

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING: It is to be used for asparagus growing, to take the place of an area that will be going out of production. After a plantation has been producing for from twelve to fifteen years it has outlived its commercial and economic usefulness.

Colonel the Hon. H. J. R. CLAYTON: From that angle, I think the bill would be readily acceptable to hon. members on this side of the Chamber. However, I should like confirmation on one further point. Though technically the land is being transferred to a person, it is to be transferred to a co-operative society that consists of many people. Under normal circumstances, they would be debarred from holding an area in excess of the land they already have. I take it that if the co-operative society decides to dispose of its land, this bill will ensure that there is no possibility of a private person who might buy it receiving an area in excess of a home-maintenance area.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING: That is so. This bill applies only to this transaction.

Colonel the Hon. H. J. R. CLAYTON: In those circumstances, I can see no objection to the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

COMMITTEE AND ADOPTION OF REPORT

Bill reported from Committee without amendment, and report adopted, on motions by the Hon. R. R. Downing.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by the Hon. R. R. Downing) agreed to:

That this House, at its rising today, do adjourn until Wednesday next.

ADJOURNMENT

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.2]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

Business has not been transacted in another place as expeditiously as I had expected and I could not expect with any degree of

confidence that the House would have legislation to deal with before next Wednesday. However, by then the General Loan Account Appropriation Bill and the Companies (Amendment) Bill at least should be available for consideration by hon. members.

House adjourned at 5.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 11 November, 1959

Questions without Notice—Personal Explanation (Power Coaching College)—Personal Explanation (Parliamentary Privilege)—Questions without Notice—Leave of Absence—Crown Lands (Removal of Restriction on Transfer) Bill (third reading)—Racing (Amendment) Bill (third reading)—Loan Estimates, 1959-1960—Bills Returned—Woodenbong Public Hall—Loan Estimates, 1959-1960—Adjournment (Rate Concessions to Pensioners).

Mr. Speaker took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

The Prayer was read.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

LANDRACE PIGS

Mr. LEWIS: I ask the Minister for Agriculture whether a few weeks ago he warned prospective purchasers of pigs against paying high prices for the Landrace breed of pig. Is it a fact that usually stud stock sales are conducted on the basis of supply and demand and that it is most unusual for a Minister to issue warnings about prices? Is it a fact, also, that an organisation known as the Landrace Pigbreeders' Association has expressed much resentment about the Minister's statement? If these are facts, will the Minister refrain in future from making any comment that might affect the sales of stud stock.

Mr. R. B. NOTT: It is a fact that about a fortnight ago in a press statement I warned bacon producers against paying what the hon. member terms high prices for Landrace pigs. I pointed out in that statement that in England high prices had for a while been paid for these pigs and that suddenly they had fallen to the normal price level. I considered, because the pig

industry is not in a very sound position, that it was my duty to make the statement that was published. I pointed out to bacon producers that they would have to weigh the admitted advantages of Landrace pigs against the high prices that they would have to pay for them. I do not hesitate to tell the hon. member for Wollondilly that if I believe the circumstances warrant it, I shall not refrain from making comments upon any matter affecting the rural community. I consider that the comments I made about Landrace pigs were fully warranted.

Mr. ROBINSON: As a supplementary question I ask the Minister whether the Landrace is a comparatively new breed of pig in New South Wales. Is it a fact, too, that in past years livestock has been imported by the Department of Agriculture to assist the development of the various breeds? If these are facts will the Minister consider the introduction by his department of stud Landrace pigs so that they may be available at a lower price to pig raisers in this State?

Mr. R. B. NOTT: I shall give consideration to the request of the hon. member for Casino. The late Hon. E. H. Graham on his visit overseas in 1955 purchased a number of stud animals. Since then no stock has been imported from overseas by the Department of Agriculture. The Landrace is a comparatively new breed of pig and wherever possible the Department of Agriculture is willing to assist primary producers and if it can help in the way suggested by the hon. member I assure him that full consideration will be given to his request.

RAILWAY BRAKE BLOCKS

Mr. STEWART: I ask the Minister for Transport whether recently because of the introduction of a Ferodo type in place of cast-iron brake blocks, the foundry at the Civic Railway Workshops, Newcastle, closed. Was it considered that the dust from the cast-iron blocks damaged electric motors? Is it a fact that because of the damage done to wheels by the new blocks, the department has reverted to the use of cast-iron blocks? If these are facts will the Minister say where these cast-iron blocks are being manufactured and whether he will

give serious consideration to having the blocks cast at the Civic Railway Workshops foundry, as was done in the past?

Mr. ENTICKNAP: It is true that the Department of Railways changed from cast-iron to composition brake blocks for use on rolling stock. I am sorry to say that the foundry at the Civic Railway Workshops was closed as a result. The composition blocks are not causing considerable damage to wheels and it is not a fact that the department is reverting to the use of cast-iron blocks. Rather, the contrary is true. The Department of Railways is using composition blocks extensively on all classes of vehicles. I am sorry about the closure of the foundry at the workshops, but I am afraid that nothing can be done to overcome that problem. The department does not propose to revert to cast-iron brake blocks and the use of non-metallic brake blocks has been extended to multiple-unit electric cars. They will be fitted to steam rolling stock, rail motor cars and inter-urban cars.

MEETINGS ON LICENSED PREMISES

Mr. GRIFFITH: I ask the Assistant Minister representing the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice whether clause 134c of the Liquor Act, supported by a ruling of the Full Court, prevents sub-branches of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia from holding their meetings on licensed club premises. Does this prohibition apply to women's auxiliaries, branches of Legacy, the Red Cross and pension organisations assisted by the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia? If these are facts, will the Minister take the necessary measures to correct these obvious anomalies in the Liquor Act?

Mr. MANNIX: I shall ascertain whether those are the facts and have the matter examined.

MARYVALE-SANDY HOLLOW RAILWAY

Mr. PUNCH: I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether some time ago I suggested that, to ascertain the cost of completing the Maryvale-Sandy Hollow railway, the Government should invite

tenders from large construction firms. Is it a fact that if this method were adopted the line could be completed cheaper and more quickly? If these are facts, will the Premier say whether the Government has yet considered my suggestion? If it has not, will he investigate my proposals and have a full survey made?

Mr. HEFFRON: I take it that this question was directed to my predecessor.

Mr. PUNCH: I mentioned it in my maiden speech.

Mr. HEFFRON: I do not know whether any investigations have been made, but I promise the hon. member that I shall make inquiries and let him know what has been done. I shall consider, also, the last part of his question concerning a survey.

Mr. L. M. NOTT: I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether it has been stated many times that completion of the Maryvale-Sandy Hollow railway would be of immense value to Australia's defence. If so, will the Premier ask the Prime Minister whether the Federal Government will, for defence purposes, contribute to the completion of this line?

Mr. HEFFRON: I shall be happy to invite the Prime Minister's attention to the hon. member's question and to ascertain from him the Federal Government's attitude in the matter.

RING-ROAD SYSTEM IN PARRAMATTA

Mr. MAHONEY: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways whether the Council of the City of Parramatta is constructing a ring-road system round the centre of the city. Is it a fact that one of the vital points in this system is the old bridge in O'Connell Street? If these are facts, will the Minister confer with the Minister for Public Works in an attempt to expedite reconstruction of this bridge?

Mr. HILLS: I am aware that the Council of the City of Parramatta has adopted a modern approach in solving some of its traffic problems. I am aware, also, that a ring-road system has been accepted as a solution of some of the problems of traffic congestion that occur in modern cities

throughout the world. I shall have inquiries made about the reconstruction of this bridge and after conferring with my colleague I will give the hon. member a further reply.

MENTAL HOSPITALS

Mr. ASKIN: I ask the Minister for Health whether it is a fact that, because of a strike by male and female mental nurses in protest against failure to have their claims for increased wages and better working conditions recognised, from 6.30 a.m. tomorrow fourteen State mental institutions will have skeleton staffs only. If so, will the Minister inform the House what action the Government is taking to resolve this distressing and presumably dangerous situation?

Mr. SHEAHAN: I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will be glad to hear that the facts of this matter are that there has been no failure by the Government regarding employment in the mental hospitals. I am not aware that a strike has been proposed, and I have been informed by my officers that nothing has been officially conveyed by any officer of the union, or by any person involved, except a message sent to me this morning by the Under-secretary of the Department of Health to the effect that a compulsory conference has been called.

At all times the facilities of the arbitration and conciliation system have been open to all government employees. The Public Service Board is the employing authority for mental nurses. That board has power, after negotiation, to enter into an arrangement or an agreement with the unions. If the negotiations fail or if there is a failure to negotiate, the proper procedure for the unions is to approach a conciliation commissioner or arbitration court. The conciliation and arbitration machinery is available to all the members of the unions concerned, but no official information about the matter has been conveyed to me by the officers of the unions. I hope that the conference that has been called for this afternoon will be successful in ending what can be described only as a calamitous state of affairs involving people in responsible positions looking after the

mentally ill. If the nurses take the action mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition when the arbitration court is available to resolve their differences, it certainly is a calamitous state of affairs.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition suggests that there has been some failure on my part, but not in any circumstances would I assume the obligations of a wage-fixing tribunal or of an appellate tribunal. I would not interfere with the machinery of conciliation and arbitration. I hope that wiser counsels will prevail in the interests not only of the patients but also of the employees. I understand that at the moment, in an attempt to reach a settlement, several officers of my department are engaged in a conference, and I ask the hon. member not to suggest that the Government has been responsible for this deplorable state of affairs. The Government does not want to interfere at any time with the due processes of the conciliation and arbitration system of this State and in that respect I give the Leader of the Opposition the same assurance that I gave to hon. members when I first became a Minister—that I would refuse to become a pawn in the game for anyone; I do so in this instance.

ESCAPES FROM PRISONS

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Has the Premier's attention been drawn to an article that appeared in this afternoon's press to the effect that the army may be co-opted to aid the police in apprehending the fugitive from justice, Simmonds? Is it a fact that many army units are completely untrained in police detection work? Is it a fact, also, that in their exuberance armed soldiers could kill or maim innocent civilians? If these are facts, will the Premier give an undertaking that he will not allow the army to usurp the functions of the New South Wales police force?

Mr. HEFFRON: I have not yet read this afternoon's newspapers, so my information on this matter may not be quite up to date. I do not know of any suggestion to turn out the army to help capture Simmonds. All I want to say is, as I said yesterday, that I have the utmost faith both in the leadership and the rank and file of

the New South Wales police. The police force is a highly-trained body comparable to the best police forces anywhere in the world, and it is entrusted with the task of apprehending a dangerous and very resourceful person. I am not going to say that the police have failed in their duty because they have not yet done so. As late as last Friday I saw them in the bush, where they were hunting for the escapee. I passed through the various road blocks, and so on. I knew that everything possible was being done. I knew, too, that on those wet nights when other hon. members and I were at home in our beds these members of the police force were tracking down Simmonds in country that was infested with snakes, leeches, and so on. They were doing this because it was their duty to do it, and they are still doing it. While they are willing to do their duty and while the leadership is as it is today, I should refuse to have them interfered with in any way. With very great respect to the members of the fighting services I say that we have no intention of asking them to take part in work of this kind. It is a responsibility for the police and I believe that the police will prove that they are capable of doing the job that they have been sworn in to do.

Mr. BLACK: As a supplementary question I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether the Australian army is famed for its discipline rather than its exuberance. Is it a fact that, under the law of the land, any member of the army who is guilty of any offence at all is subject to the law? If these are facts, will the Premier rebuke the hon. member for East Hills for his implied slur on the Australian army?

Mr. HEFFRON: I am sure that the hon. member for East Hills, in asking his question—

Mr. DEANE: That is what he said.

Mr. HEFFRON: —did not intend to cast any slur on the boys in the army. When he spoke of the exuberance of young men in the services—

Mr. DEANE: And of shooting innocent bystanders.

Mr. HEFFRON: —what he meant to say was that they would be trying their very utmost and perhaps might not be exercising sufficient discretion in the discharging of their guns. He was not suggesting for a moment that any of our soldiers in training are unsafe when in charge of fire-arms.

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Sometimes when latitude is extended to the House it is regarded and interpreted as weakness. I do not propose to allow this continual series of interjections after a Minister has begun to reply to a question. The hon. member for Neutral Bay asked a question and the Premier is answering it in his own way. In future, if hon. members on either side insist on interrupting and interjecting—many of the interjections being pointless—I propose to be ruthless.

Mr. HEFFRON: I shall conclude by saying, as I said in answer to the earlier question, that I have the utmost faith in the members of our fighting services, but there is no need to bring them into situations like this. If the police asked for their assistance, it would be an entirely different matter. For the time being, the police are handling it and I intend to leave it to them.

RELEASE OF GREEN-BELT LAND

Mr. CROSS: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways whether several weeks ago the Cumberland County Council announced the release of about 14,140 acres of green-belt land, of which it was proposed to release 5,575 acres immediately. Is it a fact that the proposals of the Cumberland County Council have caused much public interest and that many people are anxious to know exactly when these releases will be made? If these are facts, will the Minister exhibit the proposals within the precincts of this Chamber, for the information of hon. members? Also, will he afford hon. members an opportunity of discussing the merits of the proposals, seeing that there has been considerable delay in completing the matter?

Mr. HILLS: In reply to the last portion of the hon. member's question, the proposals of the Cumberland County Council

are available for inspection at the council's offices if any person is anxious to seek information. I have answered a previous question on this matter when I informed the House that the Town and Country Planning Advisory Committee was in the process of examining the recommendations made by the Cumberland County Council. Irrespective of the remarks of the hon. member for Georges River about long delays, I am sure that the House will appreciate that I have not occupied for long the posts of Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways. This is a most important matter involving the release of land, and large amounts of money are involved. Therefore, I will not be rushed into making a decision on such an important and complex problem.

While the recommendations of the committee are being considered, and before the final decisions are made by the Minister, I advise people who might be affected by the release of land to refrain from selling. I do not want it said later that during the time the determinations were being made people disposed of their land, which shortly afterwards appreciated in value as a result of rezoning. The decisions will not be long coming forward, and I advise people not to dispose of their land if they think there is any possibility of its being rezoned.

CHRISTMAS AID TO THE POOR

Mr. STEWART: I ask the Minister for Child Welfare and Minister for Social Welfare whether he will be able to provide funds this Christmas to assist people who are in poor circumstances but not qualified for Commonwealth social service benefits. Is it intended that Christmas cheer will be made available to these needy members of the community?

Mr. HAWKINS: I am happy to be able to inform the hon. member that similar arrangements are being made this year to those made last year to provide assistance for these people, who are not receiving Commonwealth social service benefits. Those registered and in receipt of cash sustenance and food relief from my department on 19th November, will receive double

payment on 3rd December. Those people not registered but who subsequently make successful applications to the department prior to Christmas, will also receive the increased benefit if the circumstances warrant it.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PAPER

Mr. CUTLER: I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether nineteen questions appear on the *Questions and Answers* paper. Is it a fact that nine are in the names of members of the Opposition, two in the name of the hon. member for Waratah, and eight in the names of Government members? Is it a fact, also, that eight of the questions have been asked of the Premier and Minister for Education, one as far back as 19th August? Further, is it a fact that four of these questions were asked of the Minister representing in this House the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, and that they have been unanswered for over a month? Will the Premier and Minister for Education say whether answers will be given to these questions before the House rises for the Christmas recess? If he is not able to give this assurance, will he say whether his heavy duties, as both Premier and Minister for Education, prevent his giving attention to these matters, and whether the delay in the questions asked of the Assistant Minister is attributable to the fact that the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice is not a member of this Chamber?

Mr. HEFFRON: I assure the Leader of the Country Party that my extra duties as Premier have not prevented me from answering those questions, for they were asked of me before I became Premier. Answers to six of those questions have come to hand this afternoon and I assure the hon. member that the rest of the questions will be answered, perhaps within the next day or so.

POWER COACHING COLLEGE

Mr. CHAFFEY: I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether last Wednesday an hon. member invited attention to an article in the *Daily Mirror* dealing with a coaching organisation's model

answers to an English literature examination paper. Is it a fact that in one of the suggested model answers the following paragraph appears:

Caesar's susceptibility to flattery proved his undoing. Decius' success indicates the basic truth of his estimate of his erstwhile friend and patron, but that estimate must be qualified as we consider that Decius was trying to convince Cassius that the deceiver's task should be his.

I ask the Premier whether that paragraph has any reference to not ancient but modern history, and particularly to some of the problems confronting the domestic life of the Government.

Mr. HEFFRON: I take it that the hon. member is referring to some model answers to an examination paper that appeared in the *Daily Mirror* newspaper, with the idea that students by studying them could decide for themselves whether they had passed or failed in the examination. A lot of people took strong exception to that article. I did myself, and I asked the director-general to get in touch immediately with the editor of the newspaper. He did so and the editor forthwith gave an assurance that his paper would discontinue publishing those suggested model answers.

I am not sure what is contained in the examination paper referred to. These papers are set not by the Minister for Education but by the chief examiner. The hon. member read the model answer quite well, but I have no idea of the question. Without having discussed the matter with the chief examiner and without knowing the full context of the examination question, I am afraid that I cannot answer the hon. member. If he wants to know whether the paragraph that he quoted has any bearing on the economic and social conditions of the people today, my answer is that I do not know, but in our study of literature it does nobody any harm to browse through the works of Shakespeare. I should imagine that a person like the hon. member for Tamworth, who can become very dramatic at times, could have become a great actor in his day if he had studied Shakespeare more closely. Seriously, without knowing the question that the examiner set, it is

impossible for me or any other hon. member to give a satisfactory answer to the question asked by the hon. member.

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

Mr. NEILLY: I ask the Premier and Minister for Education whether it is a fact that yesterday in this House the Leader of the Opposition made an allegation that a dispute had occurred between the Premier and the Commissioner of Police. Is it a fact, also, that the Premier denied this allegation, and that the Commissioner of Police also has denied it? Is it further a fact that to substantiate his statement the Leader of the Opposition said that his information on this matter had been received from an hon. member on this side of the House? If these are facts, and in view of the seriousness of the allegations and the implications against hon. members on this side of the House—

Mr. RENSCHAW: On all sides.

Mr. NEILLY: Yes, on all sides of the House—will the Premier ask the Leader of the Opposition to name the person who supplied the information or, if he is not willing to name him in the Chamber, to put the name in writing and hand it to you, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. WILLIS: So that he could be carpeted by room 32.

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr. HEFFRON: I have already said that the statement by the Leader of the Opposition about a so-called quarrel between the Commissioner of Police and me was not founded on facts at all; it was completely untrue. I expected that, in his place, he would have withdrawn the statement and apologised for creating a situation that could have been very distasteful not only to the commissioner but also to every other right-thinking person. I did not at the time believe his subsequent suggestion that the information was given to him by some hon. member on this side of the House. I have checked up, and I tell the hon. member

now through you, Mr. Speaker, that I regard it as a statement that has no foundation in fact. Like the other statement which suggested that I had put the Commissioner of Police off duty because I had some difference of opinion with him—the Deputy Leader of the Opposition may smile—

Mr. WILLIS: I will laugh if you like.

Mr. HEFFRON: If you get any joy out of libelling or defaming a high public servant, you are entitled to it.

Mr. WILLIS: I have not defamed anyone.

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate unseemly interjections. If the hon. member for Earlwood considers that he is being maligned, he will have an opportunity later of persisting in that attitude. I have already called him to order once, and he must desist from making further interjections or I shall be obliged to call him to order again.

Mr. WILLIS: On a point of order. I regard it as most objectionable and personally offensive to me that the Premier should abuse parliamentary privilege and his position as Premier of this State by asserting that I have defamed the Commissioner of Police or anyone else. I have never said anything inside this Chamber that I am not prepared to repeat outside—and that does not go for the Premier. I ask that he withdraw and apologise.

Mr. SPEAKER: Like all other hon. members, I have listened to the debate with the keenest possible interest. I did not hear the Premier make any reference to any specific hon. member. He referred to allegations, as he described them—though they are more likely to be correctly described as innuendoes—in questions asked yesterday. I did not hear the Premier refer to the hon. member for Earlwood when he made his charges. If he did, I ask that he withdraw, but I did not hear it.

Mr. HEFFRON: Mr. Speaker, I did not make any charge at all.

The hon. member for Earlwood interjecting,

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I call the hon. member for Earlwood to order for the second time.

Mr. WILLIS: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Repeatedly in this House when Opposition members are ordered to withdraw and apologise, they are not permitted to say anything but "I withdraw and apologise." If they say one additional word, then you call them to order immediately. The Premier just rose and started to debate your ruling. He was canvassing your ruling, sir, and I ask you to direct him to withdraw and apologise for saying something that I regard personally as offensive. You personally have ruled that under the standing orders if a remark is offensive to an hon. member it must be withdrawn and an apology made.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear! hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: The Premier has not even been given an opportunity to withdraw and apologise. The request that I made to him was that, if he made the allegation, he should withdraw it. I do not know whether he made it or not. For my part, I did not hear him make any charge against the hon. member for Earlwood. I asked him to withdraw and apologise if he did make such a charge.

Mr. HEFFRON: Mr. Speaker, so that the House will know exactly what I said, I shall ask the hon. member for Cessnock—

The hon. member for Earlwood interjecting,

Mr. HEFFRON: The hon. member should keep quiet.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I call the hon. member for Earlwood to order for the third time, and I ask him to leave the Chamber.

Opposition members interjecting,

Mr. McCaw: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McCaw: I am submitting a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no point of order involved.

Mr. WILLIS: Do not I have to be warned three times?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned the hon. member for Earlwood on three occasions. I ask him to leave the Chamber. Does he propose to defy the ruling of the Chair?

Mr. WILLIS: Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to disobey the ruling of the Chair, but the standing orders provide that an hon. member must be warned three times.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to leave the Chamber.

Mr. WILLIS: All I can say is—Ned Kelly rules again.

[*The hon. member for Earlwood left the Chamber, accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms.*]

Mr. McCaw: I rise to order, Mr. Speaker, because before you ordered the Deputy Leader of the Opposition from the House for defending his rights, the Premier had twice been given an opportunity to withdraw and apologise.

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. McCaw: The Premier was flouting your ruling, sir, and I ask, in justice, that you now order the Premier from the House.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear! hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: Notices of motions and questions. I call the hon. member for Waratah.

