

# Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 7th August, 1956.

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

## ELECTORAL.

### Swearing-in of Member.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am prepared to swear in the member for Guildford-Midland.

Hon. J. J. Brady took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

### The Minister for Works and the Narrows Bridge.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I desire to make a personal explanation. On Thursday last, the member for Nedlands asked if it were intended to prepare and publicly exhibit a model, or models of the proposed Narrows Bridge and the link road down to and including the new bridge over the railway, and I replied in the negative.

That answer was perfectly correct so far as my own department is concerned, but I have since been informed that the Department of Town Planning is preparing an exhibition, to be held in September, to depict the proposals of the Stephenson plan, and this exhibition will have some models, including a large-scale model showing the proposed switch road from South Perth to the north of the railway.

## QUESTIONS.

### DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

(a) Farms Abandoned and Reallocated.  
Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many war service dairy farmers have left their properties?

(2) How many of these farms have been reallocated?

(3) How many properties are unoccupied, and where are they situated?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Ninety-one. Three deceased; 11 were put off for various reasons; and 77 voluntarily.

(2) All have been reallocated or are under reallocation at the present time, except 10 sold or being sold as surplus to the scheme.

(3) Three, now advertised for allotment—one each at Karridale, Northcliffe and Denmark.

### (b) Assistance for Under-developed Holdings.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) What are the full particulars of the Government's proposals to assist dairy farmers on under-developed holdings to increase earning capacity?

(2) What is the cause of the delay in commencing this scheme?

(3) When and where is its implementation likely?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government's proposals to assist dairy farmers to increase their earning capacity envisage the further development of dairy farms up to a stage of 160 acres of developed pasture, where considered necessary, with a carrying capacity of 40 cow units per farm and a potential butter fat production of 205 lb. per cow unit.

When these stages of development and production have been reached, it is further proposed to review the conditions of the dairying industry in this State when consideration will be given to a further extension of farm development if warranted.

(2) and (3) The full implementation of the Dairy Farm Improvement Scheme is dependent upon the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government in the provision of loan moneys for the purpose of the scheme to the extent of half the estimated cost. Although this co-operation is not yet forthcoming, the Government is providing funds for the opening phase of the scheme in the development of farms in the Margaret River and Northcliffe areas. A considerable number of

farm inspections have been completed in these districts and it is intended that bulldozer clearing and other improvement works will commence as soon as weather conditions permit, which may not be prior to October or November.

A survey of all farms in the dairying zone is now being undertaken to ascertain the essential requirements for farm improvement. I wish to make it clear that the authorisation of this survey is not a committal of the Government to an extension of the Dairy Farm Improvement Scheme as yet, but is a gathering of factual information considered to be necessary in the light of experience gained in the Margaret River-Northcliffe pilot zones.

*(c) Commonwealth Government Assistance.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the answer given by the Minister for Lands to the question relating to the Dairy Farm Improvement Scheme, did he not make a statement that the scheme would be proceeded with regardless of whether or not the Commonwealth Government contributed?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes, the scheme is being provided to the extent the State is in a position to make finance available.

**STATE HOUSING COMMISSION.**

*Assistance to Local Authorities for Drainage.*

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Housing:

Will he undertake to assist local authorities with the drainage of areas before the development of any future State Housing Commission projects?

The MINISTER replied:

The commission carries out development of new areas, including drainage, as required by the Town Planning Board as a condition of the approval to a new subdivision.

**WATER SUPPLIES.**

*Metropolitan and Country Rates.*

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

What is the rate charged for 1,000 gallons of water, both ordinary and excess—

- (a) Metropolitan area;
- (b) Northam;
- (c) Merredin;
- (d) Kalgoorlie;
- (e) Norseman;
- (f) Goomalling;
- (g) Moora;
- (h) Dalwallinu?

The MINISTER replied:

The particulars are as follow:—

	Water in return for rates (per 1,000 gals.)		Excess Water (per 1,000 gals.)		Water for Trading purposes (per 1,000 gals.)	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Metropolitan Area	1	9	1	9	1	6
Northam	3	9	2	6 up to 10,000 gals. 0 thereafter	3	0
Merredin	4	6	2	9 up to 10,000 gals. 6 thereafter	3	6
Kalgoorlie	4	6	3	0 up to 5,000 gals. 2 6 thereafter	7	0
Norseman	4	6	3	0	7	0
Goomalling	4	6	3	0	6	0
Moora	4	0	3	0	4	0
Dalwallinu	4	0	3	0	4	0

Special rates apply in other instances.

**ONION BOARD.**

*Abolition Proposal.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

In view of some months having elapsed, giving him time to read the report, will he inform the House whether it is the intention of the Government to abolish the Onion Board, as was so strongly recommended by the Royal Commissioner?

The MINISTER replied:

Consideration is being given to the matter at present, but, in fairness to the growers concerned, I think it would be beneficial if we first of all endeavoured to improve conditions under the Act, rather than endeavour to abolish the board. After that has been done, a recommendation will be made to the Government and it is quite possible that it may follow the recommendation of the Royal Commissioner, although a definite statement would be premature at present.

**SOUTH-WEST POWER SCHEME.**

*Withdrawal of Government Subsidy.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Has the Government withdrawn the subsidy granted to the South-West power scheme and, if not, is any consideration being given to its withdrawal?

The MINISTER replied:

The financial position of the State Electricity Commission has improved to the extent that the subsidy is no longer necessary.

**SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.**

The PREMIER: I move—

That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 4.30 p.m., and on Thursdays at 2.15 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m., if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

These are the same sitting hours that applied last year, Mr. Speaker. I think all members who were here last year will agree that the 2.15 p.m. start on Thursdays was well worth while because, on most Thursdays, we concluded that day's sitting round about 6 p.m.

Mr. BOVELL: I would like the Premier to give consideration, at the beginning of the session, to commencing the sitting at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesdays. There are a number of members whose constituencies are in the South-West and they are forced to travel to Perth the day before Parliament sits. I feel that most members—country members, anyhow—like to spend as much time as possible in their electorates. At the moment, however, they cannot reach here by public transport in time for the sitting on Tuesday at 4.30 p.m. unless, as I have said before, they leave the day before and I feel that the facility of a 7.30 p.m. start should be made available to them.

For the first portion of the session at least, I consider we could despatch the business of the House quite satisfactorily by commencing Tuesday's sitting at 7.30 p.m. and I earnestly ask the Government to give consideration to this suggestion. I repeat that country members like to live in their electorates as much as possible and come up to Perth only while Parliament is sitting. However, if the existing arrangements are continued it will entail the South-West members travelling all day Monday and all day Friday which would mean that the only free days they would have would be Saturday and Sunday.

The PREMIER (in reply): We will give consideration to the suggestion put forward by the member for Vasse. However, I think the prospect of the suggestion being adopted is not very bright.

Mr. Bovell: I would be prepared to sit after tea on Thursday evening.

The PREMIER: Should the member for Vasse find it easier to come up to Perth on Tuesday instead of Monday I think the Government could arrange a pair for him during the period from 4.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. on the Tuesday.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Very generous!

Question put and passed.

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

The PREMIER: I move—

That on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

For the benefit of new members, I would point out that Wednesday is private members' day and this motion in no way interferes with that procedure but will simply

provide that on the other two days in each week, Tuesday and Thursday, Government business shall take precedence.

Question put and passed.

#### COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.56]: I move—

That for the present session,—

- (1) The Library Committee shall consist of Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Crommelin.
- (2) The Standing Orders Committee shall consist of Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Hon. J. B. Sleeman, Mr. Nalder and Mr. Hearman.
- (3) The House Committee shall consist of Mr. Speaker, Mr. May, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Ackland.
- (4) The Printing Committee shall consist of Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lapham and Mr. Ross Hutchinson.

**MR. JAMIESON** (Beeloo) [4.57]: Before agreeing to the personnel of these committees I would like to make a few comments to the House on at least two of them. In connection with the Library Committee, I feel it is high time that we, in this State, had what every other State has, namely, a librarian to assist and tender advice to the Library Committee. Admittedly, the Clerk Assistant of the House acts as librarian at present, but that duty, among his other tasks, is regarded only as a sideline, and therefore can receive only secondary consideration from him.

In all other Houses of Parliament in Australia it will be found that provision is made for the appointment of a librarian and the libraries, with all their reference books, are easily accessible to members. In this State, however, we have a rather clumsy system of indexing which means that books and other references are rather difficult to find by members themselves. No doubt some members more versed in library procedure than I am will have something more to say on this matter, and I will therefore conclude my remarks in that regard by repeating that steps should be taken for the appointment of a librarian to control the library of this House.

I would also like to pass a few remarks on the activities of the House Committee. This session, the personnel of the committee seems to be the same as in previous years with the exception of one new member who will probably be guided to a great extent by the other members on the committee when making decisions. That member is the member for Bunbury. I agree that possibly it is rather difficult for

the Opposition to find a member to put on the committee in view of the fact that its numbers have been reduced somewhat but, nevertheless, I feel it is a little rough on the member for Bunbury to appoint him on such a hard-working committee.

The House Committee, in the past, has more or less dealt with members' food requirements and has not been very militant in pressing for additional accommodation for members in this building. I hope that within the next year or so, the House Committee will be able to persuade the Premier to make available certain moneys to effect necessary improvements. With the exception of the Chambers themselves, in this House of Parliament the conditions generally are far worse than in any other House of Parliament in the Commonwealth. The improvements required are of an urgent nature. For 50 years the Joint House Committee appointed by this Parliament has merely dealt with the price of meals in the dining room, the liquor prices in the bar and the staff problems met by the House Controller, etc. That is a fairly solid job, but it is not enough to meet the necessary requirements in a Parliament such as this.

Until the House Committee is prepared to prevail upon the Government of the day to take action, the conditions in this House will never improve. The committee in question is responsible, through the members of each Chamber, for sending out the invitations to people to attend Parliament on Opening Day. I would like to mention that should one of the 100-odd people who are present in the public gallery on that day have to answer a call of nature, he would indeed be in strife because the policeman would not let him descend the stairs.

Therefore, I suggest it is high time that we ceased to sit back year after year, say nothing and merely accept the conditions that each succeeding House Committee imposes. We should make a plea to that committee to go ahead and prevail upon the Treasury to provide finance. We should continue to do this until such time as we get some action which will provide the additional accommodation for members, additional rooms for the officers of this House and, generally, better facilities for the public of this State, to whom this House really belongs.

**MR. ANDREW** (Victoria Park) [5.0]: I would like to pass a few remarks on the third item, the House Committee. I have a great deal of appreciation of the work that it has done over the three years since I have been in the House. All the amenities we have here have been provided, and further the staff have given us the best of attention, but I agree entirely with the statement of the member for Beeloo in regard to conveniences which people are able to use when they visit this

House and listen to the speeches from the gallery. That is a matter which should receive immediate attention. Someone passed a remark the other day that some drastic happening in that regard will promote something being done.

Another matter on which I wish to comment concerns meals in the dining-room. We all know that we get fine meals at a very low cost, and there is no complaint in that regard whatever. There is much praise of what is done in that direction. What I want to point out is this: When I first came into this House I went to the dining-room at lunch-time and had a nice meal. Prior to that, as a working man, I had been used to the usual breakfast of bacon and eggs—though it is said that is now going out because of the expense—and toast; then having sandwiches for lunch and a dinner when I reached home.

After having a midday dinner here, I said to my wife when I got home, "Don't worry about anything for me for tea, because I have had dinner at the House." She said, "If you are going to have dinner at the House and not at home, I shall not cook for myself." I said, "That is out. I will come home for dinner and will not have it at the House." I believe, and I think it can easily be arranged, that a light meal could be provided in the way of sandwiches for members who desire it. I know that some members require light meals.

**MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON:** Why not see the House Committee about it?

**MR. ANDREW:** This is something that is provided in some Houses of Parliament. I know, because I called in at the New South Wales House of Parliament when I visited Sydney. I went there at about 11 a.m., soon after I had had a very late breakfast and an hour or so before lunch-time. One of the Ministers asked me to have lunch, but I told him I had taken a late breakfast, and he said, "Have a cup of tea and some sandwiches." Eventually I did. That is a convenience we cannot get in this House of Parliament. I submit this matter for the consideration of the members of the House Committee and ask them to give it serious thought. It is not something which is hard to provide.

The second suggestion I wish to make to the House Committee is this: I know it has exercised the minds of many members during the hot spell, and is in regard to the wearing of a coat in the dining-room in all weathers. At times we have had temperatures of over 100 degrees, but, according to the rules of this House, one is not permitted to go into the dining-room without a coat. Personally, I believe that a high standard should be set in regard to the dress of members when they go into the dining-room or, for that matter, anywhere else. I believe in that high

standard, but I do not see, and cannot be convinced, that the wearing of a coat sets that high standard.

A person can be unshaven, unwashed and dirty, but as long as he wears a coat he can go into the dining-room, yet another person, neatly, cleanly and appropriately dressed to suit the weather, but without a coat, cannot go there. Many members come up to the House during very hot weather in nice, neat and clean sports shirts and carry their coats on their arms. When 1 o'clock comes for lunch and it is a hot day, they have to put their coats on before going into the dining-room. Thus, their shirts become ruffled because of the perspiration caused by having a meal in the hot weather. Consequently, their appearance, when they remove their coats afterwards, is spoiled for the rest of the day. I would suggest most seriously that members of the House Committee give earnest thought to the matters just mentioned.

**MR. RODOREDA (Pilbara)** [5.6]: I wish to say a few words on the various topics that have been discussed, particularly because of my former position as chairman of the Library Committee and joint chairman of the House Committee. I find myself in agreement with the member for Beeloo, but where on earth they dug that name up is beyond me. It is the most unusual name that has come up in this House, and I cannot understand why a better name could not have been found.

