

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 7th July, 1959

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

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (CANCELLATION OF PROCLAMATION) BILL

Assent

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

LICENSING ACT

Parliamentary Committee's Report

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

In view of the Government's expressed intention to introduce a Bill this session proposing important amendments to the Licensing Act, 1911-1958, will the Government make early arrangements to have the 1958 report of the parliamentary committee on licensing, printed, in order that members may have an adequate opportunity of studying same?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

It is estimated to cost approximately £150 to print the report referred to. Inquiries as to whether this expenditure can be justified are at present being made.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Dismissals

2. The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (Minister for Mines): Last Thursday, Mr. Strickland asked the following questions:—

(1) What is the total number of Government employees dismissed since the Liberal-Country Party coalition Government took office?

I spoke to a number of my friends who are in business—I had an opportunity to do so the same night as I saw him. They, however, could not do anything at all for him. This man came to see me yesterday, after giving me one week to look about for a job for him, and I had to tell him that I had no prospects whatever of finding employment for him.

I only mention that to show that even though a man looks for work today, and is prepared to go anywhere and take anything, he may still remain unemployed. If this man were in such circumstances that he did not have his own home, how could he possibly live on the amount of money made available by the Social Services Department for a single person? That is where this policy of the Government is heartless—

Mr. May: Hear, hear!

Mr. TONKIN: —Inconsiderate and bad. It is no justification to say that, because we are a claimant State the policy should be cut out. This is a matter which the Government should reconsider.

Mr. Brand: It will not.

Mr. TONKIN: I do not want to be fobbed off by statements that the Minister will consider each case on its merits, because that means nothing.

Mr. Brand: That is the decision of the Government.

Mr. TONKIN: Does the Premier know if anybody has been assisted under that decision?

Mr. Brand: I cannot say.

Mr. TONKIN: The Premier cannot say; and what is more, he does not care.

Mr. Brand: That is not true.

Mr. TONKIN: I hope the amendment will be carried.

On motion by Mr. Wild, debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (CANCELLATION OF PROCLAMATION) BILL.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

- (2) What is the number of employees dismissed from each department or service involved in the Government's purge?
- (3) Does the Government's policy relate to labourers only, or are the professional and administrative staffs to suffer similar fates?

I now have the replies which are—

- (1) 421. This figure includes casual employees and dismissals for all purposes, including misconduct and unsatisfactory service.
- (2) As there is no Government purge, the question does not arise.
- (3) Work on hand at present is sufficient to maintain professional administrative staffs at the existing level and it is, therefore, not anticipated there will be any reduction.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (CANCELLATION OF PROCLAMATION) BILL

Incorrect Statement

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban—Minister for Mines) [4.42]: I wish to apologise to the House, and in particular to Mr. Wise, for an incorrect statement which I made at last Thursday's sitting, when I stated that at the meeting of Executive Council which dealt with the proclamation under the Electoral Districts Act, no other business was transacted.

I find that this information was not correct, and, although at the time I made the statement I believed it to be true, I regret having misled the House.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (North) [4.43]: In regard to the personal explanation, I feel one would be churlish not to accept such an apology, but I would say there is much which could be said on this subject that is better left unsaid and, so far as I am concerned, the incident is closed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE BUILDING

Cost

1. The Hon. J. M. THOMSON asked the Minister for Mines:

What was the cost of the State Government Insurance Office building as completed?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

The completed cost of the building was £523,757.

BELOO

Renaming of Suburb

2. The Hon. G. C. MACKINNON asked the Minister for Mines:

When considering the renaming of the suburb "Beeloo", will he give some thought to the fact that there is already a large housing area at Collie known as "Wilson Park" and some confusion could possibly exist with mail and other things if another suburb had the same name?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

The name of "Beeloo" was given to that particular suburb by the Nomenclature Committee. At the request of the Canning Road Board, and the people who live in the suburb, I have recommended to the Minister for Lands that the name of the suburb be changed, and that the new name be "Wilson" and not "Wilson Park". I do not think that any confusion should arise.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Fourth Day

Debate resumed from the 2nd July on the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, to which the Hon. H. C. Strickland (North) had moved an amendment to add the following words:—

We wish to protest strongly against the Government's policy of deliberately sacking many of its employees, and against the Government's expressed intention to sack additional large numbers in the future, as this policy is creating unemployment and hardship and widespread feeling of insecurity and unrest.

We wish also to protest strongly against the action of the Government in depriving many deserving single unemployed persons of supplementary help.

THE HON. F. D. WILLMOTT (South-West—on amendment) [4.45]: Although it is not my intention to delay the House very long on this matter, there are a few observations I would like to make. In the first place, I want to say that it is not the deliberate policy of the present Government to throw men on the labour market, as was claimed by Mr. Strickland when moving this amendment. It is a policy designed more to straighten out the situation in this State and to save some of the ridiculous expenditure which occurred previously.