Mr. PURDUE: I wish to direct a question without notice—

Mr. McCaw: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I have taken a point of order and I am waiting for your ruling on it. I submit that in courtesy, as guardian of the rights of this House, you should rule upon it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The request of the hon. member for Lane Cove amounts to insisting that the Premier should withdraw.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear! hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Twice I called upon the Premier, if he had made a statement of the sort complained about, to

withdraw it. I repeated that if he had made remarks offensive to the hon. member for Earlwood he should apologise. Twice the Premier tried to explain the position and he was interrupted by the hon. member for Earlwood. I do not regard him as being required to go any further with the matter.

Mr. ASKIN: On a point of order. As Leader of the Opposition, I heard the remark——

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. ASKIN: I heard the remark made about me—that I had made allegations. As I pointed out yesterday—and you then nodded your head, Mr. Speaker—when Opposition members ask questions in this House, we are seeking information in the public interest; we are not necessarily making allegations. The Premier kept on using the word “allegations”. I heard him say that the hon. member for Earlwood was attacking and smearing the Commissioner of Police. Apart from such a statement being offensive to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—and he took a point of order about it—it is offensive to me, and I venture to say that it is offensive to every Opposition member. Mr. Speaker, you are the custodian of the rights of hon. members on both sides of the House. I suggest that this is a testing point for you, sir. We want fairness. I, as the Leader of the Opposition, demand that, under the standing orders, the Premier without further ado, without further explanation, withdraw and apologise.

Mr. MORTON: On the point of order. Hon. members should keep calm so that the position may be clarified to the satisfaction of all concerned. I take the point of order that the Premier turned to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and said, “You can smile if you take any pleasure at defaming a high public servant.” Then there was bedlam. Every hon. member knows that clearly the Premier——

[*Interruption.*]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr. ASKIN: I never opened my mouth.

Mr. MORTON: ——was referring to the hon member for Earlwood. Now you, Mr. Speaker, have asked the Premier to withdraw and apologise. If he does——

Mr. WYATT: The hon. member for Mosman was not listening to what was said.

Mr. MORTON: Mr. Speaker, you have asked the Premier, if he accused the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, to withdraw and apologise. Every hon. member knows that the Premier was accusing the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and the decent thing for him to do is to apologise like a man.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I gave the House every opportunity to listen to the Premier, but each time he rose he was subject to a barrage of interjections. I do not think that it is reasonable to expect the Premier to put up with that. The Premier, the same as any hon. member, has his undoubted rights and privileges. One of them is that an hon. member be heard in silence. If Opposition members are not willing to extend that right to him, I do not intend to press the matter. The time for asking questions has expired.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

POWER COACHING COLLEGE

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Mr. Speaker, last evening on the adjournment of the House the hon. member for Gordon attacked me for what he says was a breach of privilege.

Mr. STEWART FRASER: Hear! hear!

Mr. R. J. KELLY: The hon. member says “Hear! hear!” It should have been, “Haw! Haw!”

Mr. DOIG: On a point of order. Is the hon. member for East Hills entitled to debate the matter when he is making a personal explanation?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The answer is “No; definitely not.” However, if the hon. member for East Hills wishes to make a personal explanation about an hon. member’s having misconstrued some sentiments he has expressed, he may do so.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The hon. member for East Hills might apologise first about the remark he made about the army.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. R. J. KELLY: The Leader of the Opposition just said that, when members on that side of the House ask questions, they are seeking information and are not smearing or slandering anybody. That applies also to hon. members on this side of the House. The question that I asked the other evening, which was supplementary to one asked by the hon. member for Dulwich Hill, was asked for the purpose of eliciting information.

Mr. STEWART FRASER: What about an apology?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. R. J. KELLY: I was seeking information about a Mr. Laing, who has been advertised as the headmaster of the Power Coaching College. Members of Parliament are paid to be curious, and if they have doubts about something or are curious about certain persons or matters of moment, they are entitled to raise them in this House and ask questions about them without their actions being misinterpreted and without being accused of abusing parliamentary privilege by smearing and slandering friends, people who—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have already ruled that it is not permissible to debate the matter. If the hon. member for East Hills merely wishes to answer the points raised last evening by the hon. member for Gordon, he is distinctly out of order. The purpose of a personal explanation is to permit an hon. member to correct an impression that otherwise might be wrongfully gained. That does not give him licence to debate the matter.

Mr. CRAWFORD: What about an apology?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I call the hon. member for Barwon to order for the first time.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: I am trying to correct the impression given last night by the hon. member for Gordon. When I asked my question I was seeking information. I was in no way slandering his particular friend.

Mr. STEWART FRASER: My constituent.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Or constituent.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The hon. member for East Hills suggested that the headmaster was a doctor when he was not.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Pursuing that, it is necessary for me to enlarge upon the curiosity that prompted me to ask the question. Would I be in order?

Mr. SPEAKER: Provided it is connected to the explanation.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: As a member of Parliament I was curious about the question asked by the hon. member for Dulwich Hill. As I was curious about certain matters concerning the headmaster of the college, I asked the question. I sought to elicit information. I was curious to know whether the letters Th.L. after the gentleman's name conveyed anything to hon. members—whether they were academic or whether the headmaster had academic qualifications. I am still not enlightened.

Mr. STEWART FRASER: On a point of order. Though I appreciate that the hon. member for East Hills is trying to vindicate himself, I still say that he is pursuing the attack upon an honourable gentleman who is unable to defend himself in this Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am not completely satisfied that the comments of the hon. member for East Hills are in the nature of a personal explanation. To me it does seem as if he has a tendency to debate the matter. If the hon. member wishes to refer to statements that would indicate that he has been misrepresented, I shall hear him further, but only briefly.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: My intentions were deliberately misrepresented last night by the hon. member for Gordon and I feel that I owe an explanation to the House and to the gentleman involved. I think that this is only fair and I am not debating the question. I was concerned—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If every hon. member sought by making a personal explanation to give reasons why he has asked a question in the House the situation would be intolerable.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Mr. STEWART FRASER: I have a personal explanation to make that follows a more than usually diligent reading this morning, of the *Hansard* report of yesterday's proceedings. I refer to an interjection that I made when the Premier was speaking in reply to the Leader of the Opposition, who had made a reference to the Commissioner of Police. I interjected and asked, "What about Thursday?" That referred to something altogether different from my leader's question about police; it referred to a matter discussed here earlier today. Then, as I found myself in complete accord with the Premier regarding his views on privilege, about which he spoke most eloquently, I remained in complete agreement on the point of breach of privilege. I do not like the abuse of privilege and for my part I do not approve the use of privilege at all. *Hansard*, doing an amazing job in spite of the turmoil, has recorded the interjection, but has made it appear that I, in agreeing with the Premier, was differing from my leader—and taking the view that he did abuse privilege in his reference to the commissioner. I do not want to alter the report, but I should like the record clear. I knew, as did everyone in this House, including the Premier, that my leader had done nothing to abuse privilege.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: On a point of order. I submit that the hon. member is debating the matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I rule that the hon. member is not debating the subject but is introducing an explanation of the relations between himself and his leader, which I feel is unnecessary. Hon. members know that the most harmonious attitude, comity and amity exist among hon. members.

Mr. STEWART FRASER: Might I finish?

Mr. SPEAKER: An explanation of the relationship between the hon. member and his leader is unnecessary.

Mr. PURDUE: On a point of order. Three minutes prior to the expiration of the time permitted for questions I started to address a question to the Premier and Minister for

Education. Because of the points of order taken on an entirely different subject, followed by personal explanations, the time for the asking of questions has now expired. As I began to ask my question before the expiration of time, my point is that I have the right to continue the question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am most sympathetic to the hon. member for Waratah because when he asks a question it is usually a good one. Unfortunately, I am bound by the standing orders, which provide that no question can be asked forty-five minutes after questions have been called for. I assure the hon. member that if he rises in his place at question time tomorrow he will receive an early call. Have Ministers any papers to table?

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

(Resumed)

THALLIUM

Mr. SHEAHAN: In reply to the question addressed to me on 4th November by the hon. member for Byron concerning the control of thallium under the Poisons Act, I wish to advise that the regulations under the Act have been amended to provide stricter control over thallium, parathion and fluoroacetic acid. The Poisons Advisory Committee recommended that these poisons should be more strictly controlled. So far as thallium is concerned, a new regulation will provide that:

No person shall—

- (a) buy or obtain or use any Thallium or its salts or its compounds or any preparation or admixture thereof; or
- (b) sell or supply such poison to any person,

unless the person buying, obtaining, using or being supplied with the poison has the written authority of the Director-General of Public Health to buy, obtain, use or be supplied with such poison.

This does not mean that a person who wishes to buy thallium for legitimate purposes will need to apply to the Director-General of Public Health on every occasion when he wants to use it. If he is able to establish a good case, the director-general could issue him with an authority for a lengthy period, or even a permanent authority.

Every application will need to be judged on its merits. Special provision has been made in this new regulation for pastures protection boards to buy, obtain or use thallium and fluoroacetic acid without a written authority from the Director-General of Public Health to do so. It is hoped by this method of control to eliminate the use of these poisons by householders and home gardeners who will still have other less toxic poisons available to them; at the same time, the farm produce agents and others referred to by the hon. member will be able, under supervised conditions, to obtain supplies to meet their particular needs.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Motion (by Mr. Wyatt) agreed to:

That leave of absence for the remainder of the present Session be granted to The Honourable William Henry Lamb, Member for Granville, on account of illness.

CROWN LANDS (REMOVAL OF RESTRICTION ON TRANSFER) BILL

THIRD READING

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. McMahon.

RACING (AMENDMENT) BILL THIRD READING

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Renshaw.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1959-1960

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration resumed (from 4th November, *vide* page 1747), on motion by Mr. Renshaw:

That there be granted to Her Majesty during the year 1959-1960 a sum not exceeding £65,367,000 for Public Works and other Services.

Mr. ASKIN (Collaroy) [3.33]: The Estimates of loan money expenditure on capital works for 1959-60 given last week by the new Treasurer follow faithfully the dull unimaginative pattern set by previous loan money allocations by this Government. It is realised, of course, that owing to his newness in the position, the Treasurer is little more than a mouthpiece on this occa-

sion for someone else who prepared the various Estimates. We will make due allowance for that. I want to say, too, that I was glad the new Treasurer did not attempt to assert that the Commonwealth Government has not been fair and reasonable in the matter of loan funds. I listened attentively to his speech and read it carefully, noting this in particular. His predecessor, the late Mr. Cahill, recognised that and said so in as many words at the conclusion of the Premiers' Conference and Loan Council meeting last June. I was there and heard him say it. I hope that other Ministers and rank and file members of the Government will take due note of these facts and not try to use the outworn excuse that the Commonwealth Government does not treat the States fairly in allocating loan funds.

The fact is, of course, that there is never sufficient money available to do everything required on a nation-wide scale at the one time. It therefore becomes a matter of making the best possible use of what loan funds are available. I must say in this regard that I am disappointed to find so little departure from the staid and routine policies which have characterised Labor's capital works planning in the past. Our complaint against the Government is that, first, it is not getting the maximum value for the public from its loan money expenditure and, secondly, that the percentages for the various departments have not been so arranged as to give greater allocations to the more urgent and pressing type of public works. I will deal with these aspects during my speech. I should like to point out at this stage, however, that over the past four years there has been a sharp decline in the priority accorded to rural services as compared to city services. This trend has been continued in the current Estimates.

A comparison of the various departmental Estimates over the four years between 1955-56 and 1958-59, the financial year just concluded, is set out in the current Auditor-General's Report and confirms what I have just said. I do not propose to weary the Committee with a lot of tedious figures and percentages, but I mention that in those last four years the loan money

allocations have been reduced in all the following rural items: 1, land settlement; 2, conservation of water, soil and forests; 3, rural housing; and 4, rural and agricultural institutions and services. So far as finance for land settlement is concerned, it is a deplorable fact that the New South Wales Labor Government qualified for only £138,518 of the £2,000,000 of Commonwealth loan aid for war-service land settlement available in 1958-59.

It is an even more deplorable fact that no money at all is to be allocated in the current year for the acquisition or development of new soldier-settlement blocks. As a result, the war-service land settlement scheme in this State has, to all intents and purposes, now come to a complete full stop. I say that with shame for the Government, for today is the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Of the £8,000,000 of special loan aid which has been available for this purpose from the Commonwealth during the past four financial years, the New South Wales Labor Government has qualified for only £5,000,000. Up to 30th June last, only 3,036 of the 19,000 ex-servicemen who were issued with qualification certificates had been allotted farms. In addition, many ex-servicemen settlers have been falling further and further behind in their repayments, due mainly to the unsuitability of the farming blocks allocated to them. The percentage of arrears to the total amount payable has increased from 31 per cent in 1954-55 to 46.5 per cent in 1958-59. Payments now in arrears total no less than £1,156,000. These figures are a scathing indictment of this State's inefficiency in war-service land settlement.

The Auditor-General's Report gives some interesting figures concerning the State's accumulating loan indebtedness and the interest commitment. The average rate of interest paid during 1958-59 upon the State's outstanding loan liability to the Commonwealth was 3.96 per cent. The average rate of interest has been increasing slightly each year since 1952 when it stood at 3.05 per cent. The actual interest paid in 1958-59 was £31,000,000. Exchange, sinking fund contributions and loan management charges raised this to a total of £39,300,000, of which £17,200,000 was recouped from

statutory bodies, leaving a total of £22,100,000 paid to the Commonwealth out of State consolidated revenue. The total of the loan liability to the Commonwealth at 30th June stood at £832,400,000, compared with £363,300,000 in 1940, the year prior to the assumption of office by the New South Wales Labor Government.

I think the moral which comes from a study of these figures and trends is that it is preferable to finish a limited number of capital works on a priority basis, which will start to pay for themselves, rather than have a large number of works scattered all over the countryside in various stages of incompleteness, none of them bringing in any return. It is, of course, realised that works such as public school buildings do not bring in a direct financial return, but with most public works and capital expenditure for new plant, this is not the case. The Treasurer has stated that the total loan funds available in the current 1959-60 year will amount to £62,951,000 which is almost £3,000,000 more than last year's amount. He went on to state that the amount of £11,600,000 allotted to the Department of Education for expenditure on primary and secondary school buildings represented an increase of £2,416,000, which is equivalent to 80 per cent of the total increase in the State's loan allocation.

There can be no higher priority than that owed to the building of schools. The Liberal Party and the Country Party have consistently urged that point of view on the Government. At the same time, some concern is felt in view of the disclosures already made of the big proportion of school building funds being spent without the safeguard afforded by proper tender methods. The Minister for Public Works has admitted that more than £7,000,000 of public loan funds were dispersed within twelve months through negotiated contracts without public tenders being called. One or two firms alone have received the bulk of this work. The question which has never been satisfactorily answered is, who decides which firms shall get these negotiated tenders, and on what basis? The Liberal Party is emphatic that the calling of tenders should be the accepted practice as a necessary means of ensuring the best possible

Mr. Askin

value for the expenditure of public money. It also minimises scope for wrong practice. It is our belief that only in exceptional cases should this policy be departed from. Now there are quite a few firms which are able to tender on the basis of "design and build", if that is required, and the need for a restricted ring is no longer justified.

While speaking on the matter of tenders for public works, I want to point to an aspect that I regard as being unsatisfactory. Quite frequently when tenders are called for public works, the tender which is accepted is not the lowest or even the second lowest. The reason given on behalf of the Government is that the ability of the lowest tenderers to do the job properly and within the stipulated time is doubted. Seeing that the preparation of tenders for big public works takes a great deal of time and often involves costs running into thousands of pounds, I believe that some alteration in the system is desirable to obviate reputable firms tendering for works when they have no prospect of getting the job, irrespective of how low their tender might be. I believe the time is ripe to consider requiring tenderers for large public works to be bonded by banks or insurance companies. This is recognised practice in many overseas countries. It would get over the unsatisfactory state of affairs to which I have drawn attention.

For a clear example of the Government's slipshod way of handling loan expenditure, it is customary to turn to expenditures on dams and water works. This occasion will be no exception. The fact is, of course, that owing to the Government's policy of what might be called "scatteration" with its dam building and other water projects, the estimated final cost to the public since the various works were approved has now risen by over £50,000,000. That is not peanuts! The first example I will take of the unsatisfactory position concerning the Government's dam building project will be the Blowering Dam. It is more than a year after the Blowering Dam was scheduled to be completed, that the first worthwhile contribution to a real start upon it has at last been made. Expenditure during 1959-60 is expected to be £1,000,000. Even so this will go only a short way towards con-

struction of this £17,000,000 project. It is to be hoped that the Government does not intend, as the expenditure rate suggests, to spend a further long period in completing the project. It is too important for that.

Mr. RENSCHAW: The estimate is not £1,000,000.

Mr. ASKIN: I obtained that figure from the documents submitted to Parliament by the Government. I now notice that the figures are rather misleading, and the estimate is £1,000. I accept the Minister's correction on that point, and it makes my argument even more valid; that is, that this expenditure is hopelessly inadequate, as the Blowering Dam is vital to the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme now being undertaken by the Commonwealth Government. In October, 1950, the Government introduced the Blowering Dam Bill, foreshadowing an estimated cost of the dam at £11,000,000. Expenditure up to 30th June, 1959, was only £414,791. The seriousness of this hopelessly inadequate expenditure over so many years will be realised when I repeat that the Blowering Dam is a vital adjunct to the Commonwealth Government's Snowy Mountains programme. In introducing the bill to authorise the Blowering Dam project, the late Hon. George Weir, who was Minister for Conservation in 1950 said:

It is expected that the dam will take eight years to complete. As hon. members realise it will be necessary first to have some preliminary specifications and draft designs prepared and it is unlikely that tenders will be received until next year, leaving no more than six years for construction to be brought to an advanced state before the expected date when the first waters from the Snowy River scheme will be available. The time factor I have outlined will indicate clearly the need for treating this measure as an urgent matter.

So urgently did the State Labor Government treat this vital project that the eight years allowed for its completion have now come and gone and far from being completed, the project is in reality hardly even started. The precious waters available from the Snowy flow away to waste. Only £50,000 will be required to finish the work on Glenbawn Dam this financial year. Unbelievable as it may seem, after being under construction for thirteen years this project will soon have a lonely place in the

"finished work" category. The Government may take whatever comfort is available to it from the fact that at long last it has been completed at a cost of almost £15,000,000. The estimated total cost of the work, when authorised, was £1,500,000.

The people of the Hunter Valley were originally promised a scheme of eight dams to provide a joint flood control and irrigation system for their flood-ravaged district. I was one of those who visited the Hunter Valley during the disastrous floods early in 1955 and I was able to see at first hand what a major disaster it is to the district when a big flood comes. Glenbawn was to have been merely one of those eight dams. Its main function was to have been as an irrigation dam costing £1,500,000. None of the other dams has been built or even commenced in earnest. One has been dropped from the scheme and a token start only has been made on one other—the Warkworth project. It seems that plans for the remaining six dams have been pigeon-holed altogether. The planned storage capacity of Glenbawn was increased during construction from 120,000 acre-feet to 293,000 acre-feet to enable it to fulfil some flood mitigation purpose in addition to its original irrigation rôle. But without its partner dams under the original scheme, Glenbawn alone can achieve little in the way of flood mitigation. It could not affect the flood level by more than a few inches. The present Minister for Conservation is on record as having said frankly in this Chamber:

I do not profess to be optimistic on what the dam will achieve in flood mitigation or prevention.

His predecessor as Minister for Conservation said in March, 1955:

The Glenbawn Dam, if it had been completed, would not have had much effect on the recent floods in the Hunter Valley because its complementary projects are not yet completed.

In the last few weeks, however, the Minister for Conservation has extravagantly claimed that the Glenbawn Dam has "saved" the Hunter Valley on five occasions. He has not nominated those occasions and close observers will no doubt be just as intrigued as the general public to

Mr. Askin]

find out on what occasions since the completion of this dam the Hunter Valley has been saved from flood inundation. The final cost of this dam was £49 an acre-foot for an earth and rock-fill type dam, compared with the cost of less than £5 an acre-foot for the enormous cement Hume and Burrinjuck dams.

As is well known, the plans for an irrigation scheme to use the Glenbawn Dam's waters have been abandoned. This stark announcement appeared in the metropolitan press on the 28th August, 1958:

The State Government has abandoned plans to supply water direct from Glenbawn Dam for irrigation because of excessive costs.

I have never seen a denial of that statement. Glenbawn Dam is costing approximately £500,000 a year in interest charges. This is another episode in the sad story of the Government's ineptitude in dam building.

I come now to the Keepit Dam, which is Labor's grand champion in the field of cost inflation and start-and-stop construction. The project was initiated by the Stevens-Bruxner Government as far back as 1937. When the Keepit Dam Bill was then before the House, *Hansard* records that a future Labor Premier, Mr. J. J. McGirr, criticised the fact that the dam was not likely to reach consummation for five or six years. But long before the expiry of that five or six years, Labor had come into office. Now, eighteen years after Labor's assumption of office, the dam is still uncompleted. Up to June, 1959, £11,000,000 had been spent on it and a further £1,500,000 was required to complete it. The fact is that the project was originally estimated to cost £1,340,000. Work on the main wall is now in the final stages. The Government has claimed that the work will come to an ultimate halt at the end of the current year.

Plans to use some of Keepit Dam's 345,000 acre-feet of water for irrigation purposes also now appear to have been definitely abandoned. A public meeting was recently convened by the Mayor of Gunnedah to protest against this pending abandonment. The Mayor told the meeting that it did not seem good enough for the water from this £12,500,000 dam to be used just

to keep a flow in the Namoi River. Another speaker of standing addressed the meeting and said it appeared as if the dam had been constructed and now nobody knows just what to do with it.

To take the distressing saga of the Government's hopelessly muddled dam-building programme a step further, I turn to the Burrendong Dam. The £1,000,000 expected to be spent upon Burrendong Dam during 1959-60 is substantially less than this long-delayed project deserves. Burrendong Dam was authorised by legislation in 1946, almost simultaneously with Glenbawn Dam. It was originally to have cost a similar amount—£2,000,000 for Burrendong as against £1,500,000 for Glenbawn—and to be constructed in a similar manner. Its capacity, like Glenbawn's, has subsequently been enlarged, in this instance from 520,000 acre-feet to 1,361,000 acre-feet. It is a more valuable project than Glenbawn in most ways. Not only is its capacity more than four times greater than Glenbawn's, but it will have 397,000 acre-feet available for flood mitigation, compared with only 108,000 acre-feet available from Glenbawn. Its cost an acre-foot will be much lower than Glenbawn's. According to authorities it will provide a complete answer to the flood peril in the Macquarie Valley. It would, I am reliably informed, have reduced the 1955 flood height from 25 feet to 12 feet at Wellington and from 11 feet to 6 feet at Dubbo.