Firstly, in regard to the Library Committee, I did intend to hold a meeting and to have a general survey on this subject. After having given this matter a great deal of thought, I realised that the Clerk Assistant of this House had quite enough work to do without having to be involved in really looking after the library. I might say that possibly I fell down on my job, but I am in good company if I did. I cannot recollect the Library Committee having a meeting since I have been a member of this House. At any rate, something in that direction should be done. It is a decent general library and a reference library, and it can be very useful when a member is able to lay his hands on a book which he requires or to get someone to locate it for him.

Regarding the House Committee, there will be two new members on it from the Assembly, the member for Bunbury and you, Mr. Speaker. Without any equivocation, I would say that the serving of afternoon tea on Opening Day was a discredit to everyone associated with it. For the first time in the many years I have been here, I made it my business to investigate what went on in the precincts of Parliament House upon the completion of proceedings in both Chambers. I see no reason why we should, in effect, separate the sheep from the goats. I admit it is a privilege for a member to apply for and to be allocated a

table. Certain members can apply and have their guests seated comfortably in the dining-room, but the rest have no chance of having afternoon tea in comfort. In some cases some people did not get any afternoon tea at all.

The Minister for Transport: What a shame!

**Mr. RODOREDA:** It may be a shame, but while some people could get it, then it should be available to all under the same conditions. Personally, I would cut out altogether the seating of guests, but I would find myself in the minority.

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** You might then find yourself in the minority on Opening Day.

**Mr. RODOREDA:** If we tried the experiment of serving afternoon tea here every day, we might get a few people to come to listen to our debates. I suppose the Treasurer and the House Committee will not view that with a great deal of favour. That might be an idea.

Reverting to what happened on Opening Day, quite a few members had their guests seated at tables in the dining-room. I went along with my guests from the top gallery to the billiard-room, but when we got there we discovered that prior to this House adjourning, the Council had adjourned. The guests from that Chamber had gone in before and disposed of all the refreshments. That is a fact. Unfortunately, we were with the last of the guests from this gallery. When we got to the door of the library, we could not get in and it took at least ten minutes before we eventually did. When we got in, of course, there was nothing left. Admittedly, the stewards did bring a second lot of refreshments to the billiard-room, but they went off like snowflakes in the hot sun.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman:** The crowd was only half as large as that which used to come here.

**Mr. RODOREDA:** I am glad of that interjection, because I want to deal with that aspect particularly. Every one from the top of this Chamber had to pass through one little door from the library to the billiard-room and that was very unsatisfactory. The whole idea of having guests seated at tables is ridiculous. If tables cannot be provided for all visitors, they should not be provided for only some. Years ago all guests used to have their afternoon tea in buffet style, and instead of having three tickets we used to have six tickets and yet we could cope with the numbers far better than at present.

Some change must be made. I would ask the two new members of the House Committee to do something about this. I myself tried unsuccessfully to get the procedure altered, and I hope the two new members will be more successful than I was. I do not know that this is a very important matter, but when guests come to the opening of Parliament and see the disorganisation that

exists, it must create a very bad impression in their minds on the way we run Parliament. That is the only time they have a chance of forming any opinion as to the mentality or the organising capacity of members of Parliament. When they meet with a shambles such as existed on Opening Day, it must have given them a very bad impression of our ability.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: If they have any interest in Parliament they can come and listen to the debates whenever they wish.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: They might not form any good opinions if they did, particularly if they listened to the Leader of the Opposition when he was not in his top form. Admittedly, he does a good job now and again, but on the average it is a little below f.a.q.

Another phase of this question is the sending of three invitations. I think that is rather a bad move. What is the member to do? The member and his wife each get an invitation from the Speaker, and that is two, and he has three guests, but he has a table for four. How is he to seat five of them at the table? He cannot seat his guests unless he goes to the Speaker's room and leaves them unattended. As things are, it is absurd. There should be either four or two invitations. Three is an odd number and does not fit in anywhere. The member has to neglect his guests, and have his party split up, or else not go to the Speaker's room. The present arrangement certainly needs altering, and I hope the present members of the House Committee will do something about it at their first meeting. Both the previous speakers referred to the accommodation difficulties in this Parliament and they blamed the House Committee for the lack of action in the matter.

Mr. Andrew: No, we did not blame the House Committee, but lack of finance.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I definitely recollect that it was the House Committee.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I agree with the Leader of the Country Party. Both the previous speakers definitely blamed the House Committee for doing nothing about the question of accommodation in this Parliament House.

Mr. Andrew: We know it is a matter of finance.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: Well, why did the hon. member not say so?

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please! The member for Pilbara has the floor.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I think nearly every member of this Assembly will agree with me that both previous speakers blamed the House Committee. Am I in order?

Members: Yes.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: How are we to know what members mean? We only know what they say.

Mr. Oldfield: The members of the Government are arguing amongst themselves.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I have nothing to do with the Government. I am not a member of the Government. I say it is not the fault of the House Committee. During the last three years that I have been on the House Committee and from the records of the various meetings of the committee, which have been read to us, I would say that the House Committee has been on the Premier's back for the last 10 or 12 years—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: More than that.

Mr. RODOREDÁ:—in relation to the accommodation in this House of Parliament for members and for staff.

Mr. Bovell: Did not the present Government start a reserve fund for that purpose?

Mr. RODOREDÁ: The present Government is no more to blame than the McLarty-Watts Government.

Mr. Bovell: I am not blaming it but trying to give it a bit of credit for starting a fund.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: The proposition was put up to both Governments by various House Committees irrespective of who were the members of them. The situation that there is not nearly enough accommodation either for members or for staff, is so patent that the committee has had no option but to present a case to the Government. But there has been no success with any Premier over the last 10 or 12 years. No Premier is prepared to do anything, or no Treasurer is prepared to provide any funds towards making the accommodation in this House more suitable for members and for the staff.

All sorts of propositions have been put up by the House Committee since I have been a member, and I would acknowledge the previous proposition. Various plans have been drawn up by the Public Works Department to remedy this situation and to remedy the other situation. The position which the member for Beeloo dealt with in regard to lavatory accommodation for visitors was the subject of three or four different plans that were put up by the Public Works Department, but with the present state and condition of the building, it was found practically impossible to provide such facilities for visitors. In any case, it is a question of money. The House Committee is powerless to act without the consent of the Treasurer in the matter. Until some Treasurer is prepared to provide funds adequately to deal with the situation, the House Committee is just powerless.

**MR. MAY (Collie)** [5.20]: Unlike the member for Pilbara, I want to say that the member for Beeloo does not know what he is talking about. If he did, he would know what work has been carried out by the House Committee. Looking at the various committees mentioned on the notice paper, it would appear that the only one that does any regular work, and anything of any consequence, is the House Committee.

**Mr. Ross Hutchinson:** The Printing Committee, too.

**Mr. MAY:** The last report I received was that the Printing Committee had not met for the last five years. I do not know whether that is true.

**Mr. Ross Hutchinson:** It is entirely untrue.

**Mr. MAY:** I am only speaking as I heard it. In regard to this building, I point out that very suitable plans have been prepared for its completion. Ever since I have been in this House—for the last nine years, at any rate—I have continually complained about the conditions under which our Hansard staff work. It is shocking to ask those people to work in these tin shanties at the back, in the summertime. As a matter of fact, I am much surprised that the Hansard staff have not gone on strike. I think they are a very long suffering fraternity and they have my deepest sympathy.

Continual representation by the House Committee has been made for an extension of the amenities available for members. We have tried, with the limited amount of funds at our disposal, to provide amenities, but when it comes to something in connection with the building, it is a matter for the Treasurer and until he can find the money, the House Committee—it does not matter who is on it—just cannot do anything about it.

The surroundings of Parliament House have been very much improved, and that has been as a result of the work of the House Committee. Not only do we have to attend to matters inside the House but outside too. I do not know where members can go in Australia today and obtain the meal that they get here for the princely sum of 3s.

**The Minister for Transport:** So you should, if you pay no rent or wages.

**Mr. MAY:** If it were not for the takings in the bar, I do not think members would get a meal for 3s. I do not drink, but I still patronise the bar for other things. In regard to the question of a light meal, provision was made in that direction, but because the light meals were to be made available in the corridor and not in the dining-room, it did not suit some members. But provision was made. If a member did not want a big meal in the middle of the day, he was not forced to have a

light meal, but if he wanted to have one he could go into the corridor and be served there.

It was considered by the House Committee as not essential that a member desiring only a very light meal should go into the dining-room and upset the arrangements there in regard to the waiters and their work when there was a large number of members congregated there for the midday meal. It has been a difficult job to make ends meet in the carrying out of the duties of the House Committee, and once again I emphasise that had it not been for the bar, I think we would be paying 5s. or 6s. for a meal here, the same as is charged anywhere down town. So we—particularly those who do not patronise the bar—can thank the patrons of the bar for providing us with cheap meals, and that is the unfair part of it, although that is entirely their own business.

I have been a member of the Joint House Committee for some time now. We meet regularly and there is a big agenda to be dealt with at every meeting. There are the accounts to be squared, for instance, and it is only members of that committee who know how difficult it sometimes is to square the accounts. As a member of the Joint House Committee—this may sound as though I am scratching my own back—I feel that we have done a good job within the limits placed upon us in the matter of finance.

**MR. ACKLAND (Moore)** [5.26]: This is a rather unique occasion, which I cannot let pass, as it is the first time I can remember that the member for Collie and I have been unanimous in our approach to any motion before the House, and I wish to endorse everything he has said—

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman:** And it will be the last time.

**Mr. ACKLAND:** It probably will, and that is why I have risen on this occasion. The members for Beeloo and Victoria Park consider themselves as favouring democracy and when the Joint House Committee could not agree with reference to dress in the dining-room, we held a referendum of all members of the House and by an overwhelming majority they decided that we should wear our coats and so the word went out that coats were to be worn in the dining-room.

**HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling)** [5.27]: I thought at one stage that there was going to be a monopoly of observations on this subject by my friends opposite, and that was something I felt I could not allow to happen as I am generally a bit averse to monopolies of any kind, but my colleague, the member for Moore, has prevented that position arising. I have never been a member of the Joint House Committee during the time I have been here.

as I have usually had other duties to perform and have therefore been relieved of responsibilities of that nature, and so I can look on the operations of that committee, I hope, in an unbiassed way.

In general, and remembering the difficulties which successive committees have had to contend with—they have been fairly numerous from time to time—I think that this committee has done a very fair job. I must agree with the member for Pilbara—at least in regard to the last three years—that the Joint House Committee has made strong recommendations relating to improvements to Parliament House. I do not doubt for one moment that previous committees did likewise in previous years, but I recollect having been called upon by the Joint House Committee no less than twice during the last three years to support representations which were made to the Treasurer in regard to that matter.

It was quite clear from the minutes then read and the observations then made that a very strong case had been presented to him, and reference was also made to the times, under previous Administrations, and over a considerable period of years, when similar representations had been made and when plans and estimates of one kind or another had been submitted by the Public Works Department.

One can appreciate, too, the problem of successive Treasurers, especially in the postwar period and during the war itself. During the war period, of course, building operations of all sorts practically came to a standstill and the result was that in the postwar period the situation of building for things which were, one might say, necessary in the cause of humanity, was so urgent that all representations in regard to matters such as improving conditions at Parliament House more or less fell on deaf ears—not deaf because they did not appreciate the point of view, but because all the things that should be done could not be done with the resources available.

The position, however, is unquestionably deteriorating. One has only to look at the unfinished portions of this building and the effect of storm and tempest on it—and to some degree upon the interior of the building now—to realise that unless something is done to cover it up, and preferably cover it up with further rooms and building, the deterioration will, I feel, become rapid, until it will be much more difficult and a much more expensive proposition than it would be to handle at the present time.

Then, again, the staff here is obviously increasing and the facilities for very responsible people who are engaged in working for us are so damnably bad—particularly in the summer time—that, in all the circumstances of the case, I feel that the time has perhaps arrived when some real effort should be made to allocate some sum of money for expenditure upon this place.

We have all, of course, looked at the plan which hangs, I think, in your room, Mr. Speaker, or adjacent to it. I do not think anyone suggests that that plan should now be proceeded with because, delightful in architecture though it may be, I would suggest that in these days its cost would be prohibitive even if the workmen could be congregated together to do the work in a reasonable time. I do think, however, that the staff position should be looked into and remedied.

There should be some effort made at least to square off the back of this building—or the front of it as I understand it originally was, seeing where the foundation stone is—so that a presentable facade may be put up to the City of Perth. Incidentally, the recent removal of a number of pine trees was a problem for the Joint House Committee but, the pines having been removed, it has made the bareness and unpleasantness of Parliament House a great deal more obvious to us all.

And so this is a job which I hope the Treasurer will be able this year to look at more favourably, in order that something may be done, first of all—as I have said—to prevent the building from deteriorating further, as I think it soon will, and, secondly, to prevent the staff from having to continue much longer under their present crowded conditions or having to occupy those unpleasant premises, particularly in the hot weather, while at the same time doing something to increase facilities for members.

I must say, also, that I am somewhat in agreement with the member for Pilbara in regard to the position on Opening Day. I am quite unable to explain the happenings—as I saw them—in as picturesque a manner as the member for Pilbara, but it occurred to me that what he endeavoured to tell us about was happening and that some better organisation was desirable.

