

## Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 12th December, 1941.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION—COAL INDUSTRY.

*As to Pension Scheme for Miners.*

Mr. WILSON asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that an Act has been passed by the Government of New South Wales making pension provisions for the coal and shale miners of that State, and that such a law becomes operative as from the 1st January, 1942? 2, Is he in possession of data confirming reports of such pension scheme? 3, Is he aware that the States of Queensland and Tasmania have now Bills before them similar in character to the provisions contained in the New South Wales Act of 1941? 4, Will he consider the advisability of granting such a pension scheme to the coal miners of this State?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Apart from a copy of the Act I have no other information. I have been in communication with the Premier of New South Wales but so far I have not received any reply. 3,

Not to my knowledge. 4, The whole matter will receive consideration.

### BILL—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FUND.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—FRUIT GROWING INDUSTRY (TRUST FUND).

*Report, etc.*

Report of Committee adopted.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONEMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [3.5]:

After listening attentively last night to the Premier's speech advocating the acceptance of this Bill, I do not consider that any persuasive arguments were submitted for its adoption. I would like to have heard submitted more tangible reasons why we should agree to the measure at the present stage. The Constitution Act was passed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords for the people of this State. It is the people's law, not ours. It was passed in 1889 and came into operation here at the first election in 1890. Ever since 1890 that law has been observed in its entirety and although there have been amendments since the Bill was assented to by Queen Victoria, we have never attempted to set aside the Act in any form. I admit that we have amended it from time to time, but we have always been careful to conserve those provisions that were placed in it for the welfare of the people.

In 1917, when the Great War was in progress, there was no setting aside of an election, and there were more casualties in 1917 in a week than there have been during the present war. I admit that just recently the enemy has been closer to our shores than was the case at that period. Even in 1917 German raiders were in our waters but I will admit that the danger was not as great

then as it is now. However, there were more casualties during the Great War than have been recorded in this conflict. The present Premier was first elected to Parliament in 1917. I want to quote the exact words he used last night in connection with this measure. He said—

Many members engage in canvassing at election times and all they would have to do would be to express sympathy in the loss of a husband, son or brother that might have occurred a week or two previously.

If such losses have occurred now, they were ten times as great in 1917, but that was not used then as a justification for setting aside a general election in this State. Recently the National Parliament gave consideration to the postponement of an election. As a matter of fact it was admitted that the National Parliament had no power to effect such a postponement, but no application was made to the Imperial Parliament, which may or may not have that power to suspend an election. I am not going to pretend that I am a constitutional lawyer and able to determine that point. The position is that no provision for postponement was made at that time, because it was impossible to persuade all parties to agree upon the matter. The present Prime Minister was very much opposed to such a postponement. I have asked myself—I think rightly—what would be the attitude of the Labour Party towards a Bill of this kind if the party I represent were in office.

The Minister for Mines: The same as at present.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is easy to say that.

The Minister for Mines: You asked for it. It is not so easy, either!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister can speak only for himself.

The Minister for Mines: I am doing so.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is no use his answering for the Labour Party.

The Premier: He can speak for me.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He can speak for the Premier, too.

The Minister for Lands: He can speak for me as well.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He can speak for two others.

Mr. Stryants: And he can speak for me.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He can speak for two, three or four members opposite! That is the objection I have! For three solid

years we have been as considerate as possible to the Government. Two years ago there was an undertaking that no party legislation would be introduced, but that undertaking has not been given effect to. A Bill was introduced this session that caused more heart-burning than anything else. The Minister sponsoring it said that he would not have any alteration made to it. That was a definite party matter.

Mr. Fox: What does it matter, if your party has a good back-stop?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Never mind about a good back-stop; I believe in batting here for myself.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Leader of the Opposition will connect his remarks with the Bill.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: All this concerns the life of Parliament, where all laws are made or amended.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course regulations are made but they are submitted to this House, and some small alterations are made by proclamation.

Mr. SPEAKER: That does not give the Leader of the Opposition the right to deal with every piece of legislation that has been brought down.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not propose to do so, but I wish to point out my grievance is that the undertaking given has not been carried out. Looking back over the last two years, and, in addition, considering the future, I cannot see that there is any real need for postponing the election. This Parliament will cease at the 31st January, 1942, if the law remains as it is. Between now and the 31st January there is time to hold an election: only five weeks are required.

Mr. Warner: Then defeat the Bill and one can be held.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: But it may not be. There is plenty of time to hold an election. Failing that, provision could be made to extend the period beyond the 31st January because the law can be amended, just as the Premier is proposing to amend the most important part of the Constitution Act. If I were to look at the matter entirely from a personal point of view, I would perhaps say to myself, "Here is an opportunity to remain a member of Parliament for 12 months without having to face the electors." But I have to look at the matter more broadly, and so do other members. Already

there is a man organising in my electorate and I have to consider his viewpoint. What is he likely to say about my taking the power upon myself to agree to this measure on behalf of 4,000 electors in the York electorate?

Mr. Berry: He will be in the army soon.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I wish, Mr. Speaker, there were not so many interjections. Members are entitled to their views and I am entitled to express my opinion.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I thought you were going to express our views.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not attempting to express the hon. member's views. That man has already spent money in the York electorate and believes he has a reasonable chance. He has a perfect right to complain, and so has every candidate.

Mr. Thorn: I would not lose any sleep over him.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not losing any sleep over him either.

The Minister for Works: You must be running out of arguments.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This is a perfectly legitimate argument.

The Minister for Works: It is ridiculous!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That may be the Minister's idea, but I consider it is a very sensible argument. The provision in the Act is that every three years, every person over 21 years of age—with very few exceptions—can come forward and offer his services as a Parliamentarian. My contract with the people of York is for three years, and no longer. If I agree to this Bill, I am assisting to extend that contract without consulting the people, and depriving every one of the electors who wishes to do so of the opportunity to declare I have no longer the confidence of the people, and to contest the seat. The only Parliament I know that has done this sort of thing is the Imperial Parliament, which has a combined Government representing all parties. I find in looking at the division list that only about three members were in opposition to the Government. That occurred in connection with what was regarded as a vital issue. On one occasion I think five members voted in opposition to the Government.

Then there is the position in the Dominion of New Zealand where an arrangement was made between the Government and the Opposition to postpone the election for 12 months. During the course of his re-

marks, the Premier mentioned that the Dominion Opposition was satisfied with the position, but there does not seem to be too much satisfaction if I can accept the statement appearing in a publication called "Journal of the Parliaments of the Empire." In the course of a speech in the Dominion House of Representatives, Mr. S. G. Holland, the Leader of the Opposition, is reported to have said—

Elsewhere in the Empire truly national Governments had been formed and in that way the people had been given a lead and that influence that was necessary for a maximum war effort. In New Zealand, however, though the Opposition Party had made repeated proposals to the Government that party politics should be dropped for the duration of the war and a truly representative national Government formed, it seemed that the Government was determined to go alone and insist that his party should function as an Opposition. It was true they had a War Council, but it had no definite function. They also had a War Cabinet but, while admitting that it was doing excellent work, he thought it proper to say that the War Cabinet could do no more work than the Government allotted to it.

Further on Mr. Holland said—

The Government talked about unity and practised party politics. It talked about the war being the only thing that mattered and practised the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. While British workers—and now workers of the United States—were working long hours in a determined effort . . .

Mr. Holland at this stage proceeded to deal with industrial legislation, but I shall not mention that phase because it has nothing to do with this Parliament. What I have read from the statement by the Opposition Leader in the New Zealand House of Representatives would indicate that not too much satisfaction is felt with the present arrangement.

If there was any real necessity from a national point of view, a proper national Government might be justified in postponing the election. I do not know that we, as a State Parliament, are so very important that we need worry about postponing our State elections. The House could be called together at any time up to the 31st January, and the Government could take power to convene a sitting of Parliament at any stage if it did not care to accept responsibility regarding matters that arose from time to time. I know that the responsibilities of

Ministers are limited, and I agree it is desirable that the Premier should have authority to call Parliament together at notice shorter than that provided for in the standing orders. He should be able to call members together at a few hours' notice. I am not expressing the views of the party that I lead, because this is a matter entirely at the discretion of each individual member. I regard it not only from my own point of view but from that which I would adopt if I were "out" instead of "in."

The Premier: Look at it from the State point of view!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am doing so.

The Premier: No, you have stressed the personal point of view.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Not altogether! I have taken the view, for instance, of those who are entitled to contest the seats that the Premier and I hold at present. Incidentally, during the course of his remarks, the Premier gave himself a pat on the back when he said that nothing had transpired to cause dissatisfaction. Possibly we are not the best judges of our own actions; the other fellow is by far the better judge. When the Premier made that statement, I interjected that the only election held during the year had not resulted quite in favour of the Government. I know, of course, that, on the other hand, it is quite possible, if an appeal were made to the public within the next few months, a different verdict might be obtained.

The Minister for Works: Neither of the two parties sitting in Opposition was game to run a candidate.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know that was said, but the Minister knows the position just as well as I do. The Premier also said that in the present circumstances with which the Empire is confronted, he did not consider the Government would be justified in distracting the attention of the people in order to contest an election. In that regard I have a grievance against the general public—not against every individual member of the public by a long stretch of imagination. I am afraid, however, that there is not on the part of many of our citizens a full realisation of their responsibilities today.

Take the remarks of the Prime Minister of Australia! I do not intend to criticise him, because his task at present is most difficult, but even he is capable, in my opinion, of making mistakes. When I read the published

report of a speech by the Prime Minister, I was again reminded of the fact that some people do not appear to possess a full realisation of the necessities of the moment from the Empire point of view.

Mr. J. Hegney: To whom are you referring?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: To the Prime Minister.

Mr. Needham: Which one?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: There is only one Prime Minister of Australia at the present time! The report of his speech referred to the steps the Government intended to take, and they included the prohibition of non-essential consumption of petrol, the elimination of holidays and holiday travelling, and so on. I am afraid, if the Prime Minister is not very careful, Australia may find itself up against a shortage of fuel for the defence forces.

Mr. Styants: Do you know how much petrol the Commonwealth Government has on hand?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I think so; at any rate, I think my knowledge is very close to the mark.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Leader of the Opposition does not propose to deal with petrol rationing during this debate.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not intend to do so, but I am drawing attention to these points in reply to statements made by the Premier when he moved the second reading of the Bill. Is not one of the first duties of a Government today to ensure that our petrol supplies are conserved? There is every justification for the urgent appeal made to the people to see that they do not waste anything but conserve everything possible. That is essential so that we may further our defence efforts.

Mr. Berry: Do you think the holding of an election will conserve petrol supplies?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Evidently there is no particular shortage, for there would be a considerable quantity used in connection with an election. When the Prime Minister intimated that the people could use their petrol supplies for December and January, it made me wonder whether the holding of the general election would have any effect on the supplies for war purposes, but no doubt provision has already been made by the Liquid Fuel Control Board for the supply of petrol in connection with the campaign.

Mr. Rodoreda: How could the Prime Minister stop the petrol from being used?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Quite easily! He need only cancel licenses and all ration tickets.

The Minister for Works: You have already said that there is a sufficiency of petrol in Australia.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not.

The Minister for Works: You said you knew how much was in hand and you have divulged that information.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I did not divulge any information at all.

The Minister for Mines: At any rate, what you suggest may be done in a week's time.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That may be so. The Prime Minister, in the course of his speech, said he was hopeful that motor cars would not be used for mid-week racing purposes and that Melbourne would not be lighted up so brightly as it had been in better times. He also expressed the hope that not so many motor cars would be seen in the city. I emphasise that I have no inside information to give to the House, so I cannot divulge particulars of that nature.

Mr. Styants: The Prime Minister also said it was necessary to keep cars on the road for emergencies.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Surely that is merely logical. If the occasion arose when it became necessary to shift the population out of the danger zone, the provision of cars would be essential. For that reason it is necessary to conserve petrol supplies. That was what the Prime Minister meant when he made his statement. What he aimed at was a mobile unit that would be available for moving the population.

I have voiced what opposition I desire to make to the Bill. I could easily say to the Government, "I shall support the Bill on certain conditions." I do not propose to adopt that attitude. After all, the Government asks for authority to continue exercising the executive powers it is called upon to undertake. Naturally it must accept the responsibilities that go with office. Before the Bill is passed I would like the Premier to give an undertaking that in future we shall know something more about the legislation to be introduced. I do not want to find it necessary to contest legislation at a time when the nation is hard up against it. It must be borne in mind that the Government is asking for an extension of the life

of a Parliament in which it has a bare majority, the relative state of Government and Opposition parties being 26 and 24. I do not suggest that the Independents are not entitled to support the Government if they desire to do so. They are at liberty to vote as they please, and so are other members of this Chamber, but I remind the Government that there is in the House a strong, solid Opposition representing more than one-half of the electors. That fact must be borne in mind.

The Government in asking for this extension of the life of Parliament must remember that it does not represent 50 per cent. of the people, and that on the floor of the House its majority is slender. If the Premier will give me the assurance that I ask for and will bear in mind the strength of the party representation in the House, we may not have reason to complain about legislation introduced in the future. I give the Government my assurance that every measure introduced for the purpose of augmenting our war effort will meet with wholehearted support on the Opposition side of the House. Any criticism offered will be constructive and we shall endeavour to expedite the business. Even if the necessity arose to call members together at midnight, the Government need not have any fear that it will not receive support.

Parliament will go into recess very shortly. The war will have an adverse effect upon the finances of many people. During the course of the session no provision whatever has been made to conserve their interests, although the Federal Government under the National Security regulations has dealt with the matter to some extent. We, as a State Parliament, have not provided any protection for those people who, because of war conditions, are unable to carry on and therefore may become financially embarrassed. I have again asked the Government this session, as I did last year, to appoint a commissioner to whom people could go when they were in financial difficulties. Such a person could place his circumstances before the commissioner and, if he could make out a legitimate case for protection, the commissioner could grant him a limited moratorium. Action along those lines should have been taken long ago. I certainly do not advocate a general moratorium. If the Government

is to be granted an extension of its term of office some such provision as I have suggested should be made so that protection may be given to people requiring it. For instance, a person may enter into a lease of premises on the foreshore. Something happens that prevents him from carrying on. The person with whom he has entered into the contract can enforce the conditions embodied in the document he holds. For people in that position who are not able to meet the obligations they have undertaken, some redress and assistance should be forthcoming.

Last, but not least, the Government has not satisfied me that it has a full realisation of the position of the farmers and the need for assistance being extended to them. I know the Minister for Lands can always put up a very good argument from his point of view, but when I go through the agricultural areas and notice the worn-out machinery, realise that many of the farmers have struggled on their properties for years without having any holidays and, further, that every shilling obtained in respect of this year's crop is to be grabbed, I am afraid the Government does not possess a full realisation of the difficulties of the men on the land. I would like the Government to have done something similar to that which the Federal Government is doing. We heard a story over the air yesterday morning and in that story dealing with matters affecting Federal co-ordination there is a great deal more truth than some people imagine.

My belief is that a close co-operation exists between the Federal House and the Federal Government, much closer than probably we are prepared to admit. I read Mr. Curtin's remarks in the paper this morning, and from them I gather that the co-operation is closer than possibly we care to admit. If we now had that closer co-operation in Western Australia—and I am not seeking any portfolios for members on this side of the Chamber—and if we had had that closer co-operation for the past two years, I might not have raised the objections I am raising now. The Premier told us that a very good war effort was being put up. Of that effort I fear I know very little. I do know the work going on at the Midland Junction shops and even then I can disagree with the Premier, for he has centralised the whole of his effort in one little spot. It only wants one bomb to des-

troy the whole of that establishment, and then we would have to start afresh.

The Premier: The work is not all centralised there.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is, pretty well! If anything happened there, I would not like to be in the engineering works at North Fremantle, because that establishment is even more vulnerable than is the Midland Junction establishment. Consideration might be given to these things. I would have liked to see a lot of that war work farmed out in the country districts, where there are many garages having fairly big buildings in which men could be employed. Such a course might help to build up population in country towns which are being depleted, and give more confidence to the rural population. There may be a logical argument against that proposal; I do not know, because I am not in contact with the Government, and neither is any member on this side of the Chamber. We would like to have a fuller realisation of what the Government is doing.

We do not criticise the Government, because we do not know. If ever there was a time to be fair to the Government, that time is now. We have attempted to be fair. I have criticised the Government's effort to usurp the functions of the electors of this State. I have done that honestly. Some of my most loyal supporters disagree with me on this point. I have not undertaken to speak for them. I speak only for myself. If the House agrees to the Bill, I shall give the Government the most loyal support that any member can give. Further, if I can render any service to the State, that service will be rendered as long as my health and time will permit. It is not a question of just the Government, as the Prime Minister has said, but a question of all the civilians. The 50 members of this Chamber are leading citizens of the State, because they have been elected to make its laws. We cannot sacrifice that trust. It is the trust of every member. We will give just as loyal service as we can.

If the Bill passes, then until we appeal to the people again there will be no party politics. Let us feel that when legislation is introduced members have the right to express their opinions freely. We will do so on this side. Let legislation be in the interests of the people as a whole. Occasionally members on the opposite side of the House support the Government when they believe the

Government to be wrong. For the next 12 months, I hope, we shall forget party politics. Let us give a lead to employer and employee which will show that one depends on the other. If we succeed in doing that, I shall be the happiest man in Western Australia, and moreover shall feel that I have made a mistake in opposing this Bill. I shall gladly admit as much to the Premier if that turns out to be the case. On those conditions I raise no further objection to the measure.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [3.37]: The extension of the life of Parliament is something which can only be undertaken for reasons of extreme gravity. With my colleagues in this part of the Chamber I have given to the proposal most anxious consideration, and have arrived at the conclusion that it is our plain duty to support the measure. We feel that to precipitate a struggle for power between rival parties at this juncture in our affairs would be to fail to accept the responsibility which the people of the State expect of us, to act in an emergency. I feel that there is no reason to mention the conditions obtaining today. They fill the mind of every member of the House, because every member has a feeling of responsibility for the gathering menaces that surround our country at this particular time. It is on account of those conditions that we here believe the measure should receive our support.

It is our profound conviction, and what I believe to be the sentiment today of the overwhelming majority of the people of Western Australia, that the times demand a complete cessation of party politics and a Government representative of all sections of the people. The Government now in power received a mandate to govern this State for a period of three years. The period of the mandate is now about to expire. If an election were held in the ordinary course of our Constitutional practice, then some other party might be entrusted with the sole right to the office of government in this State. What that party would be does not matter for the time being, and I do not propose to speculate on the subject; but it is impossible to say at this stage if an election were held what party would be entrusted by the people with a mandate to govern Western Australia for the next three years. That being so, it seems to me that the only way in which we

can fulfil our democratic tradition, if we extend the life of Parliament, is to give all sections of the people representation in the Government.

The Premier has said there is no evidence of any grave dissatisfaction with this Government. I do not propose to comment on that statement. As I have already said, I do not intend to enter upon any speculation as to what would be the political colour of the Government if we proceed to hold a general election in the ordinary course. Such considerations are of minor importance in view of the greater issues now involved. While we have stated that in our opinion the proper course is that the extension of the life of Parliament should be accompanied by the formation of a Government representative of all sections of the State, I want to make it clear that we impose no such condition on our support of the Bill. That support is dictated by the emergency now confronting the people of Australia and the people of the Empire. It is true that in the course of five or six weeks it would have been possible to hold an election, but I myself believe that the next five or six weeks may be the most critical in the whole period of Australia's history. I am not prepared to consent even during those five or six weeks to the dislocation of the government of the State and the affairs of the State which would result from the holding of an election and which might weaken the war effort, an effort which might be required during that period to operate with greater force than ever.

We therefore support the Bill without asking for anything in return, for no personal considerations, no personal place, no power, no emoluments, no anything! We regard it as the paramount duty of Parliament to see that the State is safeguarded from the conflict of personal considerations as to who should hold office, who should hold power. Such considerations now sink into comparative insignificance. We therefore leave the matter at this stage in the hands of the Government. We express our view as to the type of Government which should occupy the Treasury bench during the period of the prolongation of the life of Parliament. We express that view with all the emphasis we can lay upon it; but if the Government chooses to continue the system of government by one party, then that is a responsibility for which it will answer to the people

of the State. We leave that responsibility to the Government.

From this side of the House repeated offers have been made of assistance to the Government during the 2½ years of war. They have not been accepted. So far as I know, not one member on this side of the House has been consulted by the Government during the period of the war, and no member on this side has any knowledge of the executive actions in regard to organisation and precautions which have been taken by the Government to meet the danger now confronting our people. The Government assures us that precautions and organisations have been set up to deal with matters which may be the occasion of danger to the people of Western Australia. We have no reason to challenge that. We do not know what has been done. And I think it is proper to say that such being the case, we on this side of the Chamber are not able to accept any responsibility to the people for the condition of affairs today. That is the sole responsibility of the Government. If an account is to be given at some future stage of the war for the precautions which have been taken and the organisations which have been set up, that account must be given by the Government—not by us, for we have not been allowed to participate in those organisations and we do not know what arrangements have been made.

There are in that connection many things which I assume have been done and which are essential to be done. There are a hundred things necessary for the safety of our population, for the maintenance of our communications and our transport facilities, for supplying water and essential materials to the goldfields and outlying centres, for the protection of our civil population and for the accumulation of emergency supplies in the State. What has been done we do not know. I say, therefore, that these are matters the responsibility for which rests on the Government and not on any member on this side of the House.

