

come here one day when the police are about, and it is our practice now to stop on every occasion, irrespective of the time of the night." So the action of the police is starting to bear fruit. However, I would like to see a number of our other roads gazetted as major roads. If that were done, there would be fewer accidents around the suburbs, and motorists would stop before entering upon them.

On motion by Hon. A. V. R. Abbott, debate adjourned.

PAPERS—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION REPORT.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have here the annual report of the State Electricity Commission for the year ended the 30th June, 1953. Although this report contains the financial statements, those statements have not been audited as is required by the Electricity Act. However, I am presenting the papers this evening so that members will have the report much earlier than would otherwise be the case. In due course, when the balance sheets have been properly audited, they will be laid upon the Table of both Houses, but in the meantime I desire that members shall have early information about the State Electricity Commission's activities. Therefore, I move—

That the report be laid upon the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.50 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 26th August, 1953.

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

OBITUARY.

The late Mr. Hastings Carew-Reid, O.B.E.

The PRESIDENT: Before the business of the House is proceeded with, I wish to bear testimony to the passing of an old servant of Parliament, the Chief Hansard Reporter, Mr. Hastings Carew-Reid, and I ask members to join with me in expressing their sympathy by standing in silence.

Members, accordingly, stood in silence.

QUESTIONS.

EMPLOYMENT BROKERS.

As to Scale of Payment and Supervision.

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

(1) Do all employment brokers deposit at the office of the Minister a printed copy of the scale of payment or remuneration for the time being chargeable by, and payable to, such employment broker in respect of the hiring of servants?

(2) If so—

(a) Do the printed copies of the scale of payment specify the maximum amount chargeable to the employer and the employee for, and in respect of, any hiring?

(b) Are these printed copies of scale of payment examined and considered by any responsible officer of the department?

(3) Does he consider that the scales of payment or remuneration are excessive in comparison with the service rendered?

(4) Are the application and engagement books kept by the employment brokers examined regularly?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(3) The fees being charged are at present the subject of investigation.

(4) Yes.

PETROL PUMPS, ELECTRIC.

As to Transport to Country Centres.

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

(1) How many electric petrol pumps have been transported by rail to country centres?

(2) To what country centres were these railed?

(3) How many electric petrol pumps have been transported by road to country centres?

(4) To what country centres were these transported?

(5) If any electric petrol pumps have been transported by road, how many permits were issued by the Transport Board, and on what dates?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 98.

(2) Albany, Beverley, Boulder, Bridgetown, Bunbury, Busselton, Capel, Collie, Cunderdin, Esperance, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Kellerberrin, Kojonup, Manjimup, Merredin, Moora, Mt. Barker, Narrogin, Norseman, Northam, Picton Junction, Southern Cross, Wagerup, Wagin, Waroona, Wickiepin.

(3) 290.

(4) Albany, Augusta, Benger, Beverley, Boulder, Boyanup, Boyup Brook, Bruce Rock, Bridgetown, Brookton, Brunswick Junction, Bullsbrook, Bunbury, Busselton, Capel, Collie, Corrigin, Cowaramup, Cunderdin, Denmark, Donnybrook, Esperance, Geraldton, Goomalling, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Kellerberrin, Kojonup, Mandurah, Manjimup, Margaret River, Merredin, Meckering, Moora, Mt. Barker, Narrogin, Norseman, Northam, Northampton, Pingelly, Pinjarra, Roelands, Southern Cross, Tammin, Three Springs, Vasse, Wagin, Waroona, Waterloo, Watheroo, Wickiepin, Williams, Witchcliffe, Wongan Hills, Yarloop, York.

(5) All road transport, which took place during the period from the 23rd June to the 15th July, 1953, was covered by Transport Board permits. All replaced pumps sent back to Perth will be consigned by rail.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Increased Rates, Eastern Goldfields.

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Minister for Water Supply aware of the drastic increases in the water rate on the Goldfields?

(2) Does the Minister know that the rates have in many cases been doubled and more?

(3) Will he inform the House how the annual value was arrived at and what amount of revenue it is anticipated will result therefrom?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The rate in the £ has not been increased in the Goldfields area.

(2) Yes, in some instances. Rate assessments have been increased consequent upon the review of annual rental values.

(3) The annual value is arrived at by assessing the yearly rent at which the land might reasonably be expected to be let, less an allowance of 40 per cent. to cover rates, taxes, insurance and other expenses. It is estimated that the net increase in revenue will total £5,900.

RAILWAYS.

As to Stocks and Use of Newcastle Coal.

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

(1) What tonnage of Newcastle coal is at present held in Western Australia for railway purposes?

(2) Where are these stocks held?

(3) What tonnage will be received between now and December?

(4) Will he give a direction that only Newcastle coal will be used from October to February on those lines which run through fire-hazard areas?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 5,152 tons.

	tons.
(2) Fremantle	205
East Perth	868
Midland Junction	2,835
Northam	190
Kalgoorlie	80
Coolgardie	36
Norseman	53
Geraldton	154
Mullewa	131
Bunbury	23
York	10
Narrogin	70
Wagin	164
Katanning	127
Albany	206

(3) There is no standing order, but a supply is obtained as the rate of consumption indicates the need for it.

(4) Newcastle coal is used exclusively on the following lines during the period district officers consider the fire hazard is such as to warrant it:— Clackline-Miling; Geraldton-Yuna-Ajana; Narrogin-Pinjarra; York-Bruce Rock; Katanning-Boyup Brook.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

As to Heating System.

Hon. A. R. JONES (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Can he give members any indication when the heating system will be completed in the House?

(2) If not, will he please make inquiries so that the job will be speeded up?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) and (2) I cannot give the hon. member any idea when the work will be completed, but, as he suggests, I shall make inquiries and report to the House later.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [4.42]: I take this opportunity of saying how sorry I was to hear the news of the passing of our Chief Hansard Reporter. I

am a comparatively new member here, and when I first came I was greeted by Mr. Reid in a very friendly and helpful manner. I much appreciated his acts of kindness and courtesy, and I extend to Mrs. Reid and her family every condolence.

I congratulate the Chief Secretary on being elected to the leadership of the House. I have been here only a little over one year, but no doubt we will both continue to get along in the friendly manner in which we have done so far. I add my congratulations to Mr. Strickland on being appointed Minister for the North-West. I had considerable doubt as to whether I should congratulate him, especially after the speech made by Mr. Barker. Everyone can now appreciate the great difficulties that Mr. Strickland will have in carrying out his duties as Minister. I also extend my greetings to Mr. Griffith on being elected a member of this Chamber.

It is rather difficult for people in our position to speak on matters that affect the community in general as all political parties, and the members of them, nowadays believe in the welfare-state. We all believe in taking from the "haves" and assisting the "have-nots". I feel, however, that we are not doing it justly. When the money is taken from the "haves", there is plenty of scope to see that the people on the lower rung of our social ladder are treated more leniently. I refer here to the people who are living in different stages of retirement—mainly the old-age and the invalid pensioners.

Many of these folk have no real estate, and with the deterioration of our money values, they do not enjoy the protection which real estate gives: when money values deteriorate. Many of these poor people find themselves considerably below those who are on the basic wage, insofar as there is quite a time lag before they get any redress. In the meantime, they live on the few shillings made available to them.

There has been comment about rating. Different members have mentioned the subject. It strikes me as peculiar that in a world such as we live in, where we have brains that can turn out a fighting machine that can fly from Laverton in Victoria to Darwin, Perth, New Zealand and back to Laverton within 24 hours, we still drift along in our social setup. In the fixing of costs for our public and semi-public affairs we are always 18 months or two years behind the price level. I would have thought that before now we would have developed a system by which an index on cost would be created that would act as a guide for the use of all public and semi-public utilities so that as the price levels moved up, these instrumentalities would, without the present dreadful lag, benefit from the increased income at the time that it was earned.