In this I am not criticising the Joint House Committee, or the Controller, because his problems on Opening Day have always been pretty considerable, but I was astonished at the number of people who were here last Thursday. There are 80 members of this Parliament, who have a limited number of invitations, and if one were multiplied by the other, I am sure we would not get the number of persons who were here—the number would be a lot less. One has to bear in mind, too, that several members, of whom I have certain knowledge, did not bring people to the House to the number of invitations allotted to them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But there are people who attend and who do not get invitations from members.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I admit that; but allowing for all that, there were a lot of people here. While it has been suggested



that there were not as many as there have been on previous occasions, I am inclined to question that statement, because it seemed to me that there were more. I think, if it is possible, there ought to be some better method of organising the afternoon tea. But there again, to a large extent we are up against the question of space and accommodation. Virtually the only place that can be used upstairs is, as the member for Pilbara said, the billiard-room and downstairs we have only the dining-room and the lobbies. So the accommodation is extremely limited.

Your own room, Sir, was overcrowded, as you know; it was through no fault of yours, but because of the circumstances that exist. So I think it would make a great contribution towards the solution of the problem if some additions and alterations could be made to this place in the reasonably near future. My own view of the Joint House Committee is that, even with the limitations that are imposed upon it by the condition of the building, the funds at its disposal and the authority it has, it has done a good job. But that does not suggest that it should lie down and rest on its laurels; there are plenty of other matters to which it can give attention but, as I said, up to the present time I think it has done pretty well.

So, in conclusion, I ask the Treasurer to see if he can give a little more favourable consideration to the question of this building, not for splendour and show but to do away with some of the intolerable conditions that exist and will exist for an increasing proportion of the staff and, to a certain extent, the members of both Houses.

**MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [5.37]:** I shall not delay members long, but as a member of the Library Committee I feel that I must take this opportunity of saying a few words. I agree with much of what has been said and, as the records of the House Committee will show, I have taken a part in the three years I have been here in trying to obtain a number of reforms which I felt were needed.

One of the reforms which, in my opinion, is required and which no one has mentioned, is the provision of facilities for members to interview their constituents with some degree of privacy to enable them to do the job which a member is asked to carry out. If members were provided, as Federal members are, with a separate office, each with a typist, filing staff and so on, away from this building, that provision would be sufficient; but we are expected to do our parliamentary work either from our own home or from this building and, as I have said on a number of occasions, I feel that we should have better facilities for carrying out this work.

I mention the point in order to have the matter recorded in Hansard because, when this matter is investigated by the House Committee, I presume its members will examine Hansard to see what everybody has said. I hope that the House Committee will regard as one of its principal objectives the provision of better facilities for members so that a number of private places will be available where members' constituents can be interviewed.

Also, the facilities available to members for reading, writing and doing the clerical work associated with the job are near enough to non-existent. The members' room, which is provided for the 50 members of this Chamber, would not hold them if they all stood at the one time. It has four arm-chairs, three hard chairs, three tables and one fireplace, and if the 50 members went into it at the one time, it would be condemned by the health authorities because of overcrowding.

The provision of other accommodation in the existing building would appear to be exceedingly difficult and I wish to take this opportunity of suggesting that some comparison be made between the facilities available to members of the State House of Parliament in Western Australia and those available at other State Houses and the Federal House, because unless we have decent facilities to enable us to do our job, we cannot be expected to do it in a first-class fashion.

I have been a member of the Library Committee for the past three years and, as the member for Pilbara said, there has not been a meeting during that period. The work connected with the library has rested entirely in the hands of the Clerk Assistant, and I think he has done a remarkably good job with the time and money at his disposal. I have had long talks—they could almost be described as yarns—with him about libraries and books and of people who read them.

On a number of occasions we have had informal discussions and he has gone to a great deal of trouble to explain to me the filing and indexing systems and the difference between the system he uses and the Dewey system used in modern libraries such as the University Library. Considering the pocket money expended on it, the library is a great credit to those who handle it. But I am fully in agreement with those who say that if we can raise the money to make the library the tool it should be to members of this Chamber, we should do so.

There is a great deal of useful literature available in this library and a large number of members do not know that it exists. That applies to me, too, because, much as I love books, I find difficulty in getting around all sections of the library and investigating it. The library services of the State—the Public Library service, the service of the Library Board and the University Library—are available to us

through our librarian. Provided we know what books we want, he will get them for us and so we have available to us a wonderful library service, but we have no staff to bring to our notice those things which we should know.

It is not the sort of library that should be available in a place like Parliament House and, as a member of the committee, I suppose I must take my share of the blame for that, but unless we can have money in extremely large quantities sufficient to provide all the facilities required and, more particularly, someone with both time and training to make the books live, we will have to continue the way we have done in the past. I would like to add my words of praise to the past House Committee by saying that, in my experience, under handicaps, it did a very good job despite the lack of facilities.

**MR. HALL** (Albany) [5.46]: I have something to say on this matter, but not very much. What I did observe on Opening Day was that elderly people had to climb up the stairs at the back of the Chamber to reach the public gallery instead of being privileged to sit in some spot on the floor below. In this regard, I consider that the facilities are definitely poor because we should not expect aged people to climb these stairs and exert themselves unnecessarily. It should be possible to grant them seating accommodation where they can watch the proceedings from the ground floor.

**MR. OLDFIELD** (Mt. Lawley) [5.48]: In view of the fact that this debate has taken such a turn, I feel I should voice one complaint. Last March, during a very hot spell, a referendum was held among members to decide whether coats should be worn in the dining-room. The member for Victoria Park has already touched on this matter. I agree that, at the time, it was exceptional weather; so exceptional, in fact, that even senior members of the Government thought fit to remove their coats when they entered the dining-room because they felt it was impossible to eat in any comfort whilst wearing outer garments.

As a result of the argument that ensued between the chief steward, the House Controller and the members who offended, the House Committee saw fit to take action in this matter in a democratic way by putting to members a referendum on the question. The action taken by the House Committee to put such a question to the members as a whole was quite in order but it was not in order to use the words that were chosen for the question which read: "Do you approve of the wearing of coats in the dining-room? Answer yes or no."

When that referendum was put to members it was aimed at getting the answer that the House Committee wanted and

that answer was "Yes," so that it could then say, "The majority of members desire that coats should be worn in the dining-room during the hot weather." The only logical answer to that question was "Yes," because all members approve of wearing coats in the dining-room, but during hot weather, such as we experienced last summer, they might desire to remove their coats. With other members, I refused to vote on the referendum because, in my opinion, it did not allow a member to express his true thoughts.

Therefore I trust, Mr. Speaker, during your term of office, before any further hot spell such as occurred last summer, another referendum will be put to members and that the wording will be expressed fairly so that members can voice their true thoughts in the way they so desire.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [5.50]: I appreciate the disinclination of members to get down to serious business. I might say that I am a bit with them. I am sure we all enjoyed very much the trial gallop of the member for Pilbara after his three years' absence from the floor of the House during his term as Speaker. I am sure that we will all look forward to hearing further from him as the session proceeds.

Based upon 23½ years' experience in this House, I say unhesitatingly that the various House Committees have done a remarkably good job. The question of trying to provide adequately and promptly the afternoon tea requirements for the great number of people who come to Parliament House on Opening Day is a very difficult one. I think it is impossible to provide for those people adequately and promptly in view of the large number who attend. In the event of the House Committee giving close consideration to this problem, I think its members ought to look seriously into the question of whether the numbers should not be reduced considerably if afternoon tea is still to be provided on future Opening Days.

**Mr. Rodoreda**: There were nearly twice as many on previous occasions as there were last Thursday.

**The PREMIER**: Yes, I remember that there were twice as many attending on previous occasions also, and I remember the awful shambles that occurred then in both Houses. I do not think that anyone would worry unduly if afternoon tea were not provided on Opening Day.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman**: We tried that once and the result was that there were very few here.

**The PREMIER**: That proved, if it proved anything, that people come to Parliament for the social occasion that the event provides and for the afternoon tea that Parliament supplies. In that situation we have to decide whether we want people to come here for the social occasion and the

afternoon tea or for the education in parliamentary procedure which Opening Day offers.

I think the House Committee was wrongfully criticised by one speaker in regard to the additions to Parliament House, which are undoubtedly required. During each of the last three years the House Committee has made representations to me along the lines of having some additions made to this building. During last financial year, I advised the House Committee in writing that the Government was favourable to the making of additions to Parliament House on the basis of a three-year plan. In that plan it is proposed to make certain additions each year, but I think the estimated cost of the total programme is between £75,000 and £100,000.

It is intended to proceed with the making of some additions during the current financial year. Nothing was done during the previous two years because it was considered by the Government that housing requirements and the need for school classrooms were such as to hardly justify the Government in making additions to Parliament House, and I imagine that that was the main reason why the previous Government did not undertake the task of making additions to Parliament House during its six-year term of office. The housing situation has improved, and the provision of schools and classrooms has also improved. Furthermore, and this is probably the best argument in favour of doing something now, the building industry is experiencing a quiet time.

It seems to the members of the Government, therefore, that there is sufficient justification now to proceed with the making of long overdue additions to the Parliament House buildings. The putting in hand of such work in the reasonably near future would provide employment for building tradesmen—and it is very necessary that that should be done. It would also provide employment in the trades allied to the building industry, and therefore assist the employment position in those allied trades as well as in the building industry itself. I should think that within a period of three years or so from now facilities at Parliament House will be considerably improved and the building itself will be more in keeping with the Parliament of a progressive State like Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

## PARLIAMENTARY SUPERANNUATION FUND.

### *Appointment of Trustees.*

On motion by the Premier, resolved:

That, pursuant to the provisions of the Parliamentary Superannuation Act, 1948, the Legislative Assembly hereby appoints the member for Boulder (Mr. Moir) and the member

for Vasse (Mr. Bovell) to be trustees of the Parliamentary Superannuation Fund as from this day.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. May, leave of absence for three months granted to the Minister for Mines (Hon. L. F. Kelly—Merredin-Yilgarn) on the grounds of urgent public business.

## DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES.

MR. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that I have appointed Mr. Heal, Mr. Ross Hutchinson and Mr. Sewell to be Deputy Chairmen of Committees for the session.

## BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £19,000,000.

### *Message.*

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

### *Standing Orders Suspension.*

On motion by the Treasurer, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

### *Election of Chairman of Committees.*

On motion by the Treasurer, resolved:

That the member for Boulder (Mr. A. McA. Moir) be appointed Chairman of Committees.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

The House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Moir in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to thank members for the honour they have conferred on me and to assure them that I will do my best at all times to carry out Standing Orders with fairness and impartiality to all.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [6.11]: I move—

That there be granted to Her Majesty on account of the services for the year ending the 30th June, 1957, a sum not exceeding £19,000,000.

For the information of new members, I would point out that it is the normal procedure early in the first session of Parliament each year to pass a Supply Bill to enable the services of the State to be

carried on pending the consideration and passing of the Estimates by Parliament later in each year.

Last year, as members will recall, a sum of £17,000,000 was granted by the Supply Act (No. 1) whereas this year an additional amount of £2,000,000 is being sought. The details in connection with the Supply Act (No. 1) of last year and the Supply Bill now before the House are as follows:—

	1955 (No. 1 Supply Act)	1956 (Now Sought)
	£	£
Consolidated Revenue ....	11,500,000	13,000,000
General Loan Fund ....	4,000,000	4,000,000
Advance to Treasurer ....	1,500,000	2,000,000

The extra amount sought this year from the Consolidated Revenue Fund is to meet the additional costs that have been incurred, including marginal increases for salaried and wages employees of the Government. The increase in the Advance to Treasurer is required to meet a general increase in governmental activity throughout most of the departments. These advances are to meet, in the main, expenditure pending allocation of such expenditure to Loan and Revenue Votes and the appropriate trust accounts.

Last year a full opportunity was given to members to discuss the normal departmental Revenue and Loan Estimates and it is not anticipated that there will be any difficulty in making the same opportunity available later this year. On that occasion all members will be able to discuss in considerable detail, or as they see fit, the Revenue Estimates in connection with the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the Expenditure Estimates in connection with the same fund, and also the proposed expenditure from the loan account of the State.

**HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray)** [6.51: I join with the Treasurer in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on being elected Chairman of Committees. I have no doubt that you will ably fill the position. You have the respect of all members, and your experience in Parliament is such that I am sure it will enable you to carry out those duties in the manner in which we would like to see them carried out.

The Supply Bill, which we will deal with following upon the necessary formalities, is, of course, a very important matter. I would say for the benefit of new members who have come into this Parliament that a duty devolves upon them to study closely the financial position of the State. I sometimes think there are too many members who do not give serious consideration to the State's economic position. To members who do delve into these matters, this Chamber should show its gratitude. Of course, there exist differences of opinion amongst us with regard to the financial

set-up generally, and we have often heard the saying that government is finance, and finance is government.

Whilst members have to attend to many matters—and some of them are very important—to occupy their attention such as looking after their electorates, they should carry out their prime duty to take the closest possible interest in the financial set-up and new members will not find it easy. Many of us are not accountants and have had no experience in regard to intricate financial matters. It will be necessary for those members to question and to learn. They should have no hesitation about the questioning part because this will gain for them knowledge of importance.

As the Treasurer said, it may be true that when the Estimates are introduced, members will be given an opportunity to discuss them. My experience in Parliament has been that very often members do not get the opportunity to discuss either the Revenue or Loan Estimates in detail, to the extent they would like. Here again I would point out to new members, if I might be permitted to give them some advice, that they should get a firm grasp on the difference between Revenue and Loan Estimates and see that they have knowledge of in which direction these particular funds are spent. This year the Treasurer is asking for £19,000,000 or £2,000,000 more than last year.

When I was the Treasurer I insisted on the Treasury officers giving me more information than the Treasurer has given to the Committee today. I felt that was necessary, not only for my own benefit, but from the point of view of members generally. I was not content to come here and just give the figures to the House, without knowing in my own mind exactly why the sums were required, or in what direction they were to be spent.

