

8 a.m. and 10 p.m.? Probably that is the only time people ever drive stock on the roads.

Section 104 makes it an offence to bathe between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., unless a proper bathing costume is worn. One could assume from this that the topless bathing suit would be in order at any other time. I mention these matters because I consider the Police Act is completely out of step with today's standards; and while amendments could possibly achieve some results at this stage, I believe the proper thing to do is to have it completely rewritten.

Mr. Evans: Did you have a look at section 69A?

Mr. O'CONNOR: Yes; I had a look at all of them.

Mr. Graham: He has forgotten that one.

Mr. O'CONNOR: Does the honourable member know what it is all about?

Mr. Graham: Yes.

Mr. O'CONNOR: I thought you would!

Mr. Evans: It is in regard to the onus of proof.

Mr. Graham: It is a brand of whisky.

Mr. O'CONNOR: I wanted to express my opinions in regard to the Police Act.

I should now like to express my appreciation to members of the Shire of Perth and officers of the M.T.T. for the assistance they have given to the occupants of the elderly people's homes in Mt. Lawley. We had some difficulty in getting a road through because of weather conditions, but the officers I have mentioned did everything they possibly could to implement the provision of bus shelters and to get the S.E.C. to provide the best facilities possible for these elderly people.

I shall not delay the House any further as I know people want to get away. However, it has given me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity of moving the motion on opening day.

MR. HART (Roe) [3.54 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr. Hawke (Leader of the Opposition).

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Premier) [3.55 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 4th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.56 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 4th August, 1964

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The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

KIMBERLEY PASTORAL AREAS

Death of Cattle

1. The Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is the Minister aware that experienced people estimate that in extensive areas in the Kimberleys, cattle will die in thousands near waterholes before next wet season?

Soil Erosion

(2) What is the area of our pastoral land in the watershed of the Ord River now estimated by departmental officers to be seriously eroded due to overstocking?

(3) Is the programme of regeneration, now in operation in the Kimberleys, considered to be adequate to keep pace with the progressive and extensive soil erosion already existing over millions of acres?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

(1) It is known that, because of seasonal drought conditions, the stock position in the Kimberleys is serious.

(2) Approximately 1,400 square miles.

(3) The programme of regeneration in the Ord regeneration project is considered adequate in that section. Improved grazing management must be the basis of general regeneration of other eroded areas.

REVISION OF REGULATIONS

Appointment of a Special Officer

2. The Hon. N. E. BAXTER asked the Minister for Justice:

- (1) (a) Is the Minister aware that regulations promulgated under some Acts have not been re-printed for many years;
- (b) as this situation exists, persons who, in the course of business, etc., are obliged to abide by these regulations, find it difficult to obtain full copies under which they must operate?
- (2) Would the Minister advise the House whether the Government would be prepared to appoint a special officer to bring reprints up to date and keep them so at least every five years?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) (a) Yes.
- (b) Yes.
- (2) An officer of the Parliamentary Draftsmen's Section of the Crown Law Department has been for some time and is still engaged in the preparation of regulations for re-print under the Reprinting of Regulations Act, 1954. Regulations are produced for reprint as and when required by various Government departments. It is not considered necessary to appoint a special officer for the purpose.

GASCOYNE RIVER CATCHMENT

Rehabilitation of Eroded Areas

3. The Hon. W. F. WILLESEE asked the Minister for Mines:

- (1) What stage of development, if any, has been reached in connection with the rehabilitation of the eroded areas of the Gascoyne River catchment?

Increase in Salinity

- (2) Has any definite information been collected which indicates a rise in salinity in any of the river's tributaries?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) The Gascoyne catchment area has been surveyed and eroding areas have been delineated, but plans have not yet been formulated for active erosion control measures.
- (2) Water salinity data are being collected by the Public Works Department, but because of seasonal variations any long-term trend will only become apparent when observations over several more years are available.

KINDERGARTENS AND CHILD MINDING CENTRES

Registration

4. The Hon. J. M. THOMSON asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

Are all kindergartens, day nurseries, and child minding centres in Western Australia, registered with either the—

- (a) Education Department; or
- (b) Public Health Department?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN replied:

All kindergartens, day nurseries, and child minding centres in Western Australia are registered with the Education Department.