The complaints we hear now as regards rating are nothing to compare with what we will hear when commodity prices begin to fall. When that happens, the adjustments in prices will be a little slower with a consequent lag in easement to the community. No matter how we endeavour to prop up the prices structure, the day must come when we shall have a recession. So I hope our Cabinet Ministers can consider the points I have raised and employ individuals with sufficient intelligence to work out a plan to overcome these problems. If we want to destroy human life or property, we can overcome all sorts of problems; therefore we should be able to work out some sort of plan for the welfare of society.

I should say that the question of inferior quality superphosphate is being discussed by farmers more than any other matter in the agricultural industry of Western Australia. Its price has increased considerably and there has been so much dissatisfaction over the past few years that a motion was moved in another place asking for a departmental inquiry into this problem to see whether cheaper and better-quality superphosphate could be produced in Western Australia. I have the committee's report in front of me. In many respects, the report is a good one, but I think the officers appointed to the committee were charged with responsibilities that were perhaps a little beyond them; they were asked to inquire into the possibility of cheapening the cost of superphosphate. These men are all associated with the Department of Agriculture. That is not a business concern, and consequently I do not blame those officers for any shortcomings that may be found in the report.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They are not financial advisers.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No. The most important point is the quality of the product, and prior to this season we were receiving a commodity that was no better than it was when I first handled it in 1915.

Hon. A. R. Jones: I do not think it is as good.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: In those days, the great majority of farmers had to get their superphosphate between the end of December and February because the only means of getting the superphosphate from the sidings to the farms was to use horses. Consequently, when we carted wheat we had to back-load with superphosphate. In those days, the super was stacked on gimlet poles, covered with old bags, and ti-tree bushes, covered with straw, were used as roofs. It would remain there until seeding time and by then it represented only so many slabs of superphosphate. It would have to be crushed and put through sieves before it could be used in a seed-drilling machine. The same position arises today. The departmental officers advised farmers who received early deliveries to shift the bags at regular intervals—every month—and it would be useable.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Do they suggest how many times you should shift it?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: That depends upon how early one takes delivery of the superphosphate. A farmer might have to shift it four or five times. I mention this merely to show how far we have travelled as regards the quality of superphosphate in this age of science. When the Cresco Fertiliser Coy. first came to this State from South Australia, it sent its agents throughout the country to tell farmers that if they purchased the company's product they would not need to shift the superphosphate and it would not have to be screened. That was no idle boast, and for a period in the late 1920's, and the early 1930's—the early 1930's particularly—superphosphate was cheaper and better than it has ever been. That proved that the companies could turn out an article which met the requirements of farmers, and for years we had no complaints to offer.

With the outbreak of World War II, and the difficulty of getting rock from Nauru, the product deteriorated, but the farmers accepted it because they realised that they would have to put up with it for the time being. But the war has been over for many years and still the product has not improved. I realise, as the report sets out, that the tonnage of superphosphate used has increased considerably over the last few years, for two major reasons: Firstly, farmers were growing more clover and were topdressing it with superphosphate in order to get a better growth. Secondly, with the high prices for farm produce, taxation became burdensome and farmers tried to obtain some easement by spending their money on superphosphate in an effort to build up their soil. But this merely improved the carrying capacity of the land and, as they increased their flocks, so their incomes increased and they paid greater sums in taxation.

According to the report, 325,000 tons of superphosphate were used in the 1947-48 season, and 430,000 tons in the 1951-52 season. That indicates a steep rise. Now let us consider the reason for unsatisfactory superphosphate. I would like to quote from the report of the Superphosphate Inquiry Committee. Paragraph 24 reads as follows:—

The most objectionable feature of farm storage for a period of several months is the "setting" of the superphosphate with the need for subsequent reconditioning and, to a lesser extent, rotting of the jute sacks. Information supplied by the Farmers' Union contained few complaints that the super rotted the bags—indeed one farmer complained because it did not rot the bags, claiming this as evidence of lack of strength of the super. According to information supplied to the Committee by the Farmers' Union, complaints were widespread of "setting" of some of the super delivered early in the season and stored on the

farm for several months. Another major difficulty encountered by a number of farmers and which seemed to be more prevalent in deliveries late in the season . . .

I hope members will note that fact—"late in the season." The report continues—

. . . was that the fertiliser stuck to the stars of drills and delays in seeding operations frequently resulted.

25. So far as the Committee could ascertain, the popular belief that both these troubles were related to the moisture content (immaturity, greenness) of the superphosphate is correct.

26. In the past, changes in the raw materials have sometimes resulted in difficulties with the use of super but the manufacturers have been able to overcome these difficulties by changes in the processing. However, this takes time because the effects of a change in the process may not be known for many months. In the 1951-52 season manufacturers had not been able to surmount by changes in the manufacturing process all of the recently encountered problems but they are confident that further improvements have now been made. It is highly probable that if the super were allowed a longer time to dry or "cure" before despatch this storage trouble would disappear.

That is the crux of the whole position: if there were greater storage space. The report continues—

Since the setting in the bags and the clogging of drills is considered to be caused by relatively high moisture content of the super, which may be due to immaturity, the question arises of fixing a maximum moisture content for super under the Fertilisers Act, 1928. This is not a simple straightforward question as such maximum could only apply to the super at the time of despatch and not at the time of use and in no State of the Commonwealth or in New Zealand is a maximum moisture content specified for super. Furthermore the experience of the past few years shows that much of the super required for despatch in April to June could not have complied with a maximum moisture content based on that of mature super. Under these circumstances the Committee is of the opinion that a maximum moisture content for super should not be fixed under the Fertilisers Act, 1928, until conditions are such that super manufacturers have sufficient stocks to ensure that all orders can be filled with mature superphosphate.

So far as the farmers of Western Australia are concerned, that is one of the most damaging clauses in the report. Con-

tinuing their report, these gentlemen say it may be that super despatched to the wheatbelt, after lying in the sheds for six months or so, may lose 10lb. a bag; that is, 10lb. in every 184lb. That is a fact; indeed it is only too common. There are many instances where the bags get lighter than that. That means that the moisture content in the early part of the year exceeds five per cent. It has already been said that it would have been impracticable to supply super in the months of March, April and May because of this moisture content; that is, if it had been obligatory under the Act.

Consequently, it would be a fair supposition that five per cent on an average of the whole output of super delivered to Western Australia is taken up in excess moisture. That would be in the vicinity of 20,000 tons of water going away from the super works in the form of moisture, and would represent 33 train loads of water in the super that is carted over our railways during the year. Nobody knows exactly, but it would probably mean that approximately £20,000 of the farmers' money was being paid for water as excess freight alone. Members will realise that £20,000 at five per cent would give a capitalisation of £400,000, which could be used to install all the storage required at the various super works in order to make certain that there was a sufficient bank of super—of good matured and dried super—available to the farmer.

Since this report was written, the price has been reduced by 20s. a ton owing to the cost of cornsacks falling. My contention is that the gentlemen who drew up the report should have felt it their bounden duty to the farmer to see that this product is properly matured before it goes to the country. Even if the price did go up, by comparison the farmers would be infinitely better off inasmuch as the amount of labour lost in the aggregate is enormous. Time after time equipment and farming machines have had to stop while the super is rolled down on to a concrete floor or on to sleepers to be pounded with a large piece of wood and sieved so that it can pass through the drill. I claim that the gentlemen who prepared this report have hardly done the farmers justice. Any departmental inquiry of this nature should always be assisted by a man with a little business experience to help put things on the right track.

I have made no mention of the P_2O_5 content of super. I am not a chemist and I do not profess to know anything about chemistry. But this report says that while a bag of super is stored on a farm for six months, it may lose 10lb. in weight due to the escape of moisture. The P_2O_5 , or the water soluble content of this super, is aggregated on what remains in the bag. That may or may not be so. For the years 1948-49 only six samples were taken by

departmental officers under the Act for testing the phosphate, and there were 362,000 tons despatched to the country. In 1949-50, three samples were taken out of 375,000 tons, and in 1950-51, six samples were taken from 420,000 tons. So out of 1,157,000 tons of super that went to the country, there were a total of 15 tests made by the departmental officers. I can hardly see how these gentlemen could have put into this report what they have, namely,—

The Act provides for inspectors to sample fertilisers offered for sale. If samples on analysis show less than the registered constituents for that particular brand, the seller is liable to prosecution if the deficiency exceeds certain allowable variations laid down in the Act.