The claim was also made by Mr. Strickland that the Liberal section of the present Government was failing badly in its election promises. I certainly cannot agree with that statement. I would say

that no other Premier has dealt more effectively with the promises he made during an election campaign than has Premier Brand.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Yes. Sacking people!

The Hon. G. Bennetts: There will be a stampede if he keeps going the way he is.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: As long as the stampede is in the right direction that will be a good thing.

I know that it is in the interests of the Labour Party to try to divide the Liberals and Country Party in the present Government. Naturally they will try to do that but I would like to inform them that the present Government is a solid coalition and it will not be as easily upset as members would think.

I know they would be happy to do that but I am sure they will not succeed. It is natural that the Liberal members will sometimes have differences of opinion with the Country Party members; and I, myself, quite often have differences of opinion with members of my own party.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: And you are entitled to do so.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: Of course, but I am afraid that when people try to make capital out of the differences, they will be very disappointed. When moving this motion, Mr. Strickland said in effect—I do not know that I remember his words exactly—that the actions of this Government are causing extreme distress to unemployed members of the community, because the Government is following a policy of disbanding State trading concerns and State activities generally. I think that is a pretty tall statement. What State trading concerns has the present Government disbanded?

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: It threatened.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: Threatening is different. The statement has been made that this has been done. I want to know what State trading concerns have been disbanded. The answer is, of course, none.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: There has been no time yet.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: We have not had time to think about the hon. member, either. I think that such a statement is a gross exaggeration. It is incorrect. Let us look at the truth in regard to these innumerable sackings that are claimed to have taken place. On the latest figures available, the number of retrenchments from the Public Works Department were, up to Friday, the 3rd July, 153; and out of that number 77 were registered for employment. Jobs were found for 60. During that same period 72 men resigned their positions voluntarily.

The Hon. J. J. Garrigan: Because they had no sense of security.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: They would not have resigned unless they had other jobs to go to, and they certainly have not registered as unemployed, so I repeat that Mr. Strickland's statement was a gross exaggeration.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Tell us what happened to the other 70.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: There are only 17 not accounted for—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member should ignore interjections.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: Compare that with the 200 employees who were dismissed by the previous Government. Mr. Strickland said that the circumstances in the two cases were quite different, because the previous Government did not have the money with which to pay the men. I say that the present Government would very soon be in the same boat if it did not revert to a system of contract. What is the use of keeping men on until they have to be dismissed because we cannot pay them? That was the position of the previous Government, in the words of Mr. Strickland. I think gross exaggerations of that sort by members of the Opposition are not in the best interests of the State.

Any responsible Government must have some consideration for the taxpayer and cannot consider only its employees, thus running the finances of the State to a stage where a couple of hundred men have to be dismissed because money with which to pay them can no longer be found. I do not think that any Government would be following a sound policy in doing that, yet Mr. Strickland complains because the present Government has reverted to a system of contract in preference to the system of day labour. The present Government has done that deliberately as part of its policy to try to better the financial position of the State, and there is no getting away from that.

I am convinced that eventually the Government's policy will prove to be to the benefit of the State. There is little doubt in my mind, on that score, and I think most of the taxpayers of the State will agree with that view. Mr. Strickland also made reference to an article that appeared in *The West Australian* of the 13th March, wherein—in the words of Mr. Strickland—the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, was stated to have said that he would not sack employees or close down State trading concerns. That is correct. The then Leader of the Opposition—now the Premier—did make that statement in reference to State trading concerns. It was made in answer to the propaganda of the Labour Party at election time, to the effect that if the Liberals were elected to

power they would close the State trading concerns and throw all those employees out of work.

The statement was made to refute the propaganda of the Labour Party, because it is not the intention of the present Government to close down the State trading concerns. Certainly we will sell them, if we get the opportunity to do so, with benefit to the State. The Government makes no bones about that, and it made the position abundantly clear at the election. I would say there was not one Liberal member who spoke on the platform at the election, who did not make that statement.

As for closing down the State trading concerns and throwing people out of work, such a statement was never made, nor is it the intention of the present Government—

The Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Then what is going on at the State Engineering Works?

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: The hon. member seems to know more than I do about that, so perhaps we will hear from him. When moving this amendment, Mr. Strickland also complained that perhaps eventually as many as 2,000 men would be retrenched. That may be so, but on the evidence of what has already taken place, that does not mean they will be thrown on the labour market, because I believe the Government's present policy is such as will create plenty of jobs for them. I would like to remind Mr. Strickland that what the Government has done is very much in line with what he did in reducing the number of employees in the railways.