Despite all these facts, the Government, in 1952, after £2,500,000 had been spent on the Burrendong project, elected to discontinue it while persevering with the Glenbawn Dam. Throughout the period for which the project lay at a standstill, interest to the tune of £80,000 per annum was paid on the £2,500,000 already spent. The false economics of this situation will be recognised by hon. members. Expenditure during 1958-59 on Burrendong was £887,261. So far £3,500,000 has been spent on it, but a further £4,500,000 is required to complete it. This makes a total of £8,000,000, as against the original estimate of £2,000,000. I hardly think any further examples will be needed to illustrate the

hopelessness and the terrific waste involved in the Government's dam-building programme.

Perhaps a few words on the Warkworth Dam will not be amiss at this juncture. The Loan Estimates under discussion offer no encouragement for those people who hope that one day there will in fact be a Warkworth dam. The estimated expenditure for the current financial year of £37,000 is even less than the £46,771 spent in the year just concluded. Total expenditure to date has been only £139,000 and it is estimated by the Government that a further £3,500,000 is required to complete it. This dam was authorised as far back as March, 1950, when the estimated cost of the work was then £2,500,000.

The Minister in charge of the bill authorising the Warkworth Dam in 1950 said:

The Government recognises the urgent need for the full development of our natural resources. It also realises the enormous extent of that work, but it has faith in Australia and in our people. We are convinced that if we go ahead with courage in the all important work of conservation and development of our resources, we, as a nation, will honourably fulfil our destiny. We are therefore determined to press ahead with that development in every possible way and with all our energy. These high-sounding words have an empty ring when it is noted that work fell permanently into the doldrums after only £92,772 had been spent upon the project. Of course, most of the preliminary planning has been done, including surveys and investigations of the site, preliminary designs and estimates. All that is missing is the dam.

The Menindee Lakes project, though relatively small in comparison with some others, has enormous potential. It could do a tremendous amount of good in conserving precious water in an area where it is desperately needed. Nature has already done much of the necessary work. Little effort is required on the Government's part to transform the basins of the Menindee and other lakes associated with the scheme into great storages of water filled by the Darling River in its periods of strong flow. An ingenious system of inter-connecting locks between storages has been designed to minimise evaporation. By emptying storages

one by one as required, a good depth of water will be maintained thereby reducing the loss through evaporation. Despite all these advantages, this great project has been allowed to languish by the New South Wales Labor Government. It was originally designed to provide a total storage of 2,000,000 acre-feet of water at an estimated cost of only £2,300,000. This would have represented a very low construction cost per acre-foot. However, the Government has continued to dilly-dally and the 1957-58 Loan Estimates, presented when £800,000 had been spent on the project, revealed that a further £4,200,000 was then required to finish it. The current estimates reveal that £2,000,000 has now been spent but £3,750,000 is still required to finish the work. It is hardly a success story.

The facts and figures I have quoted illustrate all too clearly that the Government has badly bungled its dam programme and that, as a result, huge sums of public money have been wasted. I believe, too, that the judicious use of the contract system, instead of almost invariably sticking to the day-labour system, would result in substantial savings and quicker completion. The completion of the Adaminaby dam project under the contract system is an excellent example of the savings in time and money that can be effected by greater recourse to private enterprise.

I wish now to make a few comments concerning the loan allocations for the Department of Railways. I was glad to note the plans for more extensive use of diesels in the country and of electric locomotives in the metropolitan area. This should help to reduce the astronomical annual deficits of the department, which are crippling the State's finances. I feel justified in expressing hope that great care will be exercised in purchasing new rolling stock for the railways. It will not be forgotten that approximately £1,000,000 of public money has been lost in recent years in paying compensation and other costs in connection with orders for new locomotives subsequently cancelled on the ground of being unsuitable. It is interesting to note some of the facts regarding the purchase of these engines later found to be unsuitable. In the first place, I take the Garratt engines,

of which twenty-five were ordered from England in 1949. This order was increased to fifty in the year 1950, although all railway experience had confirmed the superiority of diesel-electrics. The Garratt locomotives proved unsatisfactory. The Australian Railways Union found it necessary in the interests of its members to ban their use on single tracks passing through tunnels because of excessive heat. By 1954, after thirty-seven units had been delivered, the Government had to commence negotiations to terminate the contract. The Auditor-General reported on the matter as follows:

Beyer-Garratt locomotives have been the subject of criticism by engine crews, particularly in relation to work in single-line tunnels and to running in reverse. In length, the locomotives exceeded the capacity of the State's largest turntables, and urgent action to acquire six larger units was taken in 1951. Certain features associated with the letting of the contract for the turntables, however, leave little doubt that sufficient time was not allowed for proper consideration of normal contracting procedures, with a result that substantial unforeseen expenditure was subsequently incurred. Although initial action to purchase was taken as a matter of urgency, later developments apparently made it necessary or undesirable to install all the units, and, at the present time, three of them are held unused in railway stores.

Twenty Baldwin oil-fired locomotives were ordered from America in 1951, although it was then generally recognised that diesel-electrics available at the same price were capable of doing three times the work in a year. It is noteworthy that tenders were not called for the supply of these particular locomotives. The Victorian Government did call for tenders for its requirements and secured heavier locomotives from Britain at £19,000 less per unit. The Baldwins were purchased by New South Wales, despite a report of the department's chief mechanical engineer that they were unsuitable. The Commissioner for Railways endorsed this report. In use they proved unsuitable. One million pounds—a big sum of money—went down the drain. These matters have never been explained, though they have been mentioned. Condensing his words, the Auditor-General said that it went down the drain through lack of foresight.

Mr. Askin]

Adequate rail services for the rapidly expanding suburbs of Sydney's southern metropolitan area depend upon the long-promised quadruplication of the railway tracks between Central and Tempe. My colleague the hon. member for Georges River, will be interested in this because he has consistently pressed the matter in the House, recognising its great importance not only to his own constituents but also to those of the surrounding electorates. The necessary property resumptions were made fifteen years ago. Work began in 1946 and was suspended in 1949 when two-thirds complete. It was resumed in February, 1954; suspended in November, 1954; resumed in January, 1956, and then shut down again in June, 1956.

Mr. CROSS: And nearly £2,000,000 spent.

Mr. ASKIN: I do not know the figure, but I accept the word of the hon. member. Weeds have been growing for years on partly-completed platforms desperately needed to make possible extra train services for these inadequately served suburbs. In 1958-59, the sum of £174,885 was spent upon land resumptions and work associated with the project, compared with £549,553 spent upon quadruplication of the line between Lidcombe and Granville.

Labor's 1953 election policy contained the undertaking "to complete the duplication and quadruplication of suburban and near-metropolitan mainlines to improve country and city freight and passenger services." Obviously, the Government did not honour its undertaking. Liberal Party policy is to complete this work as one of first-ranking urgency.

The Treasurer made no mention of certain Government railway projects in which a lot of public finance has been sunk—and I use the word in two senses. The eastern suburbs railway remains a conspicuous absentee from the State's capital works programme. I have searched through the official documents issued under the Minister's authority and can find no reference to it. This work was authorised in March, 1947. The estimated cost was set down at £44,000,000. The estimated expenditure up to the 30th June, 1957, was £2,220,000. The last year in which the project appeared in

the Estimates at all was 1957-58. In the three years since then, no reference to the project has been made in the Estimates.

By 1956-57, approximately £500,000 had been paid in interest on the £2,220,000 which has been expended on the project and the interest bill continues to accumulate at the rate of approximately £80,000 a year. Some hope was held that a definite statement of the Government's plans in regard to this matter would have been given following the return from his trip overseas by the Minister for Transport, but this has not proved to be the case. The Government is rendering a signal disservice to the public of the eastern suburbs in particular and the public of the State in general by leaving this position surrounded by doubts and uncertainty. Surely it could make up its mind what it intends to do, one way or the other, and let the public know. The Liberal Party believes that the Caldwell plan, which provides for a rapid transit system between the eastern suburbs and the city at a cost of about £16,000,000, is a much more practicable plan. My colleague the hon. member for Vacluse has consistently urged the Government to give most meticulous consideration to this plan, but so far he has been given the brush-off. It is not treating the people of the eastern suburbs properly to allow this matter to remain a mystery—a ghost proposition—when a practical scheme has been suggested.

We find no mention of the Maryvale-Sandy Hollow railway which, to date, has cost £2,300,000 of the taxpayers' money. Apparently the Government does not intend to proceed and will write off this huge sum to experience: but it lacks the courage to come out and say one way or the other what it intends to do. This uncertainty regarding the future of both the eastern suburbs railway and the Maryvale-Sandy Hollow railway, is inexcusable. The one sure fact which emerges is that the best part of £5,000,000 of public money will go down the drain from these two projects.

The time is long overdue to relate the capital indebtedness of the railways more realistically to their assets. This is recommended by both the Auditor-General and Ebasco. It is also Liberal Party policy. We paid £110,000 for the Ebasco experts

to make their recommendations. This is one that does not adversely affect the staff. It does not mean retrenchments. In fact, it would improve staff morale. That is our policy, set out in black and white.

As to buses and trams, the sooner the Government gets new modern buses on the various routes the better. It is in the process of changing over and, whether one happens to be a supporter of trams or buses, the fact is that it is too late now to unscramble what has been done and we are committed to buses and to the elimination of trams. The sooner new modern buses are put into operation on all routes the better the prospect of halting the diminution of patronage. Many people, including my friends from the coalfields, doubt the wisdom of switching from trams to buses, but the change has been made and it is too late now to do anything about it. I believe there is also the need to deal with capital indebtedness of the buses and trams in the same way as I have suggested for the railways. This again is Liberal Party policy. To show how inappropriate it is not to take action along the lines suggested, I point out that the capital cost of scrapping trams, running into millions of pounds, will, under the Government's present system, remain a charge on the bus enterprise from now on. Bus passengers will be called upon, either directly or indirectly, to meet the cost. That is not a fair proposition. Both the Auditor-General and the Ebasco experts have suggested transferring the top-heavy indebtedness away from these undertakings. The money is not written off but transferred to the Treasury as a charge upon the State. Bus passengers in Sydney, Newcastle and the country areas should not have to bear the cost of the scrapping of tram services.

Mr. McCARTNEY: But the interest would still have to be paid behind a sort of iron curtain.

Mr. ASKIN: The hon. member is right—the interest would still have to be paid. My point is that everybody is having a crack at the staffs of the Department of Government Transport and the Department of Railways because transport services are losing money. If the departments are

relieved of some of this interest burden, the staffs are given a chance of showing reasonable working figures. The overwhelming majority of these workers take an interest in their job and they do not like to see glaring press headlines about deficits on the railways and buses. The Government should take the action recommended by the Auditor-General and the Ebasco experts and give the staff an incentive to carry on with improved morale. Nothing would have to be written off. Though the interest would have to be paid, it would be a charge on the whole community instead of on the limited number of people who use the buses. It is not their fault that the Government has decided to scrap trams.

I am disappointed in the extreme that only £27,000 has been allocated to the Housing Commission from loan funds. That amount is to be used on shops. We shall never overcome our housing shortage this way. Other States have largely overcome their housing shortages because they have not hesitated to augment substantially from their State revenues the money received in terms of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

In a recent appearance in court in another matter, the secretary of the Housing Commission, Mr. J. M. Bourke, said the commission was receiving 250 to 300 housing applications a week. He added that this State's estimated new-housing requirement was a conservative 80,000 homes. This terrific housing shortage in New South Wales is a blot on our community life. It is crippling the morale of tens of thousands of citizens who can hope for nothing better than a miserable existence in tents, garages and back rooms. This is how communists are bred. The Government is not doing nearly enough in this field. Unless it makes a substantial amount available from its loan funds for housing, there is little hope of overcoming the acute shortage.

I am extremely dissatisfied and alarmed to note that the vote for courts and prisons is only half what was expended last year. The amount actually expended last year was £466,983. The estimated expenditure

for the current year is only £224,000. Despite the syrupy words of the Assistant Minister, representing in this House the Attorney-General, everybody now knows that several of our prisons are far from being what they should be from a security point of view. What is needed is not just expenditure on prisons, but more money. Desperate criminals are repeatedly able to break out with seeming immunity. The security at Long Bay Gaol is such that recently in a heavy storm part of the wall was washed away. There is also a great need for better equipment. The rifles issued to the warders are inadequate. It has been asserted on behalf of the warder who saw Simmonds and Newcombe escape that he was reluctant to fire his old weapon for fear it exploded in his face. If up-to-date weapons had been on issue the present tremendous loss to the community in trying to recapture Simmonds might well have been avoided and Warder Mills might still be alive today.

I believe that the full and open inquiry the Liberal Party is pressing for into prisons, prison escapes and prison administration generally would reveal that much greater capital expenditure is needed on prisons and prison equipment than the Government is providing. It stands accused of pinch-penny economies concerning expenditure on prisons. I am not referring in any way to the need for extra warders as this is a matter which cannot properly be discussed under the Loan Estimates. The Government's record in allocating loan money for prisons and indeed prison administration generally, is culpable, weak and inadequate.

On the score of hospitals, I regret to note that the vote for the current year will be about £500,000 less this year than was the case last year. It has been said that the way to judge a community's standards of civilisation is by its treatment of sick and maimed citizens. Unhappily it is a fact that the hospitals in this State are not nearly sufficient to cater adequately for our sick people. Yet the Government is spending £500,000 less, despite a constantly increasing population and a constantly increasing allocation of loan funds. It is a shocking and scandalous state of affairs. Members on both sides of the House know

how difficult it is for sick people, particularly elderly ones, to get into public hospitals. I am constantly having heart-rending cases brought under my notice of people in humble circumstances who are unable to get sick elderly parents and relatives into public hospitals and cannot pay the substantial fees at private hospitals. The Government is not being fair to the Minister for Health in so drastically cutting down his allocation. More important, it is being grossly unfair to the public.

From a personal point of view, I am extremely dissatisfied that no provision has been made in the hospital Estimates for a commencement on the approved Mona Vale Hospital. In hospital beds compared to population, Warringah Shire would be about the worst served of all major metropolitan areas. The hospital has been promised now for several years and a board of directors has been appointed with the concurrence of the Government. But not even a sod has yet been turned and apparently we are still to go through another year without any allocation for this urgently needed public hospital. I strongly urge the Government to make some rearrangement of funds to permit the commencement of the Mona Vale Hospital. I am glad that some extra provision has been made for mental hospitals but, of course, it has to be borne in mind that one-third of this amount will be recovered from the Commonwealth in terms of the agreement made after the revealing Stoller report.

Electricity works at £10,000,000 are less than the £10,400,000 allocated last year. Without having more details of the proposed expenditure than is set out in the Estimates or given in the Treasurer's speech, it is difficult for me to assess whether the public will be getting value for this huge expenditure of £10,000,000. It might be worth mentioning under this heading that the letting of the Vales Point tender caused much heartburning and dissatisfaction. The two lowest tenderers were passed over. It was asserted by way of advertisement in the press by one of the tenderers, that the successful tenderer had been given an unfair advantage in being allowed, after tenders closed, to consolidate what were virtually three different tenders. These allegations

were never satisfactorily answered by the Government and left a nasty taste in the mouths of competent observers. The system of bonds for tenderers in jobs of this size mentioned earlier by me would have obviated this highly unsatisfactory state of affairs.

I note an increased allocation to the Maritime Services Board. No details were given by the Minister, but I hope some of the allocation will be used for replacing, or substantially repairing at any rate, the nine Maritime Services Board vessels, including the fire-floats, which, until recently, were tied up in an unseaworthy condition at Goat Island, while private launches were hired to do their work. It was reported in the press, and not denied, that the Maritime Services Board was paying about £400 a week to hire private craft. If this is so, it seems that either the Government has not been making sufficient loan moneys available to the board or, alternatively, that the board has hopelessly misjudged its finances.

It is gratifying to note that continued Liberal demands for a worthwhile allocation of loan funds for roads have at last borne some fruit. In place of the purely token allocations of past years, an expenditure of £700,000 is expected during 1959-60. This is still, of course, far from adequate, but is a big improvement over previous years. In the past, loan expenditure upon roads has been quite insignificant. The loan fund expenditures of the Department of Main Roads for the past five financial years were—in 1954-55, £200,000; in 1955-56, £150,000; in 1956-57, £150,000; in 1957-58, £150,000; and in 1958-59, £150,000. In short, they have remained virtually static at the trifling figure of £150,000. It is a trifling sum when one considers the magnitude of the task.

However, some restraint needs to be put upon our enthusiasm concerning the estimated expenditure increase to £700,000 in 1959-60. The estimated expenditure for 1958-59 was also much higher than actual expenditures in previous years, being set down at £550,000. These expectations were not realised, however, and actual expenditures again were continued within the limits of the traditional £150,000. We need

Mr. Askin]

to be most certain that this does not again happen this year. Of this proposed expenditure of £700,000, it is estimated that £550,000 will be spent within the County of Cumberland, £250,000 going to the Cahill Expressway and £300,000 to the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund. Only £100,000 will be spent on general country main roads, the remaining £50,000 being devoted to amelioration of coalfields unemployment through the initiation of road-works in the affected areas.

The plain fact is that the Labor Government is not measuring up to the duties cast upon it by its primary responsibility in regard to roads. Road-users, local government, and the Commonwealth are all more than discharging their onus. Since it came to office, the Menzies Government has increased from 44 per cent to 78 per cent the share of petrol tax receipts being returned to the States for roads. Through their local-government rates, property-owners here continued to find more than 50 per cent of the money required for all roads, compared with only 18 per cent and 21 per cent in the United States of America and Canada. The State Labor Government is the laggard.

For years the Government's handling of loan finance has been loose and wasteful from the public point of view. I firmly believe that the Opposition parties, in Government, could have achieved a saving of at least 10 per cent on construction costs by the judicious use of the contract system and by ensuring a system of priorities based on value to the State as a whole, rather than on local political considerations. Because the Government has failed lamentably to make anywhere near the best use of the huge sum of loan money it has been receiving year after year, especially so far as work on dams is concerned, I move:

That the Estimate be reduced by £1.

Mr. CUTLER (Orange) [4.36]: The debate on the Loan Estimates gives hon. members an opportunity to study annually the Government's administration of its loan programme and also to make an assessment of whether the programme is being administered in the best interests of the State.

There is little doubt that if a private organisation were to conduct its business affairs along lines similar to those that have been employed by the Government for the past eighteen years in its loan programme, or along the lines that were envisaged only last week by the Treasurer in respect of this year's loan programme, there could be only one end—the organisation would go bankrupt. If an investment is made, the return that is expected from it can be either of a tangible or an intangible nature. If the investment is made with borrowed finance, it seems to me that, whether the investor be private enterprise or the Government, the tangible return must be large enough to pay eventually for the cost of that return as well as the cost of obtaining the intangible return.

As applied to private enterprise, an intangible return—one that is not immediately obvious—can be obtained by investing in such things as advertising or the training of business executives. On the Government level this not so obvious return can be obtained from investing in education or health services. However, the cost of providing such services must eventually be met from the income of other projects in which loan moneys are invested, such as water conservation and irrigation works, and agricultural improvements, or from the profits earned by government business undertakings. Eventually a sufficient return must be obtained from the investment of these loan moneys to repay the capital cost of starting these services and also to meet the cost of operating them. The stage must be reached when a sufficient return is being obtained from the investment of loan moneys.

In the few years that I have been a member of this House I have not been able to see that this programme will ever reach the stage where the return from the investment will pay for the cost of obtaining the tangible and intangible returns. If that stage is not reached, it is obvious that from year to year the public debt burden must rise. This is obvious when we consider what has happened in the years of Labor rule in this State. Though figures

may sometimes lie, they do not in this instance. In 1941, when the Labor Government attained office in New South Wales, the State public debt was £369,000,000. At 30th June, 1959, it was £832,000,000, a rise of 132 per cent. This year, with a loan programme of £70,000,000, the public debt will again be increased.

In the past four years the public debt of New South Wales increased from £686,000,000 to £832,000,000 at 30th June, 1959, and to this must be added the amount of loan borrowings this year. The sinking fund last year amounted to just under £59,000,000. Of that sum, £33,000,000 was made up of interest charges. We shall borrow this year £70,490,000, which will be added to our capital debt; at the same time we shall reduce our capital debt by only £25,000,000. This means that the net increase in the public debt this year will be about £45,000,000. The sum of £70,490,000 will be borrowed this year, and only £25,000,000 will be paid off by way of sinking fund and interest. The capital debt will increase by about £45,000,000, and by 30th June, 1960, the public debt of New South Wales will be about £877,000,000. Should the Government continue to occupy the Treasury benches for another two to two and a half years it is obvious, if it continues in the same way, that at the end of its term of office the public debt of this State will exceed £1,000,000,000. In addition, our interest commitments will increase by £2,500,000 each year.

Ever since I have been a member of this Chamber I have noticed that Government supporters, in discussing matters concerned with the raising of money and the payment of interest, have always adopted the attitude that repayment of interest charges on loan moneys does not matter a great deal. I have heard Labor members of this Parliament and of other parliaments say that this money is provided by oversea bondholders. They speak of oversea bondholders as if they were dreadful creatures and it did not matter two hoots whether New South Wales repaid them. Even if the largest part of loan finance came from overseas, I think it would be important to repay those

loans as quickly as possible. There is much truth in the advice given centuries ago by William Shakespeare, who said:

Neither a borrower nor a lender be:

For loan oft loses both itself and friend.

That adage applies in this matter. Of the £832,000,000 of the existing public debt, £707,000,000 is repayable in Australia. So far as our public debt is concerned, overseas bondholders have invested in Australia only £112,000,000 repayable in London, and £13,000,000 repayable in New York. The £707,000,000 repayable in Australia is expressed in Australian currency, but the amount repayable in London is in sterling. Nothing appears in this report or in the loan accounts to indicate whether the figure of £13,000,000 is expressed in sterling. In fact, the amount owed to English investors exceeds the amount shown in the Loan Estimates.