How on earth could they conscientiously make that statement in view of the figures which I mentioned a moment ago and which were given to Mr. Loton last year in reply to a question asked in this Chamber? I think it proves conclusively that the farmers are not getting the crack of the whip to which they are entitled in regard to super. It is pure assumption to say that the P_2O_5 content aggregates in the residue of super remaining in the bag in the farmer's shed, because each stride we have taken in this matter leads us to the conclusion that the farmer is on the losing side. The only thing that remains for us to do is to take samples after the super has lain in the shed over a long period and have them independently tested. Another very interesting point that has cropped up in this report is the price of super in the various States. Under the heading of "Cost of Superphosphate" we find the following:—

March, 1953.

State.	Price per ton.		
	£	s.	d.
New South Wales	15	1	6
Victoria	14	10	0
Queensland	13	5	9
South Australia	14	13	6
Western Australia	16	3	0
Tasmania	12	7	0*

* In paper bags delivered any railway station.

From the above, it will be seen that super is delivered freight paid at any point in Tasmania at the rate of £12 7s. a ton. This is in the face of another quotation in this document which states that the committee could not see how super could be reduced in price in Western Australia. After studying the making of double and triple strength super, the report goes on to say that it may be possible when the Snowy Mountains scheme gets under way and there is plenty of cheap power to do this.

If it is possible in the Snowy Mountains scheme, we can assume it will be done in Tasmania, where there is a lot of

cheap power; and seeing that freight plays such a big part in the cost of super-phosphate, if already there is a difference of over £2 per ton in the cost as between Western Australia and Tasmania, and the other States can turn out super at double or triple the strength of the West Australian product, in keeping with the formula followed in England, the time may come when we shall be looking to the other States for our requirements. It is quite probable that in the not too distant future those States will be quoting super at such a price that it will be cheaper to lodge our orders there than to rely on our local works.

It is pleasing to see that the Minister for Agriculture has agreed to have three questions placed on the wheat marketing ballot paper so that farmers can decide for themselves which system they require. I am very pleased indeed that the Minister has agreed to have that done, because I think it is the only democratic way to handle the subject.

I would like to say a few words on the quality of wool. Of late, we have heard quite a lot about the alleged poor quality of our wool, and a good deal was said on the subject after the marketing of a substantial portion of the last season's clip. Last year a great deal of Western Australia was in the throes of drought and that had an adverse effect on the wool clip from many parts of the State. I have been surprised to hear people who are or have been associated with the growing of wool take exception to the statement that good pastures will broaden the wool. I can assure members, however, that that is correct.

The wool fibre is affected considerably, firstly, by the manner in which a sheep is bred; and, secondly, by the manner in which it is fed. An animal known as a strong-wool sheep can be put into the pastoral areas where there is plenty of nice feed; or rather, I will not say it is nice feed, but, by pulling down the herbage, sheep can get sufficient to keep them going, with a few seeds they pick off the ground. Such a strong-wool sheep under those conditions will push up a staple of wool in which the wool buyers delight. The most fastidious of the buyers will agree that that is the type of wool they require. The same animal taken into the agricultural areas and put on good pastures, will still yield a good quality wool, but one which is more robust. By that I mean that there will be less crimps to the inch than is the case when the sheep is fed on the pastoral properties to which I have referred.

Hon. L. Craig: In other words, he becomes stronger.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes. None the less, the wool can still be of very good quality.

Hon. L. Craig: It does not necessarily deteriorate. It all depends on the season.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I did not say it deteriorated.

Hon. L. Craig: In effect.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No. I think it brings out the finer qualities under pastoral conditions. I do not want anyone to misinterpret what I said. A much more valuable wool is produced in the agricultural areas and with the same type of animal more pounds of broader wool per sheep will be cut.

One of the big troubles with the wool industry is that in the past growers have culled their flocks and have omitted to send the reject sheep, marked with raddle, where they rightly belong. Anyone who neglects to send such sheep to the Midland Junction fat stock market does a disservice to the industry. I say that because of the remarks last week of Mr. Jones who said he was appalled at the number of poor quality wool sheep at Midland Junction. I claim that that is the logical place for every cull in the State. That is where it should be.

It would not worry me if there were no good wool sheep at Midland Junction. I would be happier because I would know that we were rid of the culls. Where I would go to see good quality sheep would be to country sales. There one will find sheep that have been bred on the right lines for their wool production, and they are commanding big prices. To the gentleman who said that our clip was deteriorating, I would say that I could take him through the agricultural areas and show him clips the like of which have never been produced before. The clip is improving out of sight. I would say that 80 per cent. of growers in the agricultural areas are doing their best to improve the type of wool; and I have no doubt that if wool prices keep up, then within a generation we will have reached such a stage that that gentleman will be sorry for what he said. There was no need for him to comment at all. All he did was to hurt the feelings of a lot of out-back people who are endeavouring to do their best.

A controversy started in the Eastern States. A prominent sheep man whose business it is to class wool and sheep wrote to the "Pastoral Review" and said, "Who wants fine wool?" There have been several issues of that journal since, but not one letter have I seen challenging him. I guess that Mr. Craig gets the same magazine and—

Hon. L. Craig: If people want fine wool they should pay for it.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: They should do.

Hon. L. Craig: They like it and should pay the price.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: That is correct. While on the subject of wool, I know that at the last season's sales a clip of the

best wool was sold at about 76d. per lb. That was AAA wool, and BBB was 2d. lower.

Hon. L. Craig: Sold privately, I suppose.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No, on the floor. A very rough wool from the same clip brought 96d. per lb. Are woolbuyers doing anything to improve the type of wool they get when they do things like that? I do not think they are.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Look at the report of the Agricultural Department and see what class of wool was grown at the Esperance Research Station! You will get a shock. I understand it was about the best in the State.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I do not know about the Esperance Plain.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The ex-Minister for Agriculture who sits behind you will tell you that.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I would like to touch on the subject of war service land settlement. Early in the year, while at Albany, I had an opportunity to visit Many Peaks. I would say that the highlight there was the efficiency of the high-ball and the ruthless manner in which that machine knocked down the forest, yard by yard. As it went along it opened a drain for the taxpayers' money in the difficulties it was creating. For every acre that the high-ball knocked down, growth was taking place on land behind it that had previously been cleared. I would say that 50 to 55 per cent. of the surface of a lot of properties that had been previously cleared was covered with suckers, and there was no hope of the individuals on those properties dealing with the growth.

I understand that efforts will be made to root out those suckers, but at what price I do not know. I was informed that during the year previous to my visit, there had been two boards on the gate of one property setting out the cost of each operation, but that cost had risen to such an extent that the boards were subsequently removed. As far as I am concerned, one part of the State has no preference over another. My aim is to get the greatest return for the smallest outlay and I think that should be the aim of all Governments.

Who on earth recommended the Many Peaks area for the development and gave it priority over hundreds of thousands of acres of which I already know—and I have not seen many parts of the State—I do not know. It is beyond my comprehension. If those factors and high-balls were put to work even within 50 miles of Perth, knocking down a lot of the whitegum forests, the settlers who have been clamouring for that work to be done would have the land under production within a couple of years. Where the machines are at present being utilised they are only creating a perpetual problem.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The Director of Agriculture would be responsible for that, would he not?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: He may be. I do not know who was responsible. I want to be constructive in any criticism I make; but I did say to that gentleman, soon after my return, that if I had my way those machines would be stopped operating immediately and would not be allowed to continue knocking down the forest only to create greater problems. There are hundreds of thousands of acres on the Midland line—which Mr. Logan mentioned—which could have been developed with the same capital expenditure as has already taken place at Many Peaks, and had that been done, we would have had something valuable to show for it.