ORD RIVER SETTLEMENT

Cotton and Safflower Crops

5. The Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Mines:

- (1) The total acreage sown to cotton at the Ord River settlement for the harvesting season of 1964?
- (2) The total yield of seed cotton from such acreage?
- (3) The average yield, the highest yield, and the lowest yield per acre of variety Rex this year?
- (4) What was the anticipated yield per acre forecast in the brochure published in 1963 inviting applications for farms?
- (5) What acreage of the Ord River settlement was sown to safflower in the year 1963?
- (6) What was the total yield and the average acre yield from this crop?
- (7) What was the yield forecast for this crop in the brochure?
- (8) Are yields at the above rate profitable at current prices?
- (9) Is it intended to continue to advocate safflower as a rotation crop for the Ord settlement?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) 1,613 acres. Of this area 1,359 acres were planted by the first five commercial farmers. Some of this commercial area and much of the remainder, which included trial plantings by later farmers, were planted later and without the recommended pre-irrigation.
- (2) The total weight of seed cotton harvested was 1,980,055 lb.
- (3) On the information available the average yield of seed cotton of the Rex variety was 1,415 lb. per acre. The highest yielding bay produced 1,908 lb. per acre of seed cotton and the lowest yielding bay, which was overrun by weeds, produced 613 lb. per acre.
- (4) 1,750 lb. seed cotton per acre.

- (5) 922 acres.
- (6) 495 tons averaging 11 cwt. per acre.
- (7) 1 ton per acre.
- (8) Average cotton yields for the season were profitable. Safflower yields showed a loss.
- (9) No. Safflower was intended as a pioneer crop prior to cotton growing but this procedure is not now necessary.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

PNEUMOCONIOSIS

Availability of Committee's Report

The Hon. E. M. HEENAN asked the Minister for Mines:

Will he give the House some indication as to when the report of the Committee which inquired into the subject of pneumoconiosis will be available to members for their perusal?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

Following the receipt of this report, it was necessary to give consideration to the recommendations contained therein. Those recommendations are being considered, and I would forecast that the recommendations which the Government feels should be introduced into a Bill will, during this session of Parliament, be included in a measure to amend the Workers' Compensation Act. I will make the report available to members as soon as I can.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: SECOND

DAY

Motion

Debate resumed, from the 30th July, on the following motion by The Hon. J. G. Hislop:—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver:—

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (North—Leader of the Opposition) [4.42 p.m.]: The Address-in-Reply is, on this occasion, to the Speech delivered by His Excellency to the third session of the Twenty-fourth Parliament of Western Australia. The

third session may usually be anticipated to be a placid one so far as the Government is concerned, but not necessarily so far as the Opposition is concerned. That is the history in this State, and in other States, of the last session of a Parliament prior to an election. Doubtless we will be presented with Bills, mostly non-contentious, and certainly not those which will provoke divisions in the public mind; and certainly there will be many which the Government will use to endeavour to give effect to some of the remaining promises of other election days.

In the Governor's Speech, we find very many interesting observations; and we find many indications of the buoyancy of the circumstances—particularly the money circumstances—which this Government enjoys. The revenue for the last financial year is stated to be nearly £84,000,000, and the expenditure is shown to be in excess of £85,000,000; and, as Dr. Hislop mentioned in his speech, the bulk and volume of the money goes far beyond what any person in Parliament at as recent a time as 10 or 15 years ago could have anticipated. There is a buoyancy in regard to the availability of money; and the attitude of mind of Governments and of people which such a circumstance brings about creates a different manner of approach to many of the problems that arise; and those problems are made so much easier of solution because of the amounts of money now available.

No other Governments in the history of Australia have had such an easy time in regard to the availability of money as have the Governments of all the States at the present time. There is nothing singular about the amounts which this Government has for its own spending; which amounts, to a degree, have come about as a consequence of events rather than as the result of any particular attribute of the Government, or any claim by it to obtain such large amounts of money.

The reference in the Speech to the main roads funds shows clearly how the availability of money is affecting the capacity of Governments nowadays to do things which we thought were not possible over such short terms. The Speech mentions that the State will receive £11,700,000 this year from the Commonwealth Aid Road Fund. If we go back, say, 10 years, we find the figure of funds received from the Commonwealth in 1953-54, was £4,700,000. In 1954-55—nine years ago—the figure was £6,690,000.