I would ask the Treasurer what amount of this sum will be going into deferred payments. We do know that a considerable number of promissory notes have been floating about. We know that they have to be met. We know, too, that they have presented the Treasurer with some difficulties. At this stage we have the right to know how much of the £19,000,000 is required for deferred payments. Looking at the matter briefly and generally, I find that the total amount of income tax reimbursement to be received by the Treasurer in this financial year will be £13,650,000.

In the first Supply Bill, which we are to deal with tonight, the Treasurer is seeking an amount of £13,000,000 from Revenue. So far as our income tax reimbursement goes, this will leave a balance of £650,000. Those figures must give members some cause for thought. The Supply Bill practically takes the whole of our income tax reimbursement. I am aware, of course,

that the Treasurer contemplates raising additional revenue by way of taxes and charges to the extent of £1,500,000. We shall all be interested to know in what direction he proposes to obtain this additional revenue.

In a statement by the Premier recently—I might mention here, again for the benefit of new members, that when the Premier is dealing with a financial measure such as this he is referred to as the Treasurer, and it is just as well to draw the attention of new members to that fact—a deficit of £3,500,000 is expected for the financial year of 1956-57. As I said, he is making provision to obtain £1,500,000 through additional taxes and charges. Members will be very interested to see just what those additional taxes and charges are, and I shall say something about them when I speak on the Address-in-reply. No doubt the Treasurer is contemplating receiving, on the Revenue side, a very substantial amount through the recommendations of the Grants Commission. Last year he received a sum of £8,900,000 through the recommendations of that commission. All of us should realise this fact: There is no certainty in this financial year that the Treasurer will receive such a large amount.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Prior to the tea suspension I was making reference to some items of expenditure that will be covered by the Bill, and I also said that further information should be given to the Committee. This session, if we do what we should, we will be giving more attention to the financial position of this State than previously, and to the general economic set-up. The Treasurer, I know, said that the Bill provides for £13,000,000 from the Revenue Fund.

In the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, members will see that the total amount from Revenue for 1955-56 amounted to £49,612,000. It will be appreciated by members that £13,000,000 is a very considerable amount. I presume that most of it has already been spent because the financial year ended at the 30th June, and this is the first week in August. So, nearly two months have gone by, and no doubt a very considerable amount of this money has already been spent. When we refer again to His Excellency's Speech, we see there is a deficit of £1,830,000 on last year's budgetary figures. The Treasurer will have to make provision for the repayment of this amount.

I know he is expecting that the Grants Commission will come to light and extinguish this deficit, and all will go well. Of course, that deficit will be taken into consideration by the Grants Commission but it will not be repayable immediately, and it becomes for the present, at any rate, a liability which must be taken into consideration. On the loan side, the

actual figure that the Commonwealth has agreed that the States shall have—I think my figures are right—is £17,900,000 of which over £3,000,000, I believe, is for housing—£3,316,000 of this will be for housing.

In view of that, I ask the Treasurer: Is he budgeting on the amount of £210,000,000 as agreed by the Loan Council; or is he budgeting on the figure of £190,000,000 which was agreed to by the Commonwealth? I ask this question for the reason that I do know that Treasurers in other States have not budgeted on the amount that the Commonwealth agreed to but on a figure far in excess, and, of course, they got themselves into trouble. If the Treasurer is budgeting on the amount of £210,000,000, his total, including the £3,316,000 for housing, will amount to £19,784,000.

The Minister for Transport: Where did you get that figure of £3,316,000 for housing?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: From Press cuttings and statements from the Treasurer himself, I think.

The Minister for Transport: From the Press; but they were wrong.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: They are the only figures I have, and I am sure they were from the Treasurer himself. I have not the cuttings with me, but I can show them to the Minister.

The Minister for Transport: I saw them in the Press myself.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As I say, the real figure on which the Treasurer should be budgeting is £17,900,000 as agreed to by the Commonwealth. In agreeing to that figure, the Commonwealth told us that it expected the loan market would provide only £128,000,000. So the Commonwealth is up for a sum of £62,000,000, which is no mean sum, and it will have to be made available from Commonwealth revenue.

The Minister for Transport: I think the beer drinkers will find that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Some of it, yes. I think that a more responsible outlook is required both on the revenue and the loan sides. When I come to the matter of—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member's time has expired.

The TREASURER: I move—

That the hon. member's time be extended.

Motion put and passed.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Thank you, Mr. Treasurer. I did not think there was a time limit on me.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I should have waited until the second reading—not that I need a lot of time, but I would certainly like to have a little more. I was surprised when the Minister for Works, in answer to a question asked by the member for Greenough, said that the subsidy to the South West power scheme had been withdrawn.

The Minister for Works: Who said that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think the Minister did.

Hon. D. Brand: You said it was no longer necessary.

The Minister for Works: That is not saying that it is withdrawn.

Hon. D. Brand: Can you tell us the difference?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Perhaps the Treasurer will tell me if it has been withdrawn.

Hon. D. Brand: If it is being paid.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes, if it is being paid. I was also under the impression, when the legislation was first introduced into this Parliament, that provision was made for a subsidy of £30,000. When my Government was in office, this amount was increased to £72,000 and the increase was made so that the commission could carry out extensions particularly in rural areas, and the subsidy would help them to cover the losses involved. Now, might I say, I am afraid this subsidy no longer exists.

Could I ask the Treasurer this question: Is the South-West power scheme now making a profit? If it is, what is becoming of the profit? Is it, or any part of it, being paid into Consolidated Revenue? If such is the case, I cannot help thinking that the Government is breaking faith and that many of those who expect power extensions, particularly in the rural areas, will be disappointed, because the commission is a statutory body and is expected to pay its way. This subsidy was given to the commission to enable it to make provision to supply people with current, particularly farmers in sparsely populated areas, and it is a most unfortunate business in a State such as Western Australia if the activities of the commission are to be curtailed and if the only services supplied are to be those that are immediately payable. Electricity and power are the great need in our rural areas and every progressive country in the world today is making special efforts to provide more power. I therefore ask the Treasurer if he is taking any of this money into Consolidated Revenue.

When dealing with matters covered by the Supply Bill, there are many aspects upon which we are entitled to receive information. I have received a number of letters from people in the metropolitan area who complain bitterly of the most unfortunate position in which they are placed in the matter of drainage. Some of them have

told me that they have difficulty in getting into their houses or reaching their clothes lines and it has been represented to me that conditions are such as could have a very serious effect on the health of a large number of people.

This matter is so urgent that it is worthy of some statement from the Treasurer as to what is happening in regard to the comprehensive drainage scheme. How far has it gone? What amount of money is being provided for it? How long will some of the people in the flooded areas have to wait before they get relief? Indeed, I think the position is such that if they have to wait for any extended period, consideration should be given to shifting them out of the houses which they now occupy, and particularly if the claim is true—as I believe it is—that under present circumstances they are likely to suffer seriously in regard to health conditions generally.

I was disappointed, to say the least of it, at the answer given by the Treasurer to the question relating to the help given to the dairying industry. I thought some of this money had been made available a considerable time ago. I believe it was at Bunbury that the Treasurer said that even if the Commonwealth did not participate in the scheme, the Government would go ahead with it. It is going ahead very slowly indeed and I think there must be a great deal of disappointment in the districts where those dairymen are settled.

The Minister for Lands: Not as much disappointment as there was when you were Premier.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That was a long while ago and the Government should have been able to do a great deal in the intervening period. Do not hark back to what happened four years ago! This only became an urgent question during the term of office of the present Government. The Treasurer made the promise about the £1,250,000, but what has been done about it? The Government was going to proceed without the Commonwealth, but has not got anywhere.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, we have.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer now has an opportunity to give us information which will be very useful to us. I will not go into the whole of the ramifications of the Bill at the present stage as I have no doubt that other members will want to know from the Treasurer many things in regard to the measure. I suppose the member for Albany will want to know when the building of the hospital there is to commence. I hear it has priority over Geraldton and the member for Geraldton might ask a question as to whether that is factual and the member for Bunbury might inquire as to what is to happen at Bunbury.

The Minister for Transport: Pinjarra is secure.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The people of those districts would appreciate early information as to when the building of their regional hospitals is to commence. While on the hustings I believe the Premier and the Minister for Health were most enthusiastic about these regional hospitals and the early start that was to be made on them. I believe they gave the priorities of building in regard to these hospitals.

The Minister for Health: The most deserving will be started first.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Which is that?

The Treasurer: It will be the same basis of priority as gave Pinjarra its regional hospital.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: And a very good hospital it is. If the Government builds hospitals of the same standard throughout the State, I will be loud in my praise.

The Minister for Transport: Why was Pinjarra first?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I could tell the Minister the whole story, if I wished and I would be only too happy to do so. That at Pinjarra is one of the busiest hospitals in the State. When I asked the present Minister for Health—who, it will be remembered is always honest in his expressions of opinion—which two districts in the whole of Western Australia were in the most urgent need of a new hospital, he replied that Pinjarra was one, and there we are. I think the Pinjarra hospital has the highest country bed average in the State.

The Treasurer: The Minister for Health was most unselfish or he would have said that Esperance should be first.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not want to strike a parochial note.

The Treasurer: Why not? What about the Coolup drainage?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I could say a lot about that and I could take the Treasurer down there and he could be photographed—as he was on his recent trip North—with his trousers tucked up, looking the part.

The Minister for Works: Why not take him down there? You would be helping me.

The Treasurer: I will go down there if the Leader of the Opposition will agree to have his trousers tucked up, too.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I will take the Premier up on that, but I will be wet to the waist long before he is. He only wants to add to my discomfort.

Hon. D. Brand: If I were Leader of the Opposition and such an offer were made to me, I would agree to have anything tucked up.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am dealing with serious matters. The Premier is going, shortly, to a Premiers' Conference to discuss the economic conditions that apply throughout Australia and I know he is going to ask the Commonwealth for more money.

The Treasurer: When?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: He does not cease. It is an almost continuous process. Not only is the Premier of this State going to ask for more money, but I read, also, in yesterday's Press, that Mr. Playford is going to make a special plea for more money for the flooded areas of South Australia. I think all the other Premiers, with the possible exception of the Premier of Queensland, are going to ask for more and still more money.

The Treasurer: Is the Leader of the Opposition talking about next week's conference at Canberra?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No; the Treasurer will not be discussing those matters at that conference, but I mention them because the economic position will be discussed by the Premiers at Canberra in the future, and I am stating what I think will be the Premier's attitude in regard to questions of finance. The Treasurer will be asking for more loan moneys, as will the Treasurers from all the other States but I am afraid, judging by the present outlook, that they will not get it.

I am not hoping that this State will be crippled by a shortage of funds but I am trying to look at the whole position as it exists, and I do not think any Government would be justified in spending money today beyond the sum which has been allotted to it, even taking into consideration the fact that this Government has already overspent and has to make provision for the repayment of the sum involved.

At this stage I do not think I want to say anything more in regard to the Bill but I did not want it to be passed—as it sometimes is—without any discussion at all. In view of the acute financial position I think that members are entitled to get all the information that is available to them so that they can get a close-up of the general economic position and will know what to expect. I would say that even private members of Parliament must exercise some responsibility in requests that are put to the Government, especially at a time like this. I think that the works programme should be set out in order of priority and that we should know what those works are and what priority they hold; also, what sum of money is required to carry them out.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [7.52]: I desire to make a few comments on this motion because the Government could not function without having adequate funds at its disposal. The Treasurer will later move that

we go into Committee of Ways and Means to find finance for the Government to carry on.

Mr. Lawrence: And to pay your wages.

Mr. BOVELL: And yours, too.

Mr. Lawrence: Correct.

Mr. BOVELL: In my opinion, a most alarming feature of the State's economy today is the congestion of population within the confines of the metropolitan area. At present over half of the State's population is confined within a radius of 20 miles of the General Post Office.

Mr. May: And it will get worse.

Mr. BOVELL: It is a most dangerous feature of our national economy. Earlier I asked a question of the Minister for Lands in connection with the Government's proposal to assist the under-developed dairy farmers of this State. I am pleased to know that the Government is proceeding with the scheme which was announced some months ago.

The Minister for Lands: You ought to tell your Leader; he is not too pleased about it.

Mr. BOVELL: I must express some concern that the commencement of the scheme has been delayed until October or November because I understood, when it was being launched at Margaret River and Northcliffe, that the scheme was to be commenced before the winter rains set in.

The Minister for Lands: Surveys had to be taken and the necessary administration had to be established.

Mr. BOVELL: Those who expounded the scheme at that time said that they hoped it would be commenced before the winter rains set in. I also asked the Treasurer a question as to whether funds would be made available by the State if the Commonwealth could not see its way clear to assist. He replied that the State would provide funds to the best of its ability and within its financial resources. I hope that the Treasurer will give this Committee some indication of the sum that he proposes to make available this financial year from State funds for this most important scheme.

Furthermore, I have a question on tomorrow's notice paper regarding drainage and irrigation and the extension of the scheme to the Dardanup, Boyanup, Elgin and Capel areas. We must realise that the provision of these facilities in country areas will increase production, and the State's economy will benefit as a result. For some years now schemes for the extension of irrigation southwards have been propounded and a meeting is to be held in Dardanup on Thursday of this week. That meeting will be attended by all primary producers interested in an extension of the scheme. These producers are becoming somewhat restive at the delay

and so I ask the Treasurer to give the committee some indication of when the southwards extension of this irrigation scheme is likely to take place.

The education position in country areas is deteriorating daily. Apparently, funds have not been readily available to provide adequate facilities for education and in the Speech which the Lieut.-Governor was pleased to deliver to Parliament last week, His Excellency mentioned that the Government proposed to proceed with the establishment of a further five high schools throughout the State. Efforts have been made, with some result, and a high school has been commenced at Merredin and another at Manjimup. But the post-primary potential in the Busselton area is, I understand, equal to that of Merredin and Manjimup and so I ask the Minister for Education to give us some indication as to when the proposed high school at Busselton will be commenced.