The Minister for the North-West: You could hardly call Many Peaks forest country.

Hon. L. Craig: Did you see the high-ball working at Many Peaks?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes, and I was most upset by what I saw there. I sincerely hope that similar work being done elsewhere is not having the same result, but I fear that a lot of the taxpayers' money is going down the drain. I saw them knocking down a lot of stunted jarrah at Many Peaks.

Hon. L. Craig: With the high-ball?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes, and it was a remarkable display of efficiency in the ruthlessness with which it was creating problems. Mr. Bennetts acclaims the virtues of the Esperance Plain; and if his claims are justified, that country should have been opened up with the money that has been poured down the drain at Many Peaks.

I turn now to traffic matters and would like the Chief Secretary to see to it that the drivers of railway buses abide by our traffic laws. Recently, when going home after a sitting of the House, I would have been run down on the highway by a railway bus had I not been very careful. I thought it was going to stop before entering the highway, but instead of that it charged right through. Many motorists complain that the drivers of these railway vehicles hog the road and take at least nine inches more than they are entitled to. Another matter has relation to the diesel rail coaches, and I am puzzled as to why the railway officials decided to paint the fronts of these coaches yellow and black. Anyone who has lived in the country knows that most of the serpents that want to camouflage themselves are coloured yellow and black.

Hon. L. Craig: Do you suggest that the diesel coaches are as slow as serpents?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No, but they are just as venomous if they hit one. I feel that thought should be given to this question, because if Nature has arrived at cer-

tain conclusions in the case of these reptiles it is no use human beings contending that Nature is wrong.

The next matter with which I desire to deal is the charge made by the oil companies in this State on the loan drum account. For a considerable time the farming community enjoyed the privilege or right of paying only £1 for the hire of a 44-gallon drum; but, about the time when there was some controversy as to the raising of the price of fuel, the oil companies took it upon themselves to raise a considerable amount of revenue by increasing the deposit on loan drums from £1 to £2. I am sorry to say that those who should have taken the matter up—it was their duty to do so on behalf of the farmers—had very little to say about it and so the question was left to individuals to decide.

I thought I would make a test case for myself. There was little I could do about the matter other than meet the oil companies with something similar to what they were handing out to the farmers, so I decided that our firm would spend a certain amount of money on a loan drum account and, to save any book entries, keep that money outstanding for the whole year or until the oil companies rectified the position. I decided that when cheques came forward for any returns we would not negotiate them, but would hold them as scrip. After holding the first cheque for a while I received from the oil company a letter asking me whether I had lost it and, if so, to notify them, or else put it through the bank. I replied—

In reply to your letter 14th May, regarding deposit drum refund cheque it is our intention to hold all cheques issued account deposit drum refunds and use them from time to time as fresh supplies of fuel are required as drum credit scrip. It would appear that customers' interests received scanty consideration when the various oil interests decided to increase the deposit price on drums from £1 to £2, the oil companies thereby collecting a compulsory free of interest loan from their Australian customers, perhaps to the tune of a million pounds.

I am told it is nearer £2,000,000. To continue—

I realise that a few farmers were non-co-operative by not returning empty drums, but why penalise all drum users for the shortcomings of a few? It is not sufficient reason for United Oil Interests to make customers part with this huge sum of money.

A big percentage of users of fuel oil in drums are farmers, who produce wheat, wool, oats and barley. They cannot charge buyers of their produce for the containers. Could you imagine the buyers of such goods agreeing to finance (or partly so) the purchase of

such containers and then being told that the containers were still the property of the producers? No, Sir, I could not imagine such agreement.

Why not allow customers to supply their own drums if they so desire? Many farmers did have a supply of empty lubricant drums which could be used for decanting from depots as of old. I use the word "did" advisedly, for with the introduction of the £2 deposit ramp, many farmers are unwittingly parting with their stock of empty lubricant drums at a gift price.

I omitted to add there that when one takes in an empty lubricant drum they allow on it only £1. Further—

My guess is that United Oil Companies will end up with a huge stockpile of empty drums. It seems to me that the only remedy we have is to adopt the procedure as set out in the first part of this letter.

I received a reply from the company reading as follows:—

We thank you for your letter of 22nd May and wish to advise that immediately on receipt of same we wrote to our representative and asked him to call on you as soon as possible and explain some of the difficulties we are up against in regard to our returnable drum position.

In the meantime we have read your letter with much interest, and while we agree that a number of primary producers are unable to reconcile themselves to the necessity for the introduction of "cash for drum" policy, we feel that the drum position had deteriorated to such an extent that we had to do something to recover the large number of drums outstanding in the country.

We are, however, particularly interested in your views on the matter, and would suggest that if you are in Perth you might find time to call at our office, when we could explain more fully to you the reasons which have necessitated the introduction of our present drum policy. From the tone of your letter we feel confident that you are an individual who will realise that there are two sides to each problem, and having this in mind we should very much like you to call and discuss the matter more fully with our Mr.

To that I replied—

I have to hand your letter of the 16th June, 1953, regarding returnable drum charges increase imposition. I thank you for your reply, also invitation to call and discuss this matter with your Mr.

Frankly, I am disappointed with your reply, for I do try to obtain both sides to any question which might be open to doubt. Judging by this reply I

have before me, you are not prepared to place the position as it applies to the oil interests in writing, for I think you will agree that one's memory is not nearly so good as the palest ink for recording purposes.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It is a wonder they did not call you a Commo!

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I was only doing what someone else should have done. I then received from them the following:—

Although we have written you on two previous occasions we regret to note that the above cheque has not yet been presented to our bank for payment.

To us the matter is now one of importance and urgency and we request your advices as to whether the cheque has been lost or otherwise. Should we not hear from you within the next 14 days it will be necessary to protect our interests by instructing our bank to stop payment.

On reading that, I rang up and said I was surprised that they were going to repudiate their own paper. It will be no use these people—when legislation comes before this House and they are up against the farmer for organising in his own interests—lobbying and telling us about free enterprise if this is the sort of free enterprise with which we are to be inflicted. It has already been said that the oil companies are almost embarrassed with the number of drums that they have and that transport is their greatest difficulty. They have only to get all these empty lubricant drums to a central depot and pick out the good from the bad and they will have sufficient drums for their purpose. I think members for the patient hearing they have afforded me.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [5.45]: At the outset I congratulate the Chief Secretary and the Minister for the North-West on their appointment to the Ministry. At the same time I congratulate and welcome to the House the new member for the Suburban Province. I also take this opportunity of congratulating Mr. Hall on his appointment to the position of Chairman of Committees.

I want to express not only my concern, but also that felt by the electors throughout the State on a position that has arisen and the anxiety that has been caused in the Civil Service and in other Government instrumentalities which, although not under the Public Service Act, are related to the Civil Service. The appointment of the new Under Secretary for Law has been one of the causes of concern. In saying that, I am not reflecting on the ability of the man who has been appointed. Another reason for the concern is the method by which he was promoted from a junior position in one department of the Civil Service to an extremely high position in another.

A further feature which is causing concern, and which I refer to in passing, is the suggestion by certain newspaper columnists that in the near future there will be alterations to the personnel of the State Electricity Commission. When such rumours are abroad, the inference is that where there is smoke there is fire. The suggestion is that when Mr. Dumas retires, Mr. Fernie will be his successor. However, that which concerns me most is the rumour surrounding Dr. Stoate, the Conservator of Forests.

The Minister has clearly stated that the present Conservator can re-apply for the position when applications are called. We know that, of course, but I and other members believe that all the indications are such that it will be of little avail if the present Conservator does re-apply. All the Press statements and those by the Minister indicate that he has lost confidence in Dr. Stoate. The position that has arisen is most regrettable. When questioned as to the delay in calling for applications for this position, the Minister suggested that the question should have been put to his predecessor. By effluxion of time the appointment of the present Conservator terminated last February. Had the previous Government re-appointed the present Conservator, I can visualise the outcry that would have been made far and wide by Government members.