The fund which was created from the initial Federal Aid Roads Agreement, negotiated for this State by the late Hon. Alex McCallum, not so long ago, has, this year, grown to £11,700,000; and I take it from the wording in the Speech this does not include any State contribution, which, if added, would, I feel sure, bring that

figure up to £13,000,000. That is the amount which will be available to be spent from the Main Roads Department accounts and the Main Roads Trust Account in this State in its far-flung areas and in the metropolitan area in this financial year—truly an enormous sum, but one which I feel sure will be well spent. I say that, knowing those at the helm of the administration of the Main Roads Department. The new commissioner is Mr. John Punch who is known very well to most north-west members as he commenced his cadetship in Broome with the Public Works Department. I am sure that with Mr. Punch as the successor to Mr. Digby Leach the State will not lose in regard to the interest, enthusiasm, and capacity that he will give to the very great task of properly allocating and wisely spending, under the direction of the Government, such a very large sum.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: He was also the engineer of the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is right. John Punch is a man in whom, I think, we can all have great confidence. The situation, therefore, in regard to Main Roads Department spending augurs well for every district, because there is nothing so striking as the evolution that has occurred in this State in the last 20 years in connection with road improvement brought about by the allocation of moneys in various ways, and brought about, initially, because of the vastness of the empty spaces of Western Australia. When the formula was arrived at on an area and population basis, it brought to this State considerable sums of money for areas which were not peopled.

So I look forward to a continuation of the spending of vast sums of money on roads—main roads and lesser roads—in all parts of the State; and I am hoping that since the north is to have more millions spent on it than ever before, full consideration will be given to the roads radiating from the ports as well as to the roads going from the north of the State to the south—from as far north as Wyndham to the bitumen at Carnarvon in the south.

One of the many promises which this Government made when it took office was the bituminising of vast road mileages in the north-west; but, of course, this has not come about, and the completion of the road between Geraldton and Carnarvon, commenced by a former Government, is actually the main work done in that connection. I think a bitumen road was promised from Carnarvon to Wyndham by the Government when it was on the hustings a few years ago. Let us hope that with the continuation of the very active and intelligently-applied services of our Main Roads Department engineers we will

see, in the north-west, as well as in other parts of the State, a continuation of the improvement in our road network which was commenced years before, and which stands, particularly, as a tribute to one of the Main Roads Department engineers, the late Ron Duncan.

I was extremely interested in the speech made by Dr. Hislop last Thursday. For the occasion it was a speech that one would expect from that honourable member, particularly the theme which he developed. He mentioned that we, as Australians, were living in a new era; that post-war progress has brought some remarkable changes and, with those changes, what must be considered to be remarkable progress. He said that Australia, the driest continent, which requires so much building up and buttressing of its poorer lands has, over the last few years, developed into a land of milk and honey.

The remarks of Dr. Hislop interested me even more when he mentioned that tens of millions of money were easy to obtain today, and how different was the situation in this new era in regard to obtaining such money. I will go further and say how easy it is to lavish praise on the Government of the day when, in fact, and in all cases, it is unavoidable; namely, that its role as a Government must be to carry on what were merely the blueprints and plans formulated by other Governments before it. This must always happen. There is only one aspect which I have viewed somewhat sternly; that is, the attempts—of which this Government cannot be found not guilty—of glamorising events and happenings even before they have happened and, indeed, placing them out of their true relativity and perspective.

If we keep our feet on the ground and note carefully the real progress and the real achievements, there is no need to glamorise or misrepresent them by such an attitude, or in such a fashion. With all the attempts to portray the remarkable progress in this, that, or some other part of the State, we have to be realistic and admit that while larger events are in progress there are very many smaller matters to be attended to; and many of the lesser matters are easy to overlook.

There is plenty of room for improvement and attention among the humbler things in local government; things for which the Government is responsible for administering. There are many matters affecting the administration of the humbler units of the community and the education of their children; there is the question of assisting in their education when they come from remote places; there are many things which my colleagues have dealt with session after session which still remain untouched and which, in some instances, represent injustices.

I notice, on the first page of His Excellency's Speech, the reference to the Ord River scheme—a scheme which has been mentioned in this Chamber on several occasions by different members. Some of us know all its history from its humble and first beginning—even from when the idea of it was first born in the minds of people so long ago. I have been extremely interested in the public statements relating to the Ord; the statements from economists, from Ministers, from officers, and from growers. One could not help noting the pessimism pronounced on the whole scheme by an economist, Dr. Davidson, in *The West Australian* dated the 23rd July, 1964. He was reported as saying—

The cotton crop grown on the Ord River by the pioneer farmers this year was not profitable.

He said the crop had been grown in a particularly favourable season. Without the bounty farmers would have lost heavily.

The report went on to say—

He said no-one had bothered to work out the economics of growing crops on the Ord River before the scheme was launched. The crops could not be grown profitably.

