardie. The new supervisor, who is a young man with plenty of ability and experience, is game to undertake anything. All the miners and prospectors in the district are pleased with his work. In this area there are quite a lot of minerals, and also sulphides; and if we had the proper sort of battery at Marvel Loch, we would get better results. Some good crushings from the prospectors are going through.

It is also a wonderful year for those taking part in the Miners' Settlement Scheme. I think there are 11 of these settlers, and £30,000 is being spent on equipment. That will give them an excellent start. They are having a little trouble with their water supply. They depend on a pipeline for water for home consumption and fire service. I have requested the Minister to do something in this matter; and according to the correspondence, I think some success may be achieved.

I also called at Bullfinch to see the Western Mining Company's project there. This company is one of the best that we have in Western Australia for developing the State. The Government, and particularly the Minister for Mines, knows what it has done, and is prepared to do, for the benefit of the State. The company is installing a huge plant—it is about half completed—at Bullfinch. It is building homes for its workers, and up to date has completed 90 houses of three and four rooms. The small, three-roomed places, which are completed, and which are equipped with hot and cold water, and all other conveniences, are available at 25s. per week, and the four-roomed houses at 32s. 6d., I think. The houses are in streets, and the position now is that 90 are completed, 44 are under construction and just on completion, and another 110 are to be erected. In addition, the company is putting in a path, a croquet lawn, bowling green and tennis courts, and is building roads through the town to make a complete settlement.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is the advantage of big business.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is. The company is spending £500,000 to develop this place. I hope that every assistance will be given to it for road construction. A railway goes to Bullfinch, but there are only about two trains a week, so that the people there depend on road service. A new water main is being put through. I believe it commences as a 10-inch pipe and is broken down to six inches. That will supply ample water. We should see the main completed within another 12 months. The Western Mining Company is doing a good job in the Norseman dis-

trict. It has spent a large sum of money there, and the Butterfly mine is producing pyrites. From this aspect alone, members can see that Norseman has an assured life for some time to come.

I am particularly disappointed that the broad-gauge scheme has not been implemented. A large sum of money is being expended to put in heavier rails and permanent way for new trains on the East-West run. These trains are a heavier type and travel at a higher speed. Therefore, the lines require a good foundation, and that means relaying with a heavier class of rail. I am sure that the broad gauge could be used instead of relaying the present line with heavier rails. If a war breaks out, the different gauges will cause confusion, especially in the trans-shipment of materials and troops. During the last war I was employed on the railways and I could see the trouble the use of different gauges caused in the trans-shipping of both troops and materials. If we had one gauge, all those troubles would be overcome. Members may have read in the Press about the first trip of a new Commonwealth diesel electric car, which did the run from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta in 16 hours one minute, a distance of 1,050 miles.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is a sitting-up trip.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. The Commonwealth is not going to have that as a regular service, but sporting bodies can hire the train for a special trip. At present, it takes $17\frac{1}{2}$ hours to travel from Port Pirie to Kalgoorlie, and three hours from Adelaide to Port Pirie, a total of $20\frac{1}{2}$ hours. If we had a broad gauge from Kalgoorlie to Perth, it would mean a further eight hours travel, making $28\frac{1}{2}$ hours from Adelaide to Perth. Now, it takes about 65 hours for the run, and with three changes because of the different gauges.

When the new Commonwealth diesel electric locomotives come into operation, they will provide one of the most outstanding services in the world. If those trains could go straight through to Perth, then the people would have a journey of only 28 hours from Adelaide. The 65 hours I mentioned is travelling time only and to that must be added several hours of waiting at Kalgoorlie. I think our Railway Department has too large an administration staff. Three Commissioners have been appointed whereas previously we had one man to do the job. Also, we have given these Commissioners more money to spend than has been spent at any time in the history of the railways of Western Australia.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Not up Marble Bar way.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, very little money is spent in the back country. The previous Commissioner had very little money to spend on the upkeep of the railways.

Hon. H. Hearn: Whose fault was that?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Six years of war.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The money was not available and, because of the war, the Commissioner did not have a chance to do anything about the railways. These Commissioners should do a good job because they have the money available; but unfortunately there is a duplication of staff everywhere. The administration side of the railways is becoming top-heavy and I do not know whether it is possible to carry such a large staff.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What will be the ultimate cost per mile for the carriage of goods?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That would be hard to say.

Hon. A. L. Loton: I should say it would be.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We have a number of engines on order and when they arrive we should overcome many of our problems, including slow trips. From the report which I have perused, I think our railways should be in a position, at the end of 1952 or early in 1953, to cart all our wheat, super. and any other goods offering.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Pyrites, too?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, and coal for Kalgoorlie.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They will need to do better than they did over the last 12 months.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: With the rolling-stock being brought into commission—numbering, I believe, 4,000—and the re-conditioning of wagons, the railways should be brought into a position to cater for all the requirements of the State. I notice that the railways have a 16-ton truck with only two axles. Although engineers have recommended it and certified its safety, I think that with only four wheels, it will not be as safe as it looks. The weight is distributed on to four wheels whereas if eight wheels were provided the load would be spread more evenly and with a shorter space between the wheels. That, to my mind, would be a better proposition; and, although I am not an engineer, many mechanically-minded people have supported my views. The "A.S.G." engines have done a good job on the Norseman run and have kept us out of trouble, and now we have the "W" class locomotives. The "A.S.G." engine pulls about 335 to 350 tons.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The "A.S.G." pulls 700 tons.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Because of the steep grades on that run, the "A.S.G." engine pulls, as I said, about 335 to 350 tons, while the "W" class handles from 170 to 190 tons—two "W" class engines to one "A.S.G." The "A.S.G." was a war-time engine, and built only for a period

of five years. As that time has elapsed, the cost of maintenance is terrific. The bolts and other parts of the engines are wearing out and are causing trouble. As the "A.S.Gs." have to be taken off the road one by one, the "W" class, or some other class of engine, has to replace them.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I hear they unloaded three on the South Australian Government recently.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, but the "A.S.Gs." have been very good engines. They have given good service but are now becoming worn out. The "PM" engines have had boiler trouble and I believe a number of them are now in the workshops being overhauled. Perhaps the Minister could tell me what the trouble is? I understand there are three or four at Northam and a few in the Midland workshops with boiler stay trouble. So, when the fitters at the workshops condemned them, I do not think they were very far wrong, because there must have been some fault.