The Minister for the North-West: Had not his term expired before the elections?

Hon. J. MURRAY: It might have expired before the date of the elections. I know it was during the month of February.

The Minister for the North-West: Before the elections.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Yes. Looking at the position from the viewpoint of the State's welfare and the conservation of our State forests, I personally deplore the suggestion that Dr. Stoate's services are to be ruthlessly dispensed with. His academic knowledge is of the highest and, further, he is definitely a practical man. Those two qualifications are extremely necessary to enable him to execute his duties under the Forests Act. Like his predecessors, Dr. Stoate has proved himself to be a man of the highest integrity and fully conscious of the great responsibility placed in him under the Forests Act of 1918. It is apparent, of course, that in carrying out his duties in a responsible manner he has crossed swords with people, not only in the department, but also in the industry itself and caused them to feel that they have been unjustly dealt with.

The Act has been in force for a period of 35 years, and I can think of no major amendment having been brought forward. The legislation seems to be quite workable, but it is my view that if the Government of the day considers that it has sufficient loopholes to permit it to be administered to the advantage of some people and

the disadvantage of others, it should bring forward an amending Bill. That would have been preferable to what has happened in this instance, whereby the Minister has clearly shown that unless the Conservator of Forests is prepared, when carrying out his duties and responsibilities as set out under the Act, to accept dictation and control by the Minister, he shall go. That is definitely the implication.

I consider very strongly that Dr. Stoate is finished; and although it will not affect him very much personally, it will affect his successor, because he will feel, in being appointed for a seven-year term, that unless he gives way to the Minister, his appointment will terminate at the end of that period. Our forests are too important an asset to be handled in that manner. The only way they can be built up is by establishing a long-range policy under a man who thoroughly understands his job.

The Minister for the North-West: What was the length of the previous term?

Hon. J. MURRAY: Seven years, as is provided under the Act. The position of Conservator of Forests is most peculiar, and to illustrate what I mean I will read Section 7 of the Act which is as follows:—

There shall be a department of the public service called the Forests Department having, under the direction of the Minister, such powers, authorities, and duties as are provided for by this Act.

With reference to the Conservator himself, Section 8 provides—

- (1) There shall be a Conservator of Forests to be appointed by the Governor.
- (2) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Conservator—
 - (a) shall be the permanent head of the Department;
 - (b) shall hold office for a term of seven years, and at the expiration of his term of office shall be eligible for reappointment.

The following paragraph of this subsection is the one I want to stress because of the events that have taken place. It reads—

- (c) shall be directly responsible to the Minister for the management and control of State forests

It is the word "responsible" to which I want to draw attention. In other words, he has to answer to the Minister for such acts as might be regarded by the Minister as reflecting incompetence. However, there is nothing in the Act to indicate that the Conservator is under the control of the Minister. In fact, there are many sections which clearly show that the man who controls our forest activities is the

Conservator and not the Minister. Section 68 bears out that contention. It reads—

Notwithstanding anything contained in the Parks and Reserves Act, 1895, to the contrary, no license to cut or remove forest produce in any park or reserve to which the Governor may, by notice in the Gazette, apply this section, shall be granted by a board of parks and reserves, or by a road board having control of a park or reserve, without the approval in writing of the Conservator.

It does not say, "without the approval in writing of the Minister." Therefore, it can be seen that, throughout the Act, various sections bear out my contention that the word "responsible" was used with its full intent. The Conservator is definitely not under the control of the Minister. With the indulgence of the House, I will read some of the remarks made in 1919 by the then Conservator of Forests, Mr. Lane Poole. They are contained in paragraph (5) on page 9 of the report of the Forests Department for that year, and are as follows:—

Forestry begins, not, as many imagine, with the seed bed, but with the axe and sawmill. It is by restricting the quantity of timber that may be cut to the quantity that the forest will produce that a sustained yield is assured. The country cut over may then be taken in hand and improved to assure a better and larger future crop, and this work should go on alongside the cutting. In this way the future of the timber industry is safe and the sawmills of today and tomorrow would both contribute towards the establishment of a continuous supply of timber to meet the requirements of the people for all time. Forestry as a State business is a very sound investment, for its outgoings are always well covered by its revenue, leaving a handsome enough profit to the Treasury, as is shown in all countries where it is practised on scientific lines.

The Forests Act may be commended in that it provides for the following:—

- (1) The framing of forest working plans which, when once approved, may only be altered by the consent of the Conservator.

There again, the consent of the Conservator is required, not the consent of the Minister. The report continues—

This will permit of a continuity of policy, for a working plan is a written scheme covering the sylvicultural and other operations over a given forest for a number of years. Such plans as I have shown above cannot be introduced in the con-

cessions, leases, or permits at present, so that they will for some years be framed solely for the cut-over forests which have been abandoned by sawmillers in the past.

Members will realise that the whole Act was framed with this long-range policy in view. At page 10, the following appears:—

In the interests of the State, it would be a wise policy to discourage any increase in the rate of timber-cutting till the consumption of scantling is fairly apace with the export of the larger sizes. State acquiescence in the destruction of good timber only because the export trade demands it is a crime against coming generations, and any attempts to increase the export in the interests of foreign companies, or with the object of inducing more men to join in timber-getting at the expense of posterity, need wise resistance.

Instead of a policy of discouraging the increase in the rate of timber-cutting, every encouragement was given to sawmillers to mine the wealth of the forests as rapidly as possible, and by 1913-14 our annual cut was doubled. In 1903 the output was too great for the forests, but we possessed large reserves of jarrah which would, under forest management, have yielded timber for all time. Today it is no longer a question of encouraging the increase in the rate of cutting. Even were it now the policy of the Government to continue encouraging sawmillers to mine the forests, there is no possibility of doing so for we have not a sufficient area of virgin jarrah forest to support a 40-load mill for 10 years. All the jarrah country is held by the present-day sawmiller and the rate of cutting will decrease year by year as the forests are cut out. The problem is now one of how to restrict the cutting so as to lengthen the period under which the jarrah country will be cut over and so enable the department to restore the forests behind the sawmiller and so shorten the period of lean years which must inevitably follow the closing of the last big mill in the State.

The predecessor of Dr. Stoate was Mr. S. L. Kessell, and it is interesting to note what he had to say in his 1923 report. This is to be found at page 21—

With the concurrence of the New South Wales Forestry Commission, Mr. T. N. Stoate, B.Sc., was appointed Assistant Working Plans Officer as from the 1st April, 1923. This officer had for some 12 months previously occupied this position coupled with that of Instructor in Forestry while on extended leave from the New South Wales department. Owing to the large

development of field work demanding attention, his duties have been dissociated from those of instructor, and his indefatigable enthusiasm has largely contributed to the success which has attended the inauguration of reforestation operations.

I have read that paragraph in order to show members that, by Mr. Kessell, Dr. Stoate was highly regarded for his qualifications and forestry work. I have gone to some length to stress that, when the Act came into operation in 1918, the value of the asset in our forests was recognised, and that the only way in which a real conservation policy could be put into effect was by granting almost unlimited power to the Conservator for the time being. In view of that fact, it is right to assume that the Governor-in-Council, when making the appointment to this very high position, would have taken that matter into serious consideration and would not have chosen a man unless he possessed the requisite qualifications and, by his previous service, had shown integrity and in every respect would be able to live up to the great responsibility and trust reposed in him by Parliament when it passed the Act.

Therefore it is my contention that Dr. Stoate, having lived up to those qualifications and requirements, and not having outlived his usefulness as an employee of the State, it might reasonably have been expected by Dr. Stoate, and in fact by everyone associated with forestry and the sawmilling industry, that unless something could be brought forward that could cast a reflection upon his integrity, his reappointment would have been automatic. In regard to this matter, many red herrings have been drawn across the trail, and I direct attention to the fact that the Minister has now set up an advisory committee. Notification of this action on the part of the Minister was published in "The West Australian" on the 29th July, under the heading, "Graham Initiates Forests Inquiry." The report stated.