The report went on further—

He said a sugar industry on the Ord River supporting 10,000 people would cost taxpayers nearly £7,000,000 a year in subsidies.

I am wondering how much of the statements made with such emphasis by Dr. Davidson has, as its basis, an analysis of up-to-date figures. I am wondering whether the doctor has taken into consideration many of the secondary and tertiary effects of such industries. I am wondering whether, in his views, he is expressing, on an Australia-wide basis, aspects of development—particularly agricultural development—the history of such development, and the results which ultimately have been achieved.

His statements are very definite. He said that the crops could not be grown profitably; that the economics were not worked out before the scheme was launched. But is that true?

The Hon. L. A. Logan: I do not think so.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will return to the remarks made by Dr. Davidson a little later. The next mention of the Ord River scheme made in the Press was from the Minister for Agriculture who was reported as having said—

Cotton yields from the Ord River crop grown by the first pioneer farmers had proved lower than expected.

This appeared in *The West Australian* of the 15th July, 1964. The article went on—

Farmers were disappointed with the yields, but most of them would receive economic returns for their crops.

I am sure that all of us read the article which appeared in the Press a few days ago, in which Dr. Dunne made several statements, among which was—

Dr. Dunne said that each of the first five cotton farms on the Ord River had a cash surplus from cotton growing after meeting all cash expenditures, including that for hired labour.

My view on these matters is very definite. There are many difficulties yet to overcome with the Ord project, and we will not overcome them by ignoring them.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: We will not overcome them by trying to discredit the efforts of other people.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We will not overcome them unless we examine the truth of statements made by different people.

Let us retrace our steps to the very commencement of the project when, in very splendidly presented form, the first five farms were requested to be applied for in a most attractive brochure which gave all sorts of information and detail. For the next seven farms, invitations were made to the world to apply for them under very attractive presentation. I would point out that the settlers on the first five farms, who were termed pioneers, are truly pioneers—people who are part of a very great experiment which is still going on.

Those people had to follow rigid conditions of tenure. For the first five years they were obliged to follow and accept guidance in their operations from the Director of Agriculture, or his nominee. In regard to many things, information is found on page 9 of the first brochure issued for the Ord project. The brochure included the information that agricultural directions were to be controlled by the officers; as was the type of fertiliser and the rate at which it was to be applied. It also contained instructions and directions concerning methods of cultivation, fertilisers, watering, and plant and equipment to be used. The settlers had to agree to all of those things as part of the conditions of tenure; that is to say, they were not settled there of their own volition and guided by their own instincts as farmers; they were there acting under direction. They were, and they still are, part of the experiment.

Members may realise that on two occasions I have recited in this Chamber how unfortunate it would be if we were using human lives as part of the experiment—an experiment which so far has not proceeded sufficiently to enable the Commonwealth to say that the £20,000,000 or £30,000,000 scheme will follow.

My plea is for those people who, with the background and with the life savings of their forebears—and their own—are in

this project. Some of them have put in £10,000 to £15,000 in actual cash on 600 acres, and have borrowed £20,000 in addition to supplement their own investment; otherwise they could not have carried on. They are paying at least £100 a month in interest. They are part of the experiment under the direction of people who—without any disrespect or any disregard for their ability, capacity or experience—had little more experience than the farmers themselves, with one exception.

We have not heard all the story in Dr. Dunne's statement. It is not sufficient to say that cash return for cotton is somewhere between £1,000 and £6,000; because the questions I asked today regarding safflower were directed to this aspect: that the safflower crop to the growers was a failure. They had no alternative but to plant it. I say, without fear of contradiction, that the losses were between £2,000 and £4,000 per farmer in cash, quite apart from servicing the debt I have mentioned. The estimated yield of safflower was one ton to the acre; that is shown in the brochure and in answer to my questions asked of the Minister.

Safflower has already proved to be an unsuitable crop, regardless of the type of answer we have been given today. The facts are contained in the brochure showing the anticipated return from it. The estimate was one ton per acre, and the anticipated price was £54 a ton. It was actually very little more than half of that and the yield was only half of the anticipated yield. So the first farmers being used in the experiment are paying vast sums in interest on borrowed money, and they have no money to carry on from that starting point.