Despite these facts I have no intention of making a case for limited borrowing; there is no need for New South Wales to limit its borrowing. I am sure that all hon. members will agree that this State is an excellent and sound medium for investment, either overseas or local, and there is no need for concern in this regard. I pose this question: Are we getting, or are we likely in future to get, a reasonable return from these loan investments? If the answer is "No"—and I suggest that in many respects it will be—there will be need to take stock of the whole financial set-up in relation to loan funds before the State overdraft, under the administration of this Government, reaches unmanageable and irretrievable proportions. The question is whether this State has assets to cover the investments of the past eighteen years of Labor rule. In the past ten years alone the Government has had at its disposal, quite apart from housing loans, £522,000,000—an average of £52,000,000 a year—of loan money to invest. It is true, as undoubtedly the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health would claim, that New South Wales has many fine schools and hospitals. It has also quite a number of bridges and public buildings. The Government can even proudly boast of completing one major water conservation work in New South Wales. However, we are discussing a figure

Mr. Cutler]

of £522,000,000 that has been invested in the past ten years. Looking around the State, one finds it difficult to discover where that £522,000,000 has gone and to ascertain whether we have received from it a tangible or intangible return sufficient to balance our books.

The Treasurer said that £11,100,000 of loan finance would be made available this year to the railway services. The Leader of the Opposition referred to this matter today. This sum will be added to the existing railway debt of £295,000,000. Undoubtedly, the Commissioner for Railways is an able administrator and will use that sum for essential improvements. However, the point is that in the past year the railway services lost £6,449,000, largely because of interest payments over which the commissioner has no control. Unfortunately, the railways have to carry the burden of these additional payments. It is fair that they should repay comparatively new borrowings—for instance, the £11,100,000 that has been voted this year. They will obtain a return from investment of that money on improvements. It is fair, also, that the railways should carry the capital and interest burdens of investments going back for a period of years when they still receive a return from them. However, it is quite wrong that the railways should have to shoulder the burden of repaying loans that were made decades ago. Many of those investments are no longer bringing in a return to the railways.

The Auditor-General informs us that last year the railways lost about £6,500,000. This might well provide a key to the extent to which part of the annual cost of operating the railways must be expected to fall on the State's general revenue. A few minutes ago I heard a discussion across the Chamber on this aspect which showed the attitude taken by some hon. members to the suggestion that part of the railway debt be transferred from the railway accounts to the general revenue account. It is said, "What is the difference? It still must be paid." I agree fully that the Government could well adopt that attitude. There can be no question that the debt and interest on it must be paid.

For quite a long time now I have had a feeling—which is shared by the majority of those who use or take an interest in the railways—that the railway service suffers because it has around its neck this annual interest bill of about £10,500,000. In fact, last year the New South Wales Government Railways made a profit on working that was well in excess of £6,000,000. Surely it is reasonable that the Commissioner for Railways and those under him should receive some credit for this fine achievement in working costs and profits. It seems wrong that the commissioner, having worked hard and achieved that profit, must shoulder this terrific interest debt over which he has no control and that was incurred possibly years and years before he was born. At the end of each financial year the statement appears in the press that during the year the railways made a loss of £6,500,000 or £7,000,000. This gives a wrong impression of our railways. I make no apology for all the things that might be wrong with the railway service. Many things can still be done to improve it. However, it is wrong that the commissioner and his staff should have this debt around their necks and that each year it is publicly stated that the railway service has lost £6,000,000 or £7,000,000, when in fact it made a huge profit on working.

I suggest that if the present situation is allowed to continue it must have a deleterious effect on the efficiency of the service. It cannot be expected that railway employees will take in their work the interest that they would take if they knew that at the end of the year they were going to be given credit for achieving a profit. The questions might be asked: "Why transfer part of the railway debt to the general fund? What sort of case can be made for this?" Even since the beginning of this century consolidated revenue has received an amount equal to half of the existing railway debt from the sale of land and royalties on timber and minerals that it would never have received had the railway service not been available. The railways have been used to develop the inland of this Commonwealth, and especially of this State. They have been used by people interested in minerals, in timber and in

opening up land, and, as a consequence, consolidated revenue has received sums far in excess of £100,000,000 that it would never have received but for the railways.

It seems reasonable that portion of the railway debt should be transferred to the shoulders of the people of this State in a direct fashion rather than in the indirect way in which it is done at the moment. The result is exactly the same; it is simply a book entry by the Government. I do not see that it matters very much to the Government whether the interest debt is paid direct from consolidated revenue and no one knows that it is portion of the railway interest debt or is paid after the railways have included it in their accounts. However, it matters a very great deal to the railway service. Its officers would feel far better about it and public relations would be far better if at the end of the financial year, because of the transfer of the interest debt to the general account, the Department of Railways was able to balance its books or even make a small profit. There is a sound case for the transfer of portion of this debt.

In this State the great development rôle of the railways is not matched by that of the metropolitan transport services. Though the metropolitan transport services have an interest debt and sinking fund charges of only £775,000, they lost £1,799,000 last year, and £1,250,000 is to be allocated to improve them. It is an unfortunate fact that in this State during the last few years governments and industries have attracted people to the metropolitan area. I am not going to argue at the moment what the Government should have done to reverse this trend, or even whether the Government is responsible for it. I am saying merely that people have been attracted to the metropolitan area and that transport services must be provided for them once they are here.

I do not say that the £1,250,000 should be diverted elsewhere, but if it is good enough for people living in country towns and rural areas to meet not only the cost of operating the railways but also its huge interest charges, surely it should be good enough for people who live in the metropolitan area to meet general interest

charges. The Auditor-General's Report indicates that, whereas the Department of Railways made a working profit last year of about £6,000,000, the metropolitan transport services had a working deficit of £1,000,000. This indicates the Government's policy of continuing to give concessions, not to those who are willing to open up the country, but to those who can, by their votes, keep it in office. That is a serious thing indeed. Surely even in these days when we have made a great deal of progress in this State there is still a need for governments to give incentives to people to develop the inland. This is one of the ways. Instead, we find that the railway service made a profit of £6,000,000, which comes out of the pockets of country people in freights and fares, and the metropolitan transport services incurred a deficit of £1,000,000, which is being borne by the people who reside in country areas through the freights and fares that they must pay. To my mind, this is quite wrong.

The other night I took heart when the Treasurer mentioned that this year he would make available loan funds totalling something like £4,000,000 for the improvement of this State's harbours and rivers. When I was listening to his remarks the thought struck me that one of the greatest tragedies during my lifetime was the fact that many of our inland rivers, coastal rivers and harbours have been quickly silting up. This State's rivers are silting up at a much faster rate than rivers in most other States. This has been brought about by man's interference with nature. Though the sum of £4,000,000 which has been voted this year is a reasonable amount, it has not been distributed completely in accordance with the best interests of the country. Of that total amount, £2,844,000 is to be spent outside the port of Sydney. On studying the accounts I find that most of that money is to go towards improvements at Port Kembla and Newcastle and—as I am glad to see—towards continuation of work on the Clarence harbour. No one will argue that these works are essential for the development of the State but in my journeyings around the State over the past few years I have come to the conclusion that

Mr. Cutler]

there is an urgent need for additional expenditure, whether from this allocation of £4,000,000 or by way of an additional sum, for the clearing of our inland and coastal rivers.

We must keep our coastal rivers open in order to maintain and improve water transport. Of course, that reason does not apply with equal force to inland rivers. However, the conservation of water, our greatest national asset, is of vital importance to the development of the Commonwealth and cannot be achieved without free-running rivers. The tragic fact is that most of our inland and coastal rivers are silting up and a tremendous task faces the Government. Only last Saturday when I visited the township of Gladstone on the Macleay River some local people expressed grave concern because two river steamers that for many years have been plying each week between Gladstone and Sydney via Newcastle will soon cease operating. Due to the silting up of the Macleay and increased costs generally they can no longer compete with other forms of transport. That is a tragedy. Water transport does not require the construction and maintenance of roads or steel tracks. Twenty years ago it was the cheapest transport in this or any other country but today, in New South Wales, due to lack of government action or control of the waterfront and increased costs generally, water transport is rapidly dying.

Earlier I spoke of the investment of loan funds in projects that can bring tangible and worthwhile results. The perfect example is the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, which I have inspected on several occasions. The setting up of that area, which included, of course, the construction of the Burrinjuck Dam, cost about £12,000,000. Last financial year the value of produce grown in the area was £8,500,000. In other words, two-thirds of the original cost of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area was recovered in one year. But that is not the most important aspect. Where once a couple of hundred people gained a living, today 20,000 live in modern homes in beautiful towns and on modern farms. Last year the Leeton cannery, which is the major secondary industry in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and, naturally, associated with the local primary

activity, processed 20,000 tons of produce from the area. Not only will the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area pay for itself by way of taxation on the earnings of the people in the area; returns from the area will meet the cost of the provision of essential services such as schools and hospitals. If the present rate of local production continues—and it has exceeded £8,000,000 a year for some years—it will not be long before all these services will be paid for. Probably that has already been done and returns from the area are now virtually money in the pocket of the State. The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area is a fine example of what can be done.

Eighteen years ago the Government of this State changed and the Labor Party took over from its predecessors a comprehensive plan for water conservation and irrigation in New South Wales which had been prepared at the direction of my former colleague, the Hon. Roy Vincent. That master plan included many of the dams that were mentioned earlier today by the Leader of the Opposition. The plan included Keepit Dam, which in 1940 was estimated to cost £1,340,000. Already more than £11,000,000 has been spent on Keepit Dam and, according to these documents, an additional £1,000,000 will be required to complete it. The master plan included Glenbawn Dam which was to cost £1,500,000. So far £14,000,000 has been spent on that project and a comparatively small additional sum is needed to finish the work. Originally Burrendong Dam on the Macquarie River was to cost £2,000,000. If costs do not rise, the total expenditure on that project when completed will be £8,000,000.

Mr. WETHERELL: It will be more than that.

Mr. CUTLER: I think the Minister is referring to the changed plan. The original plan was estimated to cost £2,000,000 and would now cost £8,000,000. However, that plan has been changed and the dam will cost more.

In addition to these works which are mentioned in this Chamber virtually every week, quite a few other major projects have received no consideration from the Government, despite conservation and irrigation

experts' opinions that they would be eminently suitable for the establishment of other irrigation areas like the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. There is no need for me to list them for they are known to most hon. members. If the Government had gone ahead with these works, each area concerned would be another Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, perhaps producing two-thirds of its total cost of establishment by way of produce each year, and they would be helping to achieve decentralisation in which all hon. members are interested but for which only a few have made sound proposals. Though this sound plan was made eighteen or nineteen years ago, little has been done to implement it and to bring about decentralisation through conservation and irrigation services. I am not suggesting that all these things should have been done at once, but if that had been possible, they would have cost only £30,000,000.

This year the Committee is voting £7,000,000 to the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission compared with the allocation five years ago of £8,181,000. Last year the commission spent only £5,667,000. The "stop and go" tactics that were referred to earlier today have much bearing on the slow progress that has been made over the past few years and has led to the rising interest debt that the people of this State must meet. It is not so bad paying interest upon capital that is invested provided some revenue is received as a result of the original investment. However, because of this start and stop policy, a terrific sum of money outlaid on unfinished projects—much of the £522,000,000 that has been spent in the past ten years—will not bring the Government any return until they are completed.

A perfect example of this stop and go policy is a conservation project involving part of the Lachlan Valley. For the past thirteen years I have represented a portion of this valley and I have heard many stories about the building of dams in the valley. Deputations have interviewed succeeding Ministers for Conservation. Letters have been sent by the department to organisations

in the Lachlan Valley saying, 'The Government intends to get on with the job of conserving water in the valley and developing the irrigation areas.' One project about which much has been heard affects part of the electorate that I represent, and I might as well use it as another example of the sort of promise that is given but not honoured as a result of this wishy-washy attitude of not being quite sure which way to go. The Lachlan Valley is regarded as ideal for irrigation. Years ago—I think it must have been in the 1930's, when the Hon. Roy Vincent was Minister for Conservation in a non-Labor government—the Wyangala Dam was built on the Lachlan River. It was said that another dam would be built near Canowindra on the Belubula River, one of the headwaters of the Lachlan, at a place called Cranky Rock. For eighteen or nineteen years most people in the area have been saying to me, "I wonder when Cranky Rock Dam is to be built." It has not yet even received mention in the Government's programme. The local people have been told by letter, deputations have been told by the Minister, and speakers on behalf of the Labor Party at election time have said, that Cranky Rock Dam would soon be under way.

Mr. SHEAHAN: How did it get its name?

Mr. CUTLER: I do not know, but certainly it is not named after the local representative. Only a week or so ago a headline appeared in one of the Lachlan Valley newspapers to this effect, "Startling disclosures on Cranky Rock." The startling disclosures, of course, were that a plan, of which I had heard nothing, has been prepared for the raising of the wall of Wyangala Dam, and that this work would soon be done. If it were not to be done in association with the building of Cranky Rock Dam, possibly it might be taking the place of that dam. Similar action is being taken by the Government on many other conservation projects.

In reply to a question I asked without notice recently the Minister gave me a good reason for restoring and raising the wall of Wyangala Dam, but I do not see any reason for altering the priority of public works projects almost from day to

day. As the Leader of the Opposition said a little while ago, for years now the party of which I am a member, and also the Liberal Party, have made demands that the Government should list the public works in order of priority, and especially the huge water conservation projects. Surely it is not unreasonable to suggest that the people who live in these areas and are intimately affected by the development envisaged in these water conservation and irrigation projects, should be the first to be told about what is to be done. Almost every day one hears hon. members on this side of the House referring to these matters. Recently the hon. member for Barwon stated that no plans had been prepared for using the waters that are being stored by Keepit Dam. A similar criticism may be made about Burrendong Dam. Down the river west of the dam at places like Nevertire and Warren, the local people are expressing grave disappointment that the Government apparently has no plans for using the waters of Burrendong Dam when it is completed. The people there are vague about what is to be done.

Mr. WETHERELL: They have been told.

Mr. CUTLER: I do not know about that. I have travelled through the area and I know what the people are saying. The days have gone when the dumb boys remained on the land and the keen boys became members of Parliament. Some of those on the land, who also have a little nous, do not know what is going on.

Mr. WETHERELL: They are opposing the department.

Mr. CUTLER: I do not know what is going on out there.

Mr. WETHERELL: The Narromine Council has opposed the department.

Mr. CUTLER: The people in the area do not know what is going on.

Mr. WETHERELL: They should know.

Mr. CUTLER: Do the people below Keepit Dam know whether the department has any plans?

Mr. WETHERELL: The people have been notified. Those who have protested against the irrigation scheme, and even against the dam, have been notified. They must know what is being done, otherwise they would be protesting against something about which they know nothing.

Mr. CUTLER: From what I have been told by these people, the situation is most vague. If the Government has completed plans for using the waters of dams that have been built or are being built, the people who will be most intimately affected by these schemes should be the first to know exactly what is to be done. I do not want the Minister to get upset about this. Though he has probably taken action to keep the people informed, the fact remains that they have not yet been adequately informed of the position.

Obviously loan funds should be used intelligently by both revenue-producing and non-revenue-producing departments. Even in the Loan Estimates that are before the Committee, scant regard seems to have been had for the needs of the departments that can earn revenue for the State. They include the Department of Lands, which is to receive £400,000, the conservation services, which are to receive £130,000, the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, which is being allocated £7,000,000, and the Department of Agriculture, which will get £120,000. They will receive £7,650,000 of the total loan moneys of £65,000,000. These departments are the ones that bring in the tangible return to which I referred earlier. In 1949-1950 the Department of Lands vote was £2,000,000 but by 1954-1955 it had risen to £3,750,000. Last year the vote was reduced to £2,150,000, but in this year's Loan Estimate only £400,000 is to go to that department. This lends credence to a statement that I have heard made by certain people connected with the Department of Lands that the Government intends eventually to amalgamate this department and another department. Every year the appropriation for the Department of Lands has been reduced and so are its activities, so there might be something in the suggestion that the Minister for

Lands has become the ministerial head of the department to preside over its extinction.

The sorry record of the Government in relation to war-service land settlement also supports the view that the Department of Lands is on the way out as a department. Only 3,000 qualified men out of the total of 19,000 who were originally given qualification certificates have been settled on the land. My colleagues and I have often condemned the Government for its failure to reach the standards achieved by other States in war-service land settlement schemes. Despite requests from me and other hon. members from this side of the House, no spokesman for the Government has had the courage to say that it is winding up war-service land settlement. It is obvious that this is what is happening. The allocation of loan moneys for war-service land settlement supports this contention. The Government does not want to honour the promises, given to these men in 1944, that they would be settled on the land.

I have dealt with this subject at considerable length on many occasions and have no intention of dealing with it in detail now. I shall leave that to other hon. members. I appeal to the Minister for Lands and the Government to make some clear statement of policy about the Government's attitude on war-service land settlement. More than 2,000 men are still interested in getting on the land. They hold qualification certificates issued by the Government. It is not as if the certificates had been given by someone else: they were issued by the Government. These men still apply for ballots, but have been unsuccessful in their efforts to get a block. Apparently, though no announcement has been made, war-service land settlement is to go down the drain.

The Government is always ready to deny that it is completely dominated by metropolitan interests. Its usual reply is that it has so many Ministers representing country electorates, and so many supporters representing country areas. Nevertheless, in many respects—not all, but many—country areas have to be content with the crumbs from the metropolitan table. No one can deny that these estimates for

water supply and sewerage services in country towns are inadequate. The figures appearing on page 8 support this statement. As an example, I quote the town of Canowindra, in my electorate of Orange. Its experience will be matched by towns in other country electorates. Canowindra, with a population of 2,500 people, is about twenty-fifth or thirtieth on the Government's priority list for the reticulation of sewerage services. Apparently the Government believes that twenty or thirty towns have greater claims than Canowindra.

Under the heading of Ministry of Public Works a sum of £300,000 is voted this year for country town water supplies; nothing is voted for country towns for sewerage and stormwater channels, and the expenditure for the year has a carry-over estimated at £2,000. An amount of £560,000 is voted for water supplies and sewerage in shires and municipalities. These amounts are to be spent outside the area served by the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board and the Hunter District Water Board.

Mr. RENSHAW: And the Broken Hill Water Board.

Mr. CUTLER: I thank the Minister. Votes for the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board and the Hunter District Water Board are included in the Estimates of the Treasurer. Although £526,542 of last year's vote remains, an amount of £300,000 is voted for water supply and sewerage projects in water board areas. A sum of £5,300,000 is voted for advances to the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board for its capital works programme. Advances to the Hunter District Water Board for capital works amount to £1,050,000. This makes a total of £6,650,000 this year for these metropolitan services compared with a total of £860,000 for the rest of New South Wales. It is no wonder that when I lead a deputation, as I have done, to the Minister for Public Works asking for the provision of country sewerage services, the Minister has to throw up his hands and say that he has no funds.

Mr. RENSHAW: Those were the figures for November. For the whole year it is £3,900,000.

Mr. CUTLER: I do not know whether the figures that I quoted apply, but I have taken them from the one column as the amounts voted for the year. Therefore the comparison is fair.

Mr. MORTON: There is a big discrepancy between the two areas.

Mr. CUTLER: It is £860,000 as against £6,650,000. This means that roughly only one-eighth of the total vote for water and sewerage services goes to parts of New South Wales other than the metropolitan area, which gets seven-eighths of the allocation. Unless the attitude of the Government changes, and I hope it can be changed by the pressure of Government supporters representing country electorates who work so hard for country interests, hon. members will always be asking the Minister for Public Works for these services. After all, water and sewerage are two of the basic services for which anyone will look in a modern town. Unfortunately we have to say that the Minister for Public Works cannot obtain enough funds. It is obvious that the funds that should be made available for country works are going to the metropolis.

I do not want the Committee to gain the impression that members of my party or the Opposition are against the development of metropolitan areas, which need water and sewerage as much as other areas of the State, but on behalf of the people that it represents the Country Party demands that equal consideration be given to country people in the provision of these basic services. I could deal with many other matters in these Estimates; I have not referred to education or to health. I know that the Minister for Health will not be happy with this year's allocation for his department. It is lower than last year. Doubtless the Minister will stage a battle in Cabinet and the subject will be dealt with by other hon. members from the Opposition side. Even at this late stage, after eighteen years in office, the Government should give some attention to the

fact that the letters N.S.W. do not represent only Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong.

Mr. McCARTNEY (Hamilton) [5.30]: I was keenly interested in the Treasurer's statement that larger sums of loan money would be spent on public works and other services during the year. Hon. members will be pleased to learn that following the late Premier's attendance at the Australian Loan Council earlier this year, increased loan allocations have been made to New South Wales. A total sum of £62,951,000 has been provided this year as against £60,051,575 last year. I have always been keenly interested in the financial situation of New South Wales. Recently the Hon. Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes, a federal member from Victoria, had much to say about the serious situation that has developed between the States and the Commonwealth on the matter of State capital indebtedness. The Leader of the Country Party emphasised that the capital indebtedness of New South Wales was only £369,000,000 in 1941 whereas now it is £832,000,000. This is understandable.

Clearly the capital indebtedness of the States will increase with the passage of time and eventually all the States will have to take definite and positive action to solve the problem. The Hon. Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes said that in recent years the Commonwealth's capital indebtedness has been reduced by £130,000,000. New South Wales is not the only State in which the capital debt has increased; all the other States have been similarly affected. An attempt will have to be made at future Loan Council meetings to solve this problem. In my maiden speech I said that £1 of every £4 that was returned to the States by way of taxation reimbursement was going back to the Commonwealth as interest payment on loan moneys. This is unfair because interest is being charged on the taxpayers' money.

Mr. HUGHES: It is going back to the taxpayers.