When introducing the Bill, the Premier asked for a prolongation of the life of Parliament, but he made no suggestion as to any means by which Opposition members might assist in the conduct of government. I do not know what the Premier's intentions are. All I can say is that we think the time has come when the prolongation should be accompanied by a system of government un-

der which all sections of the House should have representation. But I repeat that I and my colleagues make no conditions whatever. The Bill is necessary from the paramount point of view of the safety of the people and the maintenance of our war effort, and we accordingly support it without personal considerations of any kind whatever. Finally, I think it proper to say what we have often said before and now repeat, that all members on this side of the House are prepared to offer their service, their time and their energy in any capacity in which they can act, without any consideration of office, position or emoluments. Their only consideration will be to exert the maximum effort to meet a situation of gravity so great that we cannot possibly accentuate it.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [3.48]: Before the Bill goes to the vote of the House for its approval, which I sincerely hope it will obtain, I wish to make a few remarks as the oldest member in the House. If the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) were present he would be in that position, as he was a member of Parliament some years before I joined the Parliament of Western Australia. The member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier) and I both entered the Parliament of Western Australia at the same time, but he, too, is absent today. In all those long years—and they seem all the longer nowadays when times are bad—there never was a proposal made to alter the constitution of the State in order to allow an existing Parliament to continue its existence. It is the very brightest jewel in our Constitution that, at a stated period, we must return to our electors and render an account of what we have done; they, and they alone, in all normal circumstances have the right to extend the term of our service. But we, not the electors of the State, are taking upon ourselves to do that by this Bill. Nevertheless, I feel it is justified.

I have given the matter the most careful consideration from every point of view, from the constitutional point of view and from the point of view of all the traditions which have been handed down to us and which it is our duty to observe and preserve. I cannot find that the circumstances we are passing through are not a complete answer to any objection that those tradi-



tions and those rules would force upon us. So I am in favour—for the reason so plainly put to the House by the Leader of the National Party—of the Bill now before us. I find very little to grumble about in the statements of the Premier when introducing the Bill; although I cannot approve of the underlying kind of suggestion which is to be derived from the Premier's remarks, particularly the very laudable references to the act of his own Government and his own party to the effect that this postponement of an election is something in the nature of a sacrifice by them. It is the very reverse.

If a sacrifice is involved at all, it is a sacrifice pure and simple by those who are sitting in Opposition and by nobody else; because, if the elections were held and if the present Government succeeded in retaining the confidence of the electors, it would only be in the same position as it will occupy under this Bill.

The Premier: Three years instead of one year, perhaps.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, perhaps. I am sorry the interjection was made, because it suggests what we all know, the grave likelihood, unfortunately, that that "perhaps" will become true, that the war will not end in the year before us.

Mr. Marshall: We hope it will!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Of course we do, but unfortunately we have indulged from the very beginning of this war far too much in hope. I myself have no confidence whatever, no belief whatever, that the war will terminate within 12 months from the 1st January next, much as I would like that to happen. If there is any sacrifice involved in this measure, I say that undoubtedly it is a sacrifice by the Opposition members; because, if the election resulted in their favour—as a large number of people anticipate it would result—then they would have usurped the seats of the Government.

But if it be a sacrifice—and I do not care for an instant to attempt to measure its extent, even if it be a sacrifice of moment—it is one to which we willingly and gladly assent. I believe I am speaking not only for myself, but for every member of the Opposition, when I say that we are prepared willingly and gladly to accept this sacrifice in order that we may thereby serve the State. Of course it will serve the State, because nothing could be more

terrible to contemplate than a political tussle at the present time. Just fancy how every sense of decency—and we all profess a strong sense of decency—would be outraged if there were an indulgence in party vituperation when possibly off our coast there were at the same time the reverberations of hostile guns! What the position will be next month or in February or March, no one knows; but we know that we have no right to anticipate or permit the holding of an election, even if it were a possibly peaceful one.

While we claim no credit whatever for any sacrifice which we make by assenting to the Bill, we want it also to be clearly understood that, as the Premier said in his speech—in a note which I wish he had emphasised far more than he did, but which nevertheless I was glad, indeed proud, to hear—the time has gone for any party differences. We must act one and all together, if we hope—as we all do—to pull Australia out of the terrible position she stands in today.

I would emphasise what has been said by the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald), about the complete ignorance under which members of this House labour as to the administrative acts that are vitally necessary for the defence of Western Australia. They may have been taken, but we know nothing of them and the public knows nothing of them, nor do we see any signs of them. I refer particularly to civil defence. For instance, what steps have been taken to protect the Mundaring Weir and the Canning Dam, except, I understand, to appoint some civil watchmen?

Mr. Styants: They are militiamen.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Those two weirs represent the lifeline of Western Australia. If Mundaring Weir were damaged and the water thereby allowed to escape, the gold-fields would be impossible to live on. If the Canning Dam were destroyed, the same would apply to Perth. So we should know what steps are taken. Above all, we should know that the Civil Defence Department is not tinkering with matters entirely beyond its competence, but that it will hand them over to the military authorities.

The Minister for Mines: You can rest assured that the military authorities would not allow us to tinker with matters belonging to them. They told us that definitely.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is handing over to the proper care matters which that department, with its inferior capacity—I do not speak personally—is attempting to control. That is an instance, as the member for West Perth told the House, of an entire absence of confidence in any member on this side of the House, and it is producing a feeling of apprehension. I particularly want to know if the Civil Defence Department has made any attempts whatever to evacuate children from Perth and Fremantle and the suburbs surrounding them. I hope before the House rises we will hear some answer to that question. Have any plans been made for the evacuation of children from these dangerous areas?

The Minister for Mines: You had better ask the military authorities that question.

Hon. N. KEENAN: No. The military authorities have nothing to do with the evacuation of children.

The Minister for Mines: Of course, the hon. member knows what the military authorities, who are protecting this country, know. Does he not?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: I repeat that we want definitely to know if any plans have been made for the evacuation of children from the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Mines: No! That is the answer.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That answer is a crime; an absolute crime! There should not be a child left in the metropolitan area this side of Christmas. It will not be an easy matter to evacuate them. The railways find it difficult to carry large numbers of people away from the city. There is a bottleneck in the hills which prevents traffic on a large scale. Besides that, at any moment the railways may be taken over by the military authorities.

The Minister for Mines: That is why they evacuated them from London and then brought them all back.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister for Mines unfortunately has only read some of what is called the "tattle" Press.

The Minister for Mines: That is a fact. The authorities send out information every fortnight which we read.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister can attempt, if he is capable of attempting, to justify leaving the children here and having

no plans, to which he confesses, for evacuation. He should remember this, that the plans, even when formed, will be valueless until they are completely understood by the mothers of the families concerned. It will take considerable time to impress any plans upon the minds of the mothers, as is necessary, in order that the children may be evacuated. I am told that there are some road boards—the Leader of the Opposition says he knows of some—which have made plans to receive children. But there is no plan yet made to send them!

Just imagine the position if, before these children are sent away, Perth is bombed and there is a big casualty list of children. Just imagine how the Ministers would feel when they had allowed the matter to pass by their consideration and to drift and drift until this tragedy happened! We would also like to know what protection, if any, is provided for the powerhouse. Every single industry in Perth depends on the powerhouse at East Perth; and almost every industry in the metropolitan area does.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member going to connect that statement with the question?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. I am connecting it up with the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. C. G. Latham) and those of the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald). We want more information. We are supporting this Bill on the distinct understanding that this reticence will end. Members of this House do not want these matters discussed generally, but they should be made aware of the necessary steps being taken. Again, the powerhouse is said to be a military matter. The military authorities, if they were asked, would send down anti-aircraft guns to those works; if they had them in Western Australia! I do not know whether the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Styants) knows whether they have them or not. The powerhouse is the absolute key to the whole of our industries.

An interjector mentioned the oil stores at Fremantle. There again we know nothing of what steps are being taken to protect those stores. It is not in the interests of the State to discuss this matter item by item, or indeed to discuss these deficiencies at all. Undoubtedly, if the people learned that we were not prepared it would create a very disturbing influence which we do not want, and so I refrain from mentioning many other

matters to which my attention has been drawn. For instance, I do not intend to comment on the matter referred to by the member for West Perth that practically the whole of our railway system could be blown up if once the Midland Junction workshops were bombed. That is the only place, I am told, in which there is a steam hammer, yet there are splendid repair workshops at Merredin and Kalgoorlie.

One would have imagined that the first thing that would happen would have been decentralisation; the putting of the eggs into a whole lot of baskets to make certain that if one was destroyed the others would survive. I emphasise very clearly and distinctly that we, on this side of the House, are willing to support the Government in every way possible, but we want to know, and want to be told, what is happening. We want to be able to fit in our actions and lives with the passing events, and not be merely guessing at things, as anyone in the street guesses. So it is that we ask that we should be taken into the Government's confidence. The Premier of New Zealand said in his speech that the War Cabinet there knows everything that is being done in that country in connection with war activities. It is the same in our National Parliament.

I give this Bill my unqualified support, because I think the circumstances require it. I hope the words that the Premier gave voice to, that there is to be complete unity; that we are all to work together for the one object—and of course to do so we must have common knowledge to a certain extent—will prevail in the future, and that with that co-operation we shall be able to surmount the great difficulties we now face.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.8] : I regret that the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) adopted the attitude he did in regard to civil defence. As far as I am personally concerned, when I am asked to make a public statement as to what has been done I will not do it. My answer will be "No" all the time. Since the hon. member has raised the question I now inform him, and members of this House, that a committee was formed here before legislation was even introduced. Since legislation has been introduced a statutory committee has been formed of men holding down, not only important jobs in this State, but jobs which will be essential

in the case of emergency. The men I refer to are connected with the electricity supply, the powerhouse, the water supply, engineering and railways, together with the Commissioner of Police.

They are all ready to move at the first warning from the Military Department. The member for Nedlands should appreciate this fact that the only people in the position to give orders in the case of an emergency, such as enemy action, are those people responsible for the defence of this country. The Commonwealth War Cabinet does not tell me what it is doing. It has told my committee that, so far as evacuations are concerned—and this has been definite for the last two years, and more so during the last few months—based on the experiences both in France and England of roads being cluttered up with people running here, there and everywhere in an endeavour to be evacuated, they have "to remain put," to use its expression, until such time as it can be seen where troops may be endeavouring to land, so that the roads may be kept clear. Then we have to proceed with the evacuation.

The military authorities have all the vehicles they want tagged, and every vehicle that we want is tagged. Immediately we get the order to evacuate—and I am not going to say to where we will be evacuated and thus let the enemy know where the children are, and be able to drop bombs on them—we can shift anybody whom the military authorities require moved. The authorities have all that experience. The experience in France was that the people were being driven on the roads in front of the Germans so that the soldiers on either side could do nothing. That could happen in this country, or any other country. Every move made by the Civil Defence authorities has been done on a uniform system, as nearly as possible, throughout Australia.

Mr. J. Hegney : And in collaboration with the defence authorities.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** : We have a liaison officer who confers in this State with the three services. That officer acquires an enormous amount of confidential information that he would not even pass on to me as chairman of the council. We appointed one man at the request of the defence authorities for that purpose. It is not fair to say these people are adopting a complacent attitude and doing nothing. I rushed up here from a meeting today, and I am glad I

did, because I heard the member for Nedlands say what he thinks. Everything that is possible is being done, and money is being spent by both the Commonwealth and State Governments. Immediately the military authorities speak, we are ready to move.

I have signed just on 6,000 certificates for men and women who have passed all the examinations set by the authorities to qualify them as wardens, head wardens, and other sorts of wardens. Over 6,000 people have studied and passed those examinations and are now ready to do their job. Every week-end and every night they are meeting and practising in some way, and going through all sorts of experiences. Men like Professor Bayliss and others who have given a tremendous amount of time to this matter, for the country, are deserving, not of censure from the hon. member, but of commendation. The men on the council were placed there because we knew they had a knowledge of everything that would need to be done if the emergency arose. That is the position so far as civil defence is concerned. I will not lay on the Table of the House the plans of the Civil Defence Department, any more than would the Defence Department.

**MR. BERRY** (Irwin-Moore) [4.15]: I congratulate the Premier who has, perhaps for the first time during this war, given a lead. I am more particularly pleased with this because, as members know, only a few days ago I asked for this Bill to be introduced. I feel that one of the great errors the English-speaking people have made during the war up to date has been that they have failed to anticipate. We learnt this morning that there was an air alarm in Darwin. The report was that planes were sighted 300 miles off our coast. Three hundred miles off Darwin would be in close proximity to Timor, and we were informed recently that those nasty, little, yellow people had formed an air base there. Had I been in charge, my action would have been to use those dissatisfied troops at Darwin who have been complaining of doing nothing, to occupy that island. Had we anticipated happenings in that way, I think that report would never have been made. My firm conviction is that the Japanese now have an air base there.

I congratulate the Premier on giving the people a lead. To do so was his duty, and he has done it. The member for West Perth and the member for Nedlands have both as-

sured the Premier that everything in their power will be done by members on this side of the House. We are looking entirely to the welfare of the people and, in making this offer, are anticipating a situation that might occur during an election. However much benzine we may have in this country, I feel that every drop we use has to be borrowed from the R.A.A.F. I look upon the R.A.A.F. as the key to the problem, as the member for Nedlands said. I believe that our air strength generally constitutes the key to our problems.

The tragic loss in the Far East a few days ago of two capital ships might be ascribed to the fact that we have not yet enough planes. Criticism has been levelled against the Minister—I am sorry he became unnecessarily excited about it—but, in spite of the slight lashing administered by the member for Nedlands, we on this side of the House assure him that we have not spoken in a spirit of carping criticism. I am not going to criticise the Minister for what has not been done. I am hoping that, from today on, he will do something that will enable us to criticise him constructively. The past has gone; the immediate future is our concern. No matter what has not been done, the fact that the boats I wanted have not been built does not matter two hoots provided they are built now.

The Japanese invasion of Thailand and Malaya was supported by small, fast-moving, patrol vessels. I knew of their existence long ago. They are adequately and perhaps skilfully manned. I knew that they were armed and that they were going to prove a serious danger, because their diminutive size and speed would render them perhaps less vulnerable to air attacks than a larger ship would be. It is our duty to get on with the work of building similar little ships immediately. I happen to know that engines for them are available. Therefore let us have ships whose speed is such that they are very difficult to hit, and let us have them in charge of skilled hands, so that when this little yellow man comes—if he does come—to invade our shores, we can use those boats effectively against him. They are proving to be a very efficient weapon and I think we should learn the lesson shown us.

We have had references to the children. I am not going to refer to the Minister for Mines, who has left the Chamber at the moment, and I shall do nothing that will de-

liberately upset the Government during this crisis. From now on I shall avoid doing anything that will not help. Like members who have spoken, however, I demand my right as a representative of the people of this State to help the Government and to know something of what is going on. I am interested in a family of children whom I have made my concern and have tried to get them out of the city. The mother has not been told what is to be done with those children.

Hon. N. Keenan: There is no plan.

Mr. BERRY: There is no plan. Let us have the plans. Let us know exactly what we are going to do. There are many members who know what could happen when bombs fall, when havoc is wrought and produces terror and panic. I have seen brave men throwing their coats away in order that they might be able to run faster. Are we going to put the plans into operation when people are on the run? God forbid that that should happen! Let us be ready! A few weeks ago I was interested in another batch of children from Singapore. They had been bombed out of England previously and had come here for protection, which they received.

The other day I rang up one of the schools near the city and offered to take six of those children to Safety Bay, where they would be safer than in Perth. I knew they could run out on to the beach or into the back country if anything happened. But I was informed that those children had returned to Singapore and had arrived on the day that city was bombed. Who allowed them to leave Western Australia, particularly when some of us had been saying what would happen in the Far East? The fact of my having tried to get that motion through the House shows that I knew what would happen. That, however, is past, but from now on let every member of the House be consulted in order that he may express to the Premier views that may be beneficial to the whole of the people, including the people who have come to this State for protection. Those oil tanks at Fremantle are a source of worry to many people. I have been asked about them, although I am not the member for that district. People ask me whether those tanks still contain petrol.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the oil tanks are mentioned in the Bill.

Mr. BERRY: My remarks follow on the references to the desire to help made by the

member for West Perth. People have asked me to inquire of the Premier whether those tanks cannot be camouflaged. I shall not say any more on that point. I congratulate the Premier; I congratulate every member who has stood up and said that he will support the Government, and believe me, my support will be available during this period of crisis.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton—in reply) [4.24]: I am very pleased that the Bill has met with a good reception. It has not been violently opposed, and the actions and motives of the Government have received recognition. Although the Leader of the Opposition said he wanted to have many reasons for the measure, I do not think many reasons are required to justify it. We want to have one excellent reason, and that reason is that the State may be in danger and that the present is no time in which to hold an election. That is the reason.

Mr. Marshall: The only reason!

The PREMIER: Many other reasons could be given, but they would not count in comparison with that one. Reference has been made to controversial legislation. It depends upon the judgment of people what constitutes controversial legislation. I venture to think that the Country Party has introduced legislation which was controversial, and aroused very considerable opposition. It certainly was in the interests of only one section of the community and was highly contentious. In fact, the Leader of the National Party had to swallow the convictions of a lifetime over it.

Mr. McDonald: Hardly that; it was a matter of conversion.

The PREMIER: No, there was a violent repression in the hon. member's mind when he accepted something which for many years has been entirely opposed to his outlook, make-up and general principles, as enunciated in this House.

Mr. Doney: To what clause of the Bill does that refer?

The PREMIER: I will not enter into details. As I was saying, some people might consider legislation that has been introduced as controversial; others would not agree with them. Thank God we never all agree because, when we disagree, we make some progress. Often when people do not agree with something that is introduced, they class it as controversial. However, there are two

sides to every question and everything to an extent is controversial), and the different viewpoints on legislation enable us to achieve results and produce something as nearly as possible satisfactory to a majority of the community. We have no intention of introducing legislation that is not in our honest opinion in the interests of the people of the State.

The member for Nedlands spoke about civil defence. Obviously the Minister in control did not want to say too much. What has happened is that those in charge of civil defence here have information of all the experience, knowledge and advice gained in places that have been subjected to bombardment and warfare of all kinds. This information has been passed on to us and to the Eastern States. It is not a matter of what we think we should do; it is a matter of what we must do in the light of that experience. The Minister has told the House that we have 6,000 people who have been trained and are capable of doing the work required. Information about all the things discovered by experience in the Old Country has been passed on to us. I have seen reams and reams of correspondence passing through my office dealing with what other authorities thought they should have done, what they did do, and what results had been obtained in the light of experience.

Hon. N. Keenan: What about the women and children?

The PREMIER: Probably children should be evacuated from some places and taken to other places, but this would depend upon the nature of the crisis.

Hon. N. Keenan: You must have plans.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the Premier had better address the Chair; that is the best plan.

The PREMIER: There are plans covering emergencies that may arise. With regard to evacuation, the Minister has stated that he did not want to say too much, but all the motor transport and train transport and other forms of transport that can be made available if the need arises are under the control of people who are members of the Civil Defence Council. The hon. member mentioned water supply. The engineer, Mr. Dumas, is a member of the council. If by any means water supply should be cut off, who knows most about how to make it available through some other channel? The

engineer-in-charge of water supply; and he is a member of the Civil Defence Council!

Who knows what should be done in regard to black-outs and the shutting off of lighting power and the maintenance of industrial power? The people knowing most about this are the electricity engineer of the Perth City Council and the electricity engineer of the Government Electricity Department, both of whom are members of the Civil Defence Council. The Commissioner of Railways would be in charge of transport, and he is a member of the council. Similarly in regard to health and physical well-being. If there are injuries or casualties, who would know best what was to be done, what hospital accommodation was to be provided and how the injured might best be catered for? Who but the Under Secretary for Health, who has the whole thing at his fingertips? He, too, is on the council. Who is the best man to deal with outbreaks of fire as a result of incendiary bombs? The superintendent of the Fire Brigade; and he is on the council.

All these people, who are experts in their own particular line and can give us the benefit of their knowledge and experience, together comprise the Civil Defence Council. I want to pay a tribute to them, because they are not second-rate but rather are they at the top of their professions and, when there is a meeting of the Civil Defence Council, they are all present. They cancel highly important engagements to attend meetings, and have taken a very serious view of their responsibilities. The Civil Defence Council met in my office recently, because there was not sufficient room for them in the Minister's office, and Major-General Sir Iven MacKay only as recently as last Friday discussed with the council his experience, and stated what he considered to be necessary in regard to civil defence and with regard to the line of demarcation between military and civil responsibilities. Anyone who visits the State and has any information concerning these matters is entitled to meet the council and give the members the benefit of his experience. All of the plans that are in hand cannot be divulged but it can be said that, if every contingency has not been provided for, it will not be for want of knowledge or planning or seeking information.