My point is easy to see; this serious loss to the first farmers may be £15,000 to £20,000. A price forecast is not fair when you are dealing with human beings as part of an experiment to prove the initial case to the Commonwealth on the success of the scheme. I make this comment very strongly. I would not decry the scheme; I would not criticise it unfairly; I have made myself perfectly clear through the years on the point that, with the Commonwealth, I, as a Minister of the Crown, commenced the research station for this very purpose. My plea is, therefore, that this loss of £4,000—a little more or a little less—in safflower growing is a burden that the first five farmers are carrying in compliance with the conditions of tenure presented to them.

We know also that linseed and other crops which were recommended to them, and which were assuredly presented as suitable rotation crops, will not be grown as such; but we are going into cotton, and from cotton maybe into sugar cane. Cotton, of course, is a very different proposition from safflower. Cotton costs from £55 to £65 an acre in cash outlay before the crop is harvested. That is a lot of money

to spend per acre before any return is in sight. That represents almost £12,000 cash outlay for 200 acres before the cotton crop can be harvested.

The Ord scheme is, after all, as a development being undertaken, the most vaunted and publicised scheme at the present time in this State. It is much publicised in Australia as a scheme in which no losses should be contemplated by an individual, and failure is unthinkable.

I present these figures to show what those people with £10,000 to £15,000 in cash are going into with 600 acres. Would any Country Party farmer consider that to be a fair approach to a 600-acre proposition? They require between £20,000 and £30,000 when they have their complete plant assembled.

These people who are paying £20 to £25 per week, and more, in interest have to engage in a type of farming which requires certain units of their plant to be used for a short period of the year; for example, the cotton harvester which costs £9,300. This is a harvester which is used from six to 10 weeks of the year, according to the acreage to be harvested.

Naturally the worry is to have the capital, or the plant represented in capital, applied and used over as long a term as possible; but one article which costs between £9,000 and £9,500, used for about eight weeks of the year, represents a fairly heavy overburdening of plant, which cannot be avoided.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Not even by pooling?

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No, because the crops have to come off simultaneously.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: I understand that in Queensland the plant is pooled.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They do that there. If I may be able to answer the unruly interjection, I have before me *The Economics of Cotton Growing in Queensland*, which I received from an old colleague of mine in the Agricultural Department of Queensland only today. In the industry in Queensland, most of the farms are in 30, 50, or 100 acres plots and this permits the pooling of plant, particularly of the high-cost harvesting machinery. Once you get over 200 acres to 400 acres the plant cost is built up from £8,000 to £10,000 for the machinery I am referring to.

In reply to the interjection of Mr. Watson I would point out that the situation in Queensland is vastly different; there, essentially cotton farms are not the rule. They are mixed farms in which 30, 50, or 100 acres of cotton are grown. That is the difference.

In this State we are sponsoring farms essentially for cotton growing, and the plant therefore must be developed accordingly. I am advised by some growers at Kununurra, whom I know, that had the

initial proposition been to plant 300 acres of cotton, instead of the safflower crop, their prospects would have been very different. I think the results, considering all the circumstances: the nature of the country, the lack of knowledge of the crop under farm conditions, the years of knowledge under plot conditions in research station, and the years of knowledge in small crops, proved to be very commendable—even though well below the estimate—to both the farmers and the officers at this point; although such results were confidently anticipated. The words used in the brochure were that a reasonable expectation would be 1,750 lb. per acre, and the average, as the Minister stated today, under 1,450 lb. That is the top yield and the average must be below that. There have been sufficient indicators to show that progress on this basis should be very sound.

I do point out that such statements as were given last week in the Press, that a cotton crop gave a large cash return of from £2,000 to £6,000, invite economists to show how fallacious the reasoning is. I submit that the presentation of those very large sums appearing as net returns for the year's operations did not do a good service to the Ord project, because only half the story was given. Surely we should take the whole return from safflower plus cotton; and if that is done a very different set of figures will be arrived at.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The publicised criticism of Dr. Davidson and Dr. Schapper has not done the scheme much service either.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not going to condemn the attitude or the expressions of the economists. They are very able men. They may be off the beam, but I think the answer to the economists is to ask them whence they derived their basis of calculation, and how they followed it through.

Let us take, for example, the comment of Dr. Davidson that the acreage proposed for sugar in the Ord scheme will mean a loss to the Australian taxpayer of £7,000,000 a year. How fallacious is that argument! Is he saying this: that Queensland sugar, without the subsidy from the Australian taxpayers, would have been worth nothing; that with the contribution it still shows a loss? That is nonsense. One sees towns on the Queensland coast from Nambour to Mossman, north of Cairns—many members have seen those towns—Bundaberg, Mackay, Ingham, Innisfail, and right up to Cairns and Mossman. I mentioned Innisfail which has developed a sugar industry worth £2,000,000 a year. It is true that it is subsidised by the Australian taxpayer on the home-consumption price basis.