A forestry advisory committee has been appointed on the recommendation of the Minister for Forests (Mr. Graham) to report urgently on the reallocation of nearly 400,000 acres of forests in the South-West.

Tenders for the sawmilling rights in the forests were advertised on June 5, 6 and 9. Suddenly, on June 13, it was advertised that the areas had been withdrawn from sale on the instruction of Mr. Graham. It is now thought that some of the land might be cut over and cleared for war service land settlement.

The forest country involved is about 66,500 acres in the Nannup district, 180,000 acres in the Rocky Gully area, 123,300 acres near the Tone River

timber mill, 22,500 acres in the Shannon River area, and 3,000 acres adjacent to Northcliffe.

The committee will comprise the general manager of the Wundowie iron and steel industry (Mr. A. C. Harris), the executive officer of the Associated Sawmillers and Timber Merchants' Association (Mr. F. Gregson), and the secretary of the Co-operative Sawmillers' Association (Mr. W. Hayes). Mr. Harris will be the chairman.

Mr. Graham said yesterday that the committee would also report on—

Areas which might be made available for sawmilling.

The method and conditions of sale and allocation of forestry permit areas.

The production and distribution of sawn timber, with particular reference to supplies for Western Australia.

The determination of royalties.

Any other matters relating to forests and timber upon which the Minister might desire information.

I do not know under what Act or authority the advisory committee has been constituted to report on those matters. We have a department that was established purely and simply for that purpose, a department that has been working under an Act of Parliament. There is no recognised active forestry officer on the committee. Mr. Harris has had some experience of forestry matters, but he is now fully occupied with the Wundowie charcoal-iron and steel industry, or he should be. But in addition, I understand that he is running a private sawmill and, as such, is definitely an interested party. Mr. Gregson was formerly on the staff of the Forests Department, and left that position to take up the post of executive officer of the Associated Sawmillers and Timber Merchants' Association. Consequently, he is a party most interested in the timber on which the Minister has asked for a report. Mr. Hayes represents the Co-operative Sawmillers' Association which, I understand, is a body of small sawmillers who have combined in order to try to reduce the pressure of the big boys in the industry. Whether such action on their part was necessary is a moot point. However, there is nothing in the qualifications of those three men to indicate to me that any one of them possesses the qualifications that Dr. Stoate has, or is more capable of advising the Minister on the points I have enumerated. Quite recently, we had a Royal Commission on forestry matters.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I had mentioned the committee which had been set up by the Minister, and also the Royal Commission which was appointed to deal with forestry matters. I drew attention to facts which have arisen from the setting up of the committee. I gave details of the intention of the Minister, by way of reference to the committee and what it should report on, etc. As I said, I could not see what good purpose the committee could serve, because it had not statutory authority. Unless the Minister intends to bring down a Bill to give it authority to override the decisions of the Conservator—the present one or any future Conservator—then it must be purely and simply an advisory body for which provision was made in the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner, which I shall read later. I draw attention to what appears in this morning's issue of "The West Australian." The Minister has clearly laid down the functions of the committee. In an earlier portion of my address I suggested that many red herrings had been drawn across the trail with regard to the dismissal or reappointment of Dr. Stoate. The heading of the report is "Forests Committee Reports on Stoate." There is nothing in the setting up of this committee which suggests it was ever to report on Dr. Stoate.

The Minister for the North-West: It has not done so, either.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I would say this publication was given to the Press by the Minister.

The Minister for the North-West: No. That is the idea of the Press.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I would say then that this makes a glaring case, if a committee of this description can issue a statement as it obviously has done here. It is not manufactured by "The West Australian."

The Minister for the North-West: It is.

Hon. J. MURRAY: If it is, I suggest the Minister take action against the Press.

The Minister for the North-West: I think he has taken some action.

Hon. H. K. Watson: If the committee did say that, it would be a piece of gross impertinence on the part of the committee.

Hon. J. MURRAY: The interjectors suggest that the Minister should wipe his hands of the report in "The West Australian." I had considerable experience of the Press, prior to going into the timber industry, and I suggest that this could not be fabricated from imagination.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Have a go at the Press then.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I am not going to do that. Let the man who set up this committee, which is purely and simply on

a heresy-hunt, have something to say about the Press publication. The Royal Commissioner's report makes certain recommendations with regard to positions which may arise, and obviously have arisen, with respect to the sawmilling industry coming into conflict with the Forests Department—

Where an unsuccessful applicant for a sawmilling permit which has been submitted to auction or tender requests it, a committee of appeal be constituted to hear his representations and those, if any, of other applicants desiring to give evidence, and that such committee submit a recommendation on each case.

The constitution of the appeals committee referred to in 3 above be a magistrate, or some other person of judicial capacity and standing as chairman, the Conservator of Forests, or his nominee, and a third member from outside the Public Service with suitable qualifications, such as a member of the Institution of Engineers of Australia, or a practising member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia.

The Royal Commissioner, who did a thorough job in compiling his report and making recommendations—probably the cheapest Royal Commission, comparatively, there has been—visualised the necessity of some advisory person or body being set up, but he did not visualise the setting up of a committee comprised of men virtually concerned with decisions that might be arrived at by the Conservator for the time being. At page 59 the Royal Commissioner recommends that—

An Appeals Committee be appointed to investigate and make recommendations in cases where the holders of permits request revision of royalty rates determined as a result of any such general re-appraisal.

The constitution of such Appeals Committee be the same as, or similar to, that recommended to deal with appeals against the allocation of permits.

There again the Commissioner recommended that in certain circumstances an appeal body should be set up, but he still maintained that it should be from outside the industries concerned altogether, and that one person on it should be either the Conservator or his direct representative. I go back now to the report in this morning's "The West Australian" which states:—

The committee, it is understood, has now reported that Dr. Stoate has devoted himself more to the technical side of forestry to the detriment of departmental administration.

That may be quite correct, but I do not think it was within the jurisdiction of the committee to make any such suggestion.

On page 59 of the report of the Royal Commission, the Royal Commissioner realised, and rightly so, that in the State forests we had a valuable asset and that for the Conservator to put in full time on administrative work, as well as on the technical side, was probably disadvantageous. He had this to say—

The administration generally of the Forests Department is handicapped by a serious shortage of professional foresters, but it is not considered that any extensive changes are necessary or desirable in the form of administration.

The Forests Department has of recent years lost the services of so many senior officers that there have been too many calls upon the Conservator for his attendance in the field, and for other senior officers to act as resident forest managers.

It is essential that every head of a forests service should keep himself informed of the work of his department by personal inspection, but the direction of all the operations should not be dependent upon frequent inspections by the head of the service. Responsibilities and powers of direction for this purpose should be delegated to other senior officers.

Despite these handicaps, the department has continued to make considerable progress, particularly in the extension of fire control, the control of trade operations, the provision of housing, the mechanisation of plant, the improvement of communications, afforestation with softwoods and research, and the actual administration of the department has been generally satisfactory.

There is a need for an increase in departmental branches and field divisions, together with a consequent reorganisation of staff, but progress in this direction should be dependent upon the recruitment of additional professional officers.

There again, whilst these comments are made about the administration of the department, there is still no direct criticism of Dr. Stoate in the carrying out of his duties as laid down by the Act. The Commissioner made these recommendations—

The form of administration of the Forests Department as provided for under the Forests Act, 1918, be retained.

The Conservator of Forests be regarded as the adviser to the Government in all forestry matters, and that all communications from the department to the Minister be forwarded through the office of the Conservator.

Therefore I claim that in the setting up of this committee the Minister, instead of carrying out some of the recommenda-

tions of the Royal Commission, has cut right across them. I turn now to page 60 of the report where he recommended that—

Consideration be given to increasing the remuneration of the position of Conservator of Forests and those of the senior professional officers of the Forests Department.