The last figures that I can recall as being quoted in this House, while Mr. Strickland was Minister for Railways, showed that the number of employees in the Railway Department at that stage had been reduced by, I think, 830.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: But they were not sacked.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: I am not going to complain about that, and I commend Mr. Strickland for the action he took at that time, because the railways were in such a state that he was doing the right thing by dismissing those men—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: There were no dismissals.

The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: I agree that there were no dismissals; the hon. member got rid of the men by more subtle means, although the result was the same and there were 830 fewer men employed by the Railway Department. The present Government's policy in regard to P.W.D. workers is not much different from that of the hon. member's in regard to railways. It is a policy to try to improve the finances of the State and to place matters on a better financial footing, as a

system of contracts will undoubtedly do. I leave it at that. I believe that Mr. Strickland, in his accusations in relation to the so-called sackings, tried to make a mountain out of a molehill.

THE HON. R. F. HUTCHISON (Suburban—on amendment) [4.58]: In speaking to the amendment, and in supporting this motion of censure, I regret having to contradict the previous speaker on a few points. So far as I understand the position, the number of men in the Railway Department was reduced only by natural wastage through men retiring, leaving for other jobs or perhaps dying. No men were sacked from the railways, and that was the policy of the previous Government. It was quite a humane policy and did not put men out of work to walk the streets—as is being done now—with no chance of finding other jobs.

The present position has come about largely because of the campaign, by means of the Press and pamphlets, prior to the election. There is no doubt that the people of Western Australia were misled by the propaganda of the Liberal Party, which often had no relation to the truth. I read some of that propaganda and it was as far from the truth as one could imagine. The Liberal Party misled the people into voting for its candidates and electing the present Government. In electing the Government which is now in office I believe the people of this State sowed the wind, and they are already beginning to reap the whirlwind of adversity.

The Brand-Watts Government has a policy, and claims that it has a mandate from the people. In politics one does not complain about any Government having a policy, but the mandate in this instance is rather questionable.

I am complaining about the way this Government is implementing its policy. In spite of the assurances given by members of the Government, we are seeing put into operation one of the most unconscionable acts ever perpetrated by any body of men; this assumption of power over people by use of the ballot box and the using of that power for political gain. The haste of the Government is unseemly, and at the expense of those very people who possibly could have voted for them and those who, connected with business in the normal way, have found that the sale of their commodities has dropped off as a result of the irresponsible showmanship of the Government in denuding the aggregate amount of wages paid to those people. As a natural consequence, it has also stopped this money from circulating to the financial avenues.

As previous Labour speakers have said, it is a cruel and senseless action. I intend to back up those words. The Government's action will deprive men of their daily bread and impose the degradation of unemployment on them without any real reason.

It will put fear into the hearts of the mothers and children of this State. Surely this is not the action of responsible men! On the contrary, it is a cowardly action! To impose mental strain and worry on the workers who create the wealth of this country is to indulge in an act that should not be tolerated by any society in an atomic age.

Such a state of affairs should belong to the dark ages of illiteracy and serfdom, and not to the conditions that we should experience in 1959, when we speak of free education and free universities for the people. Justice is what we ask. In opposing this move I think the members of the Labour Party are right in every way. They should be praised for protesting as vigorously as they can against the unseemly haste of a Government that has assumed office by an extremely small mandate; of a Government that has brought trouble and misery to the people of this State in the first weeks of its assuming office.

Why, supposing the Government had a mandate, could it not have approached this matter in a practicable way? Why could it not have called tenders in the normal way, making a stipulation that the successful tenderers should employ the P.W.D. workmen, instead of dispensing with their services? If this had been done it would have saved many families undeserved suffering and hardship. That is the reason why I say the Government's action is unconscionable.

During the last sitting of this House reference was made by the Minister for Mines to the sacking of some teachers by the last Government. I understand, however, that this was a departmental action, as a result of negotiations between the Education Department and the Treasury. Without referring to the Minister, someone in the department evidently blundered, because most of the teachers concerned were reinstated. Also, as I interjected the other evening, those teachers were not bread-winners in the same sense as the P.W.D. men who have been sacked by the Government.

When the Hawke Government was forced to retrench some men, it was not done in the wanton manner in which this Government has acted, nor was it for the same reason. The Hawke Government was forced to take the step it did because of the lack of finance from the Liberal Government led by Mr. Menzies. That Government refused to accede to a request to grant extra finance to relieve the unemployment position in this State at the time. Yet, millions were being spent wantonly on unnecessary defence equipment and other material.

Surely the Government is aware of the snowballing effect its brutal action, in sacking men willy-nilly from the P.W.D., will have on industry as a whole. The

clothing trades are already feeling the pinch. They are in a deplorable state. By supporting the Brand-Watts Government, the Press cannot bolster up a false sense of security among the community.