For the past two or three years, in replies to questions, he indicated that a commencement would be made at an early date; but that date has not yet arrived. I was pleased to learn, from a communication which the Minister for Education addressed to me recently, that finality had been reached on the site of the proposed high school at Busselton and that the legal formalities had been complied with which would enable the Government to assume ownership of an area of some 21 acres for the purpose of building a high school in that centre.

I believe that it is the Government's responsibility to see that these amenities are provided in country areas so that we can overcome the drift to the metropolitan area. Earlier the member for Collie interjected and said that the population in the metropolitan area would continue to grow. I can only infer from his interjection that he has troubles at Collie and that possibly there will be a mass migration from that centre to the metropolitan area within the foreseeable future. We do not want that to happen, and I believe that the Government has a responsibility in regard to the State's coal position. It has deteriorated over the past 18 months or two years to such an extent that miners in the coal industry are at their wits' end because they do not know whether their employment is to be continued. The Government must take all these things into serious consideration with a view to maintaining the country population of this State.

In area, Western Australia comprises almost 1,000,000 square miles of territory, one-third of the total area of the Commonwealth of Australia. Our population is under 700,000, more than half of that number being within the confines of the metropolitan area. Therefore, great efforts must be made to ensure that adequate amenities are provided for those



people who are prepared to live in the country and produce the real wealth of the nation.

We must realise that without our wool, wheat, dairy produce, timber, coal and gold we could not survive. Our whole national income is based upon primary production and this applies particularly to this State of Western Australia. When spending the funds that he is asking this Committee to grant, I request the Treasurer to give serious consideration to allocating a fair share to the country areas with a view to (1) fostering and extending our rural production and (2) providing amenities for the people who reside in those areas.

**MR. WILD (Dale)** [8.21: As this debate is on the question of granting the Government finance, I want the Treasurer to tell me this evening, if he can, whether all this land which the Government intends to resume is going to be paid for. Over the past few months, when we have glanced at our morning paper, we have noticed that such and such a piece of land is to be resumed for some urgent works.

To preface my remarks, I shall repeat what I said in this House last session, namely, that I am entirely in agreement with the policy of looking to the future, particularly along the lines of the Stephenson plan. As members will recall, I have already stated that it was up to all of us to attend to our little problems but that we must look at future town planning on a State-wide basis when tracts of land in our various electorates are to be interfered with by some undertaking.

I still assert that it is incumbent upon us to take a long range point of view in regard to this problem and to be prepared to allow those who are in charge for the time being to look forward and plan ahead in the interests of my children and other people's children. Nevertheless, I am greatly concerned when I notice, from announcements in the Press, that various tracts of land are to be resumed because I often wonder when the people concerned are going to be paid compensation for such land. When I say "paid," I mean to be paid now and not in a Kathleen Mavourneen sense.

In recent months many surveyors have been going over the sites of access roads and many landholders whose properties are affected have received notices from the department that in the not too distant future a portion of their land will be resumed for a certain purpose and, in such notices, the department requests their co-operation. Usually these people call upon their local member, following the receipt of such a notice, and when people concerned have approached me on the subject, I have expressed myself to them in exactly the same terms that I have repeated in this Chamber on two occasions.

I repeat that I am entirely in agreement with the proposals, but if the Government intends to resume a man's property in the interests of the State, that man must know exactly where he stands and receive compensation for his land forthwith. I cannot help but think that somebody has taken action in a half-cocked manner because, in my opinion, the Government is talking about resumption too far ahead and it is upsetting the people concerned because the Government cannot possibly pay compensation to them in the immediate future.

The surveyors I have just mentioned, in taking a rough line, have gone through a large reserve that was granted to the people in the Canning Vale district and then proceeded further east along a line at the back of Wimbledon-st. This line cuts completely through the centre of a large fowl-shed on a property in which the owner is greatly interested. This shed was built by the owner about four years ago and it is now proposed that the whole of his property will be divided. This man has not even built himself a house. About four years ago he gave up his avocation of engineer and decided to put his all into this small property. I have been battling to get a firm understanding for this man, as well as others, so that he may know in which direction he is heading and if he is to obtain compensation as a result of this resumption.

**The Minister for Works:** With whom have you been battling?

**Mr. WILD:** The Main Roads Department and the Lands Resumption Office. When I say "battling", I would like to make it clear that the officers of those departments have given me every assistance, but the matter is beyond them. As the Minister knows, there is some doubt at the moment respecting the amendment that was passed through this Chamber last year in regard to land resumption and, as a result, there has been some delay for that reason. I am not cavilling at that.

All members of Parliament should be able to obtain information to put them in a position to advise people whether they are going to be paid for their land. Reverting again to the proposed road which is being surveyed, I would mention that it weaves around the back of Gosnells and comes out at the back of Albany Highway south of Gosnells and, in doing so, it passes through a great deal of private property. With regard to the payment of compensation for the resumption of some of that land, it would not matter very much whether immediate payment were made or not because the owners concerned may not depend upon the use of that land for their livelihood. However, in those cases where the resumption will affect a man's livelihood, the Government should make itself very clear on this question and ensure that these people receive prompt payment.

I want to know from the Treasurer whether these people are going to be paid for their land that has been resumed now or in two or three years because as yet they have received no compensation whatever. When it comes to the question of a man's livelihood, I submit that whilst I am whole-heartedly in agreement with this plan, there is one proviso and that is that if the Government intends to interfere with a man's property on which he depends for his livelihood, it is the responsibility of the Government to get on with the proposed work as quickly as possible, notify the man concerned that his land is to be resumed, resume it and pay the compensation forthwith.

There are some cases where the people, in the first instance, were told by the surveyors who were passing through their land that their properties were to be resumed and subsequently were advised by letter which indicated that their land was to be resumed. In the meantime, how can other men proceed with any development that they have in mind? In one particular case the owner has not even a house on his land. He does not know whether he is going to be granted an alternative piece of land or whether he is going to be paid for the land that is to be resumed. In any case he has not the means of doing anything as an alternative.

If the Government intends to run through their properties, let it proceed to do so and pay the people promptly. An owner can then say, "I still have this piece of property which I can sell to enable me to go somewhere else." Alternatively, he can negotiate to buy land alongside one of the portions left to him and thus get on with the job that he has in hand. So, whilst on this question of finance and the question of granting the Government money to carry on, I would like the Treasurer to advise me whether the people who are vitally affected by the resumption of land are going to be paid forthwith.

**MR. JOHNSON** (Leederville) [8.10]: Like other members, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to say a few words on finance. When speaking to this motion the Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition spoke of the virtues of new members taking an interest in finance, for the very sound reason that the control of finance is control of government. I rather feel they must have heard one or two things I have had to say previously! I wish to inform the new members that it is a difficulty which all of us find when new in this place, that finance is an important question and probably the hardest to understand.

I would like to recommend to new members and to those who intend to make a study of finance, that they look at the 18th report of the Federal Joint Public Accounts Committee dealing with the form and content of the financial papers

presented to the Commonwealth Parliament. That report deals, of course, with a different Parliament from this one, but the papers presented there, and the manner in which they are presented, have quite a resemblance to those with which we deal.

It has been one of my desires to amend the forms in which financial debates take place in this Chamber to a manner more appropriate to modern times. But the report to which I have referred is one that will indicate to members the facilities that are available to them and the method whereby private members can make themselves heard in the Chamber in relation to those matters that concern their electorates, and the manner in which they can deal with financial problems.

That however will not assist them to understand the public accounts. That is a separate study and one to which I keep returning, because it is exceedingly difficult for anyone not trained in public accounting to follow the public accounts of the State or Commonwealth and understand just what they mean. I feel sure the only way to understand these accounts is to delve into them in great detail; to see how they are made up; why they are made up, and who makes them up, and then ask them questions as to what the deuce they mean.

The manner of forming budget estimates is well set out in the form to which I have referred and is similar to that used in the State service. There are differences, but the general principle is much the same. Incidentally, the report is available at the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury, and I think there is a copy also available in our telephone room.

**Mr. Oldfield:** Is not Mr. Leslie chairman of the committee?

**Mr. JOHNSON:** If the member for Mt. Lawley has the opinion that Mr. Leslie is chairman of the committee, he must have been listening to Mr. Leslie because he is merely one of the members. The chairman is Mr. Bland who is now member for Warringah. One of the other members is Mr. Crean, the member for Melbourne Ports, who is a great expert on these matters.

I wish to remark on a statement made by the Treasurer. He dealt with the matter of "Advance to Treasurer," an amount of £2,000,000 which he said was to cover those amounts which were not allocated either to revenue or to loan and to deal with them pending allocation. That remark illustrates a point I have made in this Chamber, and I will probably make it again later; that it matters not to the public, to the employee, or to the national income whether expenditure comes from loan or revenue.

What matters is that the expenditure is made, and the allocation to loan and revenue is quite immaterial; it is just an accounting device but it does at times

tend to make both members of Parliament and the public—and I feel occasionally Ministers—completely confused as to the real purpose for which they are handling the money. The matter of revenue expenditure is very largely controlled by the fact that to keep the State rolling, all the revenue is allocated for practical purposes for the next 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, and there is little room to manoeuvre inside the amount of revenue that can be collected.

All governmental manoeuvring, financially, takes place inside the Loan Estimates and very little of it is available because it is allocated years in advance when works are authorised, when they are commenced and when they are going to take some years. Accordingly, I ask new members to clear their minds when thinking about matters financial, and I would urge them to get them into proper perspective. They should not follow the example of the Leader of the Opposition who in one breath chided the Treasurer for going to the proposed Premier's Conference to ask for more money while in the next he asked for the expenditure of more money on drainage and hospitals; and I think he also mentioned more money for schools. He cannot have it both ways.

If the Leader of the Opposition is going to deal with matters financial, he must try to deal with them clearly. Reverting to the proposed Premier's Conference which, according to the Press, is being convened to deal with the wages policy, I would like to make clear what wages policy is. It is quite popular to say that the only way to get a higher standard of living for wages employees is to produce a larger cake out of which they will get the same proportion but in effect a larger piece.

That again is a fallacy. The slices into which the public cake is cut vary from year to year; they vary considerably. It is quite possible, although not particularly easy, for an effective Government to determine the proportions into which the cake shall be distributed and to amend the variations therein. Members who have been here some time will recall the graph which I drew two years ago and which I present again. It deals with the shares of the national product. It will be noted that the red part at the bottom of the graph shows the share which those in the wages group have received over the years.

**Mr. I. W. Manning:** The new members cannot see it.

**Mr. JOHNSON:** The green part near the centre is the share which the primary producers have received. I want to point out that those amounts have varied from year to year.

**Mr. Perkins:** Will you guarantee that those figures are correct?

**Mr. JOHNSON:** I took them from a statement made by the Federal Treasurer, Sir Arthur Fadden, and published in the

form of a white paper accompanying the Federal Budget. The proportions are correct to the width of a pencil.

**Mr. Perkins:** Are you sure that you did not have to relate those figures to the categories?

**Mr. JOHNSON:** If the member for Roe doubts my integrity, I would like him to get up and say so. He can examine the figures and re-draw them if he desires. I have already given him the source from which the figures were drawn. They are accurate to the width of a pencil. I am not making an argument of this. If the member for Roe does not like the figures, let him make up his own, but those are the figures provided by the Federal Treasurer for the budget year 1954-55, the last completed year being 1953-54.

Any member who likes to see them can do so, and I can also produce the white paper from which they have been taken. Referring to the future conference, the proportion which wages have paid has varied from 48.26 per cent. to as low as 41.12 per cent. of the total national product for the year concerned. If we are to adopt a wages policy, we have to remember that that policy is not adopted separate from the rest of the economy, but as part of the whole economy and not half the economy. If we are to adopt the policy for half the economy, it must be remembered that that policy relates to the whole economy.

One cannot tinker with only a half. Everything that is done in relation to wages affects the rest of the national economy, and before a sensible wages policy can be developed, we must have a policy for the whole economy. I want to take the opportunity to say this before the conference takes place because I think Parliament is the correct place to consider the attitude which our Premier should take when attending the conference and for informing his mind as to the opinions of those on whose behalf he goes—the people of Western Australia.

**Mr. Court:** You are advocating a complete system of controls.

**Mr. JOHNSON:** What I am advocating is not necessarily a complete system of controls. First of all, I am advocating that to be realistic we must realise that the economy is a whole, and any policy that is related to any portion of that whole must affect the rest. That must be clear and logical, even to a Liberal.

**Mr. Perkins:** No one is doubting your observation on that point.

**Mr. JOHNSON:** I trust the Federal Treasurer will not either. I feel that is the first essential. Before the establishment of a policy for wages, a policy for the whole into which wages must fit, must be established.

Mr. Court: We have never accepted the proposition you put forward in that graph. I did deal with it on one occasion because there was one unsound premise.

Mr. JOHNSON: If there is an unsound premise in it, it comes from the Federal Treasurer.

Mr. Court: We are not questioning the figures. There is no doubt they are accurate, but it is too long for me to deal with the matter by interjection. I thought we dealt with it effectively during the debate on the rents and tenancies legislation.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is possible that the member for Nedlands dealt with it to his own satisfaction. I must admit that his argument was not one which I can even remember, let alone give any credence to. It made no effect on me then, and I imagine it will not now.

Mr. Court: We did not expect it would have any effect on you.