Obviously the Minister has paid some attention to that because in throwing this position open he has increased the salary attached to it. Much criticism has been levelled at the Conservator from outside bodies, and at this stage it might be as well for me to correct the rather erroneous suggestion that has been put forward that I am a representative of the sawmilling industry. I have had, I admit, a lot of experience in the sawmilling industry, but I do not represent any group of people or any single pressure group concerned.

I am concerned with the interests of the State as a whole, on a long-term policy, and not for the immediate benefit of any section of the community which may be concerned with the industry for the time being. They are well able to look after themselves if necessary. But I am concerned about any inroads that may be made on the forest asset of Western Australia, and to my mind the ideal would be a perpetuity of cutting. Those in charge of this asset have led us to believe—and I consider it to be quite true—that even at the present rate of cutting some sort of tightening up must take place in the near future, and later on I will have something to say on that aspect.

Also on page 60, the Royal Commissioner had something to say about the control and setting up of small mills. Over a long period there has been an agitation for freedom for anybody who wished to make a living out of sawmilling to be able to start operations if he could get private property on which to cut. I have a good deal of sympathy for people who want to make money in that way, but at the same time I consider there should be a perpetuity of cutting in our jarrah forests. We have karri in almost unlimited quantities, but our supplies of jarrah are causing some anxiety. There was nothing in the 1918 Act to say that the Conservator could prevent anybody from starting a small mill if he wanted to do so. But this aspect has been included in the Timber Industries Regulation Act and the Royal Commissioner makes reference to it on page 60 of his report. He recommends—

That the Timber Industries Regulation Act be amended to provide that no sawmill shall be registered unless the owner has satisfied the Conservator of Forests that he has adequate log supplies available for the support of the mill.

To my mind that is a most essential recommendation and a good deal of criticism levelled at Dr. Stoute has been because of his administration of that particular aspect. The Conservator has always taken a "poor view" of these small mills starting here, there and everywhere without a log intake. In the past he has refused a permit to a man who has started a sawmill on private property without assuring himself of a continuity of log supplies. In my opinion that was the right attitude to take and the Conservator has refused to grant concessions from State forests to keep those particular sawmills going.

It may be hard on the small sawmiller who has started up, but no business man would start an industry or shop unless he had a known market for his products or unless he was assured of a plentiful supply of raw materials or the necessary article to enable him to continue trading. If the Conservator were to allow sawmillers to start up everywhere on areas which were adjacent to State forests—that is, on private property—and which would last only two or three years, and then feel it incumbent on him to grant them permits to cut in the State forests, the other established mills—established at considerable expense—would have some grounds for complaint. Many of these larger mills were established years ago and there has been no complaint about them from any of the trade unions concerned. If these smaller mills were permitted to cut in our State forests, the bigger mills would not have a reserve of timber and eventually would have to close down. So one can see that the industry would be in jeopardy. In relation to that aspect the Royal Commissioner further stated that in his view—

The total requirements in sawn timber and railway sleepers are estimated to amount to 290,000 loads sawn. . . .

That was for 1952 and was his opinion based on all the reports placed before him. While I admit that the Conservator, with the assistance of the sawmilling industry, has not lived up to that estimate as regards sleepers, it is understandable when one realises that the Minister for Housing in the late Government—and the same applies to the present Minister—pushed him for an increase in the production of general building scantlings. Few sawmillers, during this period, were encouraged to cut the quantity of sleepers that they would have liked to cut. Actually there is no control over cutting, but it is more or less an agreement between the Government of the day and the sawmillers as to the type of cutting that will have priority.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Do you mean that the sawmillers wanted to cut them or that the Government wanted the sawmillers to stop cutting them?

Hon. J. MURRAY: No sawmiller would have avoided cutting sleepers if he had been permitted to do so, because they were his most profitable line.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That is not our experience. We were chasing them.

Hon. J. MURRAY: But at the same time the department and the Minister for Housing were putting the brakes on and demanding that scantlings be cut. Most Country Party members will recall that some two or three years ago a concerted effort was made to get the sleeper mills to change over to the cutting of general scantlings. Some of those sleeper mills are still not cutting sleepers and it will probably be a considerable time before they do. Several members, including myself, have mentioned the considerable wastage of timber that takes place through these sleeper millers taking in logs 7 ft., 8 ft. or 9 ft. long and leaving odd ends in the bush. The Royal Commissioner suggested that 290,000 loads would be cut for 1952, but the Conservator's report for the year ended the 30th June, 1952, shows that 294,297 loads of timber were produced at a value of approximately £6,000,000. So members can see that over a period the Conservator has made a real effort not only to carry out his job under the Act, to conserve timber and build up a perpetuity of cutting, but he has also lived up to the demand for sawn timber made by the various Governments in their efforts to erect houses throughout the State.

Now I would like to read some references to this position in the report of the joint Select Committee on the Kauri Timber Coy. Ltd. Agreement Bill. This Select Committee was appointed to inquire into a Bill brought before the Legislative Assembly when the Minister of the day wanted to do something that was in opposition to the Conservator's views. The Minister felt that he should bring the whole question before Parliament and obtain its approval before anything was done, and there was a wide divergence of opinion on the question. This report bears out still further my view; and although there was some disagreement between the former Minister for Forests and the Conservator—and it seems to have been carried on by the present Minister for Forests—in the committee's view the Conservator is the right man to control our forests. The members of that committee intimated that no great exception could be taken to his administration of the Act. It should not be necessary to read these extracts, but unfortunately we get so many reports from Select Committees, Royal Commissions and departments that some of them go unread altogether or some portions are skipped. On page 6, the Committee has this to say—

Among those relevant points were:—

That is, points that have been raised in reference to the Bill. The following questions were put to witnesses:—

(1) The effect of the Bill on the Forests Act and the forests policy.

In dealing with that aspect it goes on—

- (a) Whether the proposal in the Bill cuts across forests policy and is opposed to the Forests Act and what is known as the forests working plan.
- (b) Is a strict adherence to the forests working plan vital under all circumstances?
- (c) Although it has the force of law, should the working plan be departed from to meet extreme circumstances, such as the serious shortage of sawn timber existing today?
- (d) In the light of the urgent timber needs of today, are the Forests Act and the forests working plan in need of revision in the interests of present and future State timber resources?
- (e) Is a forests plan, designed to conserve our meagre virgin forests and to promote and sustain forests development and, in the main, to preserve some substantial forests in perpetuity, vital to Western Australia's national well being?

The report continues—

All the above questions are affected in some way by the Bill. The answer to the last question (e), as to whether it is vital to our national well being to have preserved substantial forests in perpetuity and to promote and sustain forests development, is definitely "yes."

In my view that is a most important consideration to which the Conservator of Forests has to apply himself: namely, that we maintain in perpetuity substantial State forests; and it is, I feel sure, because of his endeavour to do just that that most of the criticism has been levelled at Dr. Stoute. Nowhere else does he come into conflict with the members of the committee which was set up by the Government. But the interests represented on that committee definitely come into conflict with the Conservator on that particular point. If they had their way they would reap a harvest now and it would be a case of heaven help our descendants and our grandchildren. The Select Committee went on further to say—

Our immediate need appears to be a thorough stocktaking of our forests position and timber resources, and the bringing into being of a re-

vised plan which would better meet today's circumstances than those which obtained when the Forests Act was planned and passed over 30 years ago. In fact, the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole working of the forests plan and the Forests Act is regarded as urgent.

That was the recommendation of this Select Committee and a Royal Commission was appointed. Nowhere have I been able to find in the Royal Commissioner's report a suggestion either that the working plan was outmoded or that the Conservator was acting other than in the most circumspect manner. The report of the Select Committee continues—

We have it on very sound evidence, that even with the forests soundly managed, it is anticipated that, at the end of 30 years, the present rate of cut will have to be reduced by about one-half to two-thirds.

Even though the Conservator has endeavoured to put a brake on indiscriminate cutting and indiscriminate setting up of small mills, there will be many heart burnings when the day of the reduced cut comes. In this State we have a State Saw Mills Department which at present is cutting 40 per cent. of the output of timber. When it comes to a decision by the Government as to who will have to go out of existence and who will be able to carry on in this industry, there will be many heart burnings and many people will feel that it is a great pity that more power had not been given to the Conservator over the earlier period, and even now, so that a policy of restricted cutting could have been indulged in much sooner.