Dr. Davidson says that in only four years out of 40 has the margin of production shown a profit. Those towns I have mentioned are not hamlets; each has a population of from 10,000 to 25,000 people,

with primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. Surely we cannot say that because secondary industries have been subsidised they are a drag on the taxpayers. Where would the State of Victoria have been without the tariff protection and the subsidies given to secondary industries? All of Australia has paid for that. We have paid for it many times over.

Surely the emphasis should not merely be on the actual return from a particular industry; it should be on the ancillary services which such industry brings. Even if cotton is subsidised by the Commonwealth Government at 14d. per pound, once we reach our internal consumption needs that subsidy will disappear. But what happens in the meantime? What has happened with regard to sugar? Let us take a look at the town of Innisfail; that glorious town on the South Johnstone River which has developed as a result of its sugar industry. I should mention Babinda and also Cairns; although the development of Cairns has been helped by its timber industry.

Queensland is enjoying a period of great buoyancy and prosperity, and this is buttressed with millions of pounds each year paid by taxpayers throughout the Commonwealth. I am sure this fact has not exerted pressure on the hip-pocket nerve of the taxpayer to the extent that it has hurt anyone; and, while other States might be jealous of what they have to pay to Queensland for its sugar industry, I think we should applaud the development which is taking place in the State.

However unpleasant may appear to be the statements of Dr. Davidson and Dr. Schapper, they are not necessarily foolish opinions. They might have a bias one way or the other. They are economists and men of standing in their own sphere; but I think we are entitled to ask them many questions. In my opinion it is not right to say, as Dr. Davidson said and emphasised, that "no-one bothered to work out the economics of growing crops on the Ord River before the scheme was launched" and "the crops could not be grown profitably."

How many secondary industries in Australia would be at the profitable stage today, and how many powerful companies worth tens of millions of pounds would there be, if there had not been tariff protection and subsidies granted somewhere along the line? Although it is acknowledged that the real purpose of any subsidy is to render that subsidy unnecessary, the case for Australia's secondary industries has been based on Government assistance—or taxpayers' assistance—at some point in the development of those industries.

It is not sufficient to say that without the bounty farmers could not make a profit. It is not sufficient to condemn the scheme on the ground that it must be

supported by taxpayers' money. If subsidies were withdrawn from all Australian primary industries, there would be very many sick industries.

The Hon. F. D. Willmott: They would be finished.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Surely that is part of the basis of our economy! We pay for it internally. Is it hurting us very much economically, and are we not better for it, being able to compete with all-comers in many of our primary and secondary industries? Australia has sent agricultural implements, built in Australia under a protective policy, to South America, Africa, and to many other countries.

I do not like to deal with this matter in an airy-fairy fashion by making a bald statement and condemning the industry because of one statement or opinion fallaciously propounded. Economists differ in their views. I have here a book entitled *North-Western Australia*, that was published recently. Its author is Dr. Alex Kerr, Senior Lecturer in Economics at the University of Western Australia. This copy was sent to one of my electors—I have not received a copy and I do not expect to—with the compliments of The Hon. C. W. M. Court, O.B.E., M.L.A. The book deals with north-western Australia and is the work of an economist. The views contained in the book differ sharply from those of Dr. Davidson, and both gentlemen represent the same University. Although the book might be termed a statistical compendium, there are opinions expressed that are entirely opposed to those of Dr. Davidson. So where do we go from here?

Prior to and during my time as Treasurer we, in Western Australia, had in the Treasury an economist by the name of Mr. Goodes. He was recognised by the Commonwealth Government as an outstanding person, and he was called upon to consider the financial affairs of government. He would not allow any Government to enter into something that was unsound, or fallacious, without offering candid comment and advice. Mr. Goodes was transferred to the Commonwealth Treasury and was for years under Sir Roland Wilson. He is now an economist and advisor with the Department of Social Services.

I make the following suggestion: that we should, for our own comfort and capacity to answer the criticisms I have mentioned, ask the Commonwealth Government to instruct Mr. Goodes to inquire into and report upon the economics of the Ord River project. We would then get somewhere. Mr. Goodes is fearless and cares not for the opinions of others. He would not form an opinion on false premises: he would not approve a base that did not exist.