The PRESIDENT: I draw the hon. member's attention to Standing Order No. 381 which states that no member shall read his speech.

The Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I am not reading my speech. I have only notes and I will show them to the President if he so desires. I know it is not very pleasing to the members of the Government to hear the truth spoken against them. Reference was also made to the Hawke Government retrenching some men from the Public Works Department when it was in office. However, I am protesting against the manner in which these men were dismissed by the Government and the reasons given. The Hawke Government retrenched men due to a lack of finance and, although Mr. Hawke did his best to obtain assistance from the Commonwealth Government to keep those men in work, politics, of course, was played at a high level and he was forced to retrench the men.

This Government, however, is trying to destroy State enterprise by the way it thinks best; namely, by dismissing these men. From the figures I have checked I have found that June, 1959, has shown a greater fall in trade among the business community than has any other June, except those months in the depression years. This is the worst June ever. The clothing trade is very depressed. Workers in that industry are leaving it, and those remaining in it have been advised to leave because the leaders of the industry can see nothing but ill effects resulting from the Government's move. This view is also taken by other leaders in various trades.

The Labour Party had a good mandate, and when it was in office it built up State enterprise slowly and painstakingly for the benefit of the masses of the people it represented. That is its policy, and it has proved to be of benefit to the State. As a result of the policy it implemented, the Hawke Government introduced legislation to protect those who could not protect themselves against the people who represent organised capital. Such action was extremely necessary. We know that organised capital is ruthless unless controlled by law. The platform of the Labour Party is to ensure that the economy of the State flows along those channels which will benefit the people as a whole. Its policy is also to ensure security for those workers who, as I have said before, create the wealth of the nation.

This is the only way the Labour Party can carry out its humanitarian enterprises. The State trading concerns and

the Public Works Department maintain a high standard of workmanship in the building industry, and they safeguard good working conditions. As a result they raise the standard of living of their employees and create happiness in greater measure than otherwise in the lives of their workmen and their families.

After all, this is the fulcrum from which society in its best sense advances to the ultimate benefit of mankind. Government instrumentalities safeguard Government spending of public money, because there is no monopoly control.

I am speaking from notes which I prepared last night to enable me to speak in respect of the wantonness of the Government in sacking men from the Public Works Department. If any member of the Government would care to come out with me I could take him to some homes in my constituency which is also the constituency of the Minister—and the Minister knows it. These men have mostly risen from the ranks. It is poor compensation for people to know that we stand for the uplifting and security of the worker, when this Government is throwing the workers on the labour market.

I do not know where members of the Government have obtained the idea that only 17 men are out of work. I can tell the Minister that men are getting out of the Public Works Department as quickly as they can while they have a chance of getting another job. In doing so they are losing the security to which they had looked forward. Many of these men are middle aged and have the utmost difficulty in getting other work. Men of this age are just not wanted. That is a cruel thing. There is no doubt that men aged 40 to 45 years are just as good as young men in their twenties, so far as their work is concerned; and, in many cases, they possess more stability. I wonder what would happen in this Chamber if an age limit were placed upon members.

I would like to quote from a small book entitled, *The Fall of the Hawke Government*, by Dr. P. K. Crowley. The Minister has stated that the Government does not intend to do away with Government enterprise and that it is not in a hurry to do anything. Dr. Crowley summed up the position this way, and I think it is true—

The new Liberal-Country coalition Government set about its business with considerable vigour and not inconsiderable haste. Within a fortnight of taking office it had called for an early session of Parliament, it had foreshadowed the end of the Chase Esperance Land Development Scheme and it had appointed a sub-committee to review the Licensing Law. It had also revoked four major directives of the previous Government. On the 14th April *The West Australian* was pleased

to be able to publish the full texts of the original instructions and the new Premier's countermanning orders. In future, competitive tenders would if possible meet Government needs for engineering, building and printing materials, whilst government advertising was "to be effected through the most suitable channels available for the particular purpose."

The PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. member is not going to read the book through.

The Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I understand that if I am an elected member of Parliament I have a perfect right to speak in this Chamber unless you, Sir, say I cannot. In that case, I will ask you, "Why?" I have heard members make longer speeches than mine, although I know mine is not palatable.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must not make a reflection on the Chair as she is treated very well. However, I would point out that Standing Orders prevent her from reading her speech.

The Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Why cannot I quote from the book?

The PRESIDENT: You must not quote the whole book; you may quote from it.

The Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I am reading one chapter.

Point of Order.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: My interpretation, since I have been in Parliament, is that providing I can produce my document to Hansard for verification, I can read anything.

The PRESIDENT: A member cannot read extensively. He may make quotations from printed matter. A member may not read consistently.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Our friend can fight her own battles.