The Minister for the North-West: Is it not a fact that many saw millers are not cutting their permissible intake?

Hon. J. MURRAY: That is only too true, and I will come to that feature. If that is not referred to in this report, then it is in the report of the Royal Commissioner. I am glad the Minister has drawn my attention to it. That was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, but whether it is contained in the report of the Select Committee I do not know. There is quite a lot of misunderstanding in regard to permissible intake. The permissible intake of a sawmill was the amount of raw material or log timber one was allowed to take into a saw mill over a period of 12 months. That was the basis on which the tender for the concession was made.

The Minister for the North-West: That was wrapped up with the forestry plan.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Yes, but only to a degree. It was actually based on the quantity of timber that was to be cut in that particular area. Certain sections were thrown open and the cut was limited on a yearly basis to a certain number of

loads of timber in the round. That was presumably to guide the sawmiller in considering what type of plant he could afford to use to cut the requisite amount of timber in the 12-monthly period. I would say that was the only reason why it was included. It was to indicate to the sawmiller that his cut was to be limited to a certain degree and that he would be ill-advised to put in a plant which would cut more. If he laid out a more extensive plant than was necessary, that was his responsibility.

During the period when the Government found itself short of timber for house building and other structures, it began to look for regulations or other sections in the Act whereby pressure could be brought to bear on sawmillers to increase the quantity then being cut. This idea was something new and it is only over the last few years that it has been introduced. Previously the Forests Department, and most people like myself, would have thought that the less cut the better it would be from the State's point of view. We did not want just to eliminate the forests as quickly as possible.

As I see the policy now, it is laid down in the regulations that any sawmiller failing to come up to his permissible cut for a period is liable to lose some portion of his concession. That was a lever to make him produce more sawn timber, which was done during this particular period when there was a shortage of material. I feel sure members will realise that with the house-building programme that has been in operation, these people have played the game fairly well throughout the State. But it has been a lever used against them.

It has now been suggested that by means of that regulation, where a sawmilling company is not fully utilising its permit area some portion of it can be taken away and given to a small mill that wants similar timber rights. That will probably work to the satisfaction not only of the Conservator, but of the State generally if it is administered in a just manner. If a small sawmiller in a particular area is short of bush and a large sawmiller in that area is not making full use of the bush at his disposal, it is only fair that some of that bush should be taken away and given to the small sawmiller who can use it. I want to assure the House that it is only in comparatively recent years that there was any suggestion that cutting the full permissible cut was something that the Forests Department wanted done.

The Minister for the North-West: I think it was the housing requirements that brought it about.

Hon. J. MURRAY: That is possibly so. The Select Committee's report further stressed this point and said—

The prospects of our forests, with an increasing material demand to serve a greatly increased population, are not good unless quickly faced up to.

The Bill under review definitely cuts across the provisions of the Forests Act. This is a statement of fact and is clearly proven in the evidence submitted and in the papers tabled in Parliament.

Of course the Bill was not gone on with. I am merely referring to the matter to show that this joint Select Committee of both Houses had little criticism to offer of the administration of the department by the conservator.

The Minister for the North-West: It upheld his actions.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Yes, all the way through. On page 7 of the report of the Select Committee, mention is made of the position in regard to the Forests Act. I pointed out that I considered it was the Government's responsibility, if it thought the Act was not workable, to amend it. This committee has borne out that contention. The report states—

It is certainly within the province of Parliament to amend any State law—in this case the Forests Act—especially if such action is required by force of circumstances and the needs of the times, and particularly if it has the support of the officers responsible for the administration of the law.

There again it will be seen that the committee felt that unless the officers who had the responsibility of conferring upon and administering this Act, recommended amendments to it, there should be a great degree of hesitancy about making any amendments to it at all. The report goes on—

The Forests Act is a somewhat unusual Act in view of the great authority vested in the officers administering it, and therefore their advice should not be regarded lightly. However, a strict adherence to an existing law, such as the Forests Act and the forests working plan, may not be advisable under the circumstances of today, although it undoubtedly is a very desirable administrative practice to bring to Parliament in all cases any requirements intended substantially to vary a law, as has been done in this case.

That is my view in regard to the matter. If any amendments are going to be made or there is to be any skimping of the Act as laid down, and a whittling away of authority of the Conservator is to be effected, as the Minister aims to do in setting up this committee, such matters should be brought to Parliament. The report, on page 7, shows clearly that the

Conservator did, at times, in an endeavour to keep small mills going—and probably large mills, too—depart to a degree from the absolute letter of the law. The report says—

More than one witness, including the Conservator, acknowledged that the Forests Act and the forests plan have, at times, been departed from to fit into a certain permit area, milling interests to which such area would logically belong.

In other words, what has happened in a district where a sawmill has been set up is that if that mill has become short of log timber and there have been substantial areas of State forest in the district, without throwing it open for tender, a quantity has been added to a permit area for an existing sawmill, which is a good method of overcoming a difficult situation. If during the past few years tenders had been called, with timber in short supply as it was, phenomenal prices would have been offered; and if the Conservator had been forced to accept the highest tender, a sawmill already established might have had to close down and another would have started in practically the same area, which would have been bad and inefficient management.

I turn to page 10 of the Select Committee's report. Here there is a reference to what the general manager of the State Saw Mills had to say on the same question. He bore out the fact that a shortage of timber would cause heavy fluctuation in royalties being paid for timber, which could act detrimentally to existing sawmills in an area. The report says—

The State Saw Mills' General Manager said he could afford to pay more than the 10s. tendered, by spreading the costs, but as his concern holds an adjoining permit at a royalty of 6s. 6d. per load, a big principle is involved. He added that the system of tender and auction is outmoded by the terrific demand for timber-bearing country.

That bears out my remarks that at present phenomenal royalties would be paid if every block of timber were thrown open for auction, and the small men would have little hope of paying the royalty offered at an auction sale. I think I have now come to the end of the references in the Select Committee's report. The following remarks of the committee are most interesting and show that there are people in this State, and probably in both Houses of Parliament, who feel the same way as the members of the Select Committee felt. On page 14 we find the following:—

As it is the feeling of all members of the Committee that the smaller people in the timber-milling industry have had a raw deal in regard to forest areas, compared with the

stronger components of the trade, it is thought that enforcement of permissible intake conditions to a reasonable minimum would make areas available, through forfeiture, to the smaller people in the industry who, it must be admitted, have not been regarded very favourably by those who control large areas of our forests.

That is what I remarked earlier. This permissible intake might be used to the benefit of the small mills which are crying out all the time for part of our State forests.

I think I will close on those paragraphs I have read from the Select Committee's report, and repeat that in my view the Government, through the Minister, will do the greatest possible disservice to Western Australia if it continues with its present intention of dispensing with the services of the present Conservator, Dr. Stoate, who over a long period of service to this State, has shown not only his capacity, but his desire and his ability to work night and day in the best interests of Western Australia and not in those of Dr. Stoate personally. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. J. McI. Thomson, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

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

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 8th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.24. p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 26th August, 1953.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Minister for Forests and Press Report.

THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS: (Hon. H. E. Graham, East Perth): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I desire to make a statement. I am most perturbed by the report in "The West Australian" this morning headed "Forests Committee Reports on Stoate." Not only is this statement mischievous and without foundation, but it is embarrassing to both the Conservator and the members of the committee. An interim report has been received from the committee and has been passed on to the Conservator for his consideration and comment. At no time has it been my intention to refer to the committee the question of the administration of the Forests Department. Such was not in the committee's terms of reference and it has not, in fact, in any way reported on this aspect. I flatly deny that the committee has reported "that Dr. Stoate has devoted himself more to the technical side of forestry to the detriment of departmental administration," or that there has been any reference to "uneconomical clearing costs."