

holders holding at least ten per centum of the paid-up capital" inserted by a previous Committee be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 329—Registration and documents to be delivered to Registrar:

Hon. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That the following words (struck out by a previous Committee) be added to paragraph (c) of Subclause 1:—"Where there are directors in this State a memorandum shall be attached to the said list stating the powers of the local directors."

These words were struck out by a previous Committee and I think they should be reinserted. It has been said that directors simply draw their salaries and get office boys to lick the stamps on the receipts. If a shareholder desires to consult the directors he cannot do so; he must see the manager, who shelters himself behind the board.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Bill again reported with further amendments and the reports adopted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Does the Minister wish a re-print of the Bill? I have discussed this matter with the Clerk. The Bill is very lengthy and I doubt whether a re-print could be obtained tomorrow.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We will have to accept it as it stands.

*House adjourned at 2.18 a.m. (Friday)*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 7th October, 1943.*

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## QUESTIONS (3).

### RAILWAYS.

*As to Charge for Camp Equipment.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the total value of the tent, blankets, and other camp equipment loaned to "ways and works" men engaged on building and repair jobs away from home?

(2) What is the weekly rent charged to these men for this equipment?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £18 10s. per set.

(2) No rent is charged for the use of this equipment but, under the W.A.A.S.R.E. award (clause 36 k), employees when called upon to camp away from their home station for not less than three nights are provided with tent or van, and stretcher, rugs and cooking utensils, and granted a camping-out allowance of 2s. 6d. per day. If the equipment is not provided, the employee concerned receives an allowance of 8s. per day.

### MEAT.

*As to Army and Export Prices.*

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

(1) Can he state whether the arrangements for mutton contracts will provide for separate quotations for mutton supplied to the Armed Forces, and for that exported to the United Kingdom?

(2) Did the price he quoted on Tuesday last, namely, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb., refer to mutton supplied to the Armed Forces or to that which it is hoped to export?

The MINISTER replied: I have received a copy of this question asked without notice. I wish to make it clear that I stated in the course of my remarks two days ago that no contracts had been finalised with the United Kingdom. I assumed that if we can get the price of 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. it might be a satisfactory price representing, as it does, a marked increase on anything we previously had for United Kingdom contracts. I would think that when the matter is finalised there is likely to be a variation between the Service contracts and the United Kingdom contracts. That might reasonably follow. I have no information in connection with the United Kingdom contract price being accepted. I have asked the Controller of Meat Rationing to make it available as soon as anything is finalised.

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

**AXE HANDLE.***As to Sample.*

Mr. SEWARD (without notice) asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Did he receive by post an axe handle?

(2) Has he examined it?

(3) Is it a fair sample of local products for which his department is responsible?

The MINISTER replied: No, not yet.

**BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.***Third Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** [4.34]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

**MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER** (Subiaco): This Bill has neglected something and I ask members to listen for a few minutes while I tell them what I think has been omitted. We have failed to mention the commercial colleges of this city. About 800 children attend these colleges. At the present time they leave school at the age of 14 and take a year, perhaps, at a commercial college for which, of course, they pay. Some of them do not pay immediately on entering the college, but from their job later. However, they are accepted by the schools. These 800 children are well-trained—many of them pass their Junior University examination from these colleges and the majority, if not all of them, go out later and find jobs.

I have been asked today: What is to become of these commercial colleges if we raise the school-leaving age to 15 without making provision for them to be recognised? I understand that if a child at the age of 14 years leaves a State school to attend Christian Brothers' College, Hale School, or the Presbyterian Ladies' College, or some other recognised college, it can remain there for a year until attaining the age of 15 without any question arising. If, however, such a child wanted to go to a commercial college it would, perhaps, not be recognised as attending a school. I therefore raise the question so that the Minister can elucidate the point and let us know what can be done. If he can do nothing now, something may be done in another place so as to make these colleges conform with the schools now recognised as schools at which children can attend.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan): I desire to say a few words in order to register my approval and support of this Bill, concerning

which I did not speak during the second reading stage. There is no doubt that the future of the State depends on the children, and a measure which gives consideration along the lines of progress must be beneficial. Today the three R's are no longer sufficient for the education that must be acquired. They help, but beyond that they scarcely amount to anything. They start the work, certainly, and no doubt provide the foundation. The provision in the Bill to increase the leaving age from 14 to 15 is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. It shows that the State is moving into line with other countries where education is treated with the greatest consideration.