Debate Resumed.

The Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: The quotation continues—

The West Australian looked forward to further measures to "clear the atmosphere", "free the Industrial Field", and "restore private enterprise", and it was not to be disappointed. Tenders were called for the construction of new railway waggons, and the Unfair Trading Commissioner was notified that his services would not be required for much longer. At the annual meeting of Rugby Portland Cement (Sydney Bulletin 13/5), whose subsidiary in Western Australia, Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd., had been one of the first organisations to be declared an unfair trader, the Chairman confidently forecast that the State would not enjoy "a more soundly based economy and a more competent administration".

That is a very worthy beginning, in view of what is now taking place!

I say that the Government has acted hastily. I say it has acted unconscionably, because the throwing of men out of work is a cruel action. There was no need for it. Had the Government stated that its policy was not to throw men out of work, I would not quarrel with it; but it certainly was not elected to start immediately, sacking men, willy-nilly, thereby putting them on the labour market.

In the earlier centuries when men were on the land, they were able to grow their own food requirements, but, as I have pointed out, in our industrialised age, a man cannot live for a fortnight without facing a shortage of food and ill health if he is receiving no wages.

There is no need for this state of affairs. The Government could have called tenders and told the successful tenderers that the names of men who were being put off could be supplied; and the Government could have requested that those men be placed in employment. No one would quarrel with that. What does this Government care about unemployed men and human suffering? Nothing! It never has and never will. It has a capitalistic policy.

While the Labour Party is represented in this Chamber, we will bring to the notice of the people of Western Australia, as often as we can, the fact that the Government merited this motion of censure; which I support with all the vigour I can put into my voice.

THE HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East—on amendment) [5.18]: I would like to protest against the hasty action of the Government. Mr. Willmott, when speaking, stated that the Government had promptly carried out its mandate. In the opinion of my party, it was too prompt. It would be very nice if the members comprising the Government had always honoured a mandate to enable a Government to carry out what it was elected to do. The previous Government was elected by a much larger majority than the present Government. Yet, did members in this Chamber say that because the previous Government had a big majority, it had a mandate to improve workers' compensation and, therefore, the measure would pass through this House? Did they say that the previous Government had a mandate to permit the State Insurance Office to grant greater cover? No. They do not always honour a mandate, either quickly or at all. The present Government states that it has a mandate to act hastily and upset the order that has prevailed, but the mandate was decided on the result of one seat.

The Public Works Department has a very efficient organised work force. It has architects and supervisors who have done efficient work. No one can state that work

done by the Public Works Department under the day labour system has been inefficient. I have not heard it said by anyone that the work is poor. Yet, after only a few weeks in office the Government has upset this order.

The Government has told us that very few men have been sacked and that others have left. What would we do if we worked with the Public Works Department? We would hastily get out before we were put out, and endeavour to get another job. But many of these men have not foreseen the day when they would be so readily put on the labour market. As a result, they have contracted to buy homes and various things. Suddenly they find the position is upset. A number of these people will have to go to the country and seek employment, and the contracts they have entered into will have to be set aside.

Unfortunately, too, a good many of these men are middle-aged and over, and it is not easy for them to get a job. I know a few of them. When they apply for work they are told, "You are not wanted." Many Government departments—the Railways included—say, "We will not consider anyone who is over 45 years of age, for permanent employment." Casuals are day to day men who can be put off at a moment's notice.

I say again that it has not been claimed that the work done by the day labour force has been inefficient; and I have not heard any authoritative statement that it has been so much more costly than contract work. I have not heard anyone say that a particular building cost £100,000 more to construct than if it had been built by contract, but I have heard loose statements made. I have heard no definite assertions that such and such a building would have been built more cheaply, by so many thousand pounds, had it been constructed by contract.

We must remember, too, that when this Government decided to upset the then existing orderly arrangement, and the day labour force, it did so at a time which is recognised as the worst time of the year—the beginning of the winter when, every year, we have seasonal unemployment and difficulty in securing jobs. Yet, the Government did not say, "We will wait until harvest, or until September or October, or until things improve a bit." The Government said it would set about doing this immediately, and would implement what is called a mandate, even though that mandate was given by a slender majority, and in respect to which the Government has been assisted by two Independent members.

The Government could have waited for a more opportune time; it could have waited until later in the year and carried out its desires more gradually. Whilst

this would have been distasteful, the impact, perhaps, would not have been so severe as it is now.

I come now to the second portion of the censure motion which protests against single unemployed men being deprived of supplementary help. A single unemployed man receives relief totalling £3 5s. a week. Many of them—I know a few myself—pay £2 a week for a room, and this leaves very little—£1 5s.—on which to live. Even if a man pays only 30s. a week for a cheaper room, he still has very little on which to live.