If this were done it would dispel many false notions; and if the economics of the situation were revealed to be in doubt, then the Government should accept its responsibility. I plead with the Government to take a look at the financial accounts of five of the original farmers on the Ord River project, and to make sure that they will not lose financially because of the advice they have been forced to accept. Surely that is not an unfair proposition!

The Hon. G. Bennetts: A very fair proposition, that.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have spoken on this subject during debates on Supply Bills over the past two years, because it has been obvious to me that some farmers might be forced to leave their properties; and that would never do if the determining factor was lack of finance. I first raised the matter two years ago, and it is my hope that some notice will be taken on this occasion, because this is a crucial period in view of the fact that the State's case for a greater scheme has been submitted to the Commonwealth Government.

Let us be certain that we are not making guinea pigs of human beings who have staked their all on this project. I have faith in the ultimate result. Members do not always take note of the questions that other members ask and of the replies they receive, but members might recall that I asked some questions at one time concerning the denuding of the Ord River catchment area. I had a good deal to say about this matter in connection with a Bill that was regrettably passed by this House last session.

It is a fact that 1,400 square miles of countryside in the area of the Ord River watershed is as bare as is the floor of this Chamber, so far as vegetation is concerned—1,400 square miles as bare as a boot. It has been calculated that 3,000,000 tons or 4,000,000 tons of soil pass down the Ord River each summer, due to the precipitation of floods. The flood waters will pass through the main dam if and when it is completed, or the river will be filled with silt.

I know that the Government has sent men overseas to investigate the siltation of fast-flowing rivers in other countries. There is a proposal to have men sent abroad in the near future. Siltation is one of the main factors—perhaps the most crucial factor—that could make or mar the entire project. The thousands of acres that have been mentioned in connection with the capacity of the proposed dam must be considered in relation to the precipitation of silt which might impede the flow of water.

I hope that when plans are completed, the fear that is in the minds of many people, including some engineers, will be allayed, and that the problem I have mentioned will be avoided. The enormity

of the problem can be imagined if one has seen the Ord River, or a similar river, in flood. It is almost unbelievable. I have seen the Ord River so thick with mud and soil in suspension in the water that one skipper who brought a meat boat up Cambridge Gulf said it was the first time he had seen water with cracks in it.

It is a serious matter. Now it is being supplemented from these eroded areas. If between November and February there is 40 inches of rain in a watershed which is friable soil, the soil dissolves like sugar and flows into the stream. I continue to put up the red light of danger. With an area so denuded by ruthless pastoralists of today—and yesterday—who have contributed terribly to the destruction of a great national asset and become a threat to something which has a very real prospect, it is necessary to take action.

I would like all members to go now, or next week, to where I have been recently. I would like them to travel between Ord River Station or, say, Argyle Station, 120 miles from Wyndham, through the upper reaches of the Ord and back to Fitzroy Crossing. They would be shocked to a very serious degree at what they would see.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I would like them to go, but not next week, please.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Perhaps it would do a lot of good for the State if they did go next week. They would see ravines and chasms 20 or 30 ft. deep, and watercourses which were cattle tracks. They started as cattle tracks only as wide as my desk, 20 years ago. Now they are 30 ft. deep and more than 30 ft. wide.

I asked what was the area of our pastoral land in that watershed, now estimated to be seriously eroded? All members heard the answer: 1,400 square miles. Is it any wonder that North Province and north-west members get worried and agitated at the abuse that part of the country is, and has been, subjected to by individuals; and it is supplemented, of course, by drought and overstocking?

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: And allowed to continue.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, and allowed to continue until the year 2015; which I point out to this Chamber with shame.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Hear, hear!

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Last year, some members voted to extend leases to the year 2015. The abuse to our heritage was allowed to continue. However, I do not wish to worry or weary members, so I will now refer to the other glamorised and much-featured matter affecting the north: iron ore. Two years ago, and many times since, there were headlines in our newspapers. They appeared day after day, and sometimes week after week and referred to the great progress that was being made because of the discovery of iron ore. That is how it was featured. Indeed,

details were given of how towns would spring up overnight, and how schools would be built here and there, and how ports would be developed.

It is very unfortunate when one looks into the background that, firstly, such a thing cannot happen like the waving of a magic wand; and, secondly, we did not know the iron ore was there when this State was trying to get the Commonwealth to export 50,000 tons of ore in 1956 and 1,000,000 tons in 1957. Members will recall that the proposition was before this Chamber and it was turned down. At that time, it was thought we did not have the resources of iron ore, and could not consider exporting 1,000,000 tons to start a new industry. The proposition was voted out; and in any case the Commonwealth Government would not have agreed. If the ore had been available and the market entered, a lot of our worries—and those of the Minister for Mines—would not be with us. I have in mind section 51 of the Constitution; I know what it represents and means.