Mr. JOHNSON: The big point I want to make is that any discussion must first of all decide on the broad principle, the whole frame of the picture and not a half portion of the picture. When that has been decided, then a wages policy can be adopted. I feel that one of the first things to be considered in relation to the wages policy is to decide what is an acceptable standard for a working man in Australia; at what standard does the conscience of the people expect that a working man shall live; at what standard of living shall the pensioner live; at what standard of living, over and above those minimums, shall the administrative section and the skilled worker, and so on, live. Everything must be relative to each other and to the whole. It is no good adopting a wages policy if we do not adopt a pensions policy; it is no good adopting a series of incomes for farmers—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member's time has expired.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [8.26]: The Leader of the Opposition started off by complaining that I did not give the Chamber as much information as I should have provided in bringing forward this motion. I obtained Hansard No. 1 of 1952, which was the final year of the sixth year during which the Leader of the Opposition was Premier and Treasurer. I measured up very carefully the length of Hansard which that speech occupied as reported and found that it was about the same length as the one I made this afternoon.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That was the exception to the rule.

The TREASURER: Therefore, I take this opportunity of congratulating the Leader of the Opposition on being able to express himself clearly and adequately in

a short period of time. The Leader of the Opposition sought information as to the purpose for which this money was required, and later in his speech he proceeded to answer his own question. Most of the money is required to authorise payments which have already taken place; in other words, the money has been expended during the month of July and during the portion of the month of August which has already expired.

In addition, of course, a considerable amount of time will pass by before any further Bill can be dealt with or action of this kind can be taken in Parliament. Therefore, in effect, Parliament will, in connection with this matter, approve of the expenditure which has already been made in this financial year and will grant approval for a certain amount of money which is still to be expended from the amounts which are shown in this motion and which will be shown later in the Appropriation Bill.

These total amounts are used, as the older members at any rate would know, for the normal purposes of Government. Money to be expended or already expended from Consolidated Revenue Fund is used for a variety of governmental purposes, such as payment of salaries to the great number of people employed by the Government, including teachers, policemen, railway employees and the rest, and members of Parliament, as someone interjected earlier this evening. Expenditure from the loan account is used for the various public works which are under way in nearly every part of the State, including water supply work, drainage, and the many other undertakings which have necessarily to be financed from our loan income.

The Leader of the Opposition also asked whether the loan programme of the Government for the current financial year was based upon the total loan money figure for the whole of the States of £190,000,000 as agreed upon by the Commonwealth, or upon the other figure of £210,000,000, which was the amount unanimously agreed upon by the Premiers of the six States. The answer to that question is that the Government's current loan works programme is based upon the total figure for all the States of £190,000,000. Obviously, that is the only safe basis upon which to proceed. My experience teaches me to know that whenever the Commonwealth decides upon a figure, that is the figure.

It should be said in addition that a case was argued at the last Loan Council meeting for the making to Western Australia of some special payment, either by way of a grant or by way of additional loan moneys, to enable this State to reduce substantially the unemployment which has developed within the State during the

last year or so, most of which unemployment developed unfortunately in the building industry and in the trades that are allied to that industry.

During the proceedings of the Loan Council the case for Western Australia in that regard was argued not once but several times. Finally, the Acting Prime Minister, who is also the Commonwealth Treasurer, agreed that the case submitted was one that would justify the Commonwealth in making some special payment available to Western Australia over and above the normal loan allocation during this financial year.

The Acting Prime Minister submitted this question himself finally to the Loan Council and asked the other Premiers to approve of the Commonwealth taking some special action to assist Western Australia in relation to the unemployment problem, and the other Premiers agreed unanimously that something along those lines should be done by the Commonwealth. The Government of this State should therefore receive some money for expenditure on public works over and above our share of the £190,000,000 which was the total agreed upon by the Commonwealth for the public works programmes of the six States.

I want to mention this angle to that situation: The Commonwealth Government will probably lend us, at the normal governmental rate of interest, some money additional to our loan allocation with which to put in hand works to provide employment for those now unemployed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is that rate? Is it 5 per cent.?

The TREASURER: It is over 4 per cent. now. The angle I want to mention is that the Commonwealth raises this money by taxation from the people of Australia and therefore receives it without the payment of any interest upon it at all. Yet the Commonwealth adopts the method, when dealing with the States, of lending them this money, which places an obligation upon the Governments concerned not only to repay the money in due course, but also to pay interest upon it continuously until such time as it may be repaid.

I do not want to discuss this angle at any length, but I would inform members that this question was raised very seriously at Canberra a few weeks ago and was argued very solidly. The Commonwealth Treasurer finally did make some small concession in the matter; but the practice of the Commonwealth taking money from taxation, which it gets for nothing, and lending it to the States, creating it as a debt against the States and charging the States interest upon the money, seems to me to be a practice which has not very much to justify it.

Hon. D. Brand: Is that not an argument to support the return of taxing rights to the States and cast the responsibility of raising the money on the States?

The TREASURER: I have not put forward any argument. I have stated the situation; and I suggest that we might at some other time during this session of Parliament argue the matter on the basis of whatever merit or demerit it possesses.

The Government has prepared three schedules of works, or proposed works, in connection with this additional money that the Commonwealth Government will make available to us—we hope as a grant, but we fear as a loan. Each of these three schedules is estimated to cost £4,000,000 to finance. We prepared the three schedules in order that the Commonwealth might have the opportunity of choosing as between one alternative and another.

The first schedule contains a list of proposed works most of which are directly associated with the construction of buildings. This schedule was deliberately prepared in that way because the Government here is anxious to revive the building industry as much as it is possible for that to be done by governmental action.

Mr. Court: Which section in particular? Not the major industrial section?

The TREASURER: Our proposals have relationship to the construction of complete schools, classrooms, hospitals, and various government buildings of that description. In other words, the whole of the money to be received by the Government as a special payment by the Commonwealth would naturally be expended upon the construction of government buildings if the Commonwealth Government approved of our No. 1 schedule of proposed works.

Mr. Court: I thought it was the home-building section that was most hard hit.

The TREASURER: We would make some additional money available for the building of homes if the No. 1 schedule were approved by the Commonwealth. The No. 2 schedule is the one prepared to provide the greatest possible amount for employment per £1,000 to be expended—in other words, works which would not require as much expenditure on materials as would the works in the first schedule. Some of the main works in the second schedule are drainage, sewerage, forestry and similar undertakings.

The third schedule is a combination of the first two. I think it will be agreed that we have given the Commonwealth a fair range of choice, and it is now within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Ministers to make their choice to the extent of the special financial assistance which the Commonwealth finally agrees to make available to us.

Hon. D. Brand: Each of these £4,000,000 schedules represents—

The TREASURER: There is no guarantee, of course, that the Commonwealth will make a special amount of £4,000,000 available to us.

Mr. Court: Was not there a general understanding that that amount was somewhere between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000?

The TREASURER: No, there was no general understanding as to the amount.

Mr. Court: I am just going on the Press reports.

The TREASURER: There was no understanding whatever in regard to the amount. I have been very disturbed by the slump, if that is a fair description of the position, which has taken place in the building industry. I think most of us were brought up on the idea that the building industry and the condition of the building industry are, together, a barometer of the economic health of a community. In other words, we were brought up on the idea that everything in a community was reasonably good if the building industry was active.

The same idea, of course, applied in reverse, namely, that if conditions in the building industry were not good, then conditions, generally, were not as good as they should be. We were also brought up on the idea that there was no safer long-term investment than bricks and mortar. Why the financial institutions, or most of them, in the last two or three years have broken away from this idea, I would not profess to know, but they seem to have broken away, very largely, if not completely, from those very solid ideas, I think.

Mr. Hearman: It would not have anything to do with rent control, would it?

The TREASURER: Nothing whatever to do with rent control, but a great deal to do with the freezing of credit and probably due to some extent to the highly profitable opportunities for investment which some financial institutions have discovered in the hire purchase business. The building industry is tremendously important in the volume of skilled and semi-skilled employment which it provides in a community. That applies not only to carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers and so on, who are directly employed in the building industry, but also to tilemakers, brickmakers, cement manufacturers and so on who work in the trades which provide the materials needed by the building industry.

Therefore it is, I think, of major importance, and of considerable urgency, too, that we should, as far as it is within the power of Government and other organisations in Western Australia, revive the building industry as quickly as possible. I sincerely hope and trust that private financial

institutions of strength will give some close reconsideration to the unfortunate policy which they have followed in connection with the building industry over the last year or two.

Mr. Court: Do you think it is due to that? Is it not more due to the fact that the building trade, particularly in the home-building section, is suffering from the aftermath of indigestion? It geared up faster than it was really equipped to go, and many in the industry are left without the work they assumed they would have.

The TREASURER: It is due to the fact, basically, that money is not being made available in sufficient volume to enable those people who are anxious to build to proceed with the job of building, or of having buildings, which they wish to see constructed, put in hand by builders and contractors. The basic deficiency in the building industry is money. I think there is no shadow of doubt about that.

Mr. Ackland: It is no longer attractive to build. Costs are so high that you cannot get any money back.

The TREASURER: I know of a great many people who would build if they could get reasonable financial accommodation.

Mr. Ackland: It would not pay as a renting proposition.

The TREASURER: That applies to individuals who want to build homes for themselves. I imagine it would also apply to a great many firms in the industrial and commercial world. It seems to me that until such time as the building industry is revived substantially in Western Australia, with a consequent revival in the trades that serve the building industry, the Government will have to be called upon to provide more employment than it should, and perhaps more than it is desirable that it should; or, alternatively, the Commonwealth Government will have to pay out very large sums of money in unemployment relief.

If the member for Nedlands were to get the figures covering the amount of money being paid out in this State at the present time in unemployment relief and relate it to the total amount of money which would be needed to employ these men in productive or useful employment, he would be able to show quite conclusively that it would pay the Commonwealth Government to make available enough money to employ these people productively rather than continue this business of keeping them out of employment and paying them so much a week in unemployment relief.

Obviously the money paid in unemployment relief is wasteful so far as the Commonwealth Government is concerned, and it has the effect only of providing bread

and butter, as it were, to the unemployed man and his dependants. At the same time the unemployed man is not producing anything; he is not doing any work for the community, and I should say that the amount of money paid in unemployment relief would more than meet the interest which might be incurred upon the expenditure of capital funds with which to employ the men usefully.

Mr. Court: I do not disagree with your proposition about the payment of unemployment relief, but I do suggest with respect that the position that exists in the building trade today was foreshadowed by the Minister for Housing two years ago in this Chamber.

The TREASURER: It would not matter to the facts of the situation whether it was foreshadowed by the member for Nedlands ten years ago. The fact remains that we have within the community a heavy unsatisfied building demand; we have the builders and contractors; we have the building tradesmen; and we have the men who can produce the bricks, tiles, cement and all the rest of it; and obviously if the money could be made available with which to put buildings in hand, these men who now draw unemployment relief would be doing useful productive work. They would be creating assets, and the Commonwealth Government would not be paying money away in unemployment relief and getting nothing in return for it.

Hon. D. Brand: Would that mean extra taxation or greater loan-raising by the Federal Government to provide that money? The money has to be produced.

The TREASURER: The Commonwealth Government is not short of money and I am suggesting, that, as an economic proposition, in the long run it would pay the Commonwealth Government handsomely to provide sufficient money to employ these men as against its present method of paying out a considerable sum of money in unemployment relief and getting nothing in return for it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Why is the unemployment position more acute in this State than in any other State in the Commonwealth?

The TREASURER: I think it is that we have taken into our community a greater number of migrants per head of population, and another reason is that in the other States there is a far greater amount of accumulated capital and bigger and financially stronger business firms, some of which the banks would not turn down for anything.

A further reason, and perhaps the strongest of all, is that in the other States the manufacturing industries have been developed to a far greater extent than they have here and consequently factory employment there is sufficiently great to absorb into employment those who might

now and then become unemployed, while in this State we have not the factories to absorb such people into employment, with the result that as soon as one of our industries suffers a recession, unemployment is created and the unemployed are not absorbed into any other industry.

Mr. Court: Does it not all come back to the fact that we did not have a second Kwinana to start when the other one finished?

The TREASURER: I do not think so, although I am prepared to agree that the completion of the construction of Kwinana was a contributing factor in regard to the unemployment which developed and which has increased in recent months.

Mr. Court: My point is that Government money is not the only answer. If we can get increased private investment, it will achieve the same result better and more quickly.

The TREASURER: I have just used the same argument as the member for Nedlands. I said that one of our greatest difficulties in relation to unemployment is that we have not sufficient workshops and factories manufacturing our raw materials to enable our unemployed to be absorbed, and I agree that if more private capital were to be invested in such factories and workshops here, that would enable all or most of the unemployed to be provided with employment and our problem would be overcome.

Mr. Oldfield: A bit of drainage work in Mt. Lawley would help.

The TREASURER: I believe there was quite a bit of deep drainage work there in late March or early April of this year.

The Minister for Transport: Deep sewerage work!

Mr. Nalder: And it did not cost the Government a penny.

The TREASURER: I will not endeavour to allocate the cost of that work. I am sure we all feel very sorry that the previous member for Mt. Lawley is no longer with us. The Leader of the Opposition asked a question relating to the South-West power scheme. It is true that for several years a subsidy was paid to the State Electricity Commission in connection with the South-West section of the power undertakings under the control of the commission. Last financial year the commission made a total overall profit.

Hon. D. Brand: Was not a subsidy of £72,000 paid last year?

The TREASURER: No.

Hon. D. Brand: Or any part of it?

The TREASURER: No, not last financial year. Obviously, there is no justification for paying a subsidy to a concern which is

making a total overall profit. Why should the general Consolidated Revenue of the State be called upon to pay a subsidy to a concern which, overall, is making a profit? There is no sense in doing so.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What became of the profit?

The TREASURER: That is under consideration at present. I understand it was expended by the State Electricity Commission before it was earned—

Hon. D. Brand: And that gave the Treasurer a credit balance of £72,000.