A few of these people have told me that they almost lived on the 17s. 6d. that the State Government gave. They, therefore, were deprived of something genuinely worth while when this amount was taken from them. The men I have spoken to are around the 60 mark, and are too old to be employed around the town, or anywhere else. They are asked their age, and when they say, "I am 59," they are told, "Sorry. You are too old."

But, on the other side of the ledger, these men are too young to be recognised for the age pension of £4 7s. 6d. a week. They are too young to receive that pension, and they are too old to be permanently or casually employed. So, they are given something in between—the amount of £3 7s. 6d.—which is £1 a week less than an older man has to live on. They, therefore, suffer a most definite hardship. How would members like to live for a week, or even half a week, on £3 7s. 6d.? Many would not like to live for one day on that amount.

This Government deserves the most sincere censure. Therefore, I endorse the amendment moved by Mr. Strickland, and I add my protest to those already expressed.

THE HON. R. THOMPSON (West—on amendment) [5.25]: I know it is usual for a new member to make his opening, or maiden speech, on the Address-in-reply debate, but I feel forced to speak at this stage, because of the position brought about by the action of an irresponsible Government. This has forced me to speak to the amendment. My thanks for the courtesies that have been afforded to me, I shall leave until I speak on the Address-in-reply debate.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member can speak to the Address-in-reply, afterwards.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You have made your maiden speech sitting down.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I thank you, Mr. President. I realise that I am speaking on a controversial subject and, therefore, I can expect some criticism. But I assure the Minister for Mines that I have not made my maiden speech sitting down, as he claimed. The Minister, in his speech on Thursday last, said that some of the Public Works Department staff had come

from private enterprise. Certainly, some portions of his remarks are correct, but they are not substantially correct.

But why did these people leave private enterprise to go to the Public Works Department? The position was brought about, firstly, because the work at Kwinana shut down, and private enterprise scrapped labour on that occasion. Those workers were placed on the labour market, and it was the Government's responsibility to find employment for them.

That is one reason why men went to the Public Works Department; and the other is that the Menzies Government overloaded the country with migrants that we could ill-afford to have, because of our economic position. This forced the State Government to build up the Public Works Department staff and take on work to ensure that the majority of people in Western Australia were assured of a decent living standard.

I now come to a statement made by the present Premier (Mr. Brand). Mr. Willmott picked out small clauses that were conducive to his argument; but what did Mr. Brand say on the 13th of March? Evidently it was an unlucky day for Mr. Brand, because this is what he said—

The Hawke Government is making absurd charges that Liberal intentions are to close all State trading concerns, fire their employees, reduce wages and lengthen working hours. We will fire nobody nor close any concerns down. He finishes up by saying—

Their 6,300 personnel will remain in their jobs as far as the Government would be concerned.

It took him only a couple of weeks after getting into office, to change his mind. I say that was an act of sheer hypocrisy.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: In connection with which State trading concern did he change his mind?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: He has changed his mind in respect to his whole policy; and I will tell the hon. member about that a little later. If he has changed his mind about State trading concerns, I will be much surprised. It will only be this censure motion that will make him change his mind and decide not to get rid of them. In *The West Australian* of the 18th March, appears a Liberal Party advertisement in which the party pledges itself—

To restore full employment with high wages and good working conditions.

Evidently they are not going to honour that pledge because, as a kid back in the depression days, I can remember seeing the same propaganda put out by the Liberal Government. It did not last very long, either.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Then that will make you happy.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I would like to know what depths this Tory clique is going to plumb before it is pulled into gear by the electors of Western Australia. Malicious lies have been printed, and the workers have been foiled and fooled into voting for this Liberal Government. There is no doubt about it; a percentage of the voters—the workers—returned this Government to power. But it claims to have a mandate to govern.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: These people have minds of their own. They are able to vote as they like.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Government has a mandate but it has not been given to the Government by a majority of the electors of Western Australia; this mandate has been given by a handful of D.L.P. supporters, some of whom are employed in the Public Works Department. Believe me, they are now running to us fellows, and they are very sick and sorry for the attitude they took on the occasion of the last election!

The Government is outspoken in the fact that it believes that tenders should be called for all work. I would like to know whether the Government intends the Public Works Department to tender also, because I feel sure the quality and standard of work performed by workers in the Public Works Department far surpasses anything that private enterprise can do.