So far as the military situation is concerned, I meet military authorities when they

come to this State and discuss with them plans for the defence of Western Australia. I have discussed such matters with both Brigadier-General Durrant, the former military commander in this State, and with the present officer in charge, General Jackson. I wanted to know what in their opinion could be done and whether there was the necessary organisation. I have always proffered the utmost assistance in every way possible, and have undertaken that the State Government would do anything that was desired, and also not to divulge any information that might be of material assistance to those opposed to us. That is the position with regard to civil defence. While there is not a pigeon-hole to deal with every contingency that may arise, we have a trained personnel and co-operation with the military authorities, and all these experts know what is their job and are aware of the line of demarcation between military and civil precautions. Thousands of people have been trained to undertake definite duty in time of necessity.

Something was said about emergency supplies. We have been in the closest co-operation with the Commonwealth Government. We do not select people for positions because of their party principles. I doubt whether I know the politics of any individual on the Civil Defence Council except those of the Minister.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I do not think you are too sure about his, either.

The PREMIER: If I were asked to state what I consider to be the politics of the Minister I would say that he would put the Empire first, and that all other considerations in these times of stress and struggle came a long way behind.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: There is a manufacturer on the emergency supplies committee. He was selected because of his knowledge in that connection. There is also a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, and the Government is represented by the Chief Government Storekeeper, Mr. Knight. The committee has also in its membership a retailer. These men know what stocks are available and where they should be.

Acting co-operatively with the Commonwealth Government we have made arrangements to repair any loss which may be experienced through people stocking goods not actually required at the time. We have

assisted them by means of overdrafts to meet the heavy expenditure which they would not otherwise incur. For instance, people at Marble Bar say, "We would not normally have £1,000 worth of goods at one time. Every week the district has communication with the outside and fresh supplies are obtained as required." We reply, "You are in an isolated, dangerous place, and it is necessary that to provide for a time of emergency you should have ten times as much stock as usual." We are then asked, "Who is going to stand the cost?" and we are able to answer that the cost will be borne by the State Government and the Commonwealth Government, which has a complete realisation of the position. All these arrangements have been made, and we have endeavoured as far as possible to place supplies where they may be required; that is to say in centres which, instead of having communication with sources of supply every day or every second day, might in an emergency be shut off from those sources for perhaps four weeks at a time.

I thought I ought to give the House information in regard to these matters. I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party very sincerely for their offer of assistance. There seems to be a thought in their minds that they were not told all the things they should have been told. I have never refused information. I am not aware of what they want to know, but I can assure them that if they have any idea that there are things I have thought they had no right to know they can remove such thoughts entirely from their minds. I am always anxious to let them know anything necessary in the public interest; that is to say, anything that can be divulged. I am not only willing to give them such information, but I am anxious to do so. I may not have sought opportunities, and members of the Government may not have gone out of their way to afford such information, but that does not mean that we do not desire members to know what is taking place. I am sure they do not desire to have military plans revealed to them, but they do want to know what is taking place in other certain directions. If they ask me for information I shall be prepared to tell them all I know.

Reference has been made to closer co-operation. If the Leader of the Opposition

and the Leader of the National Party are prepared to set aside one day a week or one day a fortnight especially for the purpose, I am prepared to discuss with them activities that are taking place and give them information I think they ought to know, things that in these times men in responsible positions should be aware of, so that they can act in a responsible manner when the time comes to do so. Whether legislation is controversial is a matter of the interpretation of the word. I am quite willing to discuss what legislation should be introduced, because I think we have reached the stage when nothing is of very much importance compared with what can be done in connection with the war, and all legislation introduced should have one outstanding objective, namely, to be beneficial to the war effort. That should be the acid test in regard to anything we do, not only in a legislative but also in an administrative way.

I welcome the assurance of the leaders of the respective parties that they are prepared to co-operate. I have never had cause to complain about their lack of co-operation. They may have mental reservations about the lack of information that has been supplied to them, but I am prepared to remove from their minds any ideas of that description, and am anxious to afford them all the information possible. There does not appear to be any opposition to the Bill, that is to say, any opposition with a view to its defeat. The Government has been given credit for introducing it solely because of the critical period in which we are living. That is the only reason it has been introduced. Personal considerations have not influenced the matter. So far as emoluments of office are concerned, things being as they are, I do not think there will be very much difference between the income of Ministers and that of members of Parliament. People will have to be prepared to sacrifice a considerable amount of the emoluments they receive for occupying high office. The result is that a good deal of work will have to be done, but the remuneration will not be very much. I was reckoning the other day the return that would be received by a gentleman who was to be appointed to some very important duties. He was to be paid an additional £300 a year but, as a result of the extra sum, his taxation rate would be increased to such an extent

that out of the £300 all he would receive would be £27!

It is by no means on account of any selfish aspirations for the emoluments of office that the Government introduced the Bill. Ministers consider—I am glad that the House recognises the fact—that the present is a time when we should be united as far as is humanly possible. Most decidedly we should all be united in connection with the war effort. Because this is not the time for holding a general election, I am quite confident that the people generally will be prepared to accept the position and do everything in their power to promote unity among all sections. Of course I cannot select individuals and say to them, “You shall do this and you shall do that.” That sort of thing is for each individual to determine for himself, but members, I am sure, will be willing to do everything possible to assist our war effort, whether it be by means of raising funds or making available the benefit of their experience and advice. I shall say no more at this stage except to remark that I greatly appreciate the spirit that has pervaded the debate. Members have indicated that, whatever is necessary in the interests of the nation, all are prepared to do. Decidedly that attitude of mind is not confined to any one section of the House.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and have assured myself that there is a constitutional majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Terms of office of members of Legislative Assembly extended:

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added:—“Provided that this section shall not apply to any State Electoral District in respect of which:—1. (a) A majority of the persons whose names appear on the electoral roll for such electoral district and who are entitled to be so enrolled requisition the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in writing no later than the 31st day of January, 1942, for the exclusion of such electoral district from the provisions of this Act; and (b) the Speaker not later than one month from the day upon which such requisition is received by him certifies in



writing to the member for such electoral district that the Speaker is satisfied that a majority of the persons whose names appear on the electoral roll for such electoral district and who were entitled to be enrolled thereon on the day upon which the requisition was received by the Speaker have requisitioned him for the exclusion of such electoral district from the provisions of this Act. 2. Upon the Speaker so certifying the member for the electoral district concerned shall be deemed to have resigned his seat in the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the provisions of Section 25 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899.

The reason for the amendment is that members are voting themselves an extension of 12 months in their membership of the House, thereby depriving the electors of the right to say whether those members retained their seats with their constituents' endorsement. We should reserve to the electors the right to say that they are not prepared to endorse our action because they do not approve of one or other member continuing to represent them. I do not suggest that the electors of any one constituency are at all likely to take advantage of the amendment. I want to avoid the possibility of the electors saying they did not have the opportunity to take the action that I suggest is their right.

The PREMIER: I cannot agree to the amendment. In such a matter and in the circumstances confronting us today we must all be in this together. What applies to one must apply to everyone. If it should happen that in one electorate there has been keen political controversy and opinion may be almost equally divided, that particular electorate might be selected and advantage taken of the provisions of the amendment. Then we might find ourselves confronted with an election campaign on a big scale at a critical time, although elsewhere the constituencies might be content to allow matters to remain as they are. At such a time the people in any electorate should not be forced to indulge in political controversies and we should not encourage any such tendencies. There are other apparent justifications for such an attitude that I do not propose to mention.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Authority to postpone general election:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 11 the word "may" be struck out and the word "shall" inserted in lieu.

I know that many members think that the words are practically synonymous, but Section 32 of the Interpretation Act reads—

Where, in any Act passed after the commencement of this Act the word "may" is used in conferring a power, such word shall be interpreted to imply that the power so conferred may be exercised or not, at discretion; and where in any such Act the word "shall" is used in conferring a power, such word shall be interpreted to mean that the power so conferred must be exercised.

If the clause be passed as it stands, the Government may decide whether or not the election will be held 12 months hence. If the amendment be agreed to, the Government need not be embarrassed at all because before the end of 12 months it can introduce a Bill to extend the operations of this measure for a further 12 months by merely altering "1942" to "1943." I do not desire to press the amendment if the Premier will indicate his views, because if he is agreeable the amendment need not be inserted here but in another place.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to the amendment and appreciate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition does not desire to hold up the consideration of the measure. I will have the amendment moved when the Bill is considered in the Legislative Council, but, of course, I cannot say what attitude members there will adopt.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Of course not.

The PREMIER: I give my undertaking that the amendment will be moved in the Legislative Council.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That the proviso be struck out.

The Bill seeks to amend the Constitution Act and under the standing orders a constitutional majority is required for passing the second and third reading stages. The proviso will make it possible for members of the Assembly at a meeting to pass a resolution requiring a general election to be held, and the Governor will be required to give effect to that proposal. At any such meeting the resolution could be carried by a simple majority, and yet that would affect the Constitution Act for which a constitutional majority is required.

The Premier: I would have to call Parliament together.

Mr. HUGHES: Although any legislation affecting the Constitution Act would require a statutory majority, an ordinary majority of, say, nine to eight could pass a resolution which would nullify the amending legislation. If the Bill becomes law Parliament could be called together at any moment and any amendment to the Bill could be considered in respect of the whole or any part of it, as to which a constitutional majority is necessary. Surely that is sufficient. The inclusion of the proviso will not improve the position. I think the Premier would be well advised to allow the proviso to be struck out.

The PREMIER: We think it is not right at a time like the present to hold a general election, but the day may come when all parties will agree that it is an opportune time for an election. The matter is deliberately taken out of the hands of the Government, and the decision is left entirely to Parliament.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You mean, to this House!

The PREMIER: The Bill provides that a resolution must be carried in this House before the Lieut.-Governor can be asked to sanction the holding of a general election. That means that the Legislative Assembly must first be consulted. The reasons for the election would have to be approved by the House, and everything would be done in the light of day. In such circumstances there is little doubt that every member would endeavour to be present. The majority of those present would have to agree to the holding of an election at an earlier date than that specified in the Bill.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In my opinion the proviso repeals the Constitution Act. All that the Bill does is to prolong the life of Parliament for one year. The clause leaves it open for an election to be held at any time during the year.

The Premier: Only by resolution of the House.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If an election is held subsequent to the passing of such a resolution, will that not mean a repeal of the Act? I support the member for East Perth from the constitutional point of view, for it does seem to me that the proviso repeals the Constitution Act. Apparently one House, by resolution, is to be permitted to set aside something the Constitution Act says we may not do.

The PREMIER: This Bill gives a permissive right to override the Constitution, as it exists today without the passing of the Bill. Parliament would have a right to go on until February, 1943.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You can arrange an election at any time during the year without a resolution.

The PREMIER: No. The Lieut.-Governor has to be satisfied that there is need for a dissolution of Parliament, and he can refuse any request for a dissolution at any time. Must we call together two Houses of Parliament about a matter in which only this House is concerned? Can it not be left to members of the House to agree by resolution upon the date for the election? Surely members of another place are not required to be taken into consideration in a matter of this kind.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Why not?

The PREMIER: They are elected in quite a different way from members of this House.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is a continuous House.

The PREMIER: Members of another place are elected for a term of six years, but in this House members may find themselves sent to the country at any time. There is no need to consult another place in this matter.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This Bill will amend the Constitution and relevant statutes. Once it passes it becomes portion of the Constitution Act. That Act requires that any amendment to it must be made only by the consent of an absolute majority of members.

The Premier: This proviso will become part of the Constitution Act.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Bill does not amend the section of the Constitution, which requires an absolute majority. If the Premier wishes to amend the new Constitution he must do so in a way in which it is capable of being amended. It cannot be amended by a side wind or by inference. There must be a definite amendment of the particular section of the Constitution which requires that every amendment must be carried in a certain way. It strikes me that this is going to be food for lawyers.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The proviso is inserted so that the House may be consulted if an election is to be held before the expiration of 12 months. Without that proviso, there will be no need for the Government to approach Parliament for permission to hold an

election. The period is stated to be one month.

Hon. N. Keenan: No, 12 months.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: It is 12 months from January, 1942.

Hon. N. Keenan: No, 1943!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That is right. The only justification for the extension of the life of Parliament is the peril in which the Commonwealth stands at present. If that peril should pass before 12 months have expired, then it should be competent for the Government to hold an election.

Mr. HUGHES: If both sides of the House were to be consulted, I would have no objection. The Constitution provides that no amendment to the Constitution may be passed unless it is carried by an absolute majority of the members present and voting. In order to carry this Bill, there ought to be present and voting 26 members in this Chamber and 16 members in the Legislative Council. As the member for Nedlands has pointed out this Bill will, if passed, become part of the Constitution. Will the Premier agree to add after the word "resolution" the words, "carried by a constitutional majority"? That would remove my objection.

Mr. McDONALD: I sincerely hope the Government will accept the suggestion of the member for East Perth. The Premier rightly pointed out that the extension for 12 months could not be effected without the collaboration of the Opposition. I hope the proposed amendment will be agreed to, so that there may be no diminution of the feeling which I hope will prevail during the period of the prolongation of Parliament.

Mr. HUGHES: If, Mr. Chairman, you strike out the proviso, you will not get the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: There is an amendment before the Chair.

Mr. HUGHES: I ask leave to withdraw the amendment. I would sooner have it withdrawn than have it thrown out.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of the proviso, after the word "resolution" the words "carried by a constitutional majority" be inserted.

The PREMIER: The difficulty is that we desire to finish the sitting this evening and, in order to present the Bill to the Legislative Council, it would have to be sent to the printer to have these words included. So that the Bill may be dealt with today, I will re-

quest the Leader of the House in the other place to move this amendment.

Mr. Hughes: That will do me.

The CHAIRMAN: I have not put the amendment but the hon. member did move it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

### *Third Reading.*

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

1, Administration Act Amendment (No. 2).

2, Death Duties (Taxing) Act Amendment.

With amendments.

### **BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. Watts, read a first time.

### **BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

#### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3—Add after the word "King" in line 9, the words "or was a member of any medical corps nursing service attached to any of the Forces aforesaid."

The PREMIER: I had a discussion with the Leader of the House in the other place

about this matter. I cannot assure the House that the amendment is in exactly the right place, but I agree with the sentiment it expresses.

Progress reported.

## BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of four amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 6—Delete paragraph (a):

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Paragraph (a) of Clause 6 proposes to delete paragraph (b) of Section 2 which provides for administering a whipping to a child. We stood out to abolish that part of the Act. Another place evidently desires that that provision should remain.

Mr. Hughes: Stand your ground and let them throw it out!

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It is a question whether we propose to argue the point in connection with this matter. There have been no whippings for 15 years. The main reason for that is because during that time no one could be found to administer a whipping. One whipping was actually ordered but could not be carried out for the reason I have just given.

Mr. Tonkin: Accept the amendment on the understanding that a member of another place undertakes to give the whipping.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It is not worth arguing about. Should a whipping be ordered I will, as Minister, do my best to discourage anyone from giving it I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I hope the Minister will not agree to this. Certain members of this House have laid down a principle by which they are prepared to abide. This is a clause which we passed, I believe, unanimously. It went through without a "no." I am not sure what the voting was in another place, but a considerable number of members voted for the whipping. They are medieval in their out-

look. Some of them can hardly remember when their own children were young. To give a child a spanking when it is naughty, and can immediately be smacked, does no harm as the child soon forgets it, but when a magistrate says that at a certain time a child is to be whipped, it alters that child's whole outlook on life. A feeling of hatred against society will be engendered in the child. I would prefer to have the Bill thrown out to accepting something with which I thoroughly disagree.

Mr. HUGHES: Rather than that we should accept the amendment, the Council should be made to take the responsibility for throwing the Bill out. Surely we are not going to let it perpetuate an anachronism like whipping! The Minister must be becoming anæmic to give way so readily.

Mr. STYANTS: We should not retain on our statute-book a provision of this kind, which is fifty years behind the times. Corporal chastisement administered by a parent is entirely different from a whipping inflicted by order of a court.

Mr. WATTS: The Council should be more practical. There has not been a whipping for 15 years and, when one was ordered, nobody could be found to administer it. It is of no use retaining a punishment that cannot be inflicted.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: As one accustomed to blame another place from time to time, I have been pleased to hear the remarks of members. We seem to have an all-party agreement on the matter, and in view of that I ask leave to withdraw my motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 18—Delete the words "and one hundred and forty-two" in line 20:

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: This is consequential, and I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 19—Delete:

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: This amendment is consequential on No. 4, which was framed by the Government to alter Section 124 of the Act in such a way as to meet

requests made by members on Clause 19. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. New clause—Insert a new clause after Clause 13, to stand as Clause 14, as follows:—

Amendment of s. 124.

14. Section one hundred and twenty-four of the principal Act is amended—

(a) be deleting the word "maliciously" in line five;

(b) by inserting the words "except with the consent of the Minister" after the word "person" in line five.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

This will mean that no information regarding the prosecution of a child shall be made available except with the consent of the Minister.

Mr. WATTS: I move—

That the Council's amendment be amended by striking out all the words after the word "is" and inserting the following in lieu:—"hereby repealed and a new section substituted as follows:—'Whenever any child has been committed to the care of the State or has been committed to an institution or has been convicted under this Act, the fact of such committal or conviction shall not be disclosed to any person except with the consent of the Minister or be admitted as evidence in any court of law except a children's court.'"

The Council's amendment to Section 124 does not meet the desires of members here. Even with the Council's amendment, the section would only prevent the conviction being made public when the child was under the age of 18. When a child attains the age of 18, apparently the conviction is not under that ban. The desire was that no conviction should be made use of in the case of a child under 16, but we can forget that and adopt the age of 18. My amendment will ensure that, except with the consent of the Minister, or for the purpose of making use of the record before a children's court, the record of convictions or committals may not be made available.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I accept the hon. member's proposal.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mrs. Cardell-Oliver, Mr. Watts and the Minister for Labour drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council further considered.

### *In Committee.*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on amendment No. 1 made by the Council to Clause 3, as follows—

Insert after the word "King" in line 9, the words "or was a member of any medical corps nursing service attached to any of the Forces aforesaid."

The PREMIER: I have no objection to this amendment. It is one which we agreed should be made, and I gave an assurance that it would be moved when the Bill was before the Legislative Council. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3—Delete the word "direct" in line 12:

The PREMIER: When the Bill was being considered in Committee in this Chamber I gave an assurance that an amendment to delete the word "direct" would be moved in the Council. That has been done, and this Committee is asked to agree to it. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 3—Add at the end of Subsection 1 the words "and the expression 'active service' means any service outside Australia as a member of any of the said forces."

The PREMIER: There was considerable discussion in this Chamber in regard to the interpretation of "active service." This amendment is the Council's short definition

of the term, and as it embodies the views of this Committee, I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—DEATH DUTIES (TAXING) ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of nine amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 2—Insert after the word "King" in line 16 the words "or was a member of any medical corps nursing service attached to any of the Forces *afore-said*."

The PREMIER: This Bill and the one just dealt with are correlated, one being a taxing measure and the other an administrative measure. This amendment and amendment No. 1 made to the previous Bill are similar. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 2—Delete the word "direct" in line 2, page 2:

The PREMIER: This is similar to Amendment No. 2 in the previous measure. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

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

No. 3. Clause 2—Add at the end of the proposed new proviso a paragraph as follows:—"For the purposes of this proviso the expression 'active service' means any service outside Australia as a member of any of the said Forces."

No. 4. Clause 3: Insert after the word "King" in line 29 the words—"or was a member of any medical corps nursing service attached to any of the Forces *afore-said*."

No. 5. Clause 3: Delete the word "direct" in line 32.

No. 6. Clause 3: Add at the end of the clause the following:—"For the purposes of this proviso the expression 'active service' means any service outside Australia as a member of any of the said Forces."

No. 7. Clause 4: Insert after the word "King" in line 22 the words—"or was a member of any medical corps nursing service attached to any of the Forces *afore-said*."

No. 8. Clause 4: Delete the word "direct" in line 25.

No. 9. Clause 4: Add at the end of the clause the following:—"For the purposes of this proviso the expression 'active service' means any service outside Australia as a member of any of the said Forces."

On motions by the Premier, the foregoing amendments were agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1941-42.**

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

*Vote—Railways, Tramways, Ferries, and Electricity Supply, £3,407,980; (partly considered):*

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [7.35]: I was sorry to hear the Minister conclude his remarks in introducing his Estimates last night by saying that the position of the railways would be as usual. If that were so, it would be a great pity. I have every hope that the position will be greatly improved as a result of the year's operations; and already there are heartening signs indicative of that. I do not know whether it is because new officers are in charge, but certainly the provision for meeting the requirements of the travelling public has been greatly improved compared with what was apparent in previous years. I hope that satisfactory state of affairs will continue and that even greater efforts will be made to raise the standard of the railway service to what I think it should be. There is certainly still room for improvement.

I congratulate the department on the excellent service rendered to certain country districts where water had to be supplied last year. In parts of my electorate in particular, where water supplies were exceedingly short last year, the Railway Department carried out an excellent job in meeting the situation. Unfortunately it may have to repeat the effort this year because of shortage of water supplies. At any rate, on behalf of the settlers concerned, I congratulate the department and thank the officers for what they did last year. This time the supplies in the railway dams are not satisfactory and, although the position could easily be relieved by a good thunderstorm, we cannot rely on that. I understand the railways are already taking steps to meet the heavy demand that may be expected from the outer districts where water supplies are exceedingly short.