The TREASURER: —and therefore the matter is still very much under consideration.

Mr. Roberts: In view of the profit, is there any possibility of the cost to the consumer being reduced?

The TREASURER: At present metropolitan consumers are subsidising consumers at Bunbury and in other parts of the South-West.

Hon. D. Brand: Do they do that with water?

The TREASURER: One point in the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition with which I agree is that there should be more discussion, during the present session of Parliament, on finance and economics. I should think that after the conference on economic questions, which is to be held in Canberra next week, there will be provided a solid basis for discussion along the lines suggested by the Leader of the Opposition.

Anyone who looks carefully at the economic situation in Australia must be considerably worried about the future. There is no doubt that inflation is still very active and that all the Governments of Australia are facing some problems of great magnitude. We have heard some good debates on this basis previously and I think that, as the present session proceeds, there will be ample room for further discussions of that nature. We might have to get to much closer grips with these problems than we have in previous sessions since, let us say, 1933.

Mr. Bovell: Concentrate on rural development.

The TREASURER: The Leader of the Opposition claimed that this Government was continually calling on the Commonwealth Government to provide more loan money, but I would point out that when we get loan money it is a debt recorded against the State and not against the Commonwealth and that the payments in connection with loan money raised and received have to be met by the State and not by the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Except for the 5s. in the £100 contribution to the sinking fund.

The TREASURER: As the member for Leederville pointed out, we cannot have it both ways in regard to this matter. We cannot continually advocate the progress and development of the State and agree that something should be done at Bunbury and something else at Albany, in the metropolitan area or elsewhere, and at the same time argue that the State Government should not ask the Commonwealth to make more funds available. We have to choose one course or the other.

Either we need these works done urgently and the Government should make every effort to obtain adequate money with which to do them, or the works do not require to be done urgently and the Government should wait till some future time when the money may become available. I ask members to be consistent in this regard.

The member for Vasse made reference to the dairy industry rehabilitation scheme. The total amount of money to be provided for that work during the current financial year has not yet been decided but it will be decided when the Government knows, finally, how much special money is to be made available to the State by the Commonwealth for special unemployment works. As soon as I am in a position finally to decide the sum to be made available for this work, the information will be made available to the Minister for Lands, and I am sure that he will be pleased to make it available to the member for Vasse and those other members who are interested in this matter.

During his speech the member for Dale made some reference to the question of resumptions of land which the Government makes from time to time. I agree with everything he said about the subject; I think that when land is finally resumed by the Government it should, as soon as practicable, pay the people from whom the land has been taken. The Minister for Works did say to me, in regard to the case put forward by the member for Dale, that nearly all the delay which has taken place so far was occasioned by the fact that the landowners concerned appealed to the Minister against the proposed resumptions.

Until those appeals were decided and a final decision made as to whether the land would be resumed, obviously no action could be taken to decide upon a valuation and to make the necessary payments to the persons concerned. However, I believe that now the appeals have all been decided and the procedure necessary to decide fair and just compensation payments to the landowners is in motion, those payments will not be delayed unnecessarily. I have tried to cover the main points put forward by all members.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.



*In Committee of Ways and Means.*

The House resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Moir in the Chair.

**THE TREASURER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.4]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1957, a sum not exceeding £13,000,000 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund and £4,000,000 from the General Loan Fund and £2,000,000 from the Public Account.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

*Bill Introduced.*

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced and read a first time.

*Second Reading.*

**THE TREASURER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.6]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. A. F. WATTS** (Stirling) [9.7]: I listened with great interest to the remarks made by the Treasurer in reply to some of the observations made when we were in Committee of Supply. I must say that I look forward to the opportunity, later in the session, of discussing in greater detail than we are able to do on occasions such as this, some of the questions which affect the economics of Western Australia in particular, and indeed, of the Commonwealth of Australia as a whole.

At present we seem to be in a quandary on this matter. On the one hand, there is no doubt that there are many things that are not made, and in some cases cannot be made available to us from the produce of this country but of which we are sorely in need. Yet we are, it appears, obliged to restrict their importation into this country because we are unable to provide the necessary credits *ad lib* to pay for their unrestricted importation.

It would appear that so far as the question of imports from overseas and the funds provided by exports from this country are concerned, we are in much the same position as the character known as Micawber, in one of Charles Dickens' novels, found himself. He said that if one's income was £1 and one spent 19s. 6d. one had happiness; but if one spent £1 0s. 6d. one had misery. I think that is a fair paraphrase of the reference in the novel. That seems to be exactly the position which in this country has given

rise—as I understand it has done in almost every country—to import restrictions. It appears that we just could not earn enough by what we had to sell and by what we could sell to pay for all the things we desired to have, however essential they might be.

What is it that is responsible for the provision of such funds as are available for the payment of our imports? In the main, the product of primary industry is responsible for the provision of those funds because there would not be more than 10 per cent. of our export credits which would be derived from secondary industry products of this country. I do not deny for one moment that it is desirable to find—if it is practicable—more markets for our secondary industries, but if we are going to do that it is quite obvious we have to turn out goods of desirable quality at prices which the rest of the world is prepared to pay, and I do not know that our secondary industries are capable, under the present circumstances, of that development.

Do not imagine, for one moment, that I am laying the blame on any section of those engaged in secondary industry. There is evidence that management is as responsible as labour, and I do not propose to go into that aspect of the matter, either. However, the fact remains that if we are to get any substantial export credits from secondary industries, the two things I have mentioned have to be complied with—and complied with fairly rapidly—because there is industrialisation taking place in some of the countries which might, at the present time—and in the future, too, if we tackle the problem promptly—be numbered among our markets for secondary industry products but which, if they find they can turn out these goods suitable in quality at a price far better than we can handle, will, almost certainly, never look to Australia for trade of that kind.

So one of the things that obviously requires considerable attention in this country is the ways and means of making secondary industry responsible for a greater proportion of our export income. That is a subject which, I have no doubt, would stand weeks of investigation and study before anybody could make any real worth-while proposal. I can only state the problem at this stage. At least the other 90 per cent. of our export income comes from the primary industries which are obliged, as they always have been—except for some home consumption prices for a limited proportion of their output—to rely on what the other side of the world is prepared to pay whilst, at the same time, they have to contend with an Australian economy which makes them compete, in many aspects, with the cost of production which is out of control and, as the Treasurer has mentioned, there does not appear to be any immediate relief from that

position because the inflationary spiral seems to be slowly continuing although not as rapidly as it was some years ago.

So far as I can see, there is no immediate sign of any great improvement in the prices that can be expected from overseas for our exports of primary products. There is a distinct possibility that there may be some decline in some of them and there has been facing us a distinct diminution of the market in respect of one of them on which Western Australia very largely relies, to wit, the wheat industry. The fact that that seems temporarily to have improved is a cause for thanksgiving because it will enable some of the problems that have affected the wheat industry in this State for the past 15 or 18 months to be relieved and, for the time being, do away with, I hope, all discussions in connection with restrictive production, because that is not something which is very attractive to a Western Australian in our present circumstances.

It is true that the wool industry, which is the major one of course in regard to the provision of funds, has shown some improvement in recent times so far as overseas prices are concerned. If that improvement is maintained it will be all to the good, but a comparison of events last year—twelve months ago—would indicate that it is only a recent improvement. It is not an overall improvement compared with the preceding financial year.

The wool industry is facing a situation where its costs are rising and the margin between production costs and export income is becoming less. At present it would appear, in the general way, to be quite satisfactory, but if that margin should diminish to any greater extent, then our problem of imports and exports is going to be even greater than it is at present and to envisage a state of affairs where our imports are always going to be substantially restricted is not a very satisfactory outlook, not only because we would like to have the things we wish to import, but also for other reasons as well and one of them is that one cannot expect, eternally, to have one-way traffic.

We cannot expect to export our products to other countries and be paid for them and, at the same time, be totally unable, or, unwilling—whatever the case may be from time to time—to expect to receive any production from that country. The freer that international trade can flow—at least within reasonable limits—the better for both buyer and seller. Therefore, we want to take steps to get out of this problem of restricted imports as early as we can and that can only be done—which is perfectly clear—by increasing our export income.

It is possible—and there has been some progress in that direction in recent years—to increase our primary production and make available larger quantities for export

overseas, provided we can find countries that are willing to buy them. But, again, I do not think that the economy of this country can stand, eternally, what I call the one-way traffic.

I think the secondary industries have to come in, too, and they have to find ways and means to make their contribution in a more substantial way than they do at present to those industries that are capable of earning an export income. For the moment I leave that problem where it is, repeating that I heartily agree with the Treasurer that those facets, and many other facets, of this particular diamond want a lot of consideration in the future not only by this Parliament, but by those engaged in commerce and industry, and by Parliaments in other parts of Australia. They will have to give more consideration than they have been prepared to give to them, and in detail, in recent times.

Then again, I understand the Government has in mind the question of considering the economics of operating the lesser used branch lines of our railways, and that consideration may be given to closing those lines where the traffic hauled does not justify their remaining open. I am quite prepared to agree that there can be justification for closing a branch railway line where the traffic hauled can be established not to justify that line remaining open.

But I submit if it is going to be a question of considering the closure of the line, and one of deciding to close it before steps are taken to substitute some other and reasonably efficient form of transport, that there will be greater problems created for the State than will be removed. It is no use whatever, as I see it, deciding to close a railway line and then expect that the traffic which is hauled over it, which will always be considerable in quantity although unpayable in the great majority of cases, is going to be hauled over the existing roads, because I do not know of a road, which is serving any place where these considerations could arise, that at the present time is going to be suitable for handling that traffic or any substantial part of it.

If one is only to handle a couple of thousand tons of wheat—if that were the only traffic on a branch line, and it were put on a big semi-trailer truck, the road between the points concerned would be in ruins in a few weeks. So it seems to me, without any doubt whatever, that if this problem of closing any railway at all is to be agreed to by this Parliament, before it can be agreed to there should be a first-class road, and a first-class transport system prepared and ready to come into operation; and some convenient method provided also of transferring the goods that come by the road to the railway at the point of connection with the railway line wherever that may be.

Only by that means is it going to be at all possible to give consideration even to the closing of the least used of the branch lines. That is only a mere outline of the problem that should be measured up to. In my opinion, it will take most detailed and careful planning, and considerable expenditure before the people concerned can reasonably be asked—even in respect of the least used of these lines—to allow the line to be closed for the reasons that would actuate the Government giving consideration to it.

We cannot expect a settlement which has gone out in the main purely because railway lines were thrust out to make it possible, and which has, in the main, for all that time relied on railway transport for the moving at least of its heavy traffic to the point of despatch, to be happy now at a statement which says, "If the line does not appear economically payable, we are going to close it."

There should be something prepared, and money should be made available, and the whole thing well thought out and planned in advance before anyone will catch me agreeing to the closure of any railway line—even, as I said, the least used of those which are at present in existence. But if the Government of the State—whatever Government it may be—is prepared to go into the matter along those lines, to provide the funds and put down a road structure which is capable of standing up to the traffic which will ensue, to provide better facilities than the people have now for their road vehicles, then, I daresay, Parliament could give in some instances, and at the proper time, favourable consideration to such a proposal as is apparently contemplated.

I realise that when the Premier goes to Canberra on the 16th of this month, he and the other Premiers will have a very difficult problem facing them. I hope there will be a measure of give and take on both sides in the discussions that are bound to take place. I can see a considerable clash of opinions unless that give and take is evident. I am not going to suggest that our own Premier is not capable of doing it; far from it.

For my part, I am only going to express the hope that all those who are there will be in that frame of mind because if that is not so—and I am satisfied that the conference is quite likely to be abortive if the clash of opinion is going to be so great that there can be no compromise possible—that is what is likely to happen. I think it will be a bad day for Australia if a conference of this nature falls in its intention. Unfortunately, we are not very well informed as to what is in the mind either of the Federal Government, or the Governments of the States. That is why I am fearful there will be this considerable clash of opinion to which I have referred.

The Treasurer: The hon. member has as much knowledge of the ideas and intentions of the Commonwealth as I have.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I did not suggest I had not. I said I had not, and that was all. It is not a very suitable position for anybody to be in. If we did know more about what is proposed, we might be able to express some opinion.

The Treasurer: I quite agree.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: A "guess-timate" would be all that I can make as to what is proposed, therefore I do not even attempt to deal with it in detail. My imagination is not good enough. However, I am not going to raise any objection to the Bill. It is quite the usual one. Without it, in fact, the Government could not proceed to carry on the business of the State or the works which many of us are interested to see carried into effect. I shall have ample opportunity of referring to other matters which I deem of importance to the State, and one or two to my own part of the country, but I shall leave them for the Address-in-reply debate.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [9.32]: Firstly, I offer my congratulations to you, Sir, on your preferment. At the same time I convey my thanks to your predecessor for the great courtesy and impartiality which he showed me following my entry into this House some three years ago. On this occasion I have no desire to speak at great length or to labour the economic situation because I hope that during the Address-in-reply debate, which presumably will be resumed tomorrow, another opportunity will be given to deal with this particular problem.

There are three matters to which I would like to refer. The first is the question of the legislative programme for this session; the second, land tax valuations; the third, the question of the Constitution. It has been my experience in my comparatively short career in this House that we go along at a fairly leisurely pace early in the session. I understand that has been the practice over very many years, but just at the time when the really tough Bills and the Estimates come down, we are galloping to get finished before Christmas.

The Treasurer: We had a fair amount of discussion this afternoon about afternoon tea.

Mr. COURT: I must confess that I was rather horrified that we spent so much time on that subject when we know the legislative programme we have to face up to between now and Christmas—if we are to finish before Christmas. We have the Local Government Bill, which is the vital concern of both metropolitan and country members and one which will produce a fair amount of contentious matter if the Bill is in the form in which we originally saw

it. There will be town planning legislation, no doubt, some of which will be contentious.