When a child leaves school at the age of 14, he leaves just at the time when the mind is developing, and the added year will mean very much more to him than the tuition that has been received in any previous year. A lad of 14 needs care and also right teaching. If he is given the right lead, he will prove a more capable man than would otherwise be possible. What applies to the boy applies equally to the girl; the consideration given in the one case must be given in the other. A reasonable time must necessarily be spent at school and the provision for an added year is fully justified. If a person makes a success of his life in spite of the fact that his education had been exceedingly meagre, his schooling having terminated at an early age, we cannot but agree that he would have proved a better man and better able to face the problems, anxieties and difficulties of life had he received a more reasonable amount of schooling.

There is a growing realisation of the importance of education, but I appreciate that associated with the raising of the school-leaving age are some problems. The parents, for instance, must be given consideration. If this proposal is carried to its ultimate and most successful conclusion an allowance should be provided for the children kept at school. This should apply without reference to the fact that the parents are indigent or otherwise. It should be their right and there should be no suggestion of indigency. In Russia consideration is given to families where the children are in attendance at school. Children are the greatest asset of the State. Tomorrow our places will be occupied by them.

Public opinion is undoubtedly appreciating the importance of education. Not many years ago the feeling was quite different, but everyone now recognises that each child is entitled as a right to a sound education. Having arrived in the world, which is becoming more and more difficult every year, the child has a right to face it equipped with knowledge that will enable him to earn a living and later to get married and establish a home of his own.

To make all these things possible will call for much consideration. There must be a wider and more careful allocation of labour. There must be a higher rate of payment for agricultural work. The necessity for regularly calling upon children to the detriment of their education to assist on the farm, in the dairy, the orchard or garden must come to an end. They must be afforded an opportunity to acquire the knowledge that this State aims at providing. Each well-wisher of the State must exert his influence in order to bring about such a state of affairs as will enable the children of agriculturists and city workers to give their attention to the schooling which, if they are to be successful in life and able to hold their own in competition with their fellows, they should receive.

The Minister for Mines: Are you stonewalling the Bill?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am speaking especially for the benefit of the Minister for Health, and it would not be to his disadvantage if he inclines an ear to what is being said. The work proposed to be done will be costly, but I am hopeful that what is expressed in the Bill will be found to be possible and I am sure that it will prove a payable proposition for the State. Every child should be examined before he is taught a trade or a profession. It is no use thinking that every boy will become a tradesman. Every boy—and also every girl—should be carefully examined before being trained for his or her future occupation. The child itself should have a say in that matter. We do not want all our boys to become clerks.

Mr. Marshall: We want them to work at printing presses!

Mr. SAMPSON: Exactly! We want them trained in every variety of trade, and those who desire to take up a country life should be trained as farmers. Every girl should not be encouraged to become a shorthand-

writer and typist, because in my opinion that is work which imposes a great strain upon the nerves. I know of no more nerve-racking work than taking notes from dictation and typing them and I say this with full acknowledgment to the skilled shorthandwriters who spend their working lives in this Chamber. Shorthandwriting and typing is one of the hardest of jobs.

The Minister for Labour: Could you not show your sympathy in a practical way towards those girls?

Mr. SAMPSON: We should all endeavour to show our sympathy in a practical way. Some men dictate a letter by opening their mouths out of which issues a volume of poorly constructed sound.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: That is what girls who take up this work are expected to do. There is other work, and more interesting work, in which they could be engaged. Girls must receive the same treatment as boys; they must have an opportunity for athletics, recreation and reasonable holidays.

We must have better schools. That is a first necessity. Teachers are not easily obtained. They are required to be highly skilled and specially trained, particularly if they are to undertake the additional year's teaching provided for in the Bill. I want the Treasurer to make funds available in order that we may get on with the job. This we cannot do unless we have teachers qualified to carry out the work. Teachers have a most difficult task. Many of them suffer from nervous prostration because they are compelled to care for children aged from about five years to 14; in small schools, a teacher has to conduct all the classes without help. That is particularly trying.

Reverting for a moment to girl students, I hope—as is the case in Tasmania and in parts of Queensland—that cookery, needlework and arts and crafts will be taught in all the schools. I know that manual training, as well as the subjects to which I have referred, is carried out in this State to some extent, but only to a small extent. Boys and girls should be given an opportunity to follow their natural bent. If we are to progress, that training must be undertaken and it is provided for in the Bill. We also need to consolidate our outlying schools. Hitherto, children in outlying districts have been attending small schools where teachers—we can without exaggeration term them

martyrs—have discharged their duties under the most difficult circumstances. More teachers should be employed so that the work may be more effective. In districts where agriculture is carried on, the curriculum should have an agricultural bias. That would necessarily entail expense, as I said earlier, but it would be well justified in view of the result that would be obtained. I admit this State has done something in that direction. I do not for one moment wish to reflect upon those who have been responsible for the progress which has been made but, after all, that can only be regarded as a start.