I was at the opening of a hospital in South Perth only a couple of weeks ago and one of the principal speakers praised the Public Works Department, and Mr. Clare, from the Architectural division, for the fine job they had done in completing such a wonderful hospital.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: And that was a Liberal Minister!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Not very often does one hear remarks like that, or such compliments paid, especially when everyone knows that building by the Public Works Department is against the present Government's policy.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is said at every opening.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Not when there is a Liberal Government. I would refer to *The West Australian* of Saturday, the 28th February, which reported the Deputy Premier's policy speech. With regard to State trading concerns, the Deputy Premier said that the Country Party believed that as this State was always short of money for many of its essential services, it could not involve its loan funds in the development of State trading concerns; therefore, his party proposed to set its face against any further State trading concerns and to encourage private capital instead.

I consider that the Deputy Premier was quite honest. He does not say, as the Press has said from time to time, that the Government of the day will sell any State trading concerns for which it can get a reasonable price. The only thing that the Deputy Premier mentioned was that State hotels should be sold. Now let us have a look at some of the tripe—and that is all it is—that has been pushed out by the worker's friend, L. L. Carter, the Director of the W.A. Trade Bureau. In one of his statements he said—

Irrespective of what Government is returned to power on March 21st we will see that it does away with State trading concerns and public tenders are called for everything.

Thousands of pounds—that is assuming that *The West Australian* charged for these advertisements—must have been spent by these people. But as soon as this Government is returned to power, Mr. Carter goes deaf, dumb and blind; we have not heard anything from him since then. It is obvious to everybody that Mr. Carter is tied up with the Liberal-Tory mob despite the fact that he claims to be responsible to no one. I say that he and his organisation are the financiers of the Liberal Party.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: How silly can you get!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I do not know; I cannot answer the hon. member's question. He should know. In one of these articles in the Press, Mr. Carter says that everyone must be quite sure how he and his organisation feel about the North-West shipping service. He said—

We have never campaigned for its closure. No sensible businessman would want this line, subsidised by the Commonwealth, to perish, but we'll fight every future Government until the shipping service, railways and all trading concerns are run like any other properly conducted business, with complete, separate, audited balance sheets so that we, the taxpayers, can see what is going on.

Mr. Carter ought to cast his mind back to the days when the previous Liberal Government was in power—when the State Shipping Service had the most obsolete ships on the Australian coastline. I know, because I worked on them, and it took a Labour Government, when it went back into office, to modernise the fleet. I ask Country Party members: Would they want to see the shipping service sold? Of course they would not. What would happen if it were sold? At present there is a lot of nosing about going on in the State Shipping Service by the Adelaide Steamship Co. That company is vitally interested in the State Shipping Service and the State Engineering Works. I would say that firm probably wants to buy the shipping organisation.

What will happen if this company, or any other company, buys the State Shipping Service? Up will go the freights; higher Commonwealth subsidies will be asked for; and higher State subsidies will be asked for. So, members can see that it will not be in the best interests of this State to interfere in any way with the State Shipping Service. After all, for whom does the State Shipping Service act? What is its purpose? It does not serve the workers. It serves the people—and some of them are little monopolies—who control the North-West. I agree that the North-West has to be developed; and therefore I agree that the State Shipping Service should still function in the same way as it has been functioning for years, giving a service to the people who wish to go North and develop that large area of our State.

I do not believe that there should be any interference with the State Engineering Works at present, although I have been told that the Adelaide Steamship Co. is vitally interested in this organisation, too. Let us have a look at what happens there. Time and again it has been reported to me, by people who work at the State Engineering Works, that tenders have been let to private enterprise—and some of them by the Labour Government when it was in power—for certain work to be done. These private contractors have then sub-contracted for these particular articles and these sub-contractors have approached the State Engineering Works to have the work done. It is obvious that private enterprise must be getting a big rake-off.

When the State Engineering Works does a job it does the work to a specified standard and obviously at a cheaper rate than the contractor who re-lets the contract, or the sub-contractor, can do it, because both the contractor and his sub-contractor make a profit out of it.

The day labour question is most vital at the moment. Only last Sunday I was called to a house in Willagee Park. I am sure all members will know the type of house to which I am referring—it is one of the McLarty-Watts evictee type of home which people had to purchase or be evicted on to the streets. These houses were built by private contractors; some, I believe on the cost-plus basis. This particular house is in Jago-st. It is a very clean neat home, and one morning the good lady was sweeping the kitchen and noticed sand on the floor by the skirting board. She inspected the board and on pushing it with her finger found there was nothing left of the wood—her finger went straight through it. She called her husband who pulled up the skirting board and down fell two sheets of asbestos.

The frame work of that home had, contrary to the specifications, been built of karri, by a private contractor. If the Minister for Housing would like to know the contractor's name I can give it to him.

The Hon. J. M. Thomson: Don't you think the supervisor must have been slack to allow that to happen?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I do not know; it was built in the time of the McLarty-Watts Government, and I do not know what sort of supervisors they had in those days. It is an interesting question.