There will be industrial legislation, if it can be referred to as the industrial group, which is obviously going to be of a fairly contentious nature judging from the few remarks in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, to say nothing of the Estimates, which should command more of our time than has been the case in the past. I do not speak as a reformer. Probably I myself have transgressed in speaking too long in the past. I do put up a plea as a private member that if we can get over the Address-in-reply with a little more haste than we usually do, and get down to the legislation that is really vital to this session, it will be in the interests of all concerned.

I blush as I say this: Perhaps if members were given less latitude in the time to make their Address-in-reply speech they would soon have their speeches prepared and we would get over the Address-in-reply much quicker, even if we had to sit a little longer at this time of the session. Having made that comment and expressed my own view as to how we can speed up the session so that we can get to the more important legislation quickly, I address myself to the second point.

In the first place, I am very concerned at the trend that has become apparent in the last year in connection with values for land tax. Members know that land tax is based on the unimproved value. There is one rate for improved land and one rate for land which is classified under the Act as unimproved land. There has been a revaluation of certain districts and the effect of that valuation has been staggering. It means this: If the valuation is doubled, trebled or quadrupled, as the case may be—there are many cases where that has happened—the land tax payable by that particular person is just willy-nilly doubled, trebled or quadrupled immediately.

There is no system of relief given by the State in respect of that area such as one receives from a local authority which re-rates its district after a valuation. I know there are administrative problems in this connection, because it is well nigh impossible to have differential rates over different districts. However, we have the situation where some districts lag for some years behind others in the date of their revaluation.

In respect of water rates, the Minister for Works in the last session gave us an outline of his plan to try to break down this anomaly in respect of water rates so that there would be a closer relationship between the date of valuations in the different districts, and thereby remove the anomaly. For instance, if the whole of the metropolitan area could have been revalued at one time for land tax, it would have

been logical to suppose that the Government of the day would have said, "This is double or treble the values. We will share with the taxpayer some of this revaluation."

In other words, if the values have gone up 300 per cent. it might be prepared to make some concession in the rate so that the increase in tax overall is, say, only 50 per cent., but that does not happen under the present system. So we get these areas which receive an awful kick when such a revaluation takes place. I do submit that before the Treasurer brings down his Estimates, in which the question of land tax will doubtless be dealt with, some consideration be given to the effect of the revaluations that have taken place, and particularly to the anomalies that have arisen between the different districts.

I do not want to be too parochial on this, but my own district is one where the Treasurer could, with advantage, see the effect of a district being valued right up to date and out of line when compared with some other districts which may not be revalued, because of the physical limitations in respect of valuers for some considerable time. If one dismissed this with a shrug of the shoulders and said, "This is just a matter of socking the rich," to use an expression, I suppose some people could calm their conscience with that phrase.

But it goes much deeper than that. There are many people in Nedlands, for instance, who are just average people, and who built their homes very many years ago when land and house values were much less than they are today. They are not pretentious homes. They are nice homes, well kept and in a good district. All of a sudden they find that through fortuitous circumstances in respect of certain people who are able to sell on a really crazy market, their values have been shot up out of all proportion.

Some of those people are on superannuation and pensions, but they catch it with the person next door, and these terrific anomalies have arisen. I know that valuers, when approached, say, "Would you sell the land for less than that?" There are cases at the moment where people would be prepared to sell the land for less than these values, because there has been a slump. I doubt whether, at the time the valuations were issued, many would have been prepared to sell their land vacant for the values put on it.

It appears wrong that these districts are revalued to reflect unreal values brought about by extraordinary circumstances. For instance, there was a sale of land a couple of years ago in Allenbyrd., and the prices paid by certain people who had little regard for value was absolutely out of proportion. That has reflected itself throughout the whole of the area. I am illustrating this with my own electorate, but would invite the attention

of other members to the fact that their electorates could be affected by these revaluations and the anomalies that arise.

We must keep a very careful eye on the cost of home ownership. If we allow water rates, land tax and other direct charges on the home-owner to keep increasing, we shall be discouraging people from owning their homes. These things reflect themselves back into the "C" series index, because when a landlord who has rented homes gets extra water rates and municipal rates and land tax imposed on him, obviously these things find their way into the rent and eventually into the "C" series.

The Minister for Transport: They find their way into rented houses, but where is the effect on home-ownership?

Mr. COURT: It has a serious effect. A young family goes into a house when the place is valued at a modest or reasonable value and then wakes up to find itself confronted with values that have been put up three or four times.

The Minister for Transport: They would be confronted with the same position if they were renting a house in that locality.

Mr. COURT: But they are not! We are trying to encourage people to own homes. The Minister favours home-ownership.

The Minister for Transport: True!

Mr. COURT: That has been the line in his public statements.

The Minister for Transport: And given effect to, too.

Mr. COURT: I am all for it. I subscribe to the principle. As costs increase they are reflected in the cost of ownership of the home. The third point I wish to deal with is that of the Constitution. I feel that the time has come when the various States should address themselves to a thorough overhaul of the Constitution.

The Minister for Transport: The State or the Commonwealth Constitution?

Mr. COURT: I am sorry; I should have made myself clear. I refer to the Commonwealth Constitution. It is important that changes be made with due caution. We know that the Commonwealth has set up a committee, and some people are inclined to adopt the attitude that it is the Commonwealth's business and that that committee should deal with matters concerning the Constitution. I agree with the State Premiers who objected to this, but I do not agree that the States should be consulted forthwith.

My own view is that the States should at this stage set up their own examination of the position, independent of the Commonwealth. If they were all brought together at the moment there would be such a conflict of opinion that we would get nowhere. If the Commonwealth,

through its own all-party constitutional committee, can reach certain grounds for agreement within its own ranks, and the States individually, and then collectively, can reach a common agreement in respect of certain matters, I feel that then will be the time for the Commonwealth and State representatives to come together.

Taken by and large, the Constitution is not as bad as some people would have us believe. It has carried us through difficult times, such as two world wars and a very serious economic depression; and somehow or other we have managed to settle down and meet the situation. But that does not mean that because we have weathered those trials and tribulations, we should not examine the situation with a view to seeing whether something better can be achieved.

My own fear is that, under the present system, we have neither unification nor a Federal system, but a hotch-potch system which is good for neither the Commonwealth nor the State Governments. There has been a steady white-anting over the years of the sovereignty and responsibility of the States, and it is up to us to examine the position and make up our minds whether we want to go thus far and no further; whether we want a proper Federal system, or want to let the thing ride and become a system of unification.

In examining the Constitution—if the Government is prepared to set up some body to examine it—I feel that it should be investigated by people additional to, but including, politicians. There are many people in industry, commerce, law, industrial unions, employers' organisations, and primary-producing organisations who have had a lot of experience in practice of the operation of the Commonwealth Constitution, and particularly the disabilities under which the States suffer. I feel that all those people could be brought together to examine the position objectively; to try to get down to all the problems that are troubling us, and endeavour to see whether they are of any importance or whether they are more imaginary than real, and determine whether any action should be taken to induce the Commonwealth Government to join with the States in approaching the people for a change in the Constitution.

The States should not interfere with the domestic matters of the Commonwealth Parliament—as to how its elections shall be held, and the relationship between the Senate and the House of Representatives, and so on. Those aspects are essentially the business of the Commonwealth. But there are a lot of matters in which we, as a State Parliament, are vitally concerned. Some of those are the method by which we surrender powers to the Commonwealth and the problem of getting certain of those powers back; the system of creating new States, if they are wanted—and this is a problem which I think will arise in this

country in the foreseeable future—the problem of wage fixation; the terrific anomalies that arise in regard to company law through the existence of different Acts in different States, and the anomalies that occur when companies trade interstate. I feel there is a very fruitful field for research from the State angle in respect of the Commonwealth Constitution if the Government were prepared to set up such an authority.

**THE TREASURER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [9.49]: I would like to say briefly, in regard to the suggestion of the member for Nedlands, that Cabinet will give consideration to it. I understand that the Commonwealth parliamentary committee now investigating the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia will take some considerable time to complete its investigations. I also believe it is the intention of the Commonwealth Government to consult with the State Governments—and, through them, with the State Parliaments—after the Commonwealth committee has presented its report to the Commonwealth Government.

Personally, I think the Commonwealth committee is not quite sure which way it will go. I did have a few words with the chairman when I was last in Canberra, and he seemed to think it would be a sort of all-in procedure for a while, and it would take the committee a long time to work out some clear-cut ideas as to what might be done to take steps to improve the Commonwealth Constitution and to make it a more modern and workable instrument than it has been in the past.

There was a suggestion earlier on that the States should all be represented on this Commonwealth committee but finally I think the majority of the State Governments were not in favour of the idea. It was thought that with a joint Commonwealth-States committee the whole thing would probably become bogged down and that at any rate we would just get a hopeless division of opinions and views. However, as I said at the beginning, we, as a Government, will give some consideration to the suggestion put forward by the member for Nedlands for the setting up of a purely State committee to have a look at this question.

I am afraid I am not able to help the member for Nedlands in regard to the question of revaluations of land. It is a pity that there are not more expert valuers available. The number available is very small and consequently districts have to be done one by one and there is, unfortunately, too, a great lapse of time between the revaluation of one district and that of another district which may not be so far away.

Mr. Court: Have you thought of the idea of holding them until you can release about 12 together?

The **TREASURER**: I think the hon. member's idea there would be all right except for those who were receiving the revenue. His idea would be very good for those who had to pay but not so good for those entitled to receive the payments.

Mr. Court: Seriously, would you mind having a look what they have done to us at Nedlands?

The **TREASURER**: Seriously, we will have a look at what they have done to the hon. member and his fellow citizens in the suburb of Nedlands.

I was very interested in what the Leader of the Country Party had to say about railway lines passing through districts which did not provide much freight for the Railway Department. I think that if today we were setting down a railway system in Western Australia, we would probably not set down more than half the number of miles of railway that we have in our present system. A great many miles of our railway system were set down in the good old days of gold discoveries, and they were undoubtedly justified at that time. Without railways the gold-fields would not have developed to nearly the extent that they did.

The same applies, to a lesser extent, but still to a considerable extent, to those railway lines which pass through agricultural country which does not produce a great deal of wealth and, consequently is not in a position to make available to the Railway Department that quantity of traffic which would make the line in that section somewhere near payable. As a result of having to operate roughly 4,000 miles of railway line, the department naturally comes up against severe financial problems.

Proposals being developed at the present time for consideration by Cabinet take in every possible means of putting the Railway Department on a more payable footing. All I would ask in the meantime is that those who are in a position to make trade available to the Railway Department should, wherever it is within reason to do so, make it available. I am not sure that every person who is tremendously anxious that the railway line in his district should remain, gives the department a completely fair deal.

I know the arguments which can be put up to justify the people in those areas sending some of their goods by road and, perhaps, getting some of their requirements back by road where it is legal for them to do so. Nevertheless it seems to me that the financial position of the railways is such as to make it essential for the department to get the maximum amount of freight possible in a particular area if the

people in that area are to have an argument of merit for the continuation of traffic upon the railway line in question.

In other words, the people in those areas cannot have it both ways. They cannot continue to have a reasonable railway service if they do not give to that service a reasonable measure of patronage. It is not a fair thing to expect the Railway Department to transport only the bulky portion of what they produce, and for those people to have transported by road that portion of their production which would be payable to the Railway Department, or to have those goods which they require to be brought back to the farm, brought back by road as against having them brought back by rail.

Mr. Nalder: There would be only a few isolated areas that would come within that category.

The TREASURER: I think that if the number of miles of railways in those areas were totalled up, it would come to a very considerable mileage because many of these railways run through districts which are not heavily settled. That, of course, is another angle to the problem. Many of our 4,000 miles of railway line pass through areas which could be far more developed, and naturally where a railway line passes through a country that is largely undeveloped, or not nearly as well developed as it could be or should be, the operation of that line is doomed to be uneconomical almost from the beginning.

No Government would wish to suspend traffic on a railway line, or to close down a line. There are many solid reasons why that should not be done. If I lived in a district and a railway line were to be closed down, I think I would feel, as a primary producer, that I was being deserted. I would feel that the importance of the district was being substantially reduced.

Mr. Ackland: And you would be justified.

The TREASURER: And I would feel that the future of the district was being imperilled to some extent and that its importance generally would decline. These considerations are important, I frankly acknowledge, but at the same time it is essential that people who have a railway service and who want to retain it because they value it and know what it means to their area, should give to that railway system the greatest amount of patronage that it is reasonably possible for them to give.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

*House adjourned at 10.4 p.m.*

## Legislative Council

Wednesday 8th August, 1956.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### GERALDTON.

##### *Menace of Sand Creep.*

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware of the serious menace to the town of Geraldton being presented by the gradual sand creep threatening housing areas in the town?

(2) Will he inform the House what measures the Government is taking or proposes to take to deal with this problem?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) and (2) The Department of Agriculture is conducting trials on a small scale to determine the suitability of certain plants for preventing the movement of sand south of Geraldton. The responsibility for seeing that action is taken to deal with this problem appears to be that of the Geraldton Municipal Council, which has power under the Geraldton Sandhills Planting Act, 1872, and the Sand Drift Act, 1919, to require land-owners to take the necessary preventive measures.

#### ROADS.

##### *Work on Great Eastern and Great Northern Highways.*

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

(1) What was the estimated amount allocated for—

(a) new road deviations and culverts on the Great Eastern Highway extending from Greenmount to Baker's Hill;

(b) new road deviations and culverts on the Great Northern Highway?

(2) What is the cost of construction of the present works in progress since January, 1956, to date on—

(a) the Great Eastern Highway;

(b) the Great Northern Highway?