I know that the Commonwealth Government has the right and the authority to make overseas quotas; and I know, too, that it was buttressed by part III of the Customs Act, whereby any restricted commodity for export may not be exported. In spite of that embargo, which existed for 21 years, as if by magic it floats away. Today we are allowed to export almost what we like of this 2,000,000,000 tons of ore—an extra naught or two would not matter. There are several sellers and several interests spending vast sums—half a million or more—and exploring to the point of survey and assessment ready for export. But for the time being there is only one willing buyer. What a different prospect it would have been had we had the momentum and commenced in 1956 or 1957 to penetrate the markets of the world with our iron ore, which by assay, is approaching the world's best.

The Minister for Mines has made every endeavour, personally and in his public capacity, to smooth out and straighten the problems that may impede the sale of ore to Japan—Japan, the only buyer.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: For the time being.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: For the time being; so splendidly summed up in the article by Frank Devine in yesterday's paper.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: We may not even have a buyer.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think the writer of the article was very near the mark, and he makes it clear that we cannot expect much until the contracts that Japan has with Canada and other countries terminate in the year 1970, or thereabouts. So we have an enormous prospect for progress; but do not let us delude ourselves that it will be tomorrow or the next day.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: That is what is told to the unemployed.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We should not tell local people that there is to be a stimulus to their township overnight. The headlines are unpardonable and unfair. It is quite wrong, and I do not believe in this glamorised stuff. I do not believe in representing anything with pretty pictures. I resent getting my own photograph taken, because I know how it would mislead people.

In the north-west at the moment, we have a film unit, being paid by the Liberal Party, to feature all the things that are in the north.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: If you go to the Piccadilly Theatre you can see that.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Did you say the unit was being paid by the Liberal Party?

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I said by the Liberal Party; and I was told that by the person taking the pictures. Obviously, the pictures are being taken to portray to the people of the south—not those of the north—all the remarkable things this Government has initiated and developed. Of course, that film will not be true. I had long talks with the man taking the pictures and with his assistant, and I fear they did not know to whom they were talking, or I would not have heard so much. Be that as it may.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: He will get his wings clipped now.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We can expect three or four films showing everything which purports to be something this Government initiated; and, I repeat, it will not be true. But the pictures will be there in grand form from Kununurra to Mt. Tom Price.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: They will contain pictures of all the Ministers.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The films will show pictures from Broome to Derby—pictures of the hospital, which was commenced by a former Government and which Dr. Hislop drew our attention to. The pictures will also show achievements purporting to be the work of this Government. However, they will not necessarily be the work of the people who wish to take the credit.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I hope some pictures of you are included, as one of the members of the district.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The last time I saw the man from the film unit, I was collecting £2 from a bookmaker at the Broome races. I do not know whether he took that picture.

I had an idea to indulge in some trivial, and some serious, remarks, but I think I will keep them until another occasion. Maybe there will be another opportunity during the next 48 hours or so.

Perhaps we can now deal with the relationship of two political parties in this State, which relationship has been so greatly publicised lately. You may not have read them, Mr. President, but I have some photostat copies about interesting things, such as, "You cannot afford to sit on the fence."

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I thought you might have a go at this subject.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will entertain you when I do. Being very serious for the time being, I will quit on that note.

I share with Dr. Hislop the feeling of satisfaction that all people must feel in this State, or any other State of Australia, at the buoyancy of Government revenues which gives restriction in some cases to the community. It is true that some Governments do not like complete employment, but we have reached the stage where most people are benefiting from Government spending, from the high prices for our primary products, and from the healthy overseas trade balances. We are all benefiting from that realisation and from the expectation of great things that will come because of the tremendous affluence of the central Government.

Who would have dared to dream that the revenue of the Commonwealth Government would exceed £2,000,000,000, and that our loan raising and expenditure would double the State Budget of a quarter of a century ago? With the lessening value of the pound thrown in, he would be a foolish person who would say that people, as a general rule, are not better provided for now than we ever thought possible not many years ago. I hope the buoyancy of prices, and the price of export commodities, continues.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Not all of us are better off.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope that everyone who has the ability to work will share in this buoyancy at some point. The commodities will get more profitable, resulting in higher benefits. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. H. R. Robinson.

House adjourned at 5.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 4th August, 1964

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