During the course of his speech last night the Minister made a peculiar statement when he said he hoped the criticism by members would not be harsh. He went on to intimate that we could not compare the railways here with those operating in the Eastern States because the positions were not comparable. We were also told we could not compare the position regarding the State railways with the Midland Company's results, because the company had land to sell and that had to be considered in conjunction with railway returns. Before that we were told we could not compare our system with the South African system—because the conditions were different. In such circumstances, how the dickens is it possible to make any comparison? Certainly there is not much left with which to make it.

Mr. Watts: Our railways are incomparable.

Mr. SEWARD: I am afraid we must adopt some method of making a comparison and later on I shall do so in relation to the Midland Company's operations. The figures quoted by the Minister were rather interesting but disappointing and that applies also to the statistics embodied in the annual report of the Commissioner of Railways. Comparing the results for last year with those of the previous year the Minister was able to disclose a certain improvement in relation to portion of the railway service but, in making such comparisons, we must go beyond the

immediate past in order to secure a better perspective. I shall show that the improvement effected in connection with last year's activities has not yet reached the standard achieved some years ago. For instance, during 1940-41, 11,500,000 passengers were carried, whereas for the year 1935-36 the number of passengers carried was 13,000,000. Therefore the railways last year were 2,000,000 short under that heading. I claim that comparison is quite legitimate.

We are entitled to expect the railways to show an increase in the number of passengers carried because of petrol rationing. If the department provided a satisfactory service, in view of the high cost of petrol and the rationing of supplies people would be ready to patronise the system. But the arrangements are such today that it is difficult to get the public to do so. Let members consider the position of the lines radiating from Narrogin out to Kulin and Kondinin and other centres, and also the line to Wickiepin and Corrigin. Wickiepin is 160 miles from Perth and yet it takes four days to travel from Wickiepin to Perth and back again. Two days are required for the journey up and two days for the journey down. In those circumstances people cannot be expected to travel by rail.

The position is much the same regarding Kondinin, but fortunately the Diesel coach has been put on that line once a week and I trust that will successfully meet the requirements. I hope the Diesel service will be extended to other branch lines. In my opinion the coaches should not be run on the main lines because the heavy rails will take the fast travelling steam trains. When Diesel coaches have not been available the steam train has been able to run to the Diesel schedule showing that the fast steam train can give the same service. Then we can take the parcels traffic in which connection the figures show that the department is just holding its own. Last year the returns showed that £185,000 was received on account of parcels traffic, whereas in 1939 the returns represented £190,000, showing that last year £5,000 less was received than in 1939. There again room for improvement is shown. Take the position of goods traffic! Last year 2,600,000 tons were carried whereas in 1939 the tonnage totalled 2,850,000 and in 1938 the tonnage was 3,000,000. That discloses considerable room for improvement. The total earnings last year

amounted to £3,500,000 odd, which is just about the same as in former years. In fact, the total earnings have not fluctuated very much since 1935. The Commissioner in his report also drew attention to the matter of working expenses in proportion to earnings. Last year the gross working expenses percentage to earnings was 77.20, whereas during the previous year it was 79, in 1938 it was 73, in 1936 it was 72, and in 1935 it was 71. That means that in 1935 the percentage of working expenses to total earnings was 6 per cent. below what it is today. There is certainly room for improvement there.

Last night the Minister drew attention to the position regarding interest charges and mentioned that the interest bill totalled £1,030,279. It does not matter much what the interest bill may be so long as good use is being made of the money that is borrowed. That is what has to be watched. If properly used, £1,000,000 may be an easily supportable debt but if the capital is not properly used such a sum may prove an insurmountable burden. The percentage of net revenue to capital during the last five years was 3.60 per cent., whereas for the previous five years the percentage was 3.80 per cent. So the net revenue to capital has fallen. These are matters to which the Minister could very well draw the attention of the Commissioner, because the amount of the interest bill is not so frightening provided the money is put to the best use. The Commissioner will have to make better use of the capital at his disposal. The surplus of earnings over working expenses for last year was £813,000. For the last three years it amounted to £2,229,163, whereas for the previous three years the total was £2,767,954. So that in those three periods the average annual surplus of earnings over working expenses was £500,000 better. Again the railways are slipping! As regards passengers, it is in the suburban traffic that the department is falling behind.

The Minister for Lands: I think the major loss would be in the country traffic.

Mr. SEWARD: For last year the suburban passenger traffic carried comprised 9,967,000 passengers, whereas in 1935 the number was 11,500,000.

The Minister for Lands: But there is the loss on super and wheat haulage.

Mr. SEWARD: I will deal with that directly. On the figures I have quoted I think it will be agreed that the Commissioner of Railways can make a much more thorough investigation and find that there is room for much improvement. A few years ago—in fact, on several occasions—I complained of the fact that every year when we come round to springtime we see iron trucks going up and down the railways containing sheep for which no protection whatever is provided. What the unfortunate animals must suffer with a foot and a half of space above them in the truck to keep out the air, and a fierce sun blazing down on them! That is not fair treatment. Sheep buyers will not send their sheep by the railway under those conditions. They would sooner drove sheep 100 or 150 miles. The sheep sweat in the trucks and lose condition. Moreover, sheep are also lost because the trucks are not suitable.

The Minister for Railways: That is exceptional.

Mr. SEWARD: It is not exceptional. It occurs year after year. A few weeks ago I asked the Minister the following questions and received the following answers:—

#### Midland Sales.

1. Is he aware that for weeks past stock have been arriving at the Midland Government stock sales so late that frequently sales have had to be stopped until further entries arrived even as late as 3 p.m.?

No, these have been isolated occasions, due to mechanical failures when stock trains have arrived late, but only on one occasion due to a derailment has the arrival been as late as 3 p.m.

2. Are the delays caused by late arrivals of trains or by defects in the marshalling yards?

At this time of year, fat stock sales are at the peak and both railways and stock agents are taxed to maintain the schedule.

I have taken a few examples during last month, and the days selected do not include the day on which the last rake of trucks did not arrive at the sale yards until 3 p.m.

#### Midland Saleyards.

19th November: 7 rakes of trucks were delivered at the sale yards. The first in at 4 a.m.; 6th in at 9.40 a.m.; last in at 12.13 p.m. No rakes came in between 9.40 a.m. and 12.13 p.m.

5th November: 6 rakes were delivered, the first at 4 a.m., last in at 11.35 a.m. After 5 rakes were unloaded, there was a delay of 35 minutes before the empties were taken out. Altogether, over an hour's delay in moving empties this day.



29th October: 8 rakes delivered, the first at 3.45 a.m.; last at 1 p.m. Between the 5th and 6th, delay of 35 minutes in moving empties out; 6th rake arrived at 10.10 and unloaded at 10.44. Rake not taken away until 11.34. 7th rake unloaded at 12.25, not moved out until 12.55; an hour and a half lost this day through delay in moving out empty trucks.

The agents have an efficient staff which unloads a rake of 30 to 40 trucks in a quarter of an hour, but their work is nullified by the long delays in having the empty trucks removed, and this despite the fact that a railway engine is on hand, as are the necessary railway officials to direct and perform railway work. I direct the Minister's attention to these delays and ask that measures be taken to obviate them. I also want to call attention to the number of sheep trucks in commission—I refer to four-wheel vehicles. Today 480 are in commission, the same number as last year; while a year previously 430 were in use, the figures for the four previous years being 378, 378, 373 and 367.

Dealing with the improved type of sheep trucks, I point out that of 6XA., 204 were in use last year as against 200, and 144 and 92 for the three preceding years. I commend the Minister's attention to these figures because while there has been a certain increase, there is still a great demand for these trucks. It is not right to send down sheep in iron trucks that were originally intended for the bulk handling of wheat or something of that description. Indeed, I wonder the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals does not take action to compel the Commissioner to obtain a better type of truck for the transport of sheep. The Minister also drew attention to the fact that some of the increase in the money received from passengers was due to soldiers. I was very much afraid of that, and I remind the Minister that it was due in a measure to the great delay that took place in granting concessions to soldiers travelling last year. For a considerable time the soldiers were charged full fares. That was certainly most unjust to them.

Unfortunately I have again to call attention to the coaching stock on the Great Southern line, the line I travel on mostly. We have continuous changes of the coaches on the line. That was the first thing I noticed. For a run of about a month there will be a certain coach on the train. That coach might be fairly up-to-date. Certainly it

is not new, but it is fairly well renovated. That coach is taken away and a most dilapidated coach is substituted—with blinds all torn, which will not stay down, and in every respect unattractive. These carriages are an absolute disgrace to the department. One has to shake the dust out of the sheets before getting between them. People will not travel in carriages like that. On a main railway it ought to be possible to set aside half a dozen coaches and keep them permanently on the line. These remarks may also apply to the South-Western Railway and other lines.

The Minister for Railways: One has to take the good with the bad.

Mr. SEWARD: But we get all the bad. We would like to have a bit of the good, if it can be spared. My colleagues from the Great Southern district will bear out what I have said regarding the coaches. Another matter I would like to draw the Minister's attention to is the disgraceful building at Spencer's Brook for the accommodation of the refreshment room contractor. If that building were in Perth it would certainly be condemned as unfit for human habitation. Yet it serves as a habitation for the contractor and his wife and four or five young girls employed there. All those people are herded into that building, which is a disgrace to the railway service. It is high time those people were given at least a decent place to live in. I would like to see attention given to this.

Another matter to which I desire to draw the Minister's attention is whether or not the contractors for railway refreshment rooms are bound to supply certain things. Take the refreshment room at Chidlows! Last week when coming down I could obtain no fruit at the stall. The girl said there was no fruit because the contractor could not get any. That is a ridiculous statement in view of the fact that Perth shops are stocked up with fruit. I think the contractor must be bound to supply certain commodities. Surely some conditions must be laid down as to that in the contract.

The Minister for Railways: Is that the only time the contractor had no fruit?

Mr. SEWARD: It is only a late occurrence, and I have not known it to happen before. That was on Tuesday morning last. I desire to call attention to the fact that in the "Government Gazette" of the 26th September, 1941, appears a notice of an altera-

tion to the Goods Rates Book dated the 1st October, 1941. It reads as follows—

Page 50; from 1-10-1941:

Delete:—

Wheat, bagged—Special grain, max.  
3s. 6d. per bag.

Wheat, bulk—Special grain, plus 9d. per  
ton.

Insert:—

Wheat, bagged—Grain, max. 3s. 6d. per  
bag.

Wheat, bulk—Grain, plus 9d. per ton.

That is rather unintelligible, unless one knows what it is about, so I shall explain it for the benefit of members. It means that from the 1st October last wheat freights have been increased, through circumstances for which the war alone is responsible, by 3s. 1d. per ton on an average haul of 141 miles, or 1d. per bushel. There has been an increase from 12s. 4d. per ton (special grain rate) to 15s. 5d. per ton (grain rate), with a maximum of 3s. 6d. per bag on all bagged wheat. That applies to wheat shifted to some port which is not the nearest port.

The Minister for Railways: That is to encourage the transport of wheat to its natural port.

Mr. SEWARD: Nothing of the sort. The Minister knows very well that that is not so. It is simply to put a tax on the wheat that has to be taken to another port due to war exigencies. The Minister need not shake his head.

The Minister for Railways: You are definitely wrong.

Mr. SEWARD: I am definitely right, as I shall be pleased to prove to the Minister. Wheat that is taken to the nearest port is charged a special wheat rate. I shall take the average haul, which the Commissioner points out is 141 miles. If the wheat is taken under the special grain rate, there is a charge on it of 3s. 1d. per ton less than the grain rate. In other words, it is 1d. per bushel. That means that for the 141-mile journey, instead of the charge being 12s. 4d. a ton, it is 15s. 5d. a ton when grain rate is charged. I also point out that in addition to the increase of 3s. 1d. per ton on this wheat, it is subject to a surcharge of 9d. per ton for bulk wheat. As 95 per cent. of the wheat handled last year was bulk wheat, it means that on the average haul of 141 miles, there is additional freight of 3s. 1d. per ton plus 9d. a ton. That is for wheat that cannot be sent to its nearest port, but has to be deflected to

Fremantle on account of the war. That is a most unfair imposition. The wheat grower is not responsible for the fact that the wheat cannot be shipped from Geraldton. This also applies to other ports, but I am dealing with Geraldton. Wheat from that district must now be taken to Fremantle in order to be shipped; that is not due to any fault of the grower, but to the war. I shall give the Committee some figures. If the wheat is brought down on the Midland line, the distance is 306 miles; so that instead of a freight of 19s. 6d., the freight is 24s. 1d., an increase of 4s. 7d. above the special grain rate.

The Minister for Railways: You are not in favour of wheat being shipped from its nearest port?

Mr. SEWARD: If that wheat were brought down via Wongan Hills, the distance would be 397 miles. That would involve an increase of 6s. a ton in the freight, so that, instead of the freight being 24s., it is 30s., equal to 2d. per bushel increase. The Minister cannot put it over me that I am not in favour of wheat being consigned to its nearest port.

The Minister for Railways: You are arguing to that effect.

Mr. SEWARD: No. I tried to make the position clear to the Minister. The point is that the wheat cannot be consigned from Geraldton, because at present shipping does not call at that port; so it has to be consigned to Fremantle.

The Minister for Lands: And then be bagged!

Mr. SEWARD: I am not dealing with that phase just now. Whether it is bagged or bulk, the point is that it cannot be sent from Geraldton because vessels do not call there to pick it up. The growers should not be charged 2d. a bushel extra for bringing that wheat down to Fremantle. It is a gross imposition on them. We have protested about it before and I protest against it again tonight. I will read the regulation in the "Government Gazette"—

When wheat in truck loads (either bagged or in bulk) is consigned:—

- (a) To the nearest port,
- (b) To a mill for gristing,
- (c) To any station for public auction,
- (d) After private sale (but not intended for export) to any consignee within the State,

the rate chargeable on bagged wheat will be special grain, and on bulk wheat, special grain plus 9d. per ton.

I do not want the Minister to think I am saying anything against the ports of Geraldton, Albany or Bunbury. Owing to the war, the wheat must be sent to Fremantle, and extra freight is charged to the farmer on that account.

The only other matter to which I wish to refer is the 9d. per ton extra on bulk wheat. That has been ventilated several times during recent years. I have always maintained it is an unjust charge and that there is no valid reason for it. Bulk wheat is easier for the railways to handle than is bagged wheat.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. SEWARD: The trucks are loaded quicker.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. SEWARD: That has been the experience of the Midland Railway Co.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. SEWARD: Allow me to finish. When bulk handling was first introduced, the Commissioner for Railways decided to charge this impost of 9d. a ton, because he was not too enthusiastic about handling bulk wheat, notwithstanding that it cost the department nothing to instal the system. The Midland Railway Co. was even less enthusiastic and decided to place an impost of 1s. 6d. per ton on it. This the company has since removed, because it states the charge is not warranted. Yet the Railway Department says it is not sufficiently recompensed even by the additional charge of 9d.

The Minister for Railways: That is my opinion.

Mr. SEWARD: There is something radically wrong with the management of the Government railways when a private company can remove the impost and say there is no necessity for it. I do hope the Minister will not be bluffed by talk of that kind on the part of the railways. He should ask the department to supply him with figures and fully investigate the matter. If he does, he will not be long in reaching the conclusion that the impost is unjust and should be removed. I also hope the Minister will go into the other matters I have raised.

**MR. STUBBS** (Wagin) [8.10]: It is not my intention to delay the Committee long on these Estimates; but, in view of the fact that between £25,000,000 and £30,000,000 of public money is invested in our railways, I

think it right that members should criticise their control and management. I have not much criticism to offer upon my experience of the Great Southern line, but there are one or two matters to which I desire to draw the Minister's attention. The Commissioner of Railways has no right whatever to charge excessive rents for refreshment rooms. That is utterly wrong in principle and I shall give the Committee an instance that has come under my notice in my own electorate. It proves there are one or two screws loose in the methods that have been adopted by the Railway Department for the last 25 or 30 years.

Is the Commissioner justified in asking a widow to pay £5 per week for the right to sell refreshments at the Wagin railway station? Members are aware that the travelling public for the last 15 or 20 years has steadily declined, especially in country districts. Farmers who formerly let contracts for clearing and development now have their farms fully improved, so that the travelling to and fro of the people who undertook such contracts has discontinued. But the Commissioner still charges £5 a week for the right to use the Wagin refreshment rooms. The lessee has not only lost the capital she put into the business but has had to walk out penniless. I have made protests about these outrageous charges from time to time, but without any result whatever.

The Minister for Railways: The refreshment rooms are let by tender.

Mr. STUBBS: I have travelled in the middle of winter from Newdegate to Wagin, a distance of 110 miles. Women and children were in the train, which arrived at Wagin after midnight. They had to wait two or three hours before they could get a cup of tea. These may appear to be small things, but nevertheless they are serious, as the result has been loss of patronage by women and children of our spur lines. The refreshment rooms at Wagin were established some 28 or 30 years ago, but they have been empty now for two years. Why? Because the department insists upon such a high rent. It may be said that the rooms are advertised by the department. The Commissioner might say, "We advertised the Wagin refreshment rooms, but did not get a tender." Is that to be wondered at, when the last tenant, after having repeatedly tried to get a reduction in the rent, had to

walk out penniless? The Commissioner did decide to reduce the rent by £1 a week, but in the meantime the patronage had declined to such an extent that the woman walked out with only the clothes she stood up in. I ask the Minister, in the right spirit, to see that the railway refreshment rooms are maintained in a proper way. Travellers who have paid their fares are entitled to obtain refreshments at a reasonable price, and they cannot do so if the Commissioner charges high rents for the rooms. They should have been established, and I think they were, with one important object in view, the convenience of the public.

A few weeks ago it took me from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to travel 100 miles from the Great Eastern line to the Great Southern. That journey should have been accomplished in far less time. Is it any wonder that a large number of people refrain from travelling when they have to put up with that sort of inconvenience? The carriages on that line are obsolete. If the Minister or the Commissioner, denies the truth of my assertion, I would like them to make the journey, and they will find out that the complaint I am making is not one of carping criticism. It is made with one object in view, namely, the desire to get back, by speeding up, the traffic which has been lost through long journeys at night-time. I am sure the Minister's officers have the desire to do the best they can to secure revenue but, unless the public gets the ordinary conveniences which are sometimes lacking, especially on the spur lines, and while high prices are charged for refreshments at the station refreshment rooms, the traffic that has been lost will never be regained.

I endorse some of the points raised by the member for Pingelly, and especially his remarks on stock travelling in the heat of the day for long distances without proper overhead protection. I have seen that occur on several occasions. During the course of a couple of days' journey, 10 per cent. of their weight is lost. If trucks could be put on, capable of preventing stock from being in the sun for a day or a day and a half, it would be a step in the right direction. I commend to the Minister the points raised by the member for Pingelly, and the few remarks I have made on what I have noticed on the Great Southern line.

I hope an endeavour will be made to remedy what I consider is one of the reasons why the railways are not as popular as they should be.

**MR. BOYLE** (Avon) [8.20]: I listened with interest to the introduction by the Minister of these Estimates. I am pleased to hear that he has an incomparable railway service. He did not want it to be compared with the various Australian and South African lines, as the member for Pingelly pointed out. I assume the service is an incomparable one in the best acceptance of the term. Personally, I use the railways a lot.

The Minister for Labour: You do not provide much revenue!

**Mr. BOYLE**: I provide as much as does the Minister. I have no personal complaints to make.

The Minister for Lands: You are almost friendly tonight.

**Mr. BOYLE**: They are working under great pressure. In times like these, we should be a bit lenient in our criticism of this particular service. Today it has undertaken a great deal of work which was previously carried out by motor cars and so forth. The Minister says that the interest bill on the railways is £1,154,000.

The Minister for Railways: That is the whole of the interest bill. The interest on the railways is £1,030,000.

**Mr. BOYLE**: I have protested repeatedly against a principle that applies the whole of the interest to the cost of the railways—the £1,030,000 mentioned by the Minister—which is a national service. Many of these lines were built as developmental lines, and political railways, in many instances. I mention the railway built to Southern Cross from the north, now known as the "top loop." I suppose there are not 10 per cent. of the settlers remaining between Southern Cross and Mukinbudin. Because of that, the rest of the settlers in Western Australia are plastered with the whole of the interest bill. Queensland and Victoria, have adopted a system of writing down the capital cost of railways, and that should be done here. The excess of earnings over working expenses amounted to £770,000, yet the Minister tells us that we have to face a deficit of £188,000.

The Minister for Railways: The excess on the railways is £260,000.

Mr. BOYLE: The difference is between the £770,000 and the £1,000,000 interest. The Minister referred to wheat freight. He did not emphasise that position as he should have done. The figures in that connection, as given by him for the last year, amount to £448,000. That was returned on a 21,000,000 bushel crop. This year, on a 37,000,000 crop, the Minister estimates a return of £360,000. Actually, the freight, in normal times, on that wheat at 14s. a ton would be something like £750,000. So, as the Minister said, the wheat has to stop in the country. He should point out that the actual revenue to be received will be short this year by £400,000 owing to the inability of the authorities to shift that wheat out of the State. On the face of it, it appears as if the wheat industry in Western Australia has declined to the extent of the falling-off in revenue, whereas it is a potential revenue waiting in the eastern districts.

I desire now to deal with a more local matter. These Estimates have, to us country representatives, a local significance which often transcends their general importance.

The Minister for Lands: I thought you looked very friendly when you got up.