Mr. McCARTNEY: It is taken from taxpayers throughout Australia; the allocations to the States are merely a portion of that money. Some of it is lent to the States at ruling rates of interest. This is no

figment of the imagination; it is a statement of the situation made in the Commonwealth Parliament. Obviously the system needs to be reassessed.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party discussed the capital indebtedness of the railways. As I said in my maiden speech, this debt should be, in large measure, the responsibility of the Commonwealth, which ran our railways into the ground during World War II. In consequence the railway services had to be completely rehabilitated, necessitating a continual sinking of loan funds in the undertaking. This, of course, has improved services and enabled the department to meet the challenges that now face public transport. The leaders of both Opposition parties have conceded that the railways are of considerable benefit to the State and have assisted its development. It has always been expected that services in outlying parts of the State would be unprofitable. On the matter of Commonwealth responsibility for the capital indebtedness of the railways, hon. members are aware that during World War II the rolling-stock and running lines were subjected to excessive wear and tear.

Mr. CRAWFORD: All of which the Commonwealth paid for.

Mr. McCARTNEY: That may be so, but the payments did not altogether meet the cost. The Commonwealth exploited the New South Wales railways and virtually ran them into the ground. Rolling-stock could not be maintained as it would have been in ordinary times. The Federal Government should have accepted responsibility for this excessive wear and tear.

Mr. HUGHES: Did the railways make a profit during the war years?

Mr. McCARTNEY: Yes.

Mr. HUGHES: Where did the profits go?

Mr. McCARTNEY: Into general revenue. The profits were not nearly enough to pay for the re-organisation that was so badly needed.

Mr. CRAWFORD: There has been mismanagement, too.

Mr. McCARTNEY: I shall not accept the statement of the hon. member for Barwon. His leader congratulated the administration of the Department of Railways. The Commonwealth Railways are financed from revenue funds. If the Commonwealth discharged its responsibilities, the same could be done with the railways of New South Wales. This year an increased allocation of loan money will be made to the Commissioner for Railways for the purpose of further stabilising railway finances. The commissioner has told me that the margin of earnings over expenditure will rise this year as compared with last year, when it was in the vicinity of £6,000,000—a creditable achievement in an industry like the railways. The Commonwealth Government should be asked to accept some responsibility for the New South Wales railways and further discussions should be held on loan allocations to the States. Loan moneys are derived from the proceeds of general taxation and the people of the States are further burdened by being charged interest on that money.

I was delighted to hear the Treasurer say that this year an increased allocation of loan funds will be made for Newcastle harbour works. Newcastle handles the second-largest tonnage of any port in Australia and it is heartening to learn that harbour works will be accelerated there. All those associated with the Newcastle harbour are deeply concerned that the bar crossing should be made deeper. The Government has done all that it can in that regard, and I was very pleased to hear that within the next twelve months the low water depth, which is at present 25½ feet, will be increased to 28 feet, and in two years to 32 feet. That is a very welcome piece of news to the people of Newcastle, as we have all been most concerned that the larger ships being built now and many other ships already in operation would not be able to cross the bar when carrying a full pay load, so jeopardising the employment of waterside workers in the port. It is hoped that the shelf at the approach to the harbour will be cut away within two years to give a low water depth there of 32 feet which will overcome most of our shipping problems in the harbour.

The silting of the Newcastle harbour has also caused much concern, but I understand that this matter will lose its acuteness when the bar is dredged. I believe also that the setting up of a single port authority at Newcastle by this Government will assist in the development of the port. A recent matter debated in this Chamber was a second outlet for the Hunter River which flows into the port of Newcastle. I understand that such a scheme would cost between £7,000,000 and £10,000,000. That being so, any project for a second outlet to minimise the silting of Newcastle harbour would have to be very carefully considered. Water flows would have to be assessed and tide movements and wind currents studied. Silt and sand movement would also have to be investigated, as well as geological formations and the growth of vegetation. This is a very big project, but we are reassured to know that the Government is measuring up to its responsibilities to the Newcastle district by investigating such an important matter.

It will cost £73,000 this year to deepen the harbour, and £317,000 will be spent on wharf construction and £151,000 on island reclamation, totalling £541,000. The island reclamation scheme holds much promise for the prosperous future of Newcastle. In a short time a certain amount of reclaimed land will become available for industry which, when established, will increase the employment opportunities in the district. At present there is not much waterfront land available in Newcastle, and the reclamation scheme will therefore be most valuable. The Government also deserves congratulations for its activities in that direction. The Government, through the late Premier, also decided to increase its assistance to the Hunter Valley Research Foundation, which was set up to solve problems associated with the Hunter River and the Newcastle harbour. Professor Renwick, in charge of the foundation, is most astute in the interests of the district, and the Government's expenditure of £30,000 on the foundation is money well spent. Recently an appeal was made to various interests in Newcastle and the Hunter River Valley for finance for this foundation, and of the £100,000 sought more

than £98,000 has been subscribed. That shows that the people in the Hunter River Valley generally are satisfied with the work of the foundation and realise that it is aimed at continuing the prosperity of the district.

It costs a large sum of money annually to remove the silt from Newcastle harbour, but I understand that the foundation has a plan to use the very latest methods, including radioactive isotopes, in its investigation. The Government will spend £46,000 on wharves in Newcastle Harbour. No. 5, or Lee wharf, is known to the department as Wickham wharf, and is a major project which will ultimately cost about £500,000. The work on it has reached an advanced stage, the main deck having been completed and fendering being in progress. It is expected to be completed by June next year. It has been decided to replace the present oil wharf by a new oil berth to be known as No. 3 Throsby Creek Basin. All these things show that the Government is well aware that Newcastle is one of the most important harbours on our coast. As the representative of the electorate of Hamilton I am very pleased with the Government's activities in my district.

The Leader of the Country Party referred to education. Much concern has been caused by the great amount of money expended on education, but it is only to be expected that education will cost more as the population grows and as our services are extended. The Government, through the Premier and Minister for Education, has done everything possible to meet the demands made upon it for the education of our children. Last year 1,400 classrooms were built throughout New South Wales, and hon. members will agree that the whole of the State must have benefited from that expansion of the education services. In the Newcastle district the number of high schools has been increased to meet the needs of the expanded population. After World War II there was a great demand for primary schools and infants' schools but now these pupils have reached the stage of secondary education and extra high schools must be provided. This has caused a great drain on the resources of this State.

I have said many times that education is most important to this State and to Australia and that as much as possible should be spent on general and technical education.

Mr. LEWIS: New South Wales has been very slow.

Mr. McCARTNEY: New South Wales has no need to apologise to other States on any assessment of educational development throughout Australia.

Mr. LEWIS: This State has spent less than Victoria has.

Mr. McCARTNEY: In New South Wales we have progressively met our responsibilities in providing education and in doing so have neglected some of the projects about which members of the Opposition complain. Because of the high priority accorded to education by this Government it has gone ahead and spent money on education rather than on some of the other projects advocated by the Opposition.

Mr. LEWIS: It still has not been enough.

Mr. McCARTNEY: I appreciate that it has not been enough. On many occasions the Premier asked the Loan Council for a greater allocation but was unable to get it. In successive years, except the past two deficit years, the Commonwealth Government has had excessive surpluses, ranging to over £100,000,000. That money belonged to the people of Australia. If hon. members opposite believe that education has been neglected, they should direct their criticism at the right target.

Mr. RENSCHAW: The Commonwealth finances its capital works out of revenue.

Mr. McCARTNEY: Yes. As the Treasurer points out, the Commonwealth Government has continued to finance its capital works from revenue, whereas the States are allocated loan funds, derived from taxation, on which the States must pay interest. As I said before, £1 in every £4 of taxation reimbursements was spent in this direction last year. I deal now with loan money spent on public works, soil conservation and water conservation projects. I disagree with the Leader of the Country

Party and point out that it is most difficult to assess the value received from works of this type. In our stage of development such works are necessary and the money spent on them finds its way back through various channels. People in the irrigation areas and those using our harbours derive advantages which in turn are passed on to the people generally and from the people they flow back to the State. The State is concerned to see that progress takes place in the country and in the cities and to ensure that funds are spent in the best interest of the people generally. I am confident that this year the £62,000,000 allocated out of loan funds will be spent in the same worthy way in which loan money has been used during the years this Government has been in office.

Progress reported, on motion by Mr Renshaw.

[Mr. Speaker left the chair at 5.56 p.m.
The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

BILLS RETURNED

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Motor Vehicles (Taxation) Amendment Bill
Swine Compensation Taxation Bill

WOODENBONG PUBLIC HALL

Mr. McMAHON (Balmain), Minister for Lands [7.31]: I move:

That in pursuance of section 3 of the Trustees of Public Reserves Enabling Act, 1924, this House declares that such Act shall apply to the area of 3 roods at Woodenbong, dedicated on 3rd October, 1958, for Public Hall.

The area to which this motion relates comprises allotment 14, section 5, in the village of Woodenbong and Land District of Casino. It is under the control of trustees, and by very considerable voluntary effort, and the help of guarantors, a public hall has been erected on the land. The trustees wish to mortgage the land and thereby relieve the guarantors of the liabilities they incurred in connection with the raising of finance for the erection of the hall. Before the trustees can do this, however, a resolution must be passed by

both Houses of Parliament declaring that the Trustees of Public Reserves Enabling Act, 1924, shall apply to the area.

The passing of a resolution is a preliminary requirement of that Act. After the Act has been made to apply to the area it will be necessary for the trustees to make application for my consent, as Minister for Lands, to the proposed mortgage. The hon. member for Tenterfield has been active on behalf of the trustees in this matter, and I am pleased that it has been possible to bring the necessary motion before the House. The motion is non-contentious and I commend it to hon. members for their favourable consideration.

Lt-Colonel BRUXNER (Tenterfield) [7.33]: I wish to express my great thanks to the Minister for bringing this motion before the House; I assure him that the people of the little village of Woodenbong are as grateful as I am. A few people guaranteed a substantial amount in respect of this public hall, and, as some of them are getting along the road of life, they seek to be relieved of the responsibility. The bank is willing to take over the liability.

If any hon. member visits the village of Woodenbong he will find there one of the most beautiful country halls that can be seen, even in towns of a considerable size. It is really a beautiful building, and plays an important part in the social life of the people of Woodenbong. I hope that the House will agree to the motion. I again thank the Minister for his courtesy.

Motion agreed to.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1959-1960

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr. STOREY (Hornsby) [7.34]: I wish to address my remarks to the need for a better distribution of loan funds. For instance, funds should be allocated to the building of a teachers' coaching college at Chatswood. On Monday I attended a meeting of about fifty people and they brought to my notice just how bad the position is in regard to teachers' training and how beneficial a new training college

would be. It is reasonable to assume that many trainee teachers would come from the North Shore, and Chatswood, being a central place along the railway line, would be a suitable place for a college. This view is held by the Teachers' Federation and the parents and citizens' associations. There is no doubt that more training schools are required for school teachers, and some of the revelations made at the meeting I attended showed that what is being done by the Government is not sufficient to improve the plight of school teachers and the conditions in the schools in which they work.

I am not criticising the Government for not trying to improve the position, but I simply point to the crisis and ask that something be done. Maybe the Deputy Premier will bring the matter to the notice of Cabinet or, in his position of Treasurer, he might make a supplementary grant, in the same way as a grant was made when the increasing population in the Waitara area called for education expansion there.

Level crossings have been dealt with, up to a point, in the Loan Estimates, but surely the Government does not think that the provision that has been made is sufficient. Level crossings at places like Lisarow and Brooklyn remain as death traps, for the road crosses the railway line at an angle of 30 degrees. No effort has been made to improve the position. I am not being parochial. It is not a matter of preferring money to be spent in one electorate as against another. Improvements to level crossings will be of benefit to the community as a whole. The level crossing at Carlingford was bad enough, and hon. members have often heard of the difficulty at Concord West.

Mr. RENSHAW: And at Camellia.

Mr. STOREY: I do not know of that crossing, but I accept the Minister's statement that is a bad one. At Brooklyn the road crosses the railway line at an angle, and the station-master's cottage is so placed that it obscures the vision of drivers. The Department of Railways is like a mule; it will not shift. It wants the local council to agree to a subdivision, so that it can sell its land; but that would only perpetuate

the difficulty. The council is aware of its responsibilities and, thinking that the mule might get out of the way if it is kicked hard enough, the council refuses to agree. The Commissioner for Railways says "Yes", the council says "No", and the battle continues. When the Minister for Health was Minister for Transport we asked him to receive a deputation. He agreed, but when he was out of the saddle someone else said that the Minister could not see us. We were then referred to the Commissioner for Railways. However, the commissioner has about ten clerks along the line who have been regularly saying "No" for ten years. No one has any chance of "throwing" them. All that happens is that the deputation is ushered into the room for a nice, friendly pow-wow; the commissioner says, "Thank you for your attention", the deputation walks out and some time later the answer arrives: "We regret that we cannot make funds available."

I am not being parochial; I never advocate the doing of anything in my electorate unless it is of great public importance. I have been a member of the Council of the Shire of Hornsby for twenty-nine years—though I probably will not be there after the next elections—and even before I was a member of the council it applied for an overbridge at Asquith. Finally, after the council itself had prepared a plan, approval was given for the bridge but only on condition that the council found £12,500, which will come out of its loan allocation.

Mr. MORTON: That is overdoing it.

Mr. STOREY: They are overdoing it by taking all our cash. This means that we will have £12,500 less to spend on roads. The new Treasurer ought to have a look at this problem. In 1929 representatives of all councils in the metropolitan area decided at a conference at North Sydney that all railway overbridges and footways should be the responsibility of the Government. That is fair enough, but the people of Hornsby have been paying through the nose for such works as the Bridge Road overbridge, and bridges at Mount Kuringai, Asquith, and Mount Colah. Probably they will pay also when a bridge is eventually

built at Brooklyn, where, unless something is soon done, there will be a repetition of the 1944 tragedy, when a bus was caught on the line on the level-crossing with great loss of life. That was in the days of steam trains. What will happen when the electric trains come speeding through?

The Government's policy of saying, "No, no, no" has been departed from only once, when it decided to pay half the cost of extra footpaths on the overbridge at Hornsby. That cost the council at least £1,300. I concede that the Government also made a slight concession at Mount Kurin-gai, where the Department of Railways, the local council and the Department of Main Roads each contributed £11,000 to the cost of the bridge. More of this type of co-operation between the Government and councils is necessary to improve the flow of transport in this city.

Lack of provision for preliminary works on a second Sydney Harbour crossing is a grave omission from the Loan Estimates. How can the Government expect to solve the transport problem unless it uses its brains and provides a system that will benefit everyone?

Mr. RENSHAW: The Leader of the Opposition does not want the Government to start anything.

Mr. STOREY: I have been able to represent some of the area on the northern side of the harbour for a long time and I unhesitatingly say that the Deputy Premier and Treasurer will be lauded to the skies if he does something along the lines that I have suggested. He would not be criticised. The hon. member for Georges River has advocated repeatedly the building of a high-level bridge at Como. This has been promised in the last two Liberal Party policy speeches. More bridges are necessary to cope with Sydney's traffic problem. Though the Government will not admit it publicly, the traffic chaos has it so worried that it does not know what to do next. It tries something new every day but soon gives it away as a failure and tries something else.

If the Government does nothing else it should provide a teachers' college at Chatswood and give proper assistance to eliminate railway level-crossings throughout the State. Can any hon. member mention a work that is more necessary than a second Sydney Harbour bridge? One has only to go to the Parliamentary Library to read of the events that led up to the calling of tenders for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Who designed the bridge?

Mr. STOREY: Is that a catch question?

Mr. R. J. KELLY: Yes.

Mr. STOREY: The hon. member can find all the information about the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the Parliamentary Library. Dr. Bradfield was virtually discovered by a gentleman named John Storey, who was chairman of the Public Works Committee in 1914. I was a draftsman in the Department of Public Works then and know something about the subject. I say no more than that. The events that led up to the building of the bridge were simple: the site was selected and tenders were called. One of the gentlemen who went to England to check the calculations of the successful tenderer is in business in Martin Place today, available to advise the Government on the building of a second harbour crossing. I am advocating that the Government should get on with the jobs that are absolutely necessary. I rise above what might be regarded as petty requirements, though I know of plenty of projects that could be undertaken. Reclamation work could be started at Brooklyn; money could be provided for the improvement of parks; more baby health centres could be established.

Mr. CRABTREE: Where?

Mr. STOREY: Many more are required. More money could be provided for hospitals, and hospital boards could be told that the Government was willing to share the cost of hospital works on a fifty-fifty basis. Instead of spending £1,500,000 in one suburb the Government could spend £500,000 here and £500,000 there to provide the extra services that are required. I am

not criticising what has been done; I am urging the Government to get on with jobs that have not been done. I am trying to be constructive. I appreciate that everything cannot be done at once and that there is not enough money to go around. However, unless hon. members who represent non-Labor electorates are forthright in their demands and make it clear that works in their district are being passed over and that it is the Government's job to do them, they will not be done.

The Deputy Premier and Treasurer is well aware—because I was so critical—that I have never agreed with the decision to convert the tram tracks on the Sydney Harbour Bridge to a roadway. This has deferred the building of an electric railway to Palm Beach for many years, if not for ever. I well recall that from 1941 to 1944 I advocated the building of this railway, which was part of the Bradfield plan right back in 1912. It would handle a greater volume of people than the present system. We must build these electric railways and halve the fares to provide adequate transport for the people.

Mr. CRABTREE: Would it be economical?

Mr. STOREY: It would be much more economical than wasting money in laying tramlines and after a few years changing over to buses. The Government has written off the whole of the cost of tramlines. Where has that money gone? Was it charged against the transport accounts? All the Government has done is to charge interest on the capital outlay. That interest will go on for ever.

Mr. GRIFFITH (Cronulla) [7.51]: I speak on behalf of my own constituents and thousands of others who live on the newly developed perimeter of the County of Cumberland when I invite the attention of the Committee to a most important matter—adequate sewerage. It is a shocking state of affairs that in this modern day we have been unable to keep pace with the demand for sewerage—a demand that is increasing year by year. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any concerted effort to overcome the lag. Sewerage is not a luxury these days; it is an essential. The position in the Shire of Sutherland is typical of many

other rapidly expanding areas such as Bankstown and Fairfield. The population of Sutherland shire has grown in ten or twelve years from 10,000 to more than 100,000 people, and in that time the only sewerage work done has been the most important but relatively small amount at Cronulla at the eastern end of the shire. The rest of the population of the shire have no hope of sewerage in the immediate or foreseeable future.

In areas where sewerage is unavailable suburban holdings of 50-foot frontage and a couple of hundred feet depth must accommodate absorption pits, grease traps and the like. Such a small block of land might be adequate for a new house and a young married couple, but when the family begins to arrive, after some time in use the ground rapidly becomes saturated. During the recent rains it became evident in my area and in other parts of the shire that it is impossible for so-called suburban blocks without sewerage to cope with rainfall and household drainage. Dirty sludge and slime trickles out to the roadways and the children play in it. A repetition through lack of sewerage of the great poliomyelitis epidemic that occurred before the war would be tragic in my electorate. At every school in my area the local parents and citizens' organisations are dealing with the same problem—the condition of the school toilets—at meeting after meeting. At home the parents try to provide the best possible conditions, but the same cannot be said of the schools, which continue to have the same antiquated system. The recent outbreak of gastro-enteritis affected many persons in my area. Though I am not a medical man, I am sure that much of it was due to lack of sewerage. The outbreak spread everywhere like wildfire.

I appeal to the Government to take notice of this urgent need in the community and to make every effort to overcome the problem as soon as possible. When the gas company decided to instal gas in the Sutherland shire, within a matter of months pipes were laid throughout the area and any householder who wanted gas could have it connected to his home. If that can be done by the gas company, it can certainly be

done by the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the board has the necessary funds to get on with this most important task of providing sewerage wherever there is a growing population and congestion, especially where there are many children. As the hon. member for Georges River and the hon. member for Sutherland would agree, the Department of Education is hard put to keep pace with the demand for schools in the Sutherland shire. I suggest that the number of children in the area is far greater for each acre of land than in any other area of the State. Where there is a huge concentration of children it is of the utmost importance, in the interests of public health, that no time be lost in providing sewerage.

Mr. PUNCH (Upper Hunter) [7.57]: For many years my predecessor, Mr. D'Arcy Rose, local organisations and the people of Muswellbrook have been battling to obtain a new hospital. The present one is located in a building constructed originally as a private home and donated to the local citizens by the White family for use as a hospital. Over the years extensions have been added and rooms changed so that it has become unwieldy and difficult to manage. The matron and nursing and domestic staff have a difficult task in running the hospital at its present high standard. They do an excellent job under most difficult conditions. The only access to the top floor is a narrow winding staircase that all nursing staff and patients must use to reach the upper rooms. On many occasions patients going to these rooms after a delicate and dangerous operation have been strapped to a stretcher in order to avoid complications. Those who can walk, of course, do so.

The Minister has said that a proposed new hospital at Muswellbrook may be included in the Loan Estimates for 1960-61. It is not yet an approved work, though it is being examined by the members of the Hospitals Commission. I appeal to the Minister to give more earnest and serious consideration to the inclusion of this work in the Loan Estimates for the next financial year. The last visit to Muswellbrook by a

Minister for Health was in 1940, when the Hon. H. L. Primrose held that portfolio. Over the past twelve years the local citizens through their local member have been trying to persuade the Minister for Health to visit the area and inspect the hospital to see for himself the need for a new one. If the Minister would only come to Muswellbrook he would see at a glance that the hospital is completely inadequate to cope with the needs of the thriving township. The present chairman and the secretary of the hospital board, Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Martyr, are doing excellent work but, like the nursing and domestic staff, they work under most difficult conditions. The nurses' quarters are located in an old home 400 yards away from the hospital itself, and the nurses' bedrooms and bathrooms leak in wet weather.

The second matter relating to Muswellbrook that I want to raise is on the controversial Maryvale-Sandy Hollow railway, about which some mention was made in the Chamber earlier today. For many years this line has been treated as a political football. Approximately £2,500,000 has been spent on it, and at one stage it was estimated that the line could be completed for another £900,000. Unfortunately, the Government transferred the work force. I rather fear that the men were brought down to work on some city project that was not nearly so important as the Maryvale-Sandy Hollow line. Ever since then the Government has been promising to complete it. During each election campaign the late Premier would say, "If we are returned to office we shall finish this railway." Immediately after the elections the promise was forgotten and nothing more was done for another three years until the next election campaign. The file is back once more in its pigeonhole. It would take much time and trouble to unearth it from the many papers that are piled on top of it and to remove the cobwebs that spiders have spun around it.