The Hon. J. M. Thomson: It is.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I wonder if those supervisors could tell us something about the baths, sinks, copper piping, and so on that disappeared from the 300 or 400 Austrian homes bought by the McLarty-Watts Government? We will have to check up on that.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Sarcasm will not get you anywhere. Probably the same supervisors are still employed, and were employed during the time of the Labour Government. Why poke mullock at Government employees?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I am not poking mullock at Government employees.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It sounds like it to me.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You have the syrex wasp.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: In my speech on the Address-in-reply, I intend to tell a few home truths to my friends in the Country Party so they will realise what private enterprise does and what the shipping cartels do with the commodities which are very dear to people in the country.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: The slaughtered innocents!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Over the last 12 years I have seen all these things go on. I think the Country Party members here will decide which way the vote on this question shall go. We know that members of the L.C.L. have made up their minds; but, in view of their leader's policy speech, and in view of the work that people in the country have had done by the Public Works Department over many years, would Country Party members want to see scrapped such undertakings as the State Engineering Works, the State Electricity Commission, the Main Roads Department and, of course, the Railways? What would their constituents think of them if they supported such a move?

The Hon. L. C. Diver: Your Government started scrapping these organisations.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: That is possibly so, but it was done because the Government was short of funds. When it had the money, however, it employed everyone who sought employment. I am sure the

constituents in the country will be asking a lot of questions as to why these bodies are not forging ahead.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: You leave us to worry about that.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: But I would not like to see the hon. member, or his constituents, worry about it; I want to see the public works continue; I want to see the country progress. Reference was made a short while ago to the coalition Government. I feel sure the members of the Country Party are very conscious of the fact that the Liberal Party is out to swallow them up.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: What about getting on to the amendment?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: A member of the Minister's party raised this matter. There was an announcement recently that the Country Party would be swallowed up by the Liberal Party. It is obvious that in the next election which takes place for the Legislative Council we will see every Country Party member opposed by a member of the Liberal and Country League. I ask members of the Country Party to vote on this amendment in accordance with their conscience; to vote in a manner in which their electors would wish them to vote.

Reference was made by members on the other side of the House to the supplementary payments of 17s. 6d. made to single unemployed. One of the first acts of this Government was to discontinue that payment. Of course we all know why that payment was discontinued; it was discontinued because of a few people who were working in industry and who would come along and collect their 17s. 6d. even though they were not entitled to it. In any part of the world one gets that type of person; the type who will do something which will harm the great majority.

It is possible that 10,000 payments were made in two years. These payments were granted by the Hawke Government, because Mr. Hawke realised that the same opportunity did not exist here as obtained for workers in the Eastern States, where larger industries, in which they could find employment, were available. It was for that reason that he granted this payment; and it is most unjust that it should have been taken away from these people.

I would challenge any member in this House to try to live on the £3 5s. per week. If any member is prepared to do so, I will be prepared to do the same. I am sure, however, that no person here would be able to do it. I do not know whether the Minister responsible, ever had a look at the type of person who was collecting this money. These people were not professional unemployed, nor were they drunks. The majority of the 480 that I viewed on the last day that payments were made, were dressed as well as they could afford to be;

they were clean and neat people, from decent homes, who could not find employment because private industry would not employ them.

The Hon L. C. Diver: Did they go to the country?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: There were 100 odd girls between the ages of 16 and 21 who could not be found employment in the country. I am sure that most of the young fellows would have gone to the country had there been employment available for them, but I think at that time there was no such employment available in the country.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: The position was aggravated by married women taking their jobs.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I believe in full employment.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: So do I.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I would not deny any person the right to work if he or she desired to do so. There must have been some reason for married women seeking work; it must surely have been because of economic circumstances. I do not think any woman would want to go out to work if her husband were bringing back sufficient for their needs. Working wives are usually the result of the economic circumstances that prevail in the country at the time.

Even though the Country Party members have said that they can look after their own affairs, another point they must appreciate is that if the axe does start to fall—and it is not a very big “if”—on Government-controlled establishments, one of the first to be affected will, perhaps, be the abattoirs at Robbs Jetty. Members of the Country Party should have a look at that. Rumours have been rife that two firms are making extensive inquiries with respect to the abattoirs at Robbs Jetty. If this establishment were handed over to private enterprise, killing charges would rise, and members would lose access to, perhaps, the biggest freezers in Western Australia which cater for their meat, apples, pears, etc.

That is another feature which I do not think the Country Party will tolerate once the Government really goes into action with its slaughter. The amendment should be carried. As I said before, the action that has been taken by the Government is a thoroughly irresponsible one. It has put people out of work, and has brought hardship to bear on their families, particularly now that the winter months are with us. It will not augur well for the Government, because the workers have a good memory.

On motion by the Hon. G. E. Jeffery, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.