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister for Lands is in an extraordinarily good mood. Perhaps the proposed Parliamentary extension for 12 months has bucked him up. We are so used to seeing him angry that I now feel afraid of the Greeks when they come bearing gifts.

The CHAIRMAN: That has nothing to do with the railways.

Mr. BOYLE: There is in my electorate a most important railway centre at Merredin.

Mr. Hughes: It is important for Merredin!

Mr. BOYLE: No. It is a centre which clears all the traffic through to the gold-fields. It does not matter where the traffic comes from, it is cleared through Merredin. To say that the drivers and firemen in Merredin are seething is to use a mild expression. These men are working night and day, and it is a disgrace to the Railway Department that it will not repair the engines. Recently 56 lbs. weight of metal fell out of the tyre of a wheel of an engine travelling from Yellowdine to Merredin. The drivers cannot sit on the seats provided but have to remain on their feet. I heard the member for Nedlands tonight confer an economic faculty on Merredin that it does not pos-

sess. He referred to its railway workshops. There are two railway fitters in Merredin working around the clock in order to keep these crocks on the road. It is grossly unfair to put on to the engine-drivers and firemen the responsibility of working worn-out engines. I fear there may be a tragedy; there may be a breakdown involving loss of life. The Minister would be well advised to have established at Merredin adequate means of dealing with engines and rolling stock which today are operating at terrific pressure. The men are called out at all hours of the day and night, and the engine-drivers and firemen cannot make use of the facilities for comfort provided by the department.

The local branch of the union has brought the matter under the notice of the Commissioner and under the notice of its own union. I was, the other day, asked to inspect an engine. I certainly am no authority on engines, but the frame was cracked. The lateral play in the boxes was noticeable. It is possible to tell that His Majesty's engines are coming, long before they can be seen in that country. The department is not justified in cheese-paring, or cutting down expenses at the risk of a breakdown, or at the cost of these men's health and strength.

Reference has been made to the impositions on the carriage of wheat. If the normal wheat traffic of Western Australia were taken into account—it is about £700,000—there would be very little else for the railways to do in the country districts. Allied with the wheat traffic is the wool traffic, which is one of the finest paying freights.

The Minister for Railways: We have no complaint about wool.

Mr. BOYLE: No, certainly not! There are, in the wheat belt today, between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000 sheep run as a sideline to the wheat industry.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And the private Midland company carries wheat cheaper than the Minister does in bulk.

Mr. BOYLE: They imposed an amount of 1s. 6d. per ton on bulk wheat, and after 12 months their conscience worried them and they removed that impost. I am sure the Minister has never inspected a wheat bin and does not know the ease and facility with which the Westralian Farmers Ltd., handles the bulk wheat, fills these trucks and hands them back to the department. There is no such thing as demurrage in that regard. The wheat flows from the bin into the truck.

The Minister for Lands: Some of the wheat walks in!

Mr. BOYLE: That would come under the livestock rates. Weevil is inseparable from wheat. Only a little damp is needed and weevil occurs. According to the Australian Wheat Board, however, the loss from weevil is not very great. The member for North-East Fremantle, I think, has some cause for grievance on account of the moths that come out of the weevily wheat, but this continual harping by the Minister and the railway officials on the loss resulting from the carriage of wheat has little foundation in fact. I emphasise that the farmer does not live by bread alone. Wheat is a collateral to wool and livestock. I notice that £145,000 of revenue is expected from livestock. Is that carried at a loss? Of course not!

Hon. C. G. Latham: Neither is the wheat.

Mr. BOYLE: Taking all the farm production, the department is much in pocket, and I do not admit that the transport of wheat is a losing proposition. Immediately wheat falls this year to £360,000, the Minister announces a deficit of £260,000. The cost of interest is 30 to 33 per cent. of the total estimated cost of running the railways. We have a railway system working on the capital cost of 40 or 50 years ago! Has any depreciation been provided? It would be a far better proposition to impose a depreciation charge or a write-down charge to bring our railways into a position comparable with those of Queensland and Victoria.

Mr. Rodoreda: What is the real capital value of the railways?

Mr. BOYLE: That is a moot point. The book capital value is £26,000,000, but what the real capital value is I hesitate to say.

Mr. Rodoreda: Is it less than that?

Mr. BOYLE: Infinitely less.

Mr. Rodoreda: What makes you think that?

Mr. BOYLE: Is there any provision for depreciation of engines, rolling stock and permanent way? This is about the only business in Australia where there is no attempt to make a revaluation of the assets. One matter I should like to bring under the notice of the Minister appeals to me as a surprising piece of meanness on the part of the railway administration. I have to say—

The Minister for Lands: Well, do not say it.

Mr. BOYLE: But it is demanded of me that I do say it

The Minister for Lands: It will give you displeasure

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister is in a highly facetious mood; I am not. Recently one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of our railway system was narrowly averted. A washaway occurred at Livesey's siding. There was a cloudburst; six inches of rain fell in a short time and the line was washed away for over a quarter of a mile in a most dangerous section. A constituent of mine, Charles Legg, happened to be passing, saw the condition of the line and realised that the Kalgoorlie express was on its way to the fields. He battled for a quarter of a mile through water up to his waist to reach a telephone, hail falling all the time, and not knowing when he might tumble into a hole. He warned Cunderdin which in turn warned all traffic on the other side, and thus an accident was prevented.

Livesey's crossing is not more than ten miles from Cunderdin, and in 15 or 20 minutes the express would have entered that section. This washaway occurred between 10 and 11 p.m., and only the providential arrival of Legg at the spot averted an accident. Mr. Legg was public spirited enough to risk his life by battling a quarter of a mile through surging water to warn the officials and, for his pains he received, at the cost of a 2d. stamp, a letter from the Commissioner thanking him for notifying the department. At the request of constituents and friends, I wrote to the department and was told that Legg had been thanked on the 7th October and that was all about it. If a man dives into the sea at Cottesloe and rescues another most likely he receives a silver or bronze medal or some recognition from the Royal Humane Society, and the society insists upon making a public presentation of the award. Ministers and members are asked to make the presentations. Yet when Mr. Legg saves the department great loss and doubtless is the cause of saving human lives, he receives a letter of thanks! Mr. Legg has said nothing to me, but neighbours and friends have spoken of the cavalier treatment meted out by the department. I would like the Minister to take this matter up. It is a paltry way of treating a public-spirited man for an act of heroism. His action was more cold-blooded than that of plunging into the sea to rescue

someone in distress. He had to make his way through a quarter of a mile of raging waters and meet all sorts of difficulties, but he did not hesitate. The department's attitude, I consider, is a crowning piece of departmental ineptitude.

I hope the Minister will recognise the work being done by the 200 railway men in Merredin who are today clearing traffic from all over the State. They do not ask for extra recognition, but they do want reasonable tools of trade. They want to be able to sit on the seats provided in the engines; they do not want to return from their runs with bruised knees, shins and thighs through being thrown about. The member for Kalgoorlie knows something of this.

Mr. Marshall: You cannot bring him in.

Mr. BOYLE: He knows that what I am saying is correct. I have been invited by railway men to look at those engines; there is no question of my barging in. I hope the Minister will not wait until a major breakdown occurs. The permanent way is in excellent condition, but what is the use of that if the rolling stock is in bad order? It is not fair to the men working under very great pressure. There have been enlistments from their number, and the other men are standing up to the job. The department should recognise their efforts by providing decent tools of trade for them.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [8.40]: I wish again to direct the Minister's attention to the numerous fires being caused along the railway lines by locomotives. Although we had a discussion on this matter a few nights ago when the member for Williams-Narrogin brought down a motion regarding spark arresters, I feel fully justified in again speaking on the matter tonight. I ask the Minister to show some practical sympathy toward the farmers who are burnt out. It appears to me that a farmer who is burnt out, lock, stock and barrel, has no chance of succeeding in a claim for damages against the Commissioner. To try to recover damages is futile. The Commissioner says he is using the most efficient spark arrester procurable, has burnt the dry grass in the railway reserve, and has done all he can to prevent fires occurring; therefore there is no liability on the department. Surely that is wrong!

A farmer should not have a claim against the Commissioner unless he can prove that

he also has taken all reasonable precautions to prevent his property from being burnt out. Many farmers are taking these precautions. A number of them are losing a great deal of feed by burning very wide breaks in order to protect their properties, but they have not been successful. The other night we were told that certain people had received £1,000 for inventing the best spark arrester obtainable. I do not know that it is the best! If it is, it is a long way from being efficient. Otherwise these fires would not be occurring so frequently. When I travelled to Perth three weeks ago, between Pinjarra and Byford, I saw no fewer than a dozen fires caused by the engines. Such fires are occurring almost daily. It is time we made the department responsible for the damage done from this cause.

When I approach the Commissioner of Railways about the fires he is always most sympathetic, and I believe he is doing all he can to prevent them, both by using the spark arresters and by burning the grass in the railway reserve; but surely it is an injustice to an individual when a public utility causes damage in this way. I ask that the Minister give the matter further consideration, and that when a farmer has taken all reasonable precautions to protect his property he should be compensated. In the last few days there have been some disastrous fires in the district I represent, and some of the settlers have lost everything. Twelve months' labour has gone for nothing and in some cases more than that. This is a great hardship on the settlers. In some instances not only has the farmer adjacent to the railway been burnt out, but farmers distant from the railway have suffered damage through the spreading of the fires. I ask the Minister to give this matter serious consideration.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is cream. We are constantly told that second-grade cream is not wanted. Furthermore, it is not payable to produce. Consideration should be given by the department to the provision of proper shelters for cream at all stations. Again, the Minister might discuss with his colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, the advisability of making provision for the transport of cream in railway vans. If cream is put into vans where the heat can get to it, it deteriorates very rapidly, and anything that can be done

to get cream to the factory as first-grade cream should be done.

A very close study of the Commissioner's report has been made by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) and he has referred to the lateness of trains. Late runnings are common on the South-West line. It must be admitted that the volume of traffic on that line has increased tremendously. Had it not been for the war, portions of the line would have been duplicated. Notwithstanding the difficulties, I sometimes wonder why trains should be so late.

Mr. Rodoreda: It is the accepted practice.

Mr. McLARTY: Here is an opportunity for the Minister to alter the practice and to declare that it is not acceptable to him. I know that in many instances it cannot be helped, but something might be done to ensure that the trains run to time. Perhaps the question is a minor one, but it is worthy of the Minister's consideration. The main passenger train from the South-West reaches Perth about 8 o'clock at night. People travelling from the country do not spend much time in Perth. It is usually a matter of coming up one day and returning in a day or two. The train gets into town too late for them to go anywhere in the evening. Here again I know there are difficulties. Trains come a long way and connections have to be made, but if the South-West train could be brought into Perth earlier it would be very much appreciated by passengers.

I desire to say something in regard to electricity extensions. It is a long while since the Minister visited the Serpentine-Mundijong district, and he then expressed the hope that the district would soon be supplied with electricity. The extensions have not been made, but I exonerate the Minister from all blame. The materials have not been available and the work has not been proceeded with. The poles, however, have been available for months and I am hoping that the work will be proceeded with in the near future. I ask the Minister to give consideration to adjacent districts which have also asked for extensions. In dairying districts farmers find it extremely difficult to obtain labour, and the Minister will realise that if they can be provided with cheap power much will have been done to solve the problem of the labour shortage. Furthermore, the provision of electricity would

make a great difference to the life of the farmers and settlers generally. I hope it will not be long before the Minister is able to tell us that this work will be carried out.

I appreciate the courtesy I have always received from railway officials, from the Commissioner downwards. I know they are always out to help the public and give sympathetic consideration to proposals that are submitted. They are passing through difficult times at present and many of the problems are hard to overcome. However, I feel sure they are doing their utmost to give the public whatever benefits are possible.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [8.53]: I do not wish to delay the House very long, but desire to draw attention to one or two matters that will cost the Railway Department nothing in hard cash, but might be trying to the administration. It seems to me as though the travelling community does not get the consideration to which it is entitled from those in charge of the railway system. People pay very high fares to travel by railway and are entitled to every consideration and courtesy that can be afforded them.

Mr. Styants: Hear, hear!

Mr. MARSHALL: That they get courtesy I do not dispute, but that they are shown consideration I flatly deny. Like the member for Pingelly, I have given up complaining about the deplorable condition of the rolling stock, the engines and the roads, etc. There was a time when I was very enthusiastic and constantly referred to this matter, but now I realise that there is no finance and in consequence it is of little use complaining, because the Government is without money. I admit that the engineers and those controlling our railways would be ready at any given moment to repair all our dilapidated coaches, to bring all our engines up to a decent state of repair and properly to modernise the whole system, but there is no money and it is therefore a waste of time to talk about the matter. Until we tackle the cause of the trouble rather than the effects, we can go on complaining, without much hope of redress. The state of affairs to which the member for Avon referred has existed for years.

Gradually conditions have been growing worse and now, with the increased traffic due to military activities and the rationing of petrol, the railways are in a most deplor-



able state. Engines that should be in the shed being repaired have to be out on the road. I have pointed out dozens of times that it is no use anyone saying that the knock of these engines is due to lateral play. That is all rubbish. It is ordinary wear and tear. That much is obvious from the sound of the engines. I marvel at their being able to draw the loads, because the Railway Department, remarkable though it seems to me, has a desire that the engines shall pull the maximum load irrespective of the state of repair in which they go on the road. Any man with experience knows full well that, when there is a loose play in the brasses and on the driving shaft, it interferes with the eccentric and that interferes with the power of the engine. Yet the engines are expected to continue pulling the maximum load and probably more. The day will come when the engine-drivers and firemen will throw up their jobs and then there will be a lot of industrial troubles. We cannot expect them to go on handling these engines which are getting worse and worse. I agree with those members who have already spoken on the matter. I want the Minister to understand, as I said at the outset that, when people pay very heavily for a privilege, they are entitled to receive it.

I do not need to remind the Minister that during excursion time trains from Wiluna are invariably packed and we find that there is only one conductor, who is permitted to employ the casual labour of one individual. Those two men constitute the staff required in some instances to make up 200 beds. By the time the experienced man teaches the inexperienced casual the night has almost gone. And people pay 15s. for a first-class sleeper and a very high premium for a second-class sleeper! I believe that on some trains it is possible to get the same casual to go on the next excursion. He has had some experience by that time and he is a greater help. On one occasion I understand that it was after midnight before the last few beds were made up. That is a damnable state of affairs because some of those beds were to be occupied by women and children and they were paid for.

The Minister cannot expect to get any casual labour from Wiluna. The competition for labour will prevent any possibility of his obtaining the services of anyone who is physically fit. He may be able to pick up an old man or someone who would be alto-

gether incompetent to render anything like valuable service. I urge him to ensure that those trains in particular are equipped with more than one man because nearly all the trains travel at night. One leaves at 9 p.m. and another at 7 p.m. The Sunday train leaves at 3 p.m. or 3.15 p.m. That is not so bad because it allows a little more time. However, beds cannot be made until night falls, because to do so would inconvenience passengers occupying the compartments. It is not fair to make exorbitant charges for a sleeper and then deny passengers the right to enjoy what they have paid for. I ask the Minister to ensure that there is no repetition of that practice during the forthcoming excursion period. It is most urgent that trains travelling over long distances outback should be well equipped with water bags. We know what terrifically high temperatures are experienced in the outer gold-fields, and how damnably inconvenient it is if inadequate water supplies are provided on the trains. These two matters to which I have referred warrant immediate attention.

It will be recalled by the Minister that I have communicated with him regarding the treatment extended to long-distance travellers, particularly when the train on which they are travelling runs behind schedule time. I have written to him twice on this particular matter and in each instance I was travelling on the train and spoke from experience regarding what happened. Although the departmental officers who drafted the replies that the Minister sent to me were actually truthful in the statements they made, nevertheless their representations were, in effect, misleading and wrong. What I dealt with has happened on scores of occasions in connection with trains on which I have travelled. Why the officers allow goods trains—mostly comprising a long string of empty trucks going outwards to gather in the harvest—to hold up passenger trains that have been travelling for over 30 hours is beyond my comprehension.

Mr. Seward: That is done along the Great Southern line as well.

Mr. MARSHALL: I cannot understand that being permitted. The train leaves Wiluna at 3 p.m. on Sunday and does not reach Perth until the Tuesday morning following. When the train reaches the

hills it is often held up for 10 or 15 minutes. Nobody knows why until they hear a train puffing along with the clanking of empty trucks. Any officer that would permit the holding up of a long-distance passenger train to allow an empty goods train to pass should be severely reprimanded. Long-distance travellers should receive preference. I admit that the trains I travelled by, in connection with which I wrote to the Minister, were running behind time, but in one instance we got as far as Bayswater when we were stopped by the signal. We waited for some minutes and then a suburban train from Belmont swung past us conveying three passengers or so—probably school-children. The train on which I was travelling was supposed to be non-stop and the only time it was supposed to pull up was when passengers had to alight. After leaving Bayswater the train was again held up at Mt. Lawley or East Perth. The suburban train that held us up at Bayswater had to stop at each station. The train could have gone right through without inconveniencing the suburban train, and yet the long-distance passengers had to wait while an almost empty suburban train was given precedence.

In the replies to the two letters of complaint I sent to the Minister the officers smothered up the effect of my contentions, and satisfied the Minister by saying that they were always careful to give consideration to long-distance travellers. They do nothing of the kind! I want the Minister to understand that when I communicate with him on such matters I do not lodge complaints merely for the sake of complaining. I take strong exception to the practice of appealing from Caesar to Caesar. The officers responsible for such actions themselves frame the replies that the Minister forwards in response to complaints. Naturally the officers will frame replies that will exonerate themselves. The Minister should watch that position. I have long since become convinced that members of Parliament are subordinate to the bureaucracy comprising the departmental officers. We have not the same say in these matters as have the departmental officers. That state of affairs is gradually getting worse. I would not have written the letters to the Minister had I not been convinced that bad management was responsible.

There is one other matter about which I desire to speak and that refers to the waiting-room at Cue. The Minister replied to my letter today, and I have sent him a further communication because I am afraid I did not fully explain the situation in my earlier representations. The Minister's reply was based on the supposed fact that the only people to be inconvenienced were those travelling from Big Bell to Cue. That is not so. People from practically throughout the district are travelling by rail because of the absence of shipping facilities. A few may travel by air but mostly they travel by train. They concentrate at Cue where the train passes through at ungodly hours. They reach there between midnight and 2.30 a.m. As the people have to travel long distances to the railway station they have to prepare for the possibility of a breakdown. By 11 p.m. all the business premises are closed and the people have to wait on the Cue station for hours for the train. We cannot depend on the trains being on time. No. 73 which goes to Wiluna is frequently two hours behind schedule time. Certainly inquiries made at the station enable passengers to get information regarding the running of the train but that is of little avail.

There is already a waiting-room at the Cue station and all that is necessary is for the premises to be given a coat of paint, a stove to be installed in the room and a label put on the door indicating that it is a waiting-room. Surely people are entitled to that much convenience. I have put in many a miserable night waiting on the station, and I have trespassed on the generosity of the station staff by making use of their office and their coal fire. But what about the women and children who are not so fortunate? The department has plenty of giant stoves even in close proximity to the station at Cue, and they could provide this necessary convenience. I hope the matters to which I have drawn attention will receive immediate consideration by the Minister and his officers. If what I have drawn attention to is continued in the future, the Minister can look forward to some more heated discussions in this Chamber.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [9.13]: I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the railway officials regarding the manner in which

they seek new business and care for it when they obtain it. The business I refer to relates to the transport of goods, some by means of the C.O.D. system. I have often wondered why that system is not utilised more, and I can assure the Committee that my firm has availed itself of the opportunity to some extent and has always found the system satisfactory. When goods are sent by rail similarly satisfactory results follow. It is not an easy proposition in a country of such tremendous distances as is the case in Western Australia to carry on a railway service satisfactorily. I know that there is need for painting and renovation of some of the stations and other properties of the department, but we have to remember that Western Australia offers most unusual difficulties because, as I said, the distances are so great; to which I should add that the number of our people is relatively so small. With respect to the care of passengers I have no complaint to make. I admit that I do not travel by trains very often, but when I do I thoroughly appreciate the service I receive.

The Minister for Labour: Is it really necessary for you to make this speech?

Mr. SAMPSON: Perhaps it is not really necessary. The hon. gentleman interjecting is not associated with the Railway Department—and I very much doubt whether he does utilise the railways to any extent, for living as he does in the more or less aristocratic atmosphere of Ministerial cars, this would be a little beneath him—but I have no wish whatever to discourage him.

The Minister for Labour: You have had more than your fair share of "Hansard" this session.

Mr. SAMPSON: Doubtless the Minister has done some good work on occasion but I have never heard of it; however, he is not in charge of the Committee, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and therefore if I am not abashed you will not hold it against me, I am sure. I desire especially to refer to a subject concerning which I have spoken ever since I have been in this House, and that is the importance of extending electricity supplies. Year after year these requests have been made, and Minister after Minister has shown his sympathy so far as statements made in this Chamber are concerned. I look back to the long ago when Mr. Jack Scaddan was Minister for Railways. There was no man

more earnest, no man more capable, and he was the Minister who made the last extension which is in operation—I refer to the supply of current to Canning Vale. I have told this over a period of the last 19 or 20 years, because that is the period since which no extension of any importance has been made. Following the late Mr. Scaddan was Mr. John Ewing as Minister for Railways; then there was Mr. Jack Willcock, the present Premier; his successor was Mr. Fred Smith, and the present Minister is Mr. Emil Nulsen; and all these gentlemen were thoroughly convinced of the need for extensions. They have not hesitated to express their keen desire that electricity should be made available throughout the outer suburban districts.