I have said before, and I say again, that the Government should seek tenders from some of the large constructing organisations that are operating in Australia for the completion of the line. Various estimates have been made, ranging from

£5,000,000 to £8,000,000. No one seems to know how much it will cost. With the new diesel-electric locomotives and possibly the coal jet engines that may come into use in the future, the cost of completing the line may be much less than is thought. Watering places, coal dumps and many other items that were considered to be necessary will not now be needed. The longer this line is left in an unfinished state, the less chance there is that it will ever be completed. It is only fair that the Government should once again look into this matter so that all concerned will know where they stand. If the Government invited tenders with a view to ascertaining the cost of completing this line, it is possible that Government supporters, as well as everyone else, would be surprised by the result. The line is not far from completion. One only has to drive along it to see the colossal work that has been done and to realise what a white elephant it is, especially when one remembers that £80,000 a year in interest must be paid on the capital that has been invested in it.

The completion of the line would be in the interests of the people of this State; indeed, in the interests of the nation. It would alleviate much of the rail congestion that occurs on the line over the Blue Mountains to Sydney and the people in the whole of the Central West, the Far West, and even as far as South Australia and Western Australia could find some use for it. In addition, it would be a most important rail link in time of war; if the Hawkesbury River bridge were destroyed the whole railway system would be disrupted. The whole of the Central West would have direct access to the northern part of the State. Produce brought from the inland would be shipped from the port of Newcastle, which I regard as the leading port in Australia. In addition, the increased flow of goods along this line, together with a corresponding increase in goods traffic from both the New England Tableland and the Northwest, would perhaps lead to the development of Port Stephens, which is ripe for improvement. I regret deeply that these two most vital works are not to receive an allocation from the loan funds. I remind the Government that

though many other important projects must be completed, the two that I have mentioned are well out of their turn. I strongly urge the Government to include them in next year's Loan Estimates.

The other matter to which I wish to direct attention is the public school at Singleton. I notice that the Minister for Education is being allocated in the Loan Estimates an additional £2,500,000, some of which should be spent on building new schools. In view of the ever-increasing number of pupils that are enrolling at our schools, it is bad management not to build enough new schools to accommodate them. School buildings are needed in many new areas, but country school children are at a disadvantage compared with their city brothers and sisters. The accommodation provided children at the Singleton primary school is about the worst in the State. Only last year the school celebrated its centenary, and I assure the Minister that it has almost reached the end of its life as a school building. Not so long ago I had an opportunity to inspect it thoroughly. Though it is maintained in reasonable order in spite of most difficult circumstances, the building is most inadequate for this growing town.

There are not enough rooms to accommodate comfortably the large classes. Cracks have opened in the walls and in winter the cold wind whistles past the children. However, in summer the rooms are too stuffy and hot. The building has moved, and the timbers are weatherbeaten and have begun to rot. It is not right that children should be educated under such poor conditions. Also, the school grounds are inadequate and unsuitable. The property, which is in the heart of the town, is surrounded by roads that carry heavy traffic. A child has only to step outside the fence and he is likely to be knocked down by a car.

Some little time ago a block of land was acquired for the building of a new school. It is situated just across the road from the high school, and is well above flood level. During the centenary year the headmaster and the pupils planted many trees upon this block, both for ornamentation and to act as a windbreak. It is handily placed

for school transport, for buses pick up and set down children at the high school opposite. Adequate space is available for a play area and there are plenty of playing fields in the vicinity. I repeat that this school, which is more than 100 years old, and has served the community well, is now at the end of its life. The town urgently needs a new primary school, which should be built on the block that has been acquired and developed. I hope that the Minister will consider including this most necessary and urgent work on his programme and that the new primary school will be built at Singleton in the near future.

Mr. CRABTREE (Kogarah) [8.9]: The debate on the Loan Estimates gives hon. members an opportunity to present the Government with bouquets and also to throw a few brickbats. I should like to take this opportunity of presenting, first, a few bouquets to the Government for its most positive programme of sewerage service extensions in the metropolitan area.

Mr. CRAWFORD: What about the country areas?

Mr. CRABTREE: It is to be regretted that no Country Party spokesman is present. If there were he might be able to make a factual examination of the Government's achievements in country areas. I regret that the hon. member for Cronulla did not take the opportunity of examining closely the Loan Estimates and telling hon. members the truth about what the Government is doing to overcome the water and sewerage problem. It is clear from the Loan Estimates that the Government proposes to spend in this financial year, through its agent the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board, another £1,350,000 on these services.

Mr. BROWN: That is a lot of money.

Mr. CRABTREE: Much money; and much work will be done as well. Before I became the representative for the Kogarah electorate, only 20 per cent of the area had sewerage reticulation. Today sewerage services are available in 80 per cent of my electorate. I agree with the hon. member for Cronulla on the ever-growing need for water and sewerage reticulation in a rapidly

developing metropolis like the city of Sydney, and indeed in the County of Cumberland. No government has applied itself more assiduously to the task of providing these essential services than this Labor Government.

Mr. DENNIS: Has the hon. member been to Seven Hills?

Mr. CRABTREE: Yes, and to other places. The Government is cognisant of the difficulties of those areas. The hon. member for Blacktown would agree that the development of his or any other electorate on the outer perimeter of the County of Cumberland should not be retarded by lack of sewerage and water services.

Mr. CHAPMAN: These should be made available when a housing project is completed.

Mr. CRABTREE: That is so. The hon. member should call to mind the councils that were absorbed at their own request by the Council of the City of Sydney. Hon. members opposite should approach this question on a factual and practical basis and pay tribute to the Government for the work that has been done. Every hon. member representing areas where this essential service has not yet been provided should be saying that he is pleased to see that the Government has again made available a record amount to the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board so that these essential services can be extended. If the hon. member for Cronulla had gone to Loftus, Engadine and Heathcote when a government of his political persuasion was in office, he would have seen that the people there got their water supply from tanks.

Mr. MORTON: That was twenty years ago.

Mr. CRABTREE: That is so. No effort was made by those governments to extend services to established areas. I know that the hon. member for Mosman was not a member of this Chamber in those days. The Government has recognised the need to increase services in this rapidly growing metropolitan area and I am pleased to see that this year the vote has been increased by more than 50 per cent.

Mr. DEANE: Where can that be found?

Mr. CRABTREE: It is on page 5. I now fling my brickbat at the Government. Tonight hon. members have been demanding this and that, but little criticism has been made of the allocation for the Minister for Health for new buildings, improvements and additions, which is £500,000 below last year's figure. This vote, despite political pressure by hon. members opposite as well as by Government supporters, has been reduced. I have told the people in my electorate that education is not merely the three R's; it embraces a field much wider than simple mathematics and English. I regret that the Government has not had enough finance to increase the vote for health, and I pay tribute to the Minister for Health for the work that he has done.

Mr. CHAPMAN: Yet he was beaten by one vote.

Mr. CRABTREE: His defeat by one vote has nothing to do with it. The Minister for Health is a man of ability who has applied himself energetically to the problem and over the years has established a fine record. One of his monuments will be the North Ryde Psychiatric Centre. It is hard for me to accept that his vote should be reduced by £500,000. I am proud of the work done at the St. George Hospital. It would be the outstanding hospital in New South Wales and I am not being parochial when I say that. Many phases of treatment are available there which are not available at Sutherland hospital.

Mr. GRIFFITH: And an all-night telephone service?

Mr. CRABTREE: The St. George Hospital may also have an all-night telephone service, but it has also a recovery and resuscitation ward. In addition, it has a fine lecture theatre for which I pay tribute to the Government. If it is possible, even at this late stage, to review the Estimates, I urge the Treasurer to give consideration to the fact that the health of our community is more important than any aspect dealt with by these Estimates. It takes precedence even over education. So much has been done. In the past fifteen years, because

of the advances of medical science, the average stay of patients in hospitals has been reduced by half. Some of the most learned men in the field of medicine have devoted themselves to this crusade. The difficulties of heart disease remain. Unfortunately, this Assembly has lost one hon. member; others are not well. There has been a resurgence of interest in the field of health. As a member of the St. George Hospital board, I sincerely ask the Treasurer to review the Estimate.

Mr. DENNIS: Was the hon. member appointed or elected?

Mr. CRABTREE: The hon. member for Blacktown has not been here long but I assure him that a man who is willing to act on a hospital board, whether appointed or elected, has no easy task. Whether hon. members opposite regard it as stigma or not, I am glad that I was appointed—at my own request—to my local hospital board.

Mr. McCaw: Would not the hon. member have been better pleased if he were elected?

Mr. CRABTREE: Not necessarily. I spend two days a week at the hospital. I believe that I have a job to do there.

Mr. PUNCH: What about one man, one job?

Mr. CRABTREE: For this job I receive nothing. The hon. member for Upper Hunter may have a dozen jobs, but I believe I have a duty to my electorate and my constituents to act on the hospital board. Many hon. members on the Government side—

Mr. JACK BEALE: And the Opposition side—

Mr. CRABTREE: Hon. members on both sides act on boards at their own request.

Mr. MORTON: When we on this side make a request it is not acceded to.

Mr. CRABTREE: That is not correct. I am pleased with the system of appointment to hospital boards and stress that hospital boards now operate more in the interests of the community than at any other time in their history.

Mr. PURDUE (Waratah) [8.20]: I notice that £3,000,000 has been made available in the Loan Estimate of the Minister for Health for new buildings, improvements and extensions to hospitals. This is a substantial amount and I hope that enough can be squeezed from it to make a small sum available to the Western Suburbs Hospital at Waratah. If not, I hope that provision will be made for this work in next year's loan allocation. I mentioned this work when speaking in the budget debate a few weeks ago and since then one or two fresh matters have arisen. The hospital board is doing excellent work but it would like a guarantee that it may proceed with progressive development rather than slight piecemeal improvements. It has prepared a scheme that will cost about £100,000—£30,000 for a nurses' home, £30,000 for improvements and extensions to the maternity section, and about the same sum for improvements and extensions to the aged ladies' section of the hospital. As I said in the budget debate, expenditure of £40,000 would provide about forty additional beds at an average cost of £1,000 a bed compared with £5,000 a bed for a new hospital. I urge that early consideration be given to this practical proposal.

I remind hon. members that from time to time I have referred to the unfavourable rate of infant mortality in Newcastle compared with that in the Sydney metropolitan area and other parts of the State. Speaking from memory, the rate in the Sydney metropolitan area is twenty a thousand and in Newcastle twenty-eight a thousand. A couple of weeks ago I was intrigued to read a report that the maternity section at the Western Suburbs Hospital, Waratah, had reduced infant mortality to twelve a thousand. I should like the Minister to consider this aspect carefully. The maternity section at Waratah must be credited with an amazing achievement if the hospital's data is compiled in the same way as that of other hospitals, and it should be given these extensions so that it may expand its activities. The new nurses' quarters, when completed, will release for occupation by elderly people about twenty cottages that were erected for that specific

purpose twenty years ago. I hope that this matter will be given earnest and special consideration.

Reference is made also to the establishment and equipment of baby health centres. Though the hon. member for Hornsby has said that adequate provision has not been made for baby health centres, I consider that the Estimates and Loan Estimates have allocated enough money to cater for this requirement throughout the State in this financial year. I am pleased that ample provision has been made and that councils wishing to proceed with these projects will be able to do so.

In the Loan Estimate of the Treasurer £1,050,000 has been allocated as an advance to the Hunter District Water Board for various water and sewerage projects. I again emphasise the desirability of a special grant for sewerage services in the unsewered part of the Shortland area. It is highly desirable that a large school in the district be connected with the sewer. In addition, there are many hundreds of new homes in this area, which is in the electorates of Waratah and Kurri Kurri. The Hunter District Water Board has already acquired land for treatment works but a fairly heavy expenditure is needed to develop them. Unfortunately the sewerage system serving Newcastle is overloaded and effluent from the Shortland area cannot be pumped into it. This work would provide much-needed employment for miners and other unemployed persons and I urge that it be proceeded with.

A sum of £11,100,000 has been allocated to the Department of Railways for capital expenditure and quite a large portion will be used in purchasing diesel-electric locomotives. Though these locomotives are economical and useful for long-distance heavy haulage, some of the money proposed for their purchase could be better spent in extending electrification from Gosford to Newcastle. I have urged many times that this work be done and I hope that further consideration will be given to this practical and desirable suggestion. Electrification would serve many purposes. The purchase of a diesel-electric locomotive does not provide employment; electrification

does. Straight-out electrification requires the generation of more electricity, which in turn means that more coal is required and must be produced. This provides more employment in the coal-mining industry. Electrification requires also a considerable quantity of steel work, in the manufacture of which coal is again required. For every 12 cwt. of steel produced, 1 ton of coal is needed for the manufacture of coke and for other associated requirements. Steelwork required for this electrification would indirectly provide much more employment for coalminers. Furthermore, quite a lot of concrete would be required for the stanchion bases. Larger and continued orders for cement might even help the Rural Bank in some of its difficulties. I earnestly suggest that in next year's Loan Estimates an adequate amount be allocated for extending electrification to Newcastle.

In the Loan Estimate of the Minister for Public Works £750,000 has been allocated for wharfage and improvements in Newcastle harbour. I am pleased to see this but once again I urge that the work be expedited. Some time ago I said that Newcastle harbour had reached second place in the ports of the Commonwealth. Melbourne had handled 8,450,000 tons of shipping, Newcastle 8,420,000 tons and Sydney just over 8,000,000. Last year Newcastle slipped back to third place, the order then being Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle, but the most important point is that during September and October of this year there was so much shipping in Newcastle harbour that more than 1,000,000 tons of cargo were handled by the port in each of those months. If loading at that rate is continued until next June, Newcastle will handle more than 12,000,000 tons of cargo compared with 8,000,000 tons handled in both Melbourne and Sydney. That stresses once again the urgency and the desirability of Newcastle harbour's improvements being completed without any further delay.

In the Loan Estimates under the heading of "Minister for Public Works" provision is shown for new police stations, court houses and prisons in various parts of the State. A rather large number of new buildings are to be constructed, but I was most

disappointed to notice that provision has not been made for extensions to the Mayfield police station in the Waratah electorate. On many occasions in this Chamber I have referred to the inadequacy of the accommodation at that police station. Indeed, the accommodation is appallingly inadequate. About four police officers have to work in a small room where a counter is provided for the public. The conditions are so cramped that it is almost impossible for those officers to undertake their duties efficiently. In another section of the police station, a room set aside as a meal and change room for the staff has to be used as a charge room, as no other place is available. In every way the conditions are appallingly cramped, and I earnestly request that provision be made in next year's loan programme for this most important work.

In the Loan Estimate under "Minister for Education" it is indicated that £13,000,000 has been made available for new buildings. While much can be said regarding education requirements, I stress the urgent desirability of making money available from the education vote, if not this year then next year, for the completion of a second teachers' training college at Newcastle. It is well known by the Minister for Mines, who is at present at the table, that the Shortland site has been set aside not only for university purposes but also as the site of a new teacher's college. It is a most desirable site for a second teachers' college to serve the Newcastle and northern areas. Last year many students were turned away from teachers' colleges because of the inadequacy of the existing accommodation. It is agreed on all sides that it is necessary that more students should be trained for the teaching profession, and that can be done only if proper accommodation is provided for their training. Many students from Newcastle and areas to the north of that city are at present attending teachers' training colleges in Sydney, and it would be much more convenient for them—and certainly for their parents—if the training could be provided in their home city or in a location more conveniently situated than Sydney. Therefore I urge that earnest consideration be given by the Government to the allocation

of adequate funds next year, if not this year, for a second teachers' college in the Newcastle area.

Mr. MORTON (Mosman). [8.35]: I want to make one or two brief observations about the Loan Estimates, but before doing so I wish to mention the speech recently delivered by the hon. member for Kogarah. I am glad that he spoke about the money available to the Department of Public Health and I am also pleased to see the Minister for Health in the Chamber at the present time. It is most disturbing to every hon. member to know that £500,000 has been lopped off the vote for the Department of Public Health. Without knowing any of the details, we can obviously assume that the Government's interest in hospital services to the people of New South Wales is not as great this year as it was twelve months ago. It is also obvious that the Minister for Health is not too happy about the reduction of his vote but, out of loyalty to his party, he has refrained from voicing any complaint.

Mr. SHEAHAN: I complained in a letter to the previous Premier and Treasurer about the reduction of £500,000 in the allocation to hospitals.

Mr. MORTON: I appreciate the Minister's interjection, but I believe that Parliament is entitled to an explanation from the Government as to why the vote has been reduced. We all know that the previous Premier went to Canberra to put his case to the Australian Loan Council and came back thoroughly satisfied with the allocation made by the Commonwealth for expenditure in New South Wales. But wherever one goes throughout New South Wales one finds a big demand for better hospital services. Nobody in his right senses would deny that, but what has happened in regard to the reduced vote for hospitals except for a protest by the Minister for Health? Surely the Government is not treating us with contempt over this important issue, and surely the Treasurer has an obligation to all hon. members to tell us exactly why the vote for the Department of Public Health has been reduced by £500,000. There can be no excuse for

such a reduction in the money available for health services. Mosman is the best electorate in New South Wales.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Bar one.

Mr. MORTON: All electorates have made demands upon their representatives for admission to hospitals and homes for the aged. That indicates that our hospitals and nursing homes cannot provide the accommodation required. Therefore, what is the justification for reducing the vote to the Department of Public Health? We do not know the details of this matter and cannot get them. The Minister, out of loyalty to his party, will not give them to us, but the Treasurer has an obligation to stand up before this debate concludes and tell us the reason. Surely we are entitled to know why the money available for health services has been reduced.

The Minister for Health was present in the House when the hon. member for Kogarah said that he had applied to his own Government for appointment to his local hospital board. I said, by way of interjection, that when we on this side of the House apply for appointment to boards our applications are rejected. The Deputy Premier and Treasurer said that that is not so.

I want to cite this classic example which concerns admittedly not hospitals but an hon. member in this Chamber. I take the Minister's memory back a few years to a time when there were two vacancies on the Kuring-gai Chase Trust. I felt that if anyone was entitled to be a member of that trust it was the president of the Shire of Hornsby, a man who has made a fine contribution to the public life of this State—the hon. member for Hornsby. The Leader of the Opposition was away at the time and I asked the Deputy Leader to make an official recommendation to the Minister suggesting that the hon. member for Hornsby be appointed to the Kuring-gai Chase Trust. When the Leader of the Opposition returned I got him to repeat this recommendation. What happened? Who do hon. members think were appointed? The Hon. Clive Evatt and the Hon. Alec Alam. Despite this, supporters of the Government say that my charge is not correct.

I regret to say that the Minister who appointed those two men was the Minister for Health, who at the time was Minister for Lands.

Mr. SHEAHAN: No, the hon. member is wrong; I did not appoint them.

Mr. MORTON: The Minister for Health was the Minister who appointed them.

Mr. SHEAHAN: I was not the Minister.

Mr. MORTON: If that is so, I apologise. Whatever happened, they were a great pair of appointees. Over the years most appointees to trusts—though there are exceptions that prove the rule—have been stooges for the Government. Let hon. members look at the constitution of the trusts today. Recently I asked the Minister for Lands whether he would make a statement disclosing the membership of the various trusts. If this were done hon. members would find that the trusts are loaded very much in favour of the Government by way of its political affiliations. That is an established fact.

In discussing the Loan Estimates I want to strike a blow for free enterprise. On page 6, under the heading Department of Railways, a sum of money is voted for various sections of that service including the equipment of refreshment rooms. Some hon. members might think that this is only a small matter but the Auditor-General's Report reveals that for the year ended 30th June, 1959, the railway refreshment rooms lost £225,800. The report states quite clearly that a profit was made within the metropolitan area but on the services given in the country—or the lack of them—there was a substantial loss.

Irrespective of what many people might say, I regard the feeding of the people as a specialist job. When I made a tour recently of the Snowy Mountains project I was surprised to learn that at places such as Tantangara and others Utah (Australia) Limited and Kaiser-Perini-Morrison-Raymond employ contractors to feed their employees. The Utah group employs a firm of contractors that came all the way from the United States of America to tender and enter into a contract to feed the men.

I am not suggesting that we should have Americans out here to take over the railway refreshment rooms, but if Australians do not want to do this work, why not let others do it? I suggest that, if £250,000 is being lost on the activities of the railway refreshment rooms, consideration should be given to my suggestion. I have a feeling that in the past this proposal has been given some consideration.

Mr. RENSHAW: They are doing that.

Mr. MORTON: We ought certainly to give urgent consideration to the inviting of tenders for the refreshment rooms and other services. As we are losing £250,000 a year we should be willing to pay a subsidy to some free-enterprise organisation which would contract to do the work and give service. I am sure that if this were done—and I make no reflection on those conducting the rooms now—a much improved service would be given to the people. I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to give some thought to my suggestion and to see whether this heavy loss cannot be substantially reduced. If my suggestion were given effect I am convinced that, especially in country areas, where the people are entitled to service, there would be an improvement.

Mr. RENSHAW: They do lease them.

Mr. MORTON: In some places. I am considering this matter on a general basis. Another subject, with which the Deputy Premier and Treasurer is fully acquainted, is the Terra-cotta Tile Works. All hon. members know the history of this tile works. We know that many years ago it was a fancy of the Government to establish it. Before we knew where we were, over £800,000 had been expended before a satisfactory tile was produced. In fact, under the Government's direction there never was a satisfactory tile produced and the Government was forced to lease these works to a very efficient free-enterprise concern, which is now well established and is doing a good job. Now the Government asks hon. members to vote a further sum for capital expenditure. If the Government cannot run it—as obviously it cannot—it should

not mess about with it. If a free-enterprise concern can run it efficiently, why should not the Government quit it and let free enterprise get on with the job of giving the service expected of it and let the Government get on with its job of providing the essential services that are expected of it? I cannot find in the Auditor-General's Report any reference to the Terra-cotta Tile Works but I am sure they are operating at a profit and that the Government gets 50 per cent of it.

Mr. RENSHAW: The Government does not participate in any loss.

Mr. MORTON: When capital expenditure is required, the State must provide the money.

Mr. RENSHAW: No; only up to £100,000, under the agreement.

Mr. MORTON: Adopting a sensible approach to this question I ask the Government why it messes about leasing the tile works instead of selling it to free enterprise and allowing it to get on with the job? Whatever money is obtained by the Government from its sale could be applied to the construction of hospitals.

Mr. RENSHAW: This is not a lease but an agreement.