I was shocked to discover that one official in the department has altered the system of railway tickets. We had two classes of tickets; the white for first class and the green for second class. We had a huge supply of these tickets on hand, but they have all been withdrawn and destroyed. I understand that another colour has now been put into use; but for what reason, I do not know. The ticket collectors and the barrier porters, as well as everyone concerned, knew the old colours and had no trouble to distinguish first or second class. But, the new tickets require closer inspection. The same thing applies to the weekly and monthly tickets; and I am at a loss to understand why these tickets, which would be worth hundreds of pounds, were destroyed. Perhaps the Minister could explain it.

The other day I noticed that fines were imposed upon fitters in the workshops. It is doubtful whether that will be in the best interests of the department, because that is one of the reasons why drivers and other employees have left the service. It is most unfortunate, when we need the younger type of men for the railways, that this system of fining is permitted to continue. The Railway Department, other than the court, is the only institution that inflicts a fine, and I do not see why the railways should be in a position to say, "Well, so and so, you did not do this. We want a report and if it is not satisfactory we are going to fine you £5." The man just has to pay the fine and that is the end of it.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It used to be the sack at one time.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The system of fining has been in operation ever since I can remember and I was in the railways for 35 years.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Is there not a right of appeal?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Surely there are other methods which could be used. Some time ago the Government made mention of the fact that it intended to provide assistance for the building of swimming pools in country districts. The local governing authorities in Southern Cross, Merredin and Norseman are all keen on providing swimming pools for their districts, but the Government said it will assist only where the population is under 3,000. I do not see how any town with a population under 3,000 could possibly supply enough money to build a swimming pool, because it is necessary to have a fairly large population to carry out such a programme. I believe it is up to the Government to help these local governing authorities to provide amenities to keep people in the country areas. It is only by the provision of such amenities that we will keep them there.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Meckering has one and its population would not exceed 500.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: From a health point of view swimming pools should be provided and the Government should assist wherever possible. I am also concerned about Merredin, which I think is another place where a superphosphate works should be established on account of its being a junction. If there were a superphosphate works there, the distance in carting the pyrites from Norseman would be shorter, as it could be put into the works there instead of going on to Bassendean from where the superphosphate is eventually returned as the completed product. The superphosphate works at Bassendean could then serve other parts of the State. I think that is worthy of the Minister's consideration, and I am sure he will take the matter up when the Government reaches the point of having the pyrites developed. At Merredin there is a shortage of nursing staff. In fact, this shortage exists throughout the outback.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Why do not they make an appeal for assistance?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: In some places appeals have been made with success but not in others. In Kalgoorlie we would not be able to carry on the maternity ward if it were not for two sisters who are married and have agreed to do this work. It is only in these outback places where we get the trouble.

The Minister for Agriculture: Kalgoorlie is not the outback.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We are so far away—

The Minister for Agriculture: Far away from where?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: —we do not get the same service as that obtained in the metropolitan area and in the South-West where quicker transport, more amenities and more assistance are available. I have

also been concerned with the question of the High School; but today I received a letter from the Minister for Education, who tells me that he is sending one of the prefabricated buildings there as soon as it is available. Accordingly I will not say any more on that point. The railway rest-house has been a bugbear with me for some time and I am glad to see that the Minister has placed that at the top of his list for consideration. It should be commenced at a very early date.

Hon. H. K. Watson: This Government is doing quite a lot for your province.

Hon. G. Fraser: A lot of promises and nothing else.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There are more materials available now, and no matter what Government was in power, we should still be able to have this done.

Hon. A. L. Loton: There is far more being done now.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: A short while ago I was talking about the milk position. It is bad right through the outback. I do not know whether the Government has taken into consideration the fact that we have to import all our powdered milk. I should have thought that the South-West would be in a position to produce powdered milk and thus prevent the importation of this commodity. I do not know what will happen as a result of the recent floods in Victoria. It looks as if we will be set back much further, as Victoria has not yet recovered from the previous floods. I hope, therefore, that the Government will do something more than it is doing at present.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Powdered milk is being made at Waroona now.

Hon. H. Hearn: Is that a Government job? Should not private enterprise be doing it?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not care who does it as long as powdered milk is produced. In conclusion, I would like to urge that when the Minister leaves tomorrow for the Eastern States he will give some consideration to the mining industry. Like the Premier, he is well acquainted with the industry in this State and I hope that he will be able to bring back some good results which will help keep that industry going. This is my last chance of saying all I want on these matters, as next year I shall be facing my electors and may not be returned. Accordingly I have brought these subjects up so that they may benefit the people who live in the remote areas and also that they will be continually before the Government and this House. I hope some good will result, therefore, from what may have appeared to be a long and tiresome speech.

On motion by Hon. J. Murray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 21st August, 1951.

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

ELECTORAL—BOULDER CONSTITUENCY.

Seat Declared Vacant.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to announce that I have received the following letter from Sydney:—

Dear Sir,

I hereby tender my resignation as member for Boulder in the Legislative Assembly, to take effect from Thursday, the 16th August, 1951.

Yours faithfully,

C. T. OLIVER.