I ask this question: Does the Education Department fully appreciate its responsibilities under the Act? I hope so. I trust the Treasurer will make it possible for the Department to carry out the work I have suggested. No objection was raised to the Bill at the second reading stage and that is very pleasing. Specially trained teachers are required for country schools, where the education problem is becoming acute. Nevertheless, there should be no distinction made between the city and the country. We require consolidated schools. We have one at Mt. Barker, another at Toodyay and still another at Wickiepin. These are doing splendid work. When I was in Queensland I visited a consolidated school at Nambour, and it was a delight to see how interested the children were in their work and what both the boys and the girls were able to do. I hope that what is being done in those other States will be done here. I want to say a few words regarding education in the U.S.S.R. where it is compulsory for children to attend school from eight until 16 years of age. They do not begin school as early as our children, and it is claimed that children left to themselves without being forced to attend school before eight years of age are likely to be more robust.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that we are dealing only with the extension of the school-leaving age to 15.

Mr. SAMPSON: I desire merely to make a few remarks regarding what is done in Russia.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member's remarks concern the raising of the school-leaving age to 15, they will be in order.

Mr. SAMPSON: In Russia children are not allowed to start school until they are eight years of age.

Mr. Cross: They go to kindergarten before then.

Mr. SAMPSON: The hon. member might be permitted to say a few words. We have not seen him for a few days and he must be anxious to exercise his vocal chords. The children in Russia are noted for their vigour. I have that from someone who has visited Russia and perhaps the member for Canning, who knows everything, will be able to confirm that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canning is not mentioned in the Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: A few weeks ago in "The West Australian" there appeared a story told by Wing Commander Hudleston who is the son of a leading churchman of this State.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is that in connection with the Bill?

Mr. SAMPSON: Oh, yes! Wing Commander Hudleston was able to speak with earnestness and dependability regarding the robust health of the children of Russia who do not have to attend school until they are eight. I know that ultimately it is intended to extend the school-leaving age here to beyond 15 years. The Government does not intend to stop at 15. The ultimate object in Russia is to give each child 10 years at school. That is, the child attends from eight to 18 and then for a further two years goes to a technical school or a university, according to his vocational leaning. There is no differentiation between the treatment of boys and girls. A girl, if she wishes, may learn the same trade as a boy.

At the beginning of the sixteenth year, a boy or girl is apprenticed to a trade or takes up such calling as is decided. The children are not allowed to work in excess of five or six hours a day and are required to attend a continuation school in the evening. In the United States of America the average school-leaving age is 17. Each State has its own educational law governing the school-leaving age, but there are few States in which the school-leaving age is as low as 16. So far as I have been able to discover, there is no State where the school-leaving age is below 16. In most States it is 17, and in some States, as is the case in California, it is 18. The Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, Mr. Maisky, has issued a copy of a speech he delivered in

England, which is entitled "Soviet Youth." This contains some references to education in the U.S.S.R.

The Minister for Labour: You seem to have become red-ant-ed all of a sudden!

Mr. SAMPSON: I am very interested in these things and I find that every piece of knowledge whets my appetite for more. I commend that book to the member for Canning. It is available in Perth and is well worth reading. I support the Bill, which appears to be a definite move forward and will, I trust, be the beginning of better days.

MR. CROSS (Canning): I would not have spoken on the third reading but for some very crude remarks made yesterday by the member for Avon. A friend took some notes of the speech containing references to me, and as it seems to me that they were made with the absolute purpose of putting me in the wrong in the public eye—if that were possible—I intend to refute them. The hon. member, referring to the member for Canning said—

I have no desire to cause him any inconvenience but in looking over the report I was struck with one line in raised black type stating that he "dissents from this report and the recommendations." The member for Canning doubtless will be just as eloquent in supporting this proposal as he was when he hitherto condemned it. During the proceedings of the Select Committee he showed a superabundant faculty for destructive criticism. He complained that he had been gagged.

Many members will recall the time when the Select Committee's report was brought before the House. If I was not gagged on that occasion I do not know any time in my life when I was!

Mr. Sampson: You have never been gagged yet.