Mr. MORTON: It is the same thing. The Minister should not shilly-shally with words. The Government had an asset that it could not run and spent £800,000 without producing a satisfactory tile and then said to someone, "Take it away and give us half the profits." Is not that a form of lease? If the Minister wishes to be technical, it is not called a lease: but that is what it means. The Government should realise that governments cannot mess about with business, and the more they try to regulate it the greater will be their difficulties. I ask the Government to consider selling these tile works to free enterprise, at a proper price and in an open way, so that free enterprise can get on with the job that is demanded of it.

Mr. CRAWFORD (Barwon) [8.51]: The debate on the Loan Estimates is more important than the debate on the Budget, for

the use of loan moneys determines the development of the State. However, a search of these Loan Estimates reveals no plan or pattern of development. The Government has given one department a little more, by taking something away from another department; it plugs up the holes, and muddles along without any definite plan for the development of New South Wales.

The Minister will agree, I think, that the only departments that get all they want are the ones that are socialistic in their outlook; indeed, he will agree that the Electricity Commission of New South Wales is the one department that has wanted for nothing since it was created.

Mr. RENSHAW: What about the Department of Education?

Mr. CRAWFORD: It has wanted every year, including this year, but the Electricity Commission has never wanted for even £1 since it was formed.

Mr. RENSHAW: The whole of the increase in the loan allocation has gone to education.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The Electricity Commission has been cut down by not one penny, and that has been the position ever since it was created. It is the socialistic baby, and the Government ensures that it is fed on the best. Whatever it wants, it gets.

The Minister for Health, who is administering one of the most important departments, is cut down. I admit that some of the money taken away from him is to go to the Department of Education, but it did not enter the Government's mind to prune the Electricity Commission, which since I have been a member of this Chamber has been running on the freest budget ever granted to any department; no government department has ever had the allocation of money that it has been given. That lovely little socialistic baby has been fed on the very best for the nine years that I have been here. Another lovely socialistic enterprise—the State coalmines organisation—is a complete waste. It has received all the money it wanted, while the Department of Health has gone short. In the past

the departments of Education and Health have had to go short of much-needed finance, which could have been used in the building of schools and hospitals, so that this socialistic enterprise—so dear to the Government—can be fostered, cherished and brought along.

Mr. SIMPSON: The State coalmines make a profit.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I do not care. The State has enough power without the Government seeking to interfere with the production of coal. The Government's business is to provide services necessary to ensure the development of this country, and the State coalmines contribute nothing to State development that private enterprise could not contribute with a reasonable amount of encouragement.

Mr. RENSHAW: The hon. member saw at Narrabri what is being done by the local authority in connection with the distribution of power. Is that socialistic?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I do not want to be trapped on this. I am pointing to one department that is not needed.

Mr. RENSHAW: But the hon. member said that they are socialistic.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I said that the Electricity Commission of New South Wales is socialistic. The Government could not assist the Tamworth City Council when it wanted to maintain its power station, or when something was required at Gunnedah. It could not do anything for the North-West County Council when it wanted to build a generating station at Ashford, though the local people got on with the job despite what the Government did to stop them.

Mr. RENSHAW: That is still public ownership.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am referring to socialistic Government enterprises. The Government took over in Tamworth, but I shall not proceed further with that argument. If the Government had a plan for proper and true development in this State, it would do something in regard to closer settlement, water conservation and adequate

transport; the provision of water, sewerage and electricity services; and the provision of the absolutely essential services of education, health and justice. I submit not that they should receive priority in that order, but that those items are essential for the proper and sound development of New South Wales.

I shall deal with these matters, using the Loan Estimates as a guide to whether the Government fulfils the ideals I have enunciated. Take, for instance, the amount of money that is allocated to the Department of Lands, which is the only department that can give effect to a closer-settlement programme. For acquisition, development and improvement of land for settlement, including advances to settlers and contingent expenses, the amount proposed to be voted to the Minister for Lands up to 30th June, 1959, was absolutely nil. The balance on previous votes was £800,256, but this year it is estimated that the Minister will spend £650,000 on the acquisition of land and development for war-service land settlement. That is the only scheme this Government has for closer settlement. On advances to settlers the Government proposes to spend the princely sum of £650,000, for which it has voted in the Loan Estimates only £400,000. The total expenditure on land settlement this year, including £20,000 for the acquisition of alienated land in the Kosciusko State Park, is £1,320,000. This is disgraceful.

The basis of our economy is primary production. I am sure that even members of the Labor Government were amazed to see that the wool cheque alone for the first three months of this wool-selling season brought into this country £22,000,000 more than for the same period last year. That is a colossal increase. In London butter is selling at a record high price; mutton, beef and lamb are also in great demand; our wheat is being exported at the rate of 50,000 tons a month. Surely one would expect the Government to be seized with the importance of primary production and to strive to do something to increase it. However, we find that the Government is completely disinterested; it could not have voted less money to closer settlement in New South Wales, though

it knows that this is the only way to increase primary production. The Government has failed miserably in closer settlement. Apart from the financial and economic aspects, we have a moral obligation to develop this country. Can we deny the millions of starving and overcrowded people to the north the right to come to this country if we do not make full and proper use of it? No, we cannot. Therefore, it is our moral duty to ensure that full use is made of our rich country. The Government knows that on estates that have been settled under the war-service land settlement scheme production has increased many times.

Water conservation is almost as important as closer settlement. If ever a government was condemned by its own actions and lack of initiative and energy, it is this Government, because of its failure to deal with the water conservation problems of this State. This afternoon the Leader of the Country Party spoke of the number of years that the Government has taken to build any single dam. I have often impressed upon hon. members that unfortunately this country has a limited run-off, and one would think that any government would be most anxious to conserve every drop of water that does not run off. What do we find? The Government has taken twenty-one years to build Keepit Dam, yet in all that time it has not evolved any plan to make use of the 300,000 acre-feet of water that will be stored there.

The water in Keepit Dam will not help to achieve any significant increase in production unless an irrigation area is established on the flatter country below the dam, where the richest soil in Australia is to be found, ideal for irrigation and capable of growing almost any crop. Cotton, sorghum, pasture grasses and clovers could be grown if only the Government formulated a plan for the use of the water. Next year the Government will declare the dam open with a fanfare of trumpets, Ministers will speak of the Government's wonderful effort, but it will be at least five years before any use is made of the water that will be stored there. This is gross mismanagement, for which the Government deserves the strongest condemnation. Keepit Dam

Mr. Crawford

will hold some of the most expensive water stored anywhere in the world. Surely one could expect the Government to ensure that the maximum production was achieved with it.

The Deputy Premier and Treasurer must agree that the North-west of New South Wales has a tremendous potential if full use is made of underground waters. Screened bores are producing amazing results. The Government should assist farmers as much as it can to make full use of a natural underground water supply. Farmers from Gunnedah to Moree and beyond are irrigating up to 120 acres from a single bore, but they must spend tremendous amounts of money on their irrigation plants. Irrigation is not cheap; by the time the farmer buys the motor and pipes and pays for the labour for the sinking of the bore, he has spent a large sum of money. This year the Government has voted from the loan funds only £25,000 for works of water supply for farmers.

Mr. RENSHAW: But £200,000 has been allocated for shallow boring to provide water supplies for settlers.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The fact that £200,000 has been voted for that purpose shows how great the demand is for government assistance. Though the Government's scheme of assisting settlers to sink a bore, with repayments on long, easy terms, is a good one, not sufficient money is allocated to it.

Mr. DENNIS: There is a three-year delay.

Mr. CRAWFORD: That proves that not sufficient money is allocated. The Government would get a tremendous return in increased production by providing more assistance for farmers to make full use of the underground water that nature has provided in reservoirs which, if used wisely, should be inexhaustible.

Unfortunately, because of circumstances that were outlined in this Chamber recently by my leader, coastal shipping has more or less faded out of the picture, leaving this State with three systems of transport—air, road and rail. I am disregarding air transport because it is a matter for the Commonwealth Parliament, and I shall confine

my remarks to road and rail transport. Dealing with road transport first—though whether it is the most important is a matter of opinion—I have heard the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, who was formerly Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways, say that he never had enough money for the necessary road work in New South Wales. What do we find in the Loan Estimates? A “princely” sum has been allocated to the Department of Main Roads. The allocation for advances to the Country Main Roads Fund is £100,000 and the amount of £300,000 has been set aside for advances to the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund. That indicates the Government’s view of the relative importance of the two funds. Obviously it believes that the Cumberland fund is worthy of three times as much money as the Country Main Roads Fund. Why is the city to receive three times as much as the country?

Mr. RENSHAW: Only because the new Gladesville bridge was a special project.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I suppose we do not need special bridges in the country areas. The cost of our bridges must come from ordinary revenue. Last year £100,000 was allocated to the Country Main Roads Fund and £300,000 to the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund. Those amounts represent the balance of the previous vote, which is not shown in the present Loan Estimates. It is apparent that though the Government last year had £100,000 of loan money available for the Country Main Roads Fund and £300,000 for the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund, it did not spend a penny of that money. The Deputy Premier and Treasurer has deliberately misled the public of New South Wales because he has not been able to spend money at his disposal. I should like him to explain to the Committee why he did not spend last year the £100,000 advanced to the Country Main Roads Fund. We could have done with it for the construction of the Newell Highway between Narrabri and Moree.

Mr. RENSHAW: Throughout the Loan Estimates the hon. member will find in the same column large amounts that were unexpended.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am worried not about other large amounts but about this money. The Government has complained that it has never had enough money to do the job required on roads.

Mr. RENSHAW: Look at the top of the column, “Balance on previous votes at 30th June, 1959.” This is November, 1959.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The actual expenditure during the financial year 1958-59 was nil. The Government did not spend a penny during that period of twelve months. If it was short of money for roads, I cannot understand why the money was not spent. As I said a moment ago, we could have used it in the North-west, especially on the Newell Highway. The Government’s omission needs explanation. When the Treasurer is giving it he might also reply to a matter that I raised the other day when I said that the whole of the co-ordination tax, which Parliament decided was to be allocated to the Main Roads Fund, has not been so allocated. The Treasurer might explain, also, why more loan funds are not used for the building of bridges and sealed roads. Every other State uses loan funds for road construction. Every year Tasmania spends about £1,000,000 of loan funds on road construction.

Mr. RENSHAW: Victoria is not spending a penny.

Mr. CRAWFORD: In the past Tasmania has been spending at the rate that I mentioned. I have not seen the Tasmanian Loan Estimates for this year. Until the start of this financial year Victoria has been spending about £500,000 of Loan Estimates on road construction each year but, generally speaking, we in New South Wales have spent nothing. We spent nothing last year and no more than £250,000 has ever been allocated in any one year towards roads—and generally that amount has been allocated to the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund. The Government’s

policy on the expenditure of loan funds on road construction leaves much to be desired.

As anybody will concede, rail transport in this State represents the greatest muddle that this Government has had anything to do with. It is not fair to blame the present or even previous commissioners for the difficult position of our railways. The Government and ministerial interference must accept the blame. The various Ministers for Transport are equally guilty. The policy on the mode of traction to be adopted in various parts of the State is indicative of the muddle and indecision of the Department of Railways. The new timetable for the North-west Mail is so shocking that no Minister for Transport should ever mention it and I become furious every time I think about it. The train, under electric traction, leaves Central Railway Station and travels as far as Gosford; there it switches to steam traction as far as Werris Creek; and from Werris Creek to the various destinations north-west the train is hauled by a diesel-electric locomotive. That is typical of the Government's attitude towards rail traction—little bits of steam, electric and diesel-electric traction combine to make the greatest muddle involving triplication of spare parts and maintenance works.

Let me give hon. members another example of the sort of thing that goes on and contributes to the railway deficit every year. The Auditor-General mentioned in his last report the purchase of Beyer-Peacock Garratt locomotives by the Department of Railways. The Government ordered twenty-five locomotives and decided they were so good that the order should be increased to fifty. Having let the second order, the Government decided that the locomotives were not so good as they thought they were, and it tried to cancel the second order. This was done but the Government eventually received forty-seven locomotives. This is what the Auditor-General has to say in his report:

The total outlay of the Department cannot, at present, be determined with accuracy owing to the incompleteness of contract estimates but is in the vicinity of £stg.4,000,000.

That is interesting comment. Apparently these locomotives cost about £85,000 each.

Mr. Crawford]

The big Alco diesel-electric locomotives first imported into New South Wales from Canada cost about the same amount, according to a reply given by the Minister for Transport to a question of mine. With wise management at the ministerial level the department could have obtained diesel-electric locomotives for the same cost as the Beyer-Peacock Garratt steam locomotives. There is another aspect of the matter even more indicative of the way in which money has been wasted in the Department of Railways. It soon became apparent when the Beyer-Peacock Garratt locomotives arrived that our turntables could not accommodate them and six new turntables were ordered in 1951. I quote now from the Auditor-General's Report:

Certain features associated with the letting of the contract for the turntables, however, leave little doubt that sufficient time was not allowed for proper consideration of normal contracting procedures with a result that substantial unforeseen expenditure was subsequently incurred. Although initial actions to purchase were taken as a matter of urgency, later developments apparently made it unnecessary or undesirable to instal all the units and at the present time three of them are held unused in railway stores.

In other words, the Auditor-General is saying that in this matter there has been gross mismanagement. In 1951 the turntables were needed so urgently that the department did not adopt the usual contract procedure. Yet, in 1959 three of the six units purchased have not even been installed. If that did not prove to someone that this was the greatest muddle of all time, he would be hard to convince. For years this sort of thing has been going on in the Department of Railways, and every Minister for Transport—and there have been many of them since I have been a member of this Chamber—must accept his fair share of the blame.

Mr. SHEAHAN: The Garratt locomotives were ordered before control of the Department of Railways was returned to the Minister for Transport.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I do not want the Minister for Health to argue about who was responsible for ordering the Garratt locomotives. I shall leave that to Cabinet,

because nearly half the Ministry have been Ministers for Transport. Therefore, they can argue it out among themselves.

Mr. RENSRAW: There was no ministerial control of the Department of Railways then.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Not much there was not. The less said about that the better. The Minister for Health said that when he was Minister for Transport he had to give ministerial directions to get certain things done.

Mr. RENSRAW: But that was subsequently.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The Treasurer can argue about whether it was subsequent or prior. I am interested not in when it occurred; all I am concerned about is that it did occur. Collectively the Government was responsible.

Mr. RENSRAW: I do not want to spoil the hon. member's story by stating the facts.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I have quoted what the Auditor-General said. If the Treasurer thinks that he is wrong, he should tell him.

Mr. EARL: The Auditor-General has been wrong before, you know.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I do not know.

Mr. STEPHENS: Is it not a fact that a new Minister for Transport is appointed each time the deficit rises by another £6,000,000?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I think that is right.

Mr. LEWIS: Six of our Cabinet Ministers have been Ministers for Transport.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I can see four of them here now; in fact, there might be five of them present. They are all ex-Ministers for Transport. They can form their own sub-committee and I shall leave it to them to ascertain how and when the decision was made and who was responsible for it. I turn now to the allocation to the Department of Education. I understand that at last the Government has realised that the children who were in primary schools three or four years ago have arrived at the high schools. The Government would not think it possible, but children

do grow up, and suddenly it has realised that the children who were in sixth class last year are in high schools this year, and that those who are in sixth class this year will be in high schools next year. One would think that this was self-evident and that even the Minister for Education would realise it. However, the Government has suddenly discovered this fact and is making an additional £3,000,000 available for the building of more high schools that will be needed to accommodate the children who are in sixth class this year.

Mr. RENSRAW: A proportion of that sum will be spent on building new primary schools too.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I understand not.

Mr. LEWIS: Is the Treasurer Minister for Education too?

Mr. RENSRAW: Nearly 1,500 additional classrooms are to be built.

Mr. CRAWFORD: That is good. However, I am mainly interested in primary schools. I am sure that the Treasurer will draw the attention of the Minister for Education to the urgent need for additions to the Warialda Central School. They have been approved and I am sure that if ever the Minister inspected the school he would agree that the work should have been done some years ago. When it is done it will bring the school up to the high standard of the other education buildings that have been provided in the Barwon electorate. I admit that the Minister, without complaint from me but only, of course, with constant pressure from me, has made wonderful school buildings available for the children in my electorate. The only buildings on which work is urgently needed are the Warialda Central School, in respect of which a promise has been given, and the Moree War Memorial Educational Centre.

I am sure that hon. members representing city constituencies would not realise that what has been done at Moree is possible. Immediately after World War II the people of Moree and district decided to build a war memorial to those who had paid the

supreme sacrifice or had offered their services to the country during the war. They banded together and raised approximately £7,000, which they decided should be used by the Department of Education to build as a war memorial a gymnasium, an assembly hall or some other building that would form part of the school. The action of the people of Moree and district should be admired by everybody. Few centres have done this sort of thing. Unfortunately the Department of Education has not yet got around to the project.

The people of a town and district who have done so much to alleviate the education problem should receive the utmost assistance from the Minister and the Government. I suggest that the Treasurer confer with the Minister for Education to see whether it is possible to give the construction of the War Memorial Educational Centre, which will really be a new high school, higher priority, especially as the Treasurer has granted the Minister for Education this year about £3,000,000 more than was allocated last year. If the Treasurer does this he will be saying in effect to the people of Moree, "We appreciate your efforts to improve the education service available for your children." I am sure that all hon. members will agree that our agricultural college accommodation is inadequate and that it cannot satisfy the needs of those who want an education in an agricultural college.

Mr. DEANE: One hundred and twenty thousand pounds has been allocated.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Yes, but not just for agricultural colleges; it has been allocated for the promotion of agriculture, agricultural colleges and experiment farms, etc., including purchase of land, buildings, etc. There are many etceteras. The chances of getting another agricultural college under those circumstances are rather remote. Obviously, no more colleges of this type can be built this year. I suggest that next year the Treasurer increase the allocation so that another agricultural college can be built, preferably in the inland, and even better in North-west New South Wales. If

this is done, many children who now have no chance of receiving agricultural college education will be able to obtain it.

Turning to my next point, health, I, like every other hon. member of this Committee, am sorry for the Minister, who has had his allocation reduced by such a large sum. I pay tribute to the Minister for Health and the Hospitals Commission of New South Wales for the wonderful work they have done in bringing the Moree hospital up to an adequate standard. The nurses' quarters were extremely poor, but two or three months ago—it would not be more than that—the Minister opened a beautiful new nurses' home that cost about £100,000. It is appreciated greatly by the people of Moree and the district.

Mr. SHEAHAN: It cost £300,000.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The nurses' home?

Mr. SHEAHAN: Yes.

Mr. CRAWFORD: It is certainly a splendid building, and the people appreciate it. I am sure that it will make the work of the staff of the hospital much easier in the hot summer months. A contract has been let for a new kitchen, boiler room and laundry. Certainly these were urgently needed. The Minister has seen them and no one would deny that replacement was urgently necessary. Other hospitals may need new buildings, but the Minister has set in hand the work at Moree and the local people are grateful. When the nurses' home and the other buildings have been completed the final stage will be the construction of additional wards. When these are built, Moree will have a hospital of which it can be proud and I am sure that the Minister and the commission will be equally proud of it. I hope that the reduction of the funds available to the Minister will not slow down the work and that next year enough money will be available to complete the second stage and to start the third.

Another hospital project that probably will have to wait for another twelve months is the children's ward at the Boggabri hospital. The people of this small district,

between Narrabri and Gunnedah, conducted a radio appeal and the hospital auxiliary worked hard. Three thousand pounds have been raised locally to help the Hospitals Commission and the Minister to build a children's ward. It is a sound principle that those who help themselves should be encouraged by the Government.

Mr. SHEAHAN: That is my policy.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I know that, and I agree entirely with it. I hope that the reduction in the funds allocated to the Minister will not delay the building of the children's ward for another year. It is urgently needed. No one would agree that it is good to mix adults and children in the one ward. Children are accommodated on the verandas. I ask the Minister to begin the building of a children's ward at Bogga-bri at the earliest opportunity. That concludes my remarks on the points that I wish to make about the Loan Estimates. I am sorry that the allocations in the Loan Estimates do not reflect my views on the development of New South Wales. I hope that the Government will immediately evolve a further scheme of closer settlement in which holders of qualification certificates may be included and that the younger generation, who are getting no assistance from the Government, will be given some help. I hope that closer settlement will proceed.

Mr. DOIG (Burwood) [9.34]: I congratulate the hon. member for Waratah upon raising the subject that is the key to the development of the Department of Education. I refer to the building of teachers' colleges. Though no mention of teachers' colleges is made in that part of the Loan Estimates in which provision is made for the building of teachers' residences and other buildings, they are the bottleneck in the whole system of education. The hon. member for Waratah mentioned that because of the lack of teachers' college accommodation a number of eligible students could not be accepted. The teachers' college in Albion Street, Paddington, named after Dr. Mackie, has been completed only recently. My information comes from the department's own publication. The College was opened in 1958, and

provides accommodation for 172 students. This is only touching the fringe of the problem. The average net increase in teachers has been about 700 annually. In 1951 the net increase was 490; in 1952 it had risen to 565. These figures include new teachers coming from the colleges, but include also a number of "retreads". I use that term affectionately, as the teachers themselves use it when referring to those older teachers who have returned to the service after retirement. They include also graduates untrained in teaching who have entered the service. Deaths and resignations have been deducted.

In 1953 the net increase was 837, but in 1954 it fell to 533. For 1955, the figure had risen to 702; in 1956 it had dropped to the abysmally low figure of 510. For 1957 the net increase was 873 and for 1958, 703. In round figures, the net increase has been about 700 teachers a year, including the elderly retired people who have returned to the service and whose term of service must, in the very nature of things, be short, and including also graduates not trained in teaching who entered the department as a result of the advertisements of about a year ago in which, even though untrained, graduates were invited to join the service. From this figure the number who have only a short term of service ahead of them must be deducted. These may reduce the effective rate of increase to 600 a year.

The Public Service Board estimates that a net increase of 800 a year is needed to maintain the present ratio of scholars to teachers. On its own figures, and allowing for the short-term services of elderly people, the board is short about 200 teachers a year—even without allowing for reductions in class loads. A survey conducted by the New South Wales Teachers' Federation discloses that the average class load is 37.7 scholars. This is far too many. For a number of years to come the net increase in teachers should be about 1,000 a year so that the extremely heavy class loads might be gradually reduced.

Mr. EARL: Will the hon. member give particulars of class loads in private schools?

Mr. DOIG: I shall be very glad to do so if time permits. Teachers' colleges are the key to the situation, which will not be improved merely by bringing in students, now excluded, who have passed the leaving certificate with five or six B's. Students with good passes must be attracted to the department. The way has been shown in Victoria. I have spoken by telephone to Mr. D. P. Schubert, secretary of the Victorian Teachers Union, and have a letter from him in which he says that the Victorian department has attracted trainee teachers by several means. He says that hostel accommodation for the small colleges—Victoria has thirteen—is one of the secrets of success.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. L. M. NOTT): Order! I invite the attention of the hon. member to the fact that a motion on the business paper standing in his name deals with many of the matters that he is now raising. I point out that under the rules of procedure it is not in order for an hon. member to anticipate discussion of a matter already set down for consideration. Also, it is an accepted practice that in this debate only brief reference may be made to matters of detail. I ask the hon. member to keep to the question before the Committee.

Mr. HUNTER: On a point of order. Might I ask whether that ruling applies when the Government has taken private members' day away from them?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. L. M. NOTT): The hon. member knows that Mr. Speaker has given a ruling on that matter. That ruling was that private members' day had not been taken away. The motion merely provided for Government business to take precedence over general business. Accordingly, there is no need for me to rule on the point of order. I call the hon. member for Burwood.

Mr. DOIG: I shall relate my remarks entirely to the subject of this debate, which is capital expenditure. I am speaking of capital expenditure for teachers' colleges—a matter that was dealt with by the hon. member for Waratah without exception being taken. So long as I keep my remarks

within the ambit of capital expenditure I shall not expect another subject to be dragged in unnecessarily, as it has been. Teachers' colleges must be provided by capital expenditure. There are seven teachers' colleges in New South Wales and thirteen in Victoria. It is significant that a number of small teachers' colleges could be provided by capital expenditure. I shall give an indication of the small teachers' colleges that have been built in Victoria, and compare them with the big ones in New South Wales. Sydney Teachers' College accommodates 1,857 students in a building that was originally designed for 700. Armidale Teachers' College accommodates 646; Balmain, 340; Wagga Wagga, 326; Newcastle, 572; Bathurst, 325; and Paddington, 172. The figures for the Victorian teachers' colleges are: Melbourne, 595 students; Burwood, 650; Toorak, 650; Coburg, 115; Frankston, 110; Ballarat, 280; Bendigo, 220; Geelong, 310; a large secondary college, 1,375; Domestic Arts, 130; Deaf, 10.

Mr. SHEAHAN: Ten trainees?

Mr. DOIG: Yes, a tiny college for the training of ten students to teach deaf children.

Mr. SHEAHAN: I was a bit dumb.

Mr. DOIG: Melbourne Art and Crafts has 200 students, and Technical, 300. The interesting feature is the small number of students at the majority of the thirteen Victorian colleges. This highlights the opportunity in New South Wales to purchase large homes and convert them into colleges where perhaps fifty students could be housed and trained close to the homes of their parents. It would then be possible for country people to send their children to the nearest country town to be trained as teachers. This method would be preferable to waiting a long time for the Government to build new teachers' colleges. A somewhat similar practice has been most successful in Victoria.

If the Temporary Chairman will permit a passing reference to the way in which students enter the Victorian colleges, I shall refer to a photostat copy that I have here of an article which appeared in *The*

Age on 3rd February, 1959. The article is headed "Education Department Teaching Bursaries", but the word "Bursaries" has been missed in the photostat. These are post-intermediate bursaries awarded to scholars of the age of 16 or 17, some in their leaving certificate year, which is fourth year, and others in matriculation year, which is fifth year. The bursaries are worth only £50 and hundreds of young people qualify for them. Though bursaries are awarded in New South Wales, there are no teaching bursaries. I am assured by the secretary of the Teachers' Union in Victoria that this method attracts young persons into many small colleges. New South Wales educationists could follow this practice and purchase large homes for use as colleges.

Mr. EARL: There is already a surplus of applicants for bursaries.

Mr. DOIG: I am glad of that interjection. If the Department of Education offered teaching bursaries in New South Wales I am certain that there would be a large number of applicants. The quality of the applicants would be high and the department would not be dependent on students with four or five B passes. Trainees would enter country colleges in large numbers if adequate hostel accommodation were provided for them.

Mr. EARL: The department already has a surplus of applicants.

Mr. DOIG: They cannot all be accepted. There are not enough teachers' colleges.

Mr. EARL: Surely the hon. member does not want a return to the early post-war years, when unsuitable applicants had to be taken?

Mr. DOIG: Of course not. The hon. member should not make such a foolish remark. On the cognate subject of capital expenditure for schools, the shortage of classrooms is a matter of grave concern. Some factual information on the extent of this shortage is relevant to the debate. I understand from the hon. member for Tamworth that a new high school is being built in that city. This school is long overdue as the record shows that in 1959 the Tamworth High School had thirty-two

classes and only nineteen rooms—a deficiency of thirteen classrooms. Gosford High School, with thirty classes and eighteen rooms, has a deficiency of twelve rooms. There are three schools with a deficiency of eleven rooms—Granville Boys, Liverpool Girls and Macquarie Boys. Balgowlah Boys' High School has a shortage of ten rooms. Schools with a shortage of nine rooms are Albury High, Manly Boys, Newcastle Technical High and Taree High School. There are fourteen high schools with a shortage of eight rooms and seven with a shortage of seven rooms. There are sixteen or eighteen with a shortage of six rooms and about five with a shortage of five rooms. Conditions in some schools are most disgraceful. The Adamstown school was built in 1878 and since Labor attained office in 1941 school inspectors have made many reports on it. In 1941 the inspector reported, "A new building is urgently needed"; in 1943, "The new building scheme for this school should be carried out at the earliest opportunity"; in 1950, "The buildings are old and in poor condition"; in 1953, "The layout of the buildings is bad"; and in 1955, "The buildings are old". The building at Bethungra is seventy-eight years old and its foundations are decaying. The Teachers' Federation has sent out a list of many schools that need repair, and capital expenditure is badly needed.

The need for building teachers' colleges and awarding bursaries to attract more students to relieve the teacher shortage will be understood when we find that in 1959 more than 58 per cent of kindergarten classes in the Newcastle district had a class load of 46 to 50. In Grade 1, 42½ per cent of classes had a loading of 41 to 45 and in Grade 2, 45 per cent of classes had a loading of 41 to 45. In primary schools in the Newcastle district 42.9 per cent had a load of 36 to 40, 41.6 per cent of Grade 4 classes had a load of 36 to 40, 47.2 per cent of Grade 5 had a load of 41 to 45 and in Grade 6, 43½ per cent of the classes had a load of 41 to 45. I shall take a specific example to show the urgent need for capital to build more schools. Villawood East school has one class of 42, one of 46, three

of 47, two of 49 and three of 50. That is a bad example, but it shows what is happening in our schools.

The need to build more secondary schools will also be understood by a few examples. In the first, second and third years of secondary schools the class loads were as follows: 256 classes with less than 30 pupils, 411 with 30 to 34 pupils, 684 with 35 to 39 pupils, 915 with 40 to 44 pupils, 162 with 45 pupils, 155 with 46 pupils, 107 with 47 pupils, 89 with 48 pupils, 67 with 49 pupils and 86 with a class loading of 50 and more.

At Birrong Boys' High School top class loads were 50, 51 and 53. At Blacktown Girls' High School the loads were 51, 52, 52, and 54. Cabramatta secondary school had three classes of 50, Campbelltown High School two classes of 50 and 51, East Hills Girls' High School one class of 50 and two of 51, Fairfield Boys' High School loadings of 50, 51 and two of 53, Goulburn classes of 51, 52 and 59, Grafton two classes of 50, one of 53 and one of 56, Granville Boys' High School two classes of 50 and one of 51, Griffith High School two classes of 50, Hurstville girls' school one class of 51 and one of 52, Jannali secondary school two classes of 50 and one of 51, Kogarah Intermediate High School one class of 50 and one of 51, Liverpool Girls' High School four classes of 50, Macarthur Girls' High School one class of 50, one of 51, one of 52 and one of 53, Monaro one class of 52 and one of 54, Seven Hills secondary school one class of 50, two of 52 and one of 54.

According to a supplementary report, at Narwee Boys' High School there was one class of 45, two of 46 and one each of 47, 48, 49, 50 and 52, at Penrith High School four classes of 46, one of 47, two of 48, three of 49, one of 50 and one of 53, at Birrong Girls' High School there were two of 45, one of 47, one of 49, one of 50 and one of 51. Those figures cry to high heaven for the expenditure of large capital sums of money by the Department of Education on new schools throughout the State.

Mr. HILLS: They should have more funds.

Mr. Doig

Mr. DOIG: If more ingenuity had been shown by our representatives at the Australian Loan Council, instead of receiving only £1,000,000 more we would have got one-third of £7,500,000, which is £2,500,000. The Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways will remember that we were offered 34 per cent of the total after the distribution of special State grants. The table in the Premier's report showed that figure. However, the sum of money to which the 34 per cent was applied was not the total including all State grants. £7,500,000 was excluded from the total, being special grants already approved. One was £399,000 to South Australia—an adjustment of a previous grant—and the other two were £3,500,000 and £3,600,000 to Western Australia and Tasmania. I do not know which State got the larger amount. That adds up to about £7,500,000. If that were added to the total, New South Wales would have got £2,500,000 more instead of the £1,000,000 that was given to it at the last moment.

Reference to these amounts will be found in the speech of the late Premier, in which he said that South Australia obtained permission to receive a special grant already allocated. That was £399,000. If that were known to the Premier the other amounts must have been known, so that the fact that New South Wales has not received about £2,000,000 that it should have received is due to the lack of ability of our representatives at the Australian Loan Council.

To return to the matter that I was speaking about before the interjection of the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways, this State is short of 214 teachers. We need 58 mathematics teachers, 28 teachers of physical education, 27 science teachers, 17 English teachers, 17 manual arts and crafts teachers, 14 music teachers, 13 history teachers, 13 geography teachers, 10 home economics teachers, 8 teachers of commercial subjects, 5 teachers of languages, and 4 librarians. Cheltenham has a shortage of a mathematics teacher, a science teacher, a French teacher and a music teacher.

Mr. P. N. RYAN: Where did the hon. member get these figures?

Mr. DOIG: From the Teachers' Federation. Crow's Nest lacks an English teacher, a mathematics teacher and a geography teacher.

Mr. HILLS: Are these teachers being paid out of loan funds?

Mr. DOIG: The Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways was not present when I related this matter to the Loan Estimates. The relationship comes about in this way: we must have more teachers' colleges to train teachers to fill the positions that I have indicated. If these shortages did not in fact occur—and I am giving the best possible proof that they do occur—there would be no need for more money to build teachers' colleges.

Mr. MORTON: One must prove the need before one spends the money.

Mr. DOIG: Exactly. East Hills Boys' High School has a shortage of a mathematics teacher and two general activities teachers. The children who are worst affected by the shortage of teachers are those in general activities classes, that is to say, the children who are slow learners. In the past they have been catered for in special activities classes. I regret to say that the lack of teachers has virtually wiped out all those "remedial classes" for teaching children who, because of sickness that they have suffered, changing their schools too often or for some reason or other, have failed to learn to read, or failed in the learning of numbers. In the past they were sent to opportunity B schools but I am told that these classes are now virtually non-existent. It is possible that in the future we shall be turning out from our schools illiterate children—children who, because of remedial classes have gone, cannot read or write. I obtained that information from a Burwood teacher. The pressure is on and it all stems from the shortage of teachers' colleges. If we got teachers' colleges going and filled them with bright students then we should have a chance of catching up the arrears, of abating the shortage of teachers and of giving the children of New South Wales something resembling an education. It has been laid down by no

less an authority than the Public Service Board that any experienced teacher should be able to "manage" forty-five children. The ideal of the Department of Education and of teachers is that their rôle is not to manage children—that is, not merely to keep them quiet and prevent their running into the streets—but to educate them. To do so we must make a start with the building of teachers' colleges. I cannot pass from this subject without giving as a special example the shortage of teachers at Murrumburrah, which is short of an English teacher, a geography teacher, a history teacher, a music teacher, a physical education teacher and a general activities teacher.

Mr. MORTON: Murrumburrah is close to Harden. What are the children taught?

Mr. DOIG: What they do at Murrumburrah is anyone's guess. I hope I might be allowed a passing reference to a subject that is cognate with this. The Department of Education has the means of tackling these problems, with the ability, the energy, the enthusiasm and the devotion to duty that is already there, provided that the senior officers are allowed to run the department.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. L. M. NOTT): Order! I have been most lenient with the hon. member for Burwood, but he continues to discuss matters that are not relevant to the Loan Estimates. Mr. Levy, when Chairman of Committees, ruled that it is not in order to discuss the administration of a department when dealing with the Loan Estimates. The hon. member is completely out of order when he discusses the administration of the Department of Education during this debate. I am sure that hon. members will appreciate that this matter was covered during a previous debate, and I cannot permit a duplication. I ask the hon. member for Burwood to address his remarks to the question before the Committee.

Mr. DOIG: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Temporary Chairman, and shall make no reference to placing the Department of

Education under a commission. To recapitulate briefly what I have said, the main problem facing the Department of Education—

Mr. TONGE: The Government could solve many of these problems if it had the finance.

Mr. DOIG: I hoped for some comic relief during my speech and thank the hon. member. The key problem in the Department of Education is the building of teachers' colleges to accommodate the extra number of students who will graduate as practical teachers to cope with the inevitable increase in school population. Readily available figures of the number of children aged between one year and five years disclose that enrolments will not decrease. Since 1952 the State of Victoria has met the problem of providing teachers in the face of actual yearly population increases greater than in New South Wales.

In 1952 the population of New South Wales increased by 53,314, and that of Victoria by 67,181. In 1953 New South Wales increased by 41,023 and Victoria by 49,316; in 1954 the increases were 53,304 and 64,842. I trust that hon. members have noticed that in those years the Victorian increase in population was numerically greater than that in New South Wales. In 1955 the population of New South Wales increased by 63,610; in Victoria the increase was 74,144. In 1956 the figures were 62,422 for New South Wales and 77,602 for Victoria. The first time the population increase in New South Wales was greater than in Victoria was in 1957, when the New South Wales increase was 72,953, compared with a Victorian increase of 68,012. However, in 1958 the normal trend was resumed, with the population of New South Wales increasing by 65,189 and that of Victoria by 70,284. In the seven-year period that I have covered the increase of population in New South Wales was 411,014, compared with an increase in population in Victoria of 471,381; so that on actual figures the population increase in Victoria in that period beat the popula-

tion increase in New South Wales by more than 60,000. These are not percentages but actual population increases.

Despite its adverse conditions of population increase, Victoria has solved the teaching problem much better than New South Wales has. Victoria has succeeded mainly by building a considerable number of small teachers' colleges and attracting students to them by post-intermediate bursaries, which New South Wales has not got. This demonstrates that the practical method of solving our problem is to build small teachers' colleges throughout New South Wales, at Chatswood and Wollongong—which are two places where the Teachers' Federation has asked that they be built—and at large country centres. Parents in the country would be willing to send their children 50 or 100 miles to a teachers' college where they would have good accommodation and have the opportunity to return home for the week-end. This would be a practical solution to the problem. If the department went further and as soon as possible increased the teachers' training period from two to three years—thus improving the status of the profession—the probability is that the department would have all the trainees that it requires, and they would be of good quality. By this means the problem would be solved within a few years. I appreciate the small degree of latitude that has been allowed to me, and because of this I shall not have to make the speech on education that I proposed to make yesterday.

Progress reported, on motion by Mr. Renshaw.

ADJOURNMENT

RATE CONCESSIONS TO PENSIONERS

Motion (by Mr. Renshaw) proposed:

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. CROSS (Georges River) [10.14]: I crave the attention of the House for a brief period so that I may bring to the notice of hon. members a most earnest request by many pensioners residing in my electorate. I have received from the honorary secretary of the Mortdale Aged and Invalid Pensioners' Association a request in writing

accompanied by a petition containing sixty-eight signatures referring to water rates on pensioners' properties. Most hon. members know that Mortdale is very much a working man's suburb. A large number of people there are residents of long standing who over the years have built up their humble homes and reared their families. Now many of them are left alone, widows or widowers. Their water rates have become a burden to them and they have asked me to bring their plight to the attention of the Government with an earnest request that sincere and favourable consideration be given to their receiving a concession on water rates.

I have a number of sample cases showing the increases in water rates over recent years. Mrs. Saunders of Kent Street, Mortdale, whose water rates in 1956 amounted to £6 19s. 6d., today must pay £17 13s. 10d. The amount of £6 19s. 6d. was, perhaps, the maximum burden that she could bear in 1956: the present charge of £17 13s. 10d. is quite a different problem to her. I have a note from a Mr. Brown of Oxford Street, Mortdale, who in 1952 paid £2 12s. 2d. for water rates. In 1959 his water rates were £11 1s. 3d. I have another note from a Mr. Lamey of Universal Street, Mortdale. In 1951 his water rates were £1 11s. 9d.; in 1956 they had risen to £4 18s. 6d., and today, including a rate for sewerage as the house has now been connected to the sewerage system, they amount to £13 15s.

In 1949 a Mrs. Newbold of Universal Street, Mortdale, paid £2 11s. 2d. for water rates. In 1956 her rates amounted to £8 7s. 8d. and in 1959, with sewerage, they were £17 8s. 8d. Mrs. Tye, an old resident of the district, paid £9 16s. 10d. in 1956 for water and sewerage rates. In 1959 the charge has risen to £18 0s. 5d. I can cite also a gentleman who has been associated with pensioner welfare for many years and is now president of the Mortdale Age and Invalid Pensioners' Club. In 1956 his water rates were £7 19s. 3d; this year the combined water and sewerage rates for his property are £17 13s. 1d.

These people have written a simple letter, which I shall not read, asking me to raise the matter in the House with a request that

the Government extend to them the same consideration as has been extended to age and invalid pensioners in the rebating of their municipal and shire rates.

Mr. RENSHAW: Are these persons age pensioners?

Mr. CROSS: Yes. As all hon. members appreciate, this year the Government has allocated £190,000 towards the cost of concessions on municipal rating extended to age and invalid pensioners. There is no doubt that if the water rate concession were granted throughout the State, the amount involved would be considerably less than this. Even if it were granted in respect of both water and sewerage rates, the cost would still be less than the sum of £190,000, which is being paid by the Government by way of subsidy to local-government authorities throughout the State in respect of the waived municipal rates of age and invalid pensioners. After all, this is a reasonable request. During the life of the present Parliament I have raised it in the House on two or three occasions. The late Premier was then occupying the chair in which the Deputy Premier and Treasurer is now sitting.

Mr. MORRIS: What about widows?

Mr. CROSS: I include them with age and invalid pensioners. The late Premier replied that if local-government authorities were willing to grant the concession, the Government would introduce legislation so that they could bear this burden. That is not a reasonable attitude to adopt. I am suggesting that the Deputy Premier and Treasurer give most sympathetic consideration to the humble request that has been made by these people. I have sixty-eight signatures on the document before me, all of good citizens who over the years have purchased their homes. They seek this concession in respect of water rates and preferably in respect of water and sewerage rates combined. On their behalf, I would appreciate highly any action that the Government might take in respect of this most urgent matter.

Mr. RENSHAW (Castlereagh), Deputy Premier and Treasurer [10.22], in reply: I appreciate the problem that confronts the people to whom the hon. member has referred, and also his submission that a concession should be granted them in respect of water and sewerage rates similar to the one granted them already under the Local Government Act in respect of local rates. Unfortunately, the situation is not satisfactory, for little more than half of all local-government authorities have carried the resolution that is necessary for the local rate concession.

Mr. HUGHES: Is the Minister referring to the number of councils or the number of people affected?

Mr. RENSHAW: The number of councils that have granted the concession. The State makes available £190,000-odd to assist those councils that grant this concession. Of course, other local authorities defer the collection of rates until the death of an age or invalid pensioner, and the accumulated rates are then a charge on the estate. Of course, water and sewerage rates are not levied by a uniform authority throughout the State. The main point that emerges from the hon. member's submission is that the pensions being paid are inadequate and that as a consequence pensioners are unable to pay for their ordinary goods and services. The pioneers of this country are entitled to justice, but as to subsidising pensioners for such everyday things as water and power, bread and butter—the things that really matter in life—one must conclude that pensions should be large enough to enable these people to pay for their requirements. As the hon. member has intimated, costs have risen over the past nine years, and they have maintained their relation to the value of money. Pensions also have been varied during this time, though the increases have not kept pace with the cost of living, and the age and invalid pensioners are not being given enough to enable them to pay for necessary commodities and services.

Mr. MORTON: But values have risen and the water board has not reduced its rate.

Mr. RENSHAW: I have already intimated that the rises in rates and costs that have occurred since 1950 have been in proportion to the variation in the value of money. The purchasing power of the £ has dropped substantially, but pension increases have not been proportionate to this reduction. Thus, pensions have not the same value as they had ten years ago. This highlights the problems of this section of the community. The Commonwealth Parliament has full responsibility for pensions but it has denied the pioneers of this country the justice that is due to them. The only way to tackle the problem and to give pensioners, wherever they may be, justice in relation to rates for water and power is to give them the adequate pension that they deserve, so that they can pay their way in life as ordinary, decent citizens. That is the pensioners' own attitude. In view of the hon. member's remarks, the Government's attitude would be to press the Commonwealth authorities to do common justice to this section of the community so that pensioners may pay their way as other sections of the Australian community do.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 12 November, 1959

Printed Questions and Answers—Hon. Member for Earlwood—Questions without Notice—Constitution Amendment (Legislative Council Abolition) Bill—Companies (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Public Hospitals (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Printing Committee (Tenth Report)—Adjournment (Bingara Swimming Pool).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at 11 a.m.

The Prayer was read.

PRINTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FIRECLAY REFRACTORIES PURCHASED BY DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS

Mr. DEANE asked the MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT,—Will he inform the House,—(1) (a) The amount spent by the Department of Railways on "fireclay refractories", excluding silica, for the years 1947-48 to 1957-58, inclusive? (b) Of these amounts,