These long-delayed extensions are certainly exasperating. It is difficult to understand why a department, the job of which is to provide these extensions, is not able to do it. Now it is a matter of equipment. Had the Government Electricity Supply Department been in the hands of private enterprise, there would have been a good stock of equipment when war broke out. There is not a business of any importance in Perth but had, when the war broke out, a very large stock of the goods it handled. Newspapers like the "West Australian" had enough newsprint to last them for two or three or more years, and the same remark applies to other newspaper offices. That is merely referred to by way of comparison.

Mr. Doney: Comparison between what?

Mr. SAMPSON: A comparison between a privately-conducted enterprise and one that is under the control of the Government. I am sure every Minister has been prevented from purchasing the equipment which he should have purchased in order to deal with this matter properly, thus enabling extensions to be made. You, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am sure, have been caused much anxiety because you have been unable to enjoy the satisfaction of at long last seeing an extension completed. There is lack of copper wire. Why? Go to the ironmongers and members will find that they knew, as everybody knew, there was to be a war. What was done departmentally? No action was taken, and when the war broke out the discovery was made that the copper wire held by the department amounted to very little. The trouble was lack of money—not, I am sure, lack of sympathy. How differ-

ently—and I think I am justified in saying this—does the Federal Government deal with matters! It is time we awoke and saw ourselves, had a good look at ourselves, and examined ourselves with respect to the manner in which we carry out the work we are appointed to do.

Mr. Doney: We have been doing it.

Mr. SAMPSON: Within the last few days the Federal Government has revised the telephone rates. Whilst the metropolitan area is well cared for, being mostly under the care of the Perth City Council, the South Perth Road Board, and other local authorities in regard to extensions of current, where the outer suburban areas are concerned and dependence has to be placed upon the Government there has been no progress, or progress has been very slight indeed. I acknowledge the consideration given by the present Minister to what I have said earlier, as to lack of equipment having prevented the work from being done. The Federal Government, as I set out to say, has greatly reduced telephone charges and encouraged people to live in outer-suburban districts. But how different is the result of the control of electricity by the State Government! The story has been told on various occasions. I do not know that it makes very much difference. I can only hope that these extensions will be made and that the people who live in our outer-suburban areas will be shown the same consideration as is received by people living in outer-suburban areas elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

*[Mr. Marshall took the Chair.]*

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.25]: There are only two phases of the Railway Estimates I wish to discuss. In view of the lateness of the hour I would not deal with them were it not that I think the Railway Department is adopting a very dangerous policy, and a most undesirable policy, in neglecting the maintenance of its permanent way, its locomotives and its rolling stock. This neglect is made evident by the Commissioner's report itself. Examining that report we will find that in many instances the neglect is plain. As a matter of fact, there has been saved about £80,000 by a lesser replacement of sleepers, lesser maintenance of permanent way, and less attention paid to maintenance of locomotives and rolling stock. Page 61 of the report states that the number of locomotives and locomotive boilers that went

through the Midland Junction Workshops has been far less during the last 12 months than it was in the previous 12 months, and much less than the average that is put through those shops. We also find that the amount of repairs and overhauls is much less this year than previously.

The number of locomotives which passed through the shops in 1940 was 198, and the number in 1941 was 172. Locomotives thoroughly overhauled in 1940 numbered 101, and in 1941 the corresponding number was only 75. Of locomotive boilers 188 went through the shops in 1940, as against only 160 in 1941. Those thoroughly overhauled in 1940 number 71, as against only 61 in 1941. Turning to page six of the Commissioner's report we find that maintenance of Ways and Works in 1940 cost, in round figures, £635,000, as against £603,000 in 1941, £32,000 less being spent on maintenance of the permanent way in the latter year. We find that maintenance and lubrication of goods vehicles cost £532,000 in 1940 and £482,000 in 1941, or £50,000 less, despite the fact that the Commissioner's report discloses that 15,000 miles more was run by the locomotives and rolling stock throughout the State in the latter year.

That is a most dangerous practice to adopt, especially at this time. The Commissioner states that the "locomotive stock"—or locomotives in use—has been reduced during the 12 months by ten. He claims to have 243 locomotives in good condition, 86 in fair condition, and only five bad locomotives in the service. Travelling from one end of the country to the other and knowing the majority of the men who operate the locomotives I will say that, if the figures were reversed, 243 locomotives in fair condition and 86 in bad condition and only five in good condition, they would be much nearer the mark. The men complained. Despite the assurance of the Commissioner of Railways, who of course is informed by his technical advisers that these locomotives are in good condition, I repeat what I have said in this House previously, that if I want to know whether a locomotive is in good running condition I go to the man who operates it, and not to the man who turns it out of the Midland Junction workshops.

One has only to stand on a railway station, or in the vicinity of a locomotive hauling a train, and listen to the clatter that resounds as it goes by, to know its real con-

dition. The bearings are worn, and the noise is more like that of a 10-head battery than anything else I know of. I do not say that that is the case with all the locomotives. Still, I was speaking to the general secretary of the Locomotives Drivers' Union, who receives reports from all over the country concerning them, and those reports are from the men who operate the locomotives; and the general secretary said to me that never before in the history of the State has the locomotive stock been in such poor repair.

All this has been brought about by obsolescence and by the superheating of locomotives which were not made for it. The present Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr. Mills, roundly condemned it. He told me that the E class locomotives, which were constructed scientifically in a frame to carry a 17-inch saturated cylinder, should never have been superheated. Not only were those engines, which were intended to carry 17-inch saturated cylinders, superheated, but a 19-inch superheated cylinder was put on them. The result is that it is almost impossible to keep the engine in reasonable condition. With the 19-inch cylinder, these engines are over-powered and their tractive effort is too great for their cohesive force. Great difficulty is experienced by the men in handling them.

Because they are over-powered, the engines knock themselves to pieces in a very short time. That is something which never should have occurred. That superheating of engines is an advantage is evidenced by our P class engines. These have a 20-inch superheated cylinder built into a frame to carry the cylinder, the engine being built in proportion. It is probably the best class of engine on our railways. The P class engines—there are twelve of them—were brought out either from England or Scotland and were copied here. Numbers of them built at the Midland Junction workshops are now running on our railways. I have both fired and driven the imported engine and the locally-made engine, and I think I am voicing not only my own opinion but that of 75 per cent. of the men who have fired and driven them, when I say that the locally-made engine is the better engine of the two. That is a great compliment to the artisans of the Midland Junction workshops.

Our locomotive stock is hopelessly obsolete. The Commissioner's report discloses that some of the locomotives were in traffic before I was born, and I am 48 years of age. True, they have been overhauled and repaired from time to time, but the design has never been altered. With the exception of the superheating of some of them, the engines are of the same type as they were 50 years ago. Surely, some advance has been made in locomotive design during the last 50 years! An idea of the obsolescence of these locomotives can be gained by studying the table set out in the Commissioner's report showing the cost of operating the various types of engines. The estimate of the hauling capacity of these locomotives on a one in sixty grade, operating with a full load, is a little deceptive as far as operating costs are concerned, because one locomotive can haul 420 tons over a one in sixty grade, while another locomotive can only haul, say, 240 tons over that grade. Further on in the report will be found the comparative cost of operating these locomotives, each hauling 100 tons. That gives a fair indication of the relative values and merits of the locomotives.

First we have the short distance passenger engine. The cost shown for a D class engine hauling 100 tons per mile is 9.74d.; for the DS engine, which is a superheated D class engine, the cost is 7½d. per mile. The N class engine, which is a four-wheel passenger engine used in the suburban areas, costs 14.78d. per mile. Members will note the great difference. The cost of an N class engine to haul 100 tons a mile is almost double that of a D class or DS class engine. If the State were in a financial position to do so, it would certainly pay to scrap the N class engine. Then we have the long-distance passenger engine. The E class engine costs 9.72d.; the ES, superheated E class, costs 6.39d. The P class engine, which I have said is the best type of engine in use on our railways, costs only 5.55d. to haul 100 tons for a mile. What a ridiculous position our railway management is placed in! The railways have a modern engine, built to modern standards, which will haul 100 tons at 5.55d. a mile; whereas the other types of locomotive cost almost double that sum. Then we have the short-distance goods K class engine, which, according to the Commissioner's report, was put into service in

the year I was born, 1893. To haul 100 tons for a mile with a K class engine costs 13.22d. The cost with the O class engine is 13.07d. Then we have the long-distance goods engines, as follows:—

Class	Cost per mile.
C. .. .. .	11.36d.
MS. .. .. .	10.16d.
MSA. .. .. .	8.70d.
F. .. .. .	11.74d.
F.S. .. .. .	8.44d.

The F and FS class engines are comparable to the P class engine, which can do the same class of work for 5½d. per mile. A study of the report of the Railway Department would, therefore, cause one to have some sympathy for the railway management, because of the fact that it is called upon to operate engines so obsolete and costly.

The particularly bad state of repair of our locomotives has been brought about by the Midland Junction Workshops taking on munition work. When it was proposed that the workshops should take on that work I expressed the opinion, some 18 months ago, that to take the operatives from the shops and put them on to munition work was inadvisable. It would have been better to allow the operatives to concentrate upon our locomotives and rolling stock. My opinion has proved to be correct. Some five years ago our locomotives were in a bad condition. The condition then improved up to about two years ago, at which time the men said the locomotives were in a better state than they had been for many years. It was then that the Midland Junction Workshops started on munition work. Undoubtedly, that work is essential. But I ask members whether it is not even more important to keep our locomotives and rolling stock in perfect order. If our State were invaded it would be necessary to transport large quantities of war equipment and great numbers of troops; and to do that our locomotives and rolling stock must be in perfect condition.

I also mentioned in the House a couple of months ago that I considered it was a short-sighted policy for the military authorities to call up for training our young firemen and cleaners. The result has been that the men remaining in the service have had to work long hours; they work much overtime. That is costly to the department. Further, boys without any qualifications for the work are put in charge of locomotives throughout

the length and breadth of the State. Some of them had had only six weeks' experience in raising steam in locomotives worth £10,000 each. In more than one instance they met with disaster because they did not understand the duties required of them; they dropped the fusible plug and did damage to the boiler. They really cannot be blamed. Some two or three years ago a cleaner, who had not the qualifications necessary to look after a locomotive boiler, or any class of boiler under steam, dropped a fusible plug in a boiler at the Midland Junction locomotive sheds and was dismissed from the service. In my opinion, the officer who put an unqualified man in charge of a locomotive boiler under steam was the person who should have been dismissed. Had it not been for the Locomotive Engine-Drivers' Union, which took the case up for the boy and issued an ultimatum demanding his reinstatement, the boy would have had to go through life with the stigma of dismissal from the Government service.

There are instances of boys with only six weeks' service who have been sent out firing on the main lines. That is unfair to the driver, who has to accept the responsibility for both jobs. It is quite impossible to teach a boy to fire an engine in six weeks, and the department well knows that it is impossible; but the department also knows that the driver is compelled to do the two jobs. Driving a locomotive demands constant vigilance, particularly in thickly-populated areas. It certainly is a full-time job. Of course, I realise that it is necessary to call up our young men for military training. They must be taught to defend themselves and the country and to use military equipment. But the time these boys are absent from the shops, thus causing the employment of inexperienced men, is not going to be worth much, because if this country is in danger, these young men will be called upon not to use weapons but to work our locomotives. Therefore, I say that it is a short-sighted policy on the part of the military authorities to withdraw these young men from their occupations. It is a practice which should not be tolerated and ought to be discontinued. The Commissioner well knows that these young men will not be called upon to use the weapons they are now being trained to use; unquestionably, their services will be required by the railways if the State is invaded.

I am particularly concerned about the fewer number of sleepers which are being used to replace existing ones. I can remember six or seven years ago what was called the belated repairs programme put into operation at a cost of £100,000 each year, for three years. That money was spent on reconditioning the road beds of the railways of this State.

Mr. Doney: When did that arrangement start?

Mr. STYANTS: About 1936 or 1937. Some indication is given in the Commissioner of Railways' report as to the number of sleepers that had to be replaced during those years. To my way of thinking, not only is it a wrong policy to adopt, but it becomes an expensive one in that a considerably higher proportion of derailments takes place.

Mr. Doney: Is not a similar condition threatening now?

Mr. STYANTS: If it is continued at the same rate as has prevailed for the last 12 months—that is £50,000 less on the maintenance of rolling stock and locomotives, and £35,000 less for sleepers, for maintenance of the track—in two or three years' time we will have arrived at the same perilous and dangerous position as existed six or seven years ago.

Mr. Doney: That is what I mean.

Mr. STYANTS: According to the Commissioner of Railways' report, during this last 12 months, 310,190 sleepers have been used on re-sleepering, and in 1940 352,341 sleepers were used; 42,000 less in 1941 than in 1940. In 1939, 34,000 more sleepers were used than during the next 12 months, and in 1938, 55,000 sleepers more. The total used in 1941 for special work and maintenance, was 316,739; in 1940 it was 392,000, or 76,000 more; in 1939 it was 63,000 more, and in 1937, which I think was the last of the three-year period for the belated repairs, 206,000 more sleepers were used than during the previous 12 months. Members will realise that if this policy is pursued for any length of time we will not only have another belated repairs programme staring us in the face; but if an emergency should arise—and it is on the cards that it will—that the railways are required for special purposes we will find that neither locomotives, rolling stock nor permanent way are in a condition to give the necessary service. I hope this

policy of skimping on these particular portions of the service will not be persevered with.

Mr. Doney: It is the very worst form of economy I can think of at present.

Mr. STYANTS: At this time of our history, with a national crisis looming ahead, it is suicide not to keep the locomotives, rolling stock and permanent way in good repair. The Commissioner of Railways, in his report, says there has been an increase in rents of £2,559. I cannot understand that, when rent restriction was taking place in this State. Presumably it is obtained from the extra rentals received from the refreshment rooms. The excuse can be offered that these rentals are called for by public tender. The Commissioner, under the provisions of the Railways Act, has to call for tenders each five years. If a would-be proprietor tenders a higher price than was previously operating, it would be testing human nature to the limit to refuse to take it.

Mr. Seward: A private individual could do it.

Mr. STYANTS: It is a wrong policy to increase the charges for refreshment room services or dining car services. It would mean that the public would get a poorer and more expensive type of catering. Goodness knows, the type of catering in this State for our railway passengers is at a sufficiently low level at present! It would be difficult to find, in any railway system in Australia, such poor catering as takes place in our railways. I have heard comparisons made between the meals supplied on the "Westland"—our interstate train running from Perth to Kalgoorlie—and those supplied on the trans train. That is not a fair comparison because the passengers on the "Westland" are charged 3s. for breakfast and 3s. 6d. for dinner, while on the trans line the average is 5s. per meal. The majority of people who travel from Kalgoorlie to Perth do not require a heavy three-course meal. I have often advocated that there should be something in the nature of a buffet car supplying a meal for about 2s. It would then be possible for all classes of the community to have meals on the train. If a working man travels from Kalgoorlie to Perth with his wife and two children of ten and twelve years of age, it costs him at present 14s.

for the evening meal. It is more than he can afford to pay.

For those who are not able to afford 3s. 6d. per head for a meal some kind of service is provided whereby tea and toast is served for 1s. Five years ago travellers could get a cup of tea and two slices of toast for a shilling, and many passengers availed themselves of that service. It has, however, fallen off about 100 per cent. On occasions when I have travelled from Perth to Kalgoorlie I have tried both the meals and this light refreshment service so as to test the complaints I received from my constituents. The light refreshments proved to be most deplorable. I was served with a piece of toast made from a slice of bread which had been cut in halves and had been intended to be eaten with the meal on the dining-car. It was a wafer-like piece of bread which had been toasted on one side and burnt on the other. For my shilling I also received one cup of tea.

Mr. Doney: I am surprised at your being taken down to that extent.

Mr. STYANTS: They say there is a fool born every minute. I have one or two other matters to deal with, one of which is in connection with the dining-car service. People complain to me that the employees of the dining-car sleep in the dining section of the coach, and that the proprietor of a boarding and lodging-house would not be permitted to fix up beds in the dining-room for the convenience of lodgers. That is what is occurring, and I know it. It has been going on for the last 25 years. When the dining-car is taken off at Southern Cross, Yellowdine or wherever it may be, the employees sleep in the dining saloon portion of the car. That is something which should be investigated by the Health Department.

Another thing which should be dealt with is the matter of the second-class sleeping accommodation provided on the express from Kalgoorlie. Passengers are charged 6s. for a sleeper and all they are given are one or two rugs and a pillow. No sheets are provided. Would any member here like to sleep in rugs without sheets, knowing that those rugs had probably been used by all classes of people for two or three months previously? It is disgusting, repugnant, and definitely unhealthy! One sees people travelling around with a rash on their faces or necks. They use these rugs and pull them up around their necks. The next passenger

who comes along uses these rugs, and although he was perfectly healthy when he started the trip he finds when he is returning that he has the same kind of rash breaking out on his neck. I admit that these rugs are fumigated from time to time, but not after every trip. The Health Department should not permit this practice. A second-class passenger who pays 6s. for a sleeper should be provided with sheets. If 2s. were paid for a bed at the most tumble-down shack in this State sheets would be supplied. If a boarding-house keeper did not supply sheets and the matter were reported to the Health Department, I am certain the Commissioner for Public Health would compel him to do so. The Commissioner would not tolerate such an unhygienic practice.

Mr. Sampson: Our charges are very low in comparison with America.

Mr. STYANTS: That is all I wish to say about the railways. I realise the difficulties under which the Commissioner and his staff have to operate. It is almost impossible for them to show a decent financial return because we have made provision for depreciation repayment on previous loans. We have now arrived at the position when out of every £1 the Railway Department earns—not every pound of profit that it makes over working expenses, but every pound earned—approximately 6s. 4d. goes out in interest. Almost 30 per cent. is absorbed in interest. One would need to be a genius indeed to operate a concern such as the railways and show a profit in the circumstances.

I pay a tribute to the Commissioner and his staff for the services they have provided under these disadvantageous conditions. Most of the officials of the department are men who have risen from the ranks by sheer merit, and they have justly earned their promotions. I know from my experience of working amongst the men that the traffic staff, drivers, firemen and cleaners are as capable and efficient as any class of men in the same calling in Australia, and that if they were given better conditions they would obtain better results. In view of the obsolescence of the rolling stock, I consider that they put up a particularly fine performance and deserve all possible credit for the financial results obtained.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams - Narrogin) [10.1]: I desire to draw attention to what I regard as the very raw deal being meted



out by the railway authorities to a body of workers, namely the ticket collectors. Similarly affected are men in adjoining similar grades, including guards and shunters and possibly others. Some of these are able and ambitious men and equally capable of performing far more important duties than ordinarily fall to their lot.

The trouble is that there seems to be no channel through which they may advance to better jobs. That is not fair. These men seem to have no spokesman in the Chamber because, although these disabilities have existed for many years—certainly for the 13 years I have been travelling on the railways consistently—I do not recall that their troubles and trials have ever before been referred to here. To be graded as a ticket collector means to remain a ticket collector for life. This is very unjust. Life can become very irksome indeed under those conditions. What will the Minister do to improve their lot? Will he afford them access to better jobs? I do not know whether he has been brought face to face with the problem.

The Minister for Railways: I have not.

Mr. DONEY: And yet I have heard complaints on this score for at least 13 years. I am not referring so much to the ticket collectors who are better known to us and act as conductors on the trains; I am referring to those who follow the occupation at the various barriers on the larger stations. They drag out a dreary and uninspiring sort of existence over the years, doing the same job this week as they did last week and with no hope at all of getting any better job. I hope the Minister will do the decent thing by these men and show for them a way out, step by step, to some more responsible job. The Minister is listening to my remarks and I hope he will not forget all about them or merely pass the matter on to the Commissioner, who will simply reply, "It is not convenient to do anything." I want the Minister to look into the matter and, if he is personally convinced these men are suffering an injustice, as I feel sure they are, he himself will decide that something be done and see that it is done within a reasonably brief time.

The Minister for Railways: They should make some effort for themselves.

Mr. DONEY: They cannot carve a channel to a better job; a channel is not officially afforded them. In some other sections of the

service means are provided for men to rise from poor jobs to better jobs and ultimately to the highest of all, that of Commissioner. Napoleon used to say that every private soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack. Why should not that equally apply to all railway men in respect of the Commissionership? I leave the matter to the Minister, and if he does not do something, I shall be bitterly disappointed and shall have to take the first opportunity of re-submitting it to this Chamber.

MR. HILL (Albany) [10.5]: To hear about the deplorable condition of our railways must give anyone serious cause for thought. There is no doubt that the transport services of this State require a lot of overhauling and putting into shape. I have heard it said that three things are required—legislation, organisation and administration and that, of the three, administration is the most important. I say without hesitation that the condition of our railways, our ports and other transport activities is due to the fact that there is no transport administration in this State. I would like to see the Commonwealth Grants Commission take the matter up with the State Government, read the report of the Federal Transport Committee of 1929, and tell our Government that it is not going to get a penny from the Commonwealth until it intelligently carries out all the well-considered recommendations of that committee.

The outstanding recommendation of the committee was that all transport should be brought under one ministerial head and that there should be a transport department to deal with the whole problem. I have before me a copy of the "Journal of the Institute of Transport," of New South Wales. When I was in the Eastern States last year, I had the pleasure of lunching with the Minister for Transport in New South Wales. The journal contains a report of his address to the institute in that State. One of the finest addresses I have read on the subject of transport was that given by the President of Transport in Great Britain, Sir David Owen, in 1932. He concluded his remarks by saying it was essential to consider the problems of transport as a whole. He referred to the need for continuous and scientific study of the problem.

"The golden age of railways," he said "has passed, but railways under wise control

still have a useful function to perform. The self-propelled road vehicle is capable of useful but not unlimited service to the community, but the tendency is for the workers in the various activities to look upon their particular job as the end instead of the means to some other end." He went on to say that the railways were inclined to look upon the ports to act as feeders to the railways, and he visualised the time when the various means of transport would be regulated in such a way as to best serve the community as a whole. Ports would be seen in their true perspective, acting as links between sea and land transport.

In a report prepared at the instigation of the Commonwealth Government appeared the remarks of Sir George Buchanan. He truly said that ports are a medium or clearing house between sea and land transport. On the ports, their efficiency and proper location, the whole system of transport depended. The trouble with our transport and railway services, apart from the lack of scientific administration, is that ports are not seen in their true perspective. In South Africa where the transport problem is being handled better than in any other part of the world, there is no hesitation about diverting trade from one port to another if by so doing economies can be effected. In the old days of bullock wagons and sailing ships, we needed many ports. In these times we need a limited number of properly-equipped ports. Instead of acting on expert advice, the Government has divided the State into port zones. Those zones are shown on the map I have in my hand supplied by the Railway Department. It reminds me of the maps we used to draw at school. I strongly object to the port zone system particularly because it has proved a hopeless failure.

We have been told by the member for Kalgoorlie of the deplorable condition of the railway rolling stock. Since the present Premier has occupied that office, our railways and ports have made a loss of 2½ million pounds, and here in the largest self-governing unit in the world we have the port of Fremantle handling 90 per cent. of the trade, while half of the population are concentrated in the metropolitan area. The zone system based on an unsound port policy is the cause of much of our trouble. Many references have been made to the losses incurred by the department on the haulage of super. There is one class of traffic that

causes far more loss than the haulage of super, and that is the haulage of empty trucks. In 1927 two gentlemen visited my orchard—Mr. C. W. Harper and Mr. John Thomson. I asked them why they did not have all the wheat conveyed to Albany, and they told me the department did not like taking wheat to Albany because there was no back loading. I informed them that super works would overcome that difficulty, and they said the works should go to Bunbury. I replied, "Put them there and you will regret it." That was early in 1927. In the "West Australian" of the 25th April, 1929, the present Premier announced that the Government had asked the super companies to erect works at Picton to provide back loading for the wheat trucks. If we go down the South-West line in a normal year, we find a continual stream of empty trucks going to the South-West. If we go to Albany, there we find a stream of empty trucks coming from that port. If we could put the cost of running those "empties" into figures, we would find that the blunder of putting the super works at Picton is causing the railways a loss of £30,000 a year.

Mr. Abbott: The land around Albany is not worth two hoots, and will not be for a hundred years.

Mr. HILL: Sir James Mitchell, whose opinion I respect, once said, "You do not want to look around the King and Kalgan Rivers. You want to look back a hundred and fifty miles." If we could find out what it is costing the State because Albany is not obtaining the trade of its economic zone, the figures would be astounding. The member for North Perth spoke about the land. We have to consider the whole of Western Australia, not a section within a short radius of one town. Wheat should not be transported by the shortest route; it should be sent by the most economical route. I have figures showing that out of £500,000 spent on the regrading of railways, not one penny has been spent on regrading the Great Southern line south of Narrogin.

The Premier: No wheat was sent to Albany for years.

Mr. HILL: None is being sent to Albany today. Let me make a statement that the Premier cannot contradict. It would be easy to provide a grade of one in a hundred or better to Albany, and if the Government spent as much money between Narrogin and Albany as has been spent between Collie

and Brunswick, the haulage to Albany would be cheaper than it is to Bunbury. The Minister says wheat went to Albany. There is none going to Albany today. He complained in the "West Australian" that wheat should go to the nearest port. As soon as wheat was diverted from Geraldton, out came a regulation that if wheat was diverted to any port an extra rate must be charged. That does not apply to wheat diverted from Albany. The wheat from the Albany zone, in order to go to Bunbury, has to be hauled an extra 80 miles on an average. According to the Premier that has resulted in a very heavy loss. With a decent terminal at Albany and a reduction of the grade the wheat of the Great Southern could be handled more economically than it is being handled today.

We are at war with Japan. I have handled six-inch guns and I can visualise what happened when the "Sydney" got close to the enemy. I wonder how long it will be before a six-inch gun is trained on the magnificent target that our Government built in this State at a cost of £70,000?

I desire now to refer to the Diesel trains. I congratulate the Government on having made use of this form of transport, which is a decided improvement. I feel sure the service to Albany is appreciated. It takes 12 hours 45 minutes to do the trip by Diesel coach. It is a pity that the time could not be reduced by half an hour, bringing it to 12 hours 15 minutes. I make that suggestion because that is the time that Opperman took to cycle the distance.

I have a letter from the Minister for Railways dated the 4th December, 1941, wherein he gives the returns of the Albany harbour which has been under the control of the Railway Department for the last 13 years. For that period the total deficiency was £1,124. If the port of Albany had handled the trade of its present zone, that deficiency would have been converted to a substantial surplus. When one considers the financial returns of Albany, despite the way in which it has been neglected, with those of other ports, one finds them very interesting. If I gave the Minister a couple of million pounds he would be very pleased, but here the State has a very valuable asset which is neglected. Constructive suggestions have been asked for. The Government has now the chance

of its life. This side of the House has agreed to abandon party politics for the next 12 months. One of the greatest problems we have is that of transport, and to straighten that out will be a man's size job. It should be a national and not a party job. I can tell the Minister a way to improve our railways and our transport services. Let him carefully carry out the considered recommendations of experts.

The Minister for Railways: Experts have been an abomination to Western Australia.

Mr. HILL: Whose recommendations has the Minister endeavoured to carry out? Sir George Buchanan, one of the greatest transport experts in the world, came here and was abused by the Premier. Today we are yearly losing three-quarters of a million pounds on our ports and railways—

The Minister for Railways: How do you know?

Mr. HILL: We have the returns before us. I read the returns that are laid before Parliament. Members of the Government "sling off" at the transport experts, but has one member had a good word to say about the Railway Department tonight? The member for Kalgoorlie is a former railway man. What did he say? Did he praise the railway service?

The Minister for Railways: His criticism was constructive.

Mr. HILL: I am offering constructive criticism. Members of the Government criticise the experts, but the taxpayers of this State have to pay a tremendous price because expert advice was neglected. The Minister reminded me of one of the most deplorable speeches I have heard in my life. I nearly laughed on one occasion when the Premier referred to the fact that for many years he was Minister for Railways and spoke of his colleague, the Minister for Works, as Minister for Transport. The Minister for Works addressed the Chamber of Commerce at Albany and I was present. He said, "Ships will go to the capital port." I heard him first on that subject in 1928. I said, "Why did you not carry out the experts' advice?" The Minister for Works then replied with a remark similar to that made by the present Minister for Railways. He said, "The experts contradict themselves and if we carried out their advice we would soon be in a hole." If the Minister and his colleagues had car-

ried out the recommendations of the transport experts—

The Minister for Railways: Is that what you would do?

Mr. HILL: I have listened to all of them and I use my commonsense, but please do not interrupt me! After a while the Minister for Works, again referring to experts in a later part of his speech to the Chamber of Commerce, said "We have experts and we must carry out their advice. We would be in a hole if we did not." It is no wonder that the people laughed at the Minister! We are at war today and fighting for our very existence. One of the most important problems we have to face is that of transport. We have no Minister for Transport and our transport is in a chaotic condition. Consequently our war effort is going to suffer just because our Minister and Premier and their colleagues have ignored expert advice and our natural advantages.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [10.21]: I hesitate at this late hour to refer to matters that are purely local to my district, but North Perth has a legitimate grievance in connection with tramway sections. This is not a new story but I want the Minister to listen and give the matter his consideration. The North Perth tram section starts at the South Perth ferry, which is not fair, because it is not in the centre of the city nor anywhere near it. That is the shortest section in the tramway system. One can go from the Town Hall to Thomas-street or to the car barn and in other directions and all the sections start from the centre of the city, but the North Perth section begins at the river. I complained to Mr. Taylor about this and he was quite frank with me. I said it was not fair, and his answer was, "I am not here to be fair. I am here to see that the tramways make money." I said, "That may be your job but this is a public utility and everyone should have reasonable justice in connection with the matter."

That is why I am voicing this protest. I ask the Minister whether it would be possible for the twopenny section going north to start from Wellington-street and end at Walcott-street. That would be exactly the same distance as between the Town Hall and Thomas-street, which is a twopenny section. If anybody gets into a tram going north, he can travel only as far as Bulwer-street

for twopenny and that is the shortest twopenny section on the whole system. I do not think it is reasonable that the section should start on one side of the city, go through the city, and a little way beyond, because no one wants to use a section of that kind—at least very few people want to do so. I ask the Minister to consider that point. I propose to take a more convenient opportunity of stressing the matter by correspondence, but I desired to bring the matter before the Committee.

MRS. CARDELL - OLIVER (Subiaco) [10.25]: I shall speak for only a few minutes on a question that I have brought before the House previously. I cannot conscientiously ask the Minister to do anything about the matter just now, but if he could see his way clear to do something, I would be glad. I refer to the height of the steps on our trams. The Minister's predecessor promised faithfully that the steps would be altered. He had them altered on one tram and that has been a great convenience, especially to women. I make a special plea here on behalf of the health of women who have babies, and who are pregnant. Such women cannot get on to the high steps of our trams. I think the rise is considerably over a foot. The first step is near the ground and the second is very high above it. The women to whom I have referred are in such a condition as to be unable to mount the high step without detriment to their health, and consequently to the health of the nation. If the first step could be put a little higher there would be a more uniform distance to mount and it would be a very great convenience to people, especially women, both young and old. I have a friend in the St. John of God Hospital who has been there for nine weeks, having fallen while trying to mount the second step on one of the trams. I know many other people who have made the same complaint. Every women's organisation has passed resolutions against these steps and I plead with the Minister, if it is at all possible, to effect an alteration.

[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [10.27]: There are two matters to which I wish to draw the Minister's attention and they are associated with Midland Junction. At that centre there is a technical school which is

one of the branches of technical education in the State. The pupils are instructed in conjunction with the Midland Junction Workshops. This branch of technical education is one of a group of schools wherein our boys are trained in various trades. I would like the Minister to take up with the Minister for Education the question of an extension of these technical facilities at Midland Junction through the workshops and through other industries now being developed throughout our State, and at the various technical training centres. There are two aspects of the matter. The first is that we now know more than ever before that in the light of the future every man will need to be skilled in some trade. The second is that at present this country needs all the skilled men it can secure, and it may be that through these training centres it will be possible to draw a current of young boys into the various industrial centres to meet the demands imposed by the war. We shall be short of skilled men if the war continues much longer and it may be that by means of these young boys of 14 or 15, we shall be able to overcome the shortage of labour.

The time has arrived when the Minister might well consider with the Minister for Education the diversion of portion of the Education Vote from expenditure on subjects not of immediate concern to our war effort to technical training essential for that effort. If we are spending £750,000 a year, it may well be, as a war measure, that a far larger proportion of the expenditure should be diverted from instruction on matters that will not directly help us to win the war, for use in connection with branches of technical education that will help to turn out a number of young boys who will play an important part in our industrial effort, which must be built up if we are to succeed. In my electorate we have an important technical institution attended by 600 lads, which is supplementary to the school at Midland Junction, where the boys are partially trained in the Railway Workshops.

The second matter to which I desire to direct attention relates to a series of questions which I asked. I refer to the patents taken out by Mr. Watts, who at one time was employed at the Midland Junction Railway Workshops. The patents include a number of devices for improvements in railway workings. I am not in a position to say whether the patents are

effective or not, but the Minister, in the replies he gave to my questions, said that some of the patents had been given a trial. I am informed that any trial given them was on the basis of the old designs of 20 or 24 years ago, and that the new designs are vastly superior to those tried out so long ago.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Have those patents been taken up by anyone else?

Mr. McDONALD: I do not think so. I would not have felt justified in drawing the attention of the Minister to this matter were it not for a letter published in the Press in May last by Mr. R. N. Johnston, who was for about 11 years works manager at the Midland Junction Railway Workshops, in which he referred to the trial of Mr. Watts's devices by the State Railways. In the course of his letter, Mr. Johnston said—

It is hard to conceive what the barrier is to the adoption of Mr. Watts's patents in future works. Is it that our railway engineers have not the courage to depart from the standard text books of their childhood days? If our British nation was endeavouring to fight the present war with the standards of the last, we would have been defeated long since. I am writing this letter to try to arouse public interest so that at least Mr Watts's patents be subject to a more careful and extensive scrutiny by a committee of expert engineers of both States and Commonwealth.

It is claimed by those who sponsor these patents that if adopted they would effect economies in connection with our railway system of between £400,000 and £500,000 a year. Those are astronomical figures and I cannot say if the claim is or is not justified. If such possible economies can be effected, or even if the claims are justified to the extent of a fraction of the amount stated, the adoption of the patents would make a vast difference respecting the payability of our railways. Therefore the claims appear to justify further investigation. Obviously, I am not in a position to pass judgment on such matters but this man alleges that his patents have not received a proper investigation. I would like the Minister to take the matter up with the Commissioner of Railways to ascertain whether or not there is anything in the claim that these patents should receive further investigation.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [10.35]: I support the remarks of the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald). I have known Mr. Watts all my life and am

acquainted with the long study he has devoted to patents in connection with the interlocking gear of our railway system. I certainly believe there is much in his statement and I understand that his patents have received attention in England, and that they have been tried out in South Australia, where—I am subject to correction in this regard—they are actually in operation. Even at this stage it would not be amiss if a thorough and complete investigation were made of the patents put out by Mr. Watts. He is well up in years and must now be over 70, and probably at this stage anything done respecting his patents will be to the benefits of others. He has always been recognised as a very capable man of a most inventive turn of mind, particularly with respect to interlocking gear.

My father was a striker with him at Fremantle and later at Midland Junction. That was long before he became foreman blacksmith at the Midland Junction Workshops. During the years I served there I know that Mr. Watts was always respected for his keenness regarding these matters, and it was recognised that there was a good deal of substance in his claims respecting his inventions. The present Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Ellis, is comparatively new to his duties and it would be well if he were to authorise a further test of the matters, to which attention has been drawn by the member for West Perth.

There are one or two other questions to which I desire to draw attention. The Premier intends to leave for the Eastern States tomorrow and, while he is there it would not be amiss for him to take up with the Federal authorities the question of the standard railway gauge from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. That national undertaking is more a necessity now than when first mooted. The question of the standard railway gauge has been debated at many conferences of Premiers and Commissioners of Railways, as a result of which the main recommendation was that the 4ft. 8½in. gauge should be made the standard for Australia as a whole. When I was a lad I remember the discussion regarding the projected construction of a railway on the south side of the river to link up Midland Junction with Fremantle on the standard gauge.

It is more urgent now than ever before that the main trunk line should be extended

from Kalgoorlie through to Fremantle, not only from the standpoint of the transport of troops but for the development of the trans-Australian railway system. The time is opportune to draw attention to this matter of national importance. When the trans-Australian railway system was inaugurated by the Fisher Government, it was recognised that the system would not be complete until there was a standard gauge track right through to Fremantle. Some 30 years have passed since then, and the project remains still in the air. I remember that some people became interested in the project because they thought their properties would be resumed with the construction of the railway line along the south side of the river. I hope the Premier will take up the matter with the Federal authorities so that it may be brought to fruition. The time has arrived when the transport system should be placed under one authority.

Mr. Hill: Have I made one convert?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: At present a good deal of the transport service comes under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Railways, but the whole of our transport system should be placed under one authority, and the profit derived should be retained by the board or trust so that there might be a continuous development of the transport system. There is need for electrifying the suburban railways and there should be further development of the trolley bus system, but perhaps it is not much use talking of those matters at present. We want economy in our transport service, and whether it is controlled by the Commissioner of Railways or by a trust does not matter so long as we get economical service.

The member for West Perth touched on the system of technical training for apprentices. This has been in vogue for many years and was established at Midland Junction by the Scaddan Government. The building now being used is not suitable for the training of apprentices; the studies of the boys are interrupted by the noise of engines blowing off steam, and it is difficult for students to concentrate. Having regard to the need for training the boys to become efficient tradesmen, funds should be made available for providing an up-to-date technical school at Midland Junction.

In years gone by I have agitated for a siding between Maylands and Bayswater, and there is a fairly big file dealing with

the matter, but the provision of a siding is as far off as ever. The people living in that part, in the absence of a siding, have to walk to the tramline or go to Guildford-road and patronise the buses. At one time the Premier was favourable to providing this siding, but the difficulty is the cost of maintenance. I appreciate this difficulty. At one stage there was a promise by a local firm to provide £750 towards the cost, but it fell through because the land changed hands. If a siding was put in, greater use would be made of the railway.

The central railway station will either have to be removed or greater facilities will have to be provided for traffic to cross to the northern part of the city. Road traffic should be catered for by subways or overhead bridges and there are only two points where crossings could be made over the railway line. The delays to traffic under existing conditions are costly. If the central station was moved to some other site the value of the land might more than compensate for the cost of making the transfer. The suburban railway service is altogether too slow having regard to the needs of modern times. If the railway system from the hills to Fremantle could be electrified a great increase of revenue would accrue. I mention these matters because they are problems that will have to be tackled in the near future and they are certainly vital to the development of the railways and of the State.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—State Batteries, £95,970; Cave House (including caves of the South-West, etc.), £12,306—agreed to.*

This concluded the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

*In Committee of Ways and Means.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [10.50]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year ended the 30th June, 1942, a sum not exceeding £7,119,378 be granted from Consolidated Revenue fund.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

## BILL—APPROPRIATION.

### *Message.*

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

### *First Reading.*

Bill introduced by the Minister for Lands (for the Premier and Treasurer) and read a first time.

### *Second Reading.*

On motion by the Minister for Lands, Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, Schedules A to D—agreed to.

#### *Schedule E:*

Mr. McDONALD: Under Miscellaneous Services there appears an item of £45,000, additional capital for the State Shipping Service. I would like to know the circumstances which necessitated this additional capital.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: On behalf of the Treasurer I have to state that the item represents a transfer made during the balancing of last year's budget and therefore appeared as an item under the Vote of the Treasurer.

Schedule put and passed.

#### *Schedule F:*

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Apparently there is a mistake in the Title, which speaks of "grants made by the present Parliament during its last session." As we have already passed a measure extending the life of the present Parliament, those words will require some slight alteration. This was intended to be the present Parliament's last session, but we have extended the life of the present Parliament.

THE CHAIRMAN: In checking up the Title of last year's Appropriation Bill, I find that the wording is exactly the same as that of this year's, except of course as regards the figures.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Very well.

Schedule put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

*Third Reading.*

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**STATE TRADING CONCERNS  
ESTIMATES, 1941-42.**

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the State Trading Concerns for the year ending the 30th June, 1942, now considered; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

*Divisions—State Brickworks, £37,725; State Hotels, £56,182; State Implement and Engineering Works, £89,610—agreed to.*

*Division—State Quarries, £12,036.*

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The time has arrived when the Minister should order an investigation into the State Quarry at Boya, in order that it might be put upon a paying basis and become a competitor with other quarries in the metropolitan area. I have been consulted about the state of affairs at the quarry by representatives of the men employed there, and have, with others, visited and inspected it. If members will examine the balance sheet of the quarry, they will find that a crusher which cost £8,000 has just been written off. Other obsolete equipment is at the quarry, and consists, among other things, of horse-drawn drays. These drays and other equipment might have been sold at the time they fell into disuse. The crusher, I am informed, was not in use for longer than one day. It is now obsolete, because the machines at present in use are designed to crush stones to the smaller size now required for various uses. I again visited the quarry on two occasions in company with a qualified engineer. He suggested that the crusher, which is on the flat portion of the quarry near the railway system, could be removed and a crusher capable of crushing stones to a smaller size installed in its place. If that were done the quarry could be put on a better paying basis. At one time 120 men were employed there. Today, only 15 or 20 are employed. I direct the Minister's attention to this matter in the hope that he will order the investigation I have suggested to be made.

Division put and passed.

*Divisions—State Shipping Service, £278,005; State Sawmills, £659,166; Wyndham Freezing Works, £377,520—agreed to.*

This concluded the Estimates of the State Trading concerns for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

**BILL—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT  
FUND.**

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

**BILL—FRUIT GROWING INDUSTRY  
(TRUST FUND).**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

**BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DUR-  
ATION AND GENERAL ELECTION  
POSTPONEMENT.**

Returned from the Council with amendments.

**BILL—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT  
FUND.**

*Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands (for the Premier) in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—Clause 3, definition of "loss of membership"—Add at the end of the definition the words: "but a member shall not be deemed to have lost his seat merely by the Legislative Assembly being dissolved."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The amendment is designed to cover another contingency. Members will recall that an attempt was made to clarify the definition of "loss of membership," and it was decided to leave it wide and not make specific mention of any case whereby loss of membership might be incurred. The amendment seeks to cover the time following a dissolution until a new member is elected. I can see no objection to it. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.



Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONEMENT.**

#### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5: Delete the word "may" in line 3 on page 3 and substitute the word "shall."

The PREMIER: The Committee will recall that when the Bill was passing through this Chamber certain amendments were moved by the member for East Perth. In order to expedite the passage of the message, I suggested to him that the amendments might be moved in the Council. I gave him my assurance that, if he agreed, that would be done. The first amendment merely involves the substitution of the word "shall" for "may." The Committee will recollect the discussion that took place on that point in this Chamber. There being no objection to the amendment, I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 5—Insert after the word "resolution" in line 11 on page 3 the words "carried by an absolute majority":

The PREMIER: This amendment deals with the position where the House, by resolution, can direct the Governor to issue a writ at any time that the Assembly, by resolution, considers an election may be held. That was the original proposal to the proviso to the last clause of the Bill to which both the member for East Perth and the Leader of the National Party consider we should add the provision that it should be by the statutory majority. That is the provision in the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: I draw the Premier's attention to the fact that when the discussion took place in this Committee the amendment

suggested was in these terms "carried by a constitutional majority" but here it is "an absolute majority." I do not know that there is very much difference.

The PREMIER: There is no difference, because a constitutional majority is an absolute majority and means that one more than half of the members of the Assembly has to vote for it. As this amendment means the same as the one suggested, and the principle is one which this Committee desired to agree to—except for the point I took—I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

#### *Second Reading.*

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [11.18] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been passed in another place where it was introduced by Mr. Piesse. He should be complimented for tackling a matter of this nature. This measure seeks to amend the Administration Act in three or four particulars. The first amendment is one which is purely to correct what is apparently an anomaly in the present Administration Act, in that one section refers to "one or more" sureties, and the next section refers to "one or both." The first amendment is to ensure that two shall be the maximum number in order to comply with the section which followed in the existing Act.

The next amendment in the measure provides that where an estate of a deceased person does not exceed £1,000 and administration is granted to the husband or widow of the deceased, no surety shall be required for the administration bond. It will be remembered that where the nett value of an estate does not exceed £500, the whole of it, under the Administration Act, goes to the surviving husband or widow. Where the nett value exceeds £500, the husband or widow is entitled to £500 and half the balance where there is no issue, and where there is issue, the husband or widow is entitled to £500 plus one-third of the balance. Therefore, if a person dies leaving property not exceed-

ing £1,000, the greater part of it, in some cases three-quarters of it, goes to the husband or widow. For those reasons it is not unreasonable to dispense with sureties to a bond in the case of estates not exceeding £1,000.

The amendment was put forward primarily because there has arisen increasing difficulty in getting bondsmen to sign because, quite aside from the large number who are unwilling, fewer people are willing and able to make the necessary affidavit of justification stating that after the payment of their just debts and liabilities, including any which they may have under bonds previously signed, they are well and truly worth £1,000, or whatever the sum may be. I can assure the House that this difficulty is not an imaginary one—especially in country areas. It will be seen later in my remarks that this measure is intended to deal, in other respects, particularly with these areas. This state of affairs has, in fact, rendered it extremely difficult to get administration of at least two cases to my knowledge. This may be some departure from the usual practice and, in fact, it is. But I remind members that it is limited to an estate not exceeding £1,000 where administration is granted to the husband or widow. I have already pointed out that a substantial share in the estate would be the property of the husband or widow in such circumstances.

The next provision is that there shall be no surety to the bond of the administrator required in respect of any portion of the value of real estate upon which there is a debt secured by mortgage. If there is real estate worth £1,000 with a mortgage upon it to the value of £500, then there would be no surety asked for in regard to the amount represented by the security of the mortgage; the reason being, of course, that the creditor under the mortgage is already fully secured, and the asset of real estate cannot be shifted. He is in a sound position. I am given to understand that that is the practice at present. But I am also told that there is nothing in the law itself which renders it necessary for that provision, as in the Bill, to be carried into effect. The object of the clause is to give statutory authority for the reduction of the liability of sureties instead of leaving the matter to the discretion of the Master, or the courts.

The third amendment is to provide that in Section 28 of the Act the liability of any

surety to an administration bond may be reduced subsequent to the bond having been executed. Section 28 at present provides that the court may at any time, on the application of any person interested in the estate, order the administrator to enter into a further bond in such sum as the court may direct. There are circumstances in which it would be equally desirable for the court to have the power to reduce the amount of the bond. An example is this, that one sometimes has to get a guarantee bond from an insurance company, and a considerable number of years elapse before the estate can be fully administered. An estate might be worth £1,000 at the beginning, but as infant beneficiaries become of age and are paid, so the amount is reduced, and I have known of cases where difficulty has been experienced in arranging for a reduction in the premiums. In other instances the administrator has allowed the policy to lapse completely, because of having to pay an annual premium. I admit that Section 30 of the Act provides as follows—

If, upon the application of a surety to any bond, it appears to the court that the estate is being or is in danger of being wasted, or that the surety is being or is in danger of being in any way prejudiced by the act or default of the person administering the estate, or that any surety desires to be relieved from further liability, the court may grant such relief as it may think fit.

That presumes the application of circumstances to which the amendment of this Bill does not make any reference. It is entirely a question of the court's discretion in reducing the liability for any reason it may think proper, without having to consider what are the provisions of Section 30.

We now come to what is really the major provision of the Bill. It is inserted with a view to assisting people who live outside the metropolitan area. At present the Act provides that district agents may be appointed in areas outside of 30 miles from the metropolis. As a matter of fact that provision is a dead letter and has never been made use of. References have been made in this House to the unfortunate position of persons who desire to make personal application which, of course, can only be made in respect of estates of less than £500 in value, and who live in the country. It was only last evening, if I remember correctly, that two or three members of this House dwelt at some length on the unfortunate position of

some of their constituents, who had been obliged to make long journeys to Perth in order to apply for administration for small estates. In some cases that was because there were no legal practitioners who could assist them, and in other cases because they were unable to bear the expense which might be entailed by that procedure.

The Minister for Justice will agree with me that it is reasonable to give the people of the country districts—by using the word “country” I mean the rural, goldfields and pastoral areas, and other areas not within easy reach of the metropolitan area—the right, so far as possible, to make personal application. The Act, for many years, has authorised the appointment of district agents, but the proviso is a dead letter. Another clause in the Bill repeals the existing provision and provides that “the magistrate of every local court held at a town beyond 50 miles from Perth shall be and is hereby appointed to act as a district agent for the Master.”

The Minister for Justice: Is that 50 miles or 20 miles?

Mr. WATTS: Fifty miles is what is in the Bill. The idea is that these personal applications can be lodged with the resident magistrate at the local court, and that they will be through him transmitted to the Master of the Supreme Court for that official's attention. The resultant transaction and issue of documents will be done through the district agent after the Supreme Court has completed the issue of the papers. The result will be that from a personal application point of view in an estate worth not more than £500, broadly speaking, as nearly as possible the metropolitan and other areas will be in a similar situation.

The last amendment proposed by the Bill is that if any person dies leaving property not exceeding £1,000 in value and the deceased person's place of abode was more than 50 miles from Perth, application may be made to the district agent—that is, the resident magistrate—by a country legal practitioner. One of the difficulties in regard to estates in which personal application cannot be made—that is, estates which are still of a comparatively small nature, and up to £1,000 has been taken as that figure—is that the country practitioner, even with the best of intentions, is obliged to employ a city agent. The net result of

this is that in many cases there is approximately double expenditure. This it is sought to avoid by the proposal in the Bill. I have here some notes on the subject from the Hon. H. V. Piesse, in the course of which he says—

This would result, I think, in a saving of expense. The district agent is not required, as in the case of a personal application, to provide any assistance in preparing the application. The remainder of the section provides the machinery whereby the application is transmitted by the district agent to the Master of the Supreme Court. In effect, the district agent is merely the agent of the Master for receiving applications and forwarding same to the Master. He is the channel through which the solicitor deals with the court. But there will be no need to have two sets of legal practitioners dealing with the court.

Those are the major provisions of the Bill; but since it came from the Legislative Council I have discussed it with the Minister for Justice, and if the Bill reaches the Committee stage it is my intention to ask that a new clause be inserted postponing its coming into operation until the 1st July, 1942. There is undoubtedly a reason why that should be done in that some little organisation and issue of instructions and so forth will be desirable. I think it only fair and proper, if these amendments or the substantial part of them are to be accepted, that time should be allowed for the purpose.

I would like to conclude by saying that the intention of the measure is to simplify, on the one hand, as regards the surety bond, certain difficulties which have come particularly to the notice of the sponsor of the Bill, who, as is well known, has taken, from a layman's point of view, a considerable interest in these matters, and has had as administrator some personal experience in connection with country estates—possibly to his detriment so far as time and trouble are concerned—and who has realised what the difficulties are possibly far better than I have, although I myself have some understanding of his position in the matter. The second part of the Bill is intended to cure what, as I said, has been brought under notice in this House on many occasions by country members from scattered portions of the State. I entirely agree with them in their desire to simplify matters. It has been suggested, of course, that the Public Trustee should act in these matters; but I

would point out that that would undo the benefit which the measure is intended to do, in that the Public Trustee would have to collect his fees on the corpus of the estate. The fees would probably be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., so that on a £500 estate there would be an immediate charge of £12 10s. As indicated last night by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), it would be far better if the applicant came to Perth for a holiday and spent the £12 in that manner, or, better still, and in conformity with the objects of the Bill, if he were prevented from spending the £12 at all. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [11.36]: I have no intention of opposing the Bill. It seems only fair and reasonable that persons living outside the metropolitan area should enjoy the same privileges as are accorded to those living within that area. Under the present Administration Act that is not the case. I shall support the measure although I am informed by the officers of my department that it is quite impracticable. They candidly tell me that there has been power in the Act since 1903 for the Master of the Supreme Court to create agents for various districts; but that it has not been done, because it was impracticable. This is one of the reasons why the Department of Justice is more or less opposed to the Bill. They seem to think that the magistrate will not have the necessary qualifications for preparing the papers, which are very complicated, and not by any means simple. The officers appear to be of opinion that magistrates will not have the qualifications required for the work, and that in consequence there will be much loss of time and considerable expense to the parties. However, that remains to be seen.

I myself know from dealings in these matters that the work is highly complicated. Further, I am informed that it will be necessary for the district agents to have even some knowledge of the Wills Act, which is said to be altogether outside the scope of magistrates, with the possible exception of one magistrate who is a fully qualified solicitor—I refer now to the magistrate at Bunbury. It is stated that the whole of the work of preparation is of a judicial character, and I am definitely informed that

many complications will arise. In some cases there might be many wills and, if they are not filled in correctly, copies will have to be kept and the will sent to Perth, or vice versa.

Mr. Watts: I suggest that regulations be made to cover that.

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:** The member for Katanning seems to think that difficulty can be got over. I could go on quoting instances. I have here 18 pages of notes, which I do not intend to read. All I have to say in addition is that I support the Bill with reservations. I am prepared to give the measure a trial. If it does not work out well and I see that it is impracticable, the Act will have to be repealed. But I agree with the member for Katanning in thinking that it will prove practicable. I cannot speak from personal experience on this subject, but from the little general experience that I do possess I know that a will is not a simple document, but a very complicated one, and that there must be mix-ups. My department informs me that there are numbers of legally trained men who do not understand this work, and that many applications filled in by the legal fraternity are returned as incorrect. That being the case, it is easy to understand what messes might be made by men not legally qualified.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Watts in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 8—agreed to.

New clause:

Mr. WATTS: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 8:—“This Act shall come into operation as from the first day of July, 1942.”

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and the report adopted.

*Third Reading.*

Read a third time and returned to the Council with an amendment.

*Sitting suspended from 11.41 p.m. to 1.55 a.m. (Saturday).*

# **BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on its amendments Nos. 1 and 2, and had agreed to the amendment made by the Assembly to No. 4.

# **BILL—APPROPRIATION.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

# **BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

## *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's amendment.

# **BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (POST- PONEMENT OF ELECTION).**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

## *Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [1.57] in moving the second reading said: We have just passed a Bill for an Act to prolong the life of the Legislative Assembly. This a complementary measure dealing with the same aspect in regard to the Legislative Council. The same reasons apply to this measure as were advanced for the passing of the other Bill. I do not desire to say much about the necessity for this Bill. It has been considered and agreed to by the Legislative Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM** (York) [1.58]: I have no objection to this measure. I have had the opportunity to read the Bill. What we have already done in this Chamber must be done in another place. I support the second reading.

Question put.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

## *In Committee.*

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

## *Third Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [1.59]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time, and passed.

*Sitting suspended from 2.2 a.m. to 2.10 a.m.*

# **BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1, 3 and 4.

## *In Committee.*

**Mr. Marshall** in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

**The MINISTER FOR LABOUR:** I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to the amendments made by the Council.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendments not agreed to.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

## *Assembly's Request for Conference.*

**The MINISTER FOR LABOUR:** I move—

That the Council be requested to grant a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and that the managers for the Assembly be the Hon. C. G. Latham, Mr. J. Hegney and the mover.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

**BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR  
RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMEND-  
MENT.**

*Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendment insisted on by the Council, and had appointed the Honorary Minister, Hon. J. Cornell and Hon. L. Craig as managers for the Council, the President's room as the place of meeting and the time forthwith.

*Sitting suspended from 2.15 a.m. to 2.15 a.m.*

**BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR  
RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Conference Managers' Report.*

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I have to report that the managers met and agreed that as the landlord and tenant regulations issued on the 28th November, 1941, and set out in Statutory Rule 275 under the Commonwealth National Security Act cover the point in disagreement, the Council's amendment be no longer insisted on. I may explain that the National Security regulations in question completely supersede Section 12 of the State Act, which was the section that the Council desired to amend. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

*Sitting suspended from 2.46 a.m. to 3 a.m.*

**BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR  
RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

**BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION  
ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference and intimating that the managers for the Council would be the Honorary Minister, Hon. L. B. Bolton, and Hon. Sir Hal Cole-

batch, and that the conference would be held in the President's room forthwith.

*Sitting suspended from 3.7 a.m. till 4.5 a.m.*

**BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION  
ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Conference Managers' Report.*

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I have to report that the conference managers met in conference on the Bill and reached the following agreement:—That the Council's amendment be agreed to. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

**BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION  
ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

**COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS.**

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [4.7]: That concludes the business for this session. I desire to extend to you, Mr. Speaker, to the Chairman of Committees and his deputies, to the officers of the House and staff, and to "Hansard," the greetings which at this time of the year are usually extended. Unfortunately, we are living in very stressful times, but I do extend to you, Mr. Speaker, the wish that you may enjoy the greatest happiness that can be derived from the times in which we are living.

At the conclusion of the last session I expressed the hope that the present year would see the end of the hostilities in which the Empire was engaged. Unfortunately those hopes have not been realised. Whilst we have had ups and downs in connection with this war, the position at present seems as serious as at any time since it commenced. We have now another formidable adversary added to the list of our enemies. One consolation is that all the countries likely to participate against us in this war have now entered the field, and we know exactly where we are.

The fact that we are confronted by a tremendous task in the achievement of final victory will bring out the best traditions of the British race. We will face the future with fortitude and resolution knowing that we have such a task, but knowing at the same time that the traditional courage of the British race will be cemented throughout the Empire in unity, and that whatever effort is necessary, and whatever sacrifices we are asked to make, the teachings of history will enable us to look forward with confidence to the future. Whenever the best effort is necessary for us to pull through adversity, it is always made.

So far as we, in this State, are concerned, the coming year will show that we will do a lot more in regard to the making of munitions. When in this State of such comparatively small population we know that a much bigger effort is being made—and the preparations carried out this year will result in a large increase in the production of the munitions of war to assist the Empire in its present struggle—we can feel some sense of satisfaction. This small State, together with the rest of the British Empire and the territory of the people allied with us—especially the United States—is making this tremendous effort to accelerate our war production in order to give us the necessary means in these days of mechanised warfare to carry our country through these times of stress and trial so that ultimately victory may be ours.

I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party for the co-operation and assistance they have extended to me as Leader of the House in considering legislation, and to extend my warm appreciation to my colleagues on the Treasury bench and to members on the Government side of the House respecting the loyal support I have received. I am sure that in the coming year any assistance the Government seeks in order to achieve a completely united effort will be forthcoming from all sections of the House. At present there are unfortunately many in the community who are confronted with all the elements of tragedy and to them we extend our full sympathy. With them, we are having anxious moments in this time of serious stress. To all who are affected by the war and its consequences, we extend our sympathy and goodwill.

In wishing you, Mr. Speaker, and the others I previously mentioned the best that can be made of a season during which goodwill should prevail, I trust that during the forthcoming year final and complete victory will be achieved by the British Empire and its Allies, and that we shall not this time next year be in the position we are today. I trust that 1943 will see the nation emerge victoriously from the tremendous struggle in which it is now engaged.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.12]:** With the Premier, I extend to you, Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, the officers of the House and the staff and to the "Hansard" staff the very best wishes possible at this particular time. We have passed through a strenuous and trying year, and before we meet again an even more severe test may be imposed upon us. If we look to the future in the sincere belief that we shall eventually be successful in the issue confronting the nation, I believe that spirit will assist materially towards achieving success.

I realise that the task of the Government in these times imposes a severe strain upon Ministers, and, although it has not seen fit to avail itself of the services of members of this House, I trust that during the recess the Government will provide some opportunity to them to fill the posts that their capacity fits them for, and that the result will be of benefit to the community generally. If the Government were to call upon members to assist, it would give a lead to the community and further emphasise that in the task ahead of the nation we are all willing and anxious to play our respective parts.

I trust that during the recess we will have better news than we have received just recently. I always feel with regard to the British race that some dire calamity is necessary to bring us to our bearings. We are apt to take things too easily but, when the call is made upon us, we respond well. That has been borne out during the last day or two by the response made by our young people, particularly since the last of the nations that could possibly join against us has been added to the number of our enemies. Personally I feel we can look to the future with a good deal of certainty of

success. It is useless to take too dismal an outlook upon life, and we must accept conditions as they are with equanimity and fortitude.

While no doubt you, Mr. Speaker, and those who have been mentioned, will not be able to spend as happy a time as in past years, still I hope all will be able to get some relief and happiness from the festive season. To the Premier, his Ministers and Government members generally, I tender my thanks for the treatment accorded me during the session. All Leaders of Opposition are trying, and I trust I have not been more trying than my predecessors in that position. While some hard things may have been said during debates, Ministers have been generous in their replies, and I recognise the kindly manner in which the discussions, generally speaking, have taken place.

To my own colleagues of the Country Party I tender my thanks, for no one could have had more loyal supporters than I have enjoyed in this Parliament. We have not always seen eye to eye, but the privilege of expressing his views is a right reserved to the individual. I realise I am not infallible, and I am likely to make mistakes, even from their point of view. To the Leader of the National Party and those associated with him I also tender my thanks, for they have very materially added to the strength of the Opposition during the year. They have accepted more of the work associated with the work of the Opposition than in past years, and I appreciate their great help. I trust that when next we meet the war clouds will have broken, and that we shall enjoy the sunshine presaging a brighter outlook and a speedy return to peace.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [4.16]: On behalf of those associated with me and on my own behalf, I wish to extend to you, Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, his Deputy Chairman, members of the staff of the House, and to the "Hansard" staff all good wishes for the coming season and in the years to come. We appreciate the help and consideration that you, Mr. Speaker, and the Chairman of Committees have always been ready to extend to us, the courtesy of the Clerks of Parliament and members of the staff, and the work that has been carried out by "Hansard." We have

passed through a period of very great anxiety, overshadowed by the danger that threatens our Empire. That has been the outstanding characteristic of the session now ending, but we are fortified by the knowledge that we are prepared to use our utmost exertions to bring the struggle to a successful issue.

To the Premier, his Ministers and those sitting with them we extend our good wishes for the season and for the years to come. To the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, and to the two Independents we also extend seasonal greetings. I desire to thank my associates for the unfailing help and support they have always given me during the session. We are now at a most critical period in our history, and I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in the sincere hope that when we next meet there will be a prospect of brighter days ahead.

**MR. SPEAKER** [4.18]: I thank the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the National Party for their very kindly references to myself, to the Chairman of Committees and the Deputy Chairman, the officers of the House, and the members of the "Hansard" staff. I would like to acknowledge that my work has been made easy by the splendidly efficient help given to me by the Chairman of Committees, the Deputy Chairman, and the officers of the House. This Christmas time we are passing through a critical stage, and I trust that before we meet again the dark clouds hovering over us will have disappeared and that our reunion will be under far happier circumstances than have characterised this closing session. Under present conditions while I believe it is impossible for this Christmas to be a very merry one for any of us, I repeat that I do trust when Parliaments meet again much happier circumstances will prevail.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [4.20]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed by Mr. Speaker.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 1.21 a.m. (Saturday).*