Mr. CROSS: When the Select Committee met to draw up its report, I said I wanted to make my position clear and to indicate that while there were some things in the report which I supported, there were others that I strongly resented. Right up to the last minute, almost just before the Chamber met, I tried to submit a minority report but the Committee would not let me. All the Committee would do was to let me put in the report what was written out for me, namely, the words "Mr. Cross dissents from the report and its recommendations." When the matter was discussed in this House, I endeavoured to put myself right and I think

I did it pretty well. The member for Avon moved that the report and evidence be printed and that the consideration of the report be made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House. I moved an amendment that the words "and evidence" be struck out. What I said then I will repeat now—

I wish to dissent from certain portions of the report and some of the recommendations. Throughout the inquiry I objected to the acceptance of hearsay statements as evidence. In all instances in which statements were made by laymen, such for example as those concerning the alleged injurious effects of certain types of furniture upon children, expert evidence should have been called either to substantiate or refute the statements. The selection of witnesses was made in a somewhat haphazard manner. It should have been carefully planned so as to give due weight to the various phases of the questions to be investigated. By not doing so the committee failed to take advantage of the expert advice that was available.

Later I continued—

It was abundantly clear that the department was fully aware of the disabilities that existed and that those disabilities would be removed when the financial position permitted. The Governmental costs in a State of this size, with the population of this State and its widespread distribution must necessarily be high. The State has every reason to be proud of the officers of the Education Department who are giving the State such excellent service for the money the Government is able to expend at present. . . . While I am strongly of the opinion that laymen should always have the right to criticise the educational system and other matters, I also feel that insufficient expert advice was sought by the committee. The report in some instances includes only a superficial examination of the points raised, and therefore will not stand the light of expert criticism. My reason for moving that the evidence be not printed is that the great bulk of it is not worth printing. It includes lengthy statements made by laymen who had practically no knowledge, or very little knowledge, of the points they desired to bring before the committee. The report of the committee includes recommendations relating to the Teachers' College. No inspection of the college was made and no evidence was called from the college. It would be a waste of money to print the evidence, a great deal of which is not worth printing because it is rubbish. Statements were made by incompetent witnesses and expert evidence was not called. The only evidence of real value was that given by the Director of Education and his officers. Therefore I strongly oppose the printing of the evidence and ask members to support the amendment.

Evidence was given to the Select Committee by a number of people. Some of it was tendered by a lady named Mrs. Greenwood and

some of it by another lady named Mrs. Kretchmar. I asked them if they were experts on education. Mrs. Kretchmar replied, "No." Then I asked her who prepared the statement she had produced and she said it had been prepared by Mrs. Greenwood and herself and she added, "We were helped us to the special addendum by another member of our organisation."

I asked quite a number of questions, but the truth of the matter is that when the Select Committee's report was prepared I was not allowed to submit a minority report which would have set out my position clearly. Therefore, I strongly resent the attempt by the member for Avon to misrepresent me, and to make out that I was strongly opposed to raising the school-leaving age, because nothing of the kind was in my mind. I could say a good deal about this report. I am glad that this House at that time carried my amendment and not the motion moved by the member for Avon. There is still a copy of the evidence in the Chamber, which can be read by members if they so desire. What I said five years ago still stands: That if evidence is to be called on this question from the Education Department or any other department it should be expert evidence and not the evidence of laymen.

Some of the evidence tendered on that occasion was merely hearsay. Some of it was read from books which anybody can buy. A broadcast made over the B.B.C. was tendered as evidence at that inquiry but I do not regard that as evidence at all. It is merely hearsay. I resent the remarks of the member for Avon, who has tried to put me in the wrong, and to make members believe I am opposed to the extension of educational methods in this State, whereas the reverse is the case. I believe now, as I believed then, that not only the Education Department, but the Government also is aware of the weaknesses in the system and that it was entirely lack of funds which prevented the Government from introducing reforms. At present finance is easier and it may be possible to extend the school-leaving age. I hope that before the Minister proclaims the measure he will take steps to make the necessary provision for additional school rooms, because I know that in my electorate the school rooms are not sufficient to cope with the number of children in attendance. Before extending the school-leaving

age, the Government must certainly cater for children who are in attendance at the schools today. In my electorate there are at State schools nearly 300 children in excess of the number for whom accommodation has been provided. I realise that that large increase is principally due to the influx of population on account of the war. Nevertheless, it is of little use extending the school-leaving age until provision is made not only to meet the requirements of the children at present in attendance but of the increased number that can be anticipated later on.

**MR. BOYLE (Avon):** I mentioned during the course of the debate last night that I regretted the member for Canning was not present to hear some of the oral bouquets I desired to throw his way. This afternoon I could not help being impressed—if I may put it that way—by the vigorous defence of himself by the hon. member. He certainly must realise the necessity for some attempt on his part to justify, from his place in the House, his attitude in connection with the Select Committee.

**Mr. Cross:** You first justify your Gestapo methods of five years ago!

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. BOYLE:** As I mentioned, the member for Canning inscribed on the report the very definite statement that he dissented from it and the recommendations of the Select Committee.

**Mr. Cross:** You would not allow me to put in anything else, and you know it.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. BOYLE:** It did not rest with me what the member for Canning should do.

**Mr. Cross:** Of course it did!

**Mr. BOYLE:** It did not rest with me to prevent the hon. member from doing what he liked. That was quite in his own hands. The majority of the members of the Select Committee decided on the tenor of the report, and the member for Canning had his opportunity to dissent. Without making any special effort he merely inscribed plainly on the report that he dissented from its contents and the committee's recommendations. To come along now with an explanation of his connection with the Select Committee and to voice his exception to what was done, is futile. I think other members of the Select Committee will bear out my statement when I say that never

once did the member for Canning object to the way the Select Committee was conducted.

Mr. Cross: I was objecting all the time, and I told you that.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: You did nothing of the sort.

Mr. BOYLE: Of course not! The member for Canning never once raised any objection. As I have repeatedly stated, the Select Committee realised that as he was the only member from the Government side of the House who took part in the work of the committee, he had to be treated with the utmost consideration in the circumstances. To complain now about being gagged—

Mr. Cross: Why did you not allow me to put in a minority report?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canning must keep order.

Mr. BOYLE: The hon. member said he was gagged. That accusation is quite wrong. As I pointed out previously, in the course of the 17 sittings the member for Canning asked 117 questions. When Mr. Thomas, the first witness, was before the committee, his evidence was in the nature of a friendly exchange between the member for Canning and the secretary of the Teachers' Union. So much was that so that at 1 p.m. the members of the committee decided that it would be better if Mr. Thomas did not return to continue with his evidence.

Mr. Cross: What was the chairman of the Select Committee doing?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BOYLE: The chairman was being most tolerant to the hon. member; in fact, he was far more tolerant than the circumstances warranted. Never in the course of my public life, and never when I have acted as chairman of conferences, have I ever attempted to gag anyone or to interfere with the right of free speech. I have in mind a lady witness from the Country Women's Association, Mrs. Williams, of Nungarin.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not know that all this has much to do with the Bill.

Mr. BOYLE: I am replying to allegations by the member for Canning.

Mr. SPEAKER: The debate seems to be developing into a battle between two members as to what they did or did not do.

The Minister for Mines: It looks like a private brawl.

Mr. Doney: Who started the private brawl?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Hon. members will keep order!

Mr. BOYLE: I do not wish it to go out to the public that the member for Canning was gagged on the committee in any shape or form.

Mr. SPEAKER: It will not affect the Bill whether he was gagged or was not gagged.

Mr. BOYLE: The member for Canning talked about the necessity for expert witnesses. Of the 22 who appeared before the Select Committee 12 were experts. They included Professor Whitfield, of the University of Western Australia; Mr. Hadley, the Director of Education; Mr. Coleman, the Chief Inspector of Schools; Mr. Eakins, the Controller of the correspondence classes; Mr. Lynch, the then Superintendent of Technical Education; the head teacher of the Junior Technical School; Miss Bell, of the Princess May School at Fremantle. Then there was a gentleman from Victoria Park who was called at the particular request of the member for Canning, and there was the headmaster of the Katanning State School. I venture to say that the Select Committee almost exhausted the whole panel of the educational experts of Western Australia.

Mr. Cross: I did not object to one of them. I asked—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BOYLE: The member for Canning referred to Mrs. Greenwood and Mrs. Kretchmar. Those ladies had a perfect right to attend and give evidence. We invited evidence from all sections of the community. Why not? Our intention was to ascertain whether there were any weaknesses or deficiencies in the educational system of the State, and I am convinced that those two ladies placed before us information that was of value. They demonstrated on the basis of a carefully-prepared report the salient features of the Russian system of education, and showed us that one-third of the income of Soviet Russia was devoted to the promotion of education throughout the Soviets. That certainly was information of value to us. Then again the member for Canning said that the year 1938 was a particular period when the Government could not afford to embark upon educational reforms. If that is so, it is most notable that that period was

about coincident with the time when the Government granted a 5s. per head prosperity loading on to the wages bill.

The Premier: Who did that?

Mr. BOYLE: I am sorry; I should have said that that was done by the Arbitration Court, and, of course, not by the Government. The fact remains that the prosperity of the State at that time was allegedly such that 5s. per head could be added to the State's wages bill. If that was the real position, then I should say that the recommendations of the Select Committee were particularly opportune. I shall not labour the question, but on behalf of the Select Committee I object to the suggestion that any member was gagged or interfered with in any way. If the member of Canning wishes to defend himself and make himself right with the public, he will have ample opportunity to do so, but I am afraid he will find it very difficult to explain that single line he added to the report in which he intimated that he dissented from the recommendations of the Select Committee.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): Since the subject matter of the Bill under discussion has been, on the admission of the Premier, based on the findings of the Select Committee—

The Premier: I did not say that! Don't you continue along those lines. It is bad enough for one man on your side of the House to misrepresent the position.

Mr. DONEY: I do not know that there is any misrepresentation about it at all.

The Premier: Yes, you know there is.

Mr. DONEY: I may have made an error, but I do not think so. I remember that when I interjected that the principal proposal in the Bill was one of the recommendations of the Select Committee, the Premier assented and made some remark about the Bill being based on the committee's report.

The Premier: Nothing of the kind. I said that people sometimes saw the light. That is all.

Mr. DONEY: With regard to the complaint lodged by the member for Canning, I say it is altogether too late in the day for him to endeavour to clear himself of the obloquy that quite properly attaches to him regarding his actions as a member of that body. What the member for Canning has outlined in his remarks is his attitude as he

now wishes it had been. What I am dealing with is his attitude as it actually was. It was most noticeable from start to finish of the debate associated with the appointment of the Select Committee, during the course of the inquiry and in connection with the report presented to Parliament, that the member for Canning was, throughout the whole time, most pointedly and deliberately obstructive. He voted against the appointment of the Select Committee, yet for some strange reason he was one of the two members selected to represent the Government on that committee, from which I am afraid we appreciated what the intentions of the Government and of the hon. member were in connection with the inquiry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member is getting well away from the Bill.

Mr. DONEY: Then I will return to the point I was making before I digressed. Throughout the proceedings of the Select Committee, the member for Canning was absolutely of no help whatever. On the contrary, his attitude was frequently offensive to lady witnesses, and he complained that the wrong witnesses were being called.

Mr. Cross: Why make a wild statement like that? You know it is not true!

Mr. DONEY: Very well! I will read an extract from "Hansard" of the 7th December, 1938.

Mr. Cross: That had nothing to do with the Select Committee.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: Pardon me, I will show that it refers to that body. Quoting from my speech in which I referred to the member for Canning and his statements I said—

He had every opportunity to ask for and secure what he wanted in the way of expert witnesses, because the chairman was most amenable to reason in respect of requests to that end. It is therefore absurd for him to say that expert evidence should have been obtained and was not obtained.

Mr. Cross: Then why was not Professor Cameron called?

Mr. DONEY: The member for Avon has already given a list of some of the educational experts who gave evidence. I continued in my statement—

The hon. member asked for the attendance of a schoolmaster named Atkinson, and kept on insisting that he should be called. When that gentleman was called, he (the member for Canning) failed to attend.

That would seem to set aside entirely the hon. member's complaint.



*Point of Order.*

The Minister for the North-West: On a point of order!

Mr. Speaker: The member for Williams-Narrogin will resume his seat.

The Minister for the North-West: Is a post-mortem on the attitude of the member for Canning or any other member in order on the third reading of the Bill? It appears to me that the discussion is merely holding up the business and is developing into an argument as to what one member of the Select Committee said and what another did.

Mr. Speaker: The discussion is certainly not in order. The member for Avon made a statement and the member for Canning was allowed to reply, but the discussion has developed into a post-mortem that is certainly not in order.

Mr. Doney: I suggest that what the member for Canning has been allowed to say has been part of the debate, and therefore I might be permitted to reply to the matters mentioned by him.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. member may proceed.

Mr. Doney: I have concluded what I wanted to say.

*Debate Resumed.*

**MR. WATTS** (Katanning): I would like before this third reading is carried to subscribe to the remarks made in the earlier stages of the debate by the member for Subiaco. The hon. member raised the question of the position of commercial colleges—by which name we know them—under this measure. Representations have been made to me in regard to their position, and I am hopeful that in another place some consideration may be given to that position. I understand that at the present time they serve a useful purpose in regard to youngsters who have left school at 14 years of age but who wish to undertake studies in particular lines to fit them for business occupations. I am also given to understand that the services the colleges render in a number of cases are highly valuable. Young people get instruction in subjects which they particularly require to know and which probably they could not obtain a knowledge of by remaining a further year at school. I do not think, anyhow, that there should be any unnecessary

restriction imposed on people who have been carrying on a lawful occupation in, I understand, a reasonable and proper manner.

When one considers the Bill—which I have done since this matter was discussed with me—it does not seem difficult to amend the measure so as reasonably to cover these people as long as the Director of Education is able to approve of them. We have already a number of these schools—there are so many of them that I need not name any—which are efficient for the instruction of children six years old and upwards. These schools are obliged to make certain returns and to satisfy the Education Department in various ways of their efficiency. They are, for instance, subject to inspection by departmental inspectors. It seems to me that in view of the extension which, when the Bill comes into operation, will take place in the school-leaving age, an effort should be made to include the commercial colleges in that provision of this Bill. The Minister should have the fullest discretion to make inquiries and investigations as to whether they are not worthy of consideration—although I do not think that will be the case.

Further, the Minister should exercise his discretion to decide where the provision should not apply. As regards commercial colleges, at the present time that is not necessary, as they do not receive their pupils until they are beyond the school-leaving age. The Act makes no provision for their receiving approval. I submit this Bill might provide that the Act should be amended to give the Minister discretion to approve of them provided they are prepared to devote regulation hours to the teaching of the children and that the teaching is such as the Education Department approves of. I trust the Minister will see that the Bill receives consideration from those aspects when it goes to another place. All I seek to ensure is that there shall be authority in the department to make inquiries and give the necessary approval. That is not in the Act, because this type of school does not appear in it.

I did not speak on the second reading, but I supported the Bill. I can understand quite well that numerous arrangements will have to be made before the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 years can take effect. We all subscribe to the need for better and more education for our young people, provided that the education is of a type to suit them for the occupation they intend to fol-

low. That is why I think there may be room for the commercial colleges to which I have referred. There may be room for other types of educational institutions as well, but these might easily come under the control of the Government in the same way as agricultural colleges and technical schools do. No difficulty should arise in regard to them, because the Government will class them as schools already under the Act. The measure is a necessary one. I think we shall have to assist sometimes in overcoming difficulties which may arise in the country, but those difficulties will exist mainly during the war, when there is a shortage of manpower and children are called on to do odd jobs which in normal times they would not be called upon to do.

I believe that when the war is over, all sections of the community will in the interests of their children and in the interests of the State as a whole drop any objections they may have to legislation of this kind. It will pay them handsomely to do so, and to realise that almost every occupation in which we engage in this State is becoming more and more scientific. On the farm education is more necessary now than ever it was. A man or a woman running a farm, for example, must be capable of dealing with many problems and of reading up many subjects—which was not requisite a decade or two ago. I hope that the necessary amendments will be made in another place.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands): I desire to say a few words regarding the appeal made by the member for Subiaco, which has already been supported by the Leader of the Opposition, to the Minister to include in the present measure provision whereby schools known as commercial colleges will be recognised as being efficient for the purpose of complying with the compulsory attendances that will be obligatory under the Bill, if it becomes an Act. I have looked up the principal Act and find that Section 32 provides that the proprietor or headmaster or principal teacher of any school, not being a Government school, can apply to the Minister in writing to have such school inspected for the purposes of this Act. In that section there is no limitation as to age; so it will apply except for one portion, the portion providing that there shall be inspection of inefficient schools and that the inspector

has to find that the school is efficient, and that the instruction given by it includes English, history, geography and drawing. It is only the matter of the specification of such subjects which requires to be amended.

I understand that all commercial colleges do not include history or geography, or sometimes even arithmetic, the reason being that these are not the subjects they are advertising themselves to teach. The amendment would be a very good one, and I suggest that there will be no trouble in having it made in another place. It is highly desirable, as was well pointed out by the member for Kalgoorlie on the second reading, that efforts should be made to induce the child to study subjects which will help it in the calling it intends to try to follow. There should be almost periods of vocational training. But, at any rate, if the colleges serve a useful purpose, as appears on all hands, they ought not to be interfered with, as possibly they would be if the Bill were not amended.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (in reply): I think the only point on which the House will expect me to reply is the one point raised by the member for Subiaco. I believe it was understood by members that it is not the intention of the Government or the department to impose hardships upon children. The object of the measure is to increase the opportunities for school children. I am not in a position to say definitely whether a commercial college would come under the clause as to efficiency. Not expecting the debate to be so protracted I did not obtain that information. However, I shall draw the attention of the Minister for Education to this discussion.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

## **BILL—ELECTORAL (WAR TIME).**

### *Council's Amendments*

Schedule of 22 amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

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

No. 1. Clause 5 (1), page 2:—Delete the words “during the present war and for a period of 12 months thereafter” in lines 33 and 34.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: My intention is to ask the Committee to agree to the whole of these amendments. I now move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

If the suggested deletion is made, the measure will operate not for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter, but only to the 31st December 1943, which will be provided for at the end of the Bill.

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

No. 2. Clause 5 (2), paragraph (a), page 3:—Insert after the word “Forces” in line 3, the words “who is not.”

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. McDONALD: I notice from the evidence given before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council that there appears to be some doubt whether a number of the soldiers who are intended to be covered by this legislation will have the opportunity to vote. It appears there are 11 forms which need to be printed; and the printing cannot at all events be completed until after nomination day, when there will be only one month to elapse between nomination day and polling day, by the time the printing is done and the necessary papers are despatched. It appears from the evidence that the time factor, in view of the date of election, is material.

The Chief Electoral Officer said in his evidence—

I asked for the maximum period between the closing of nominations and election day because it would be the only chance we had. As it is, I doubt whether we will reach them on account of the delay in printing.

The Chief Electoral Officer pointed out that owing to shortage of staff in the printing office it was not possible to get through all the printing as would be the case in normal times. I draw the attention of the Minister to the views of that officer as given before the Select Committee in the hope that every endeavour will be made to ensure that soldiers who are entitled to vote as a result of this legislation will have an opportunity to do so.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We have already been advised of the position and we know how anxious the Chief Electoral Officer is about it. That is why we are trying to get this Bill through as quickly as possible, so that everyone concerned may get on with the job. But for the existing situation, we might not have agreed to all the amendments made by another place.

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

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the Minister that he might move in one motion that all the amendments made by the Council be agreed to. Members would still be enabled to speak to any particular amendment merely by quoting the number of such amendment.

No. 3. Clause 5 (2), paragraph (a), page 3:—Delete the word “whether,” line 3

No. 4. Clause 5 (2), paragraph (a), page 3:—Delete the words “or over,” line 3

No. 5. Clause 5 (2), paragraph (a), page 3:—Insert the word “and” before the word “who” in line 4.

No. 6. Clause 5 (2):—Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (a) to stand as paragraph (b) as follows:—

(b) who is under the age of twenty-one years and who has served outside Australia and is serving with any unit within Australia or the area referred to in the preceding paragraph.

No. 7. Clause 5 (2) (b):—Delete all the words after the word “Forces” in line 11, and substitute—

(i) who is not enrolled as an elector and is not under the age of twenty-one years; or

(ii) is under the age of twenty-one years and has served outside Australia.

No. 8. Clause 9, paragraph (a):—Delete the words “or non-commissioned” in lines 11 and 12.

No. 9. Clause 11 (2), page 5:—Delete the words or “non-commissioned” in lines 28 and 29.

No. 10. Clause 16, page 7:—Delete the words “or non-commissioned” in lines 5 and 6.

No. 11. Clause 18, paragraph (c):—Delete the words “Returning Officer for that District” in line 15, and substitute the words “Chief Electoral Officer.”

No. 12. Clause 19 (2), paragraph (c):—Delete the words "Returning Officer for that District" in line 33 and substitute the words "Chief Electoral Officer."

No. 13. Clause 23:—Delete the words "or non-commissioned" in line 40.

No. 14. Clause 25 (2), page 10:—Delete the words "forty-six or" in line 32.

No. 15. Clause 25 (2), page 10:—Insert after the word "forty-seven" the words "or forty-eight."

No. 16. Clause 26:—Delete this clause.

No. 17. Clause 30: Delete the word "returning" in line 11, and substitute the words "Chief Electoral."

No. 18. Clause 35:—Delete the words "during the present war and twelve months thereafter" in lines 37 and 38, and substitute the words "until the thirty-first day of December, one thousand nine hundred and forty-four and no longer."

No. 19. Schedule No. 1:—Insert a new clause (4) as follows:—

(4) I am not under the age of twenty-one years or I am under the age of twenty-one years and I have served outside Australia.

No. 20. Schedule No. 2:—Insert a new clause (5) as follows:—

(5) I am not under the age of twenty-one years or I am under the age of twenty-one years and I have served outside Australia.

No. 21. Schedule No. 3:—Insert a new clause (5) as follows:—

(5) I am not under the age of twenty-one years or I am under the age of twenty-one years and I have served outside Australia.

No. 22. Title:—Delete the words "to make provision, for the duration of the present war and twelve months thereafter."

On motions by the Minister for Justice the foregoing amendments made by the Council were agreed to.

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

## BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance.

2, Mine Workers' Relief Act Amendment. Without amendment.

## LOAN ESTIMATES, 1943-44.

### *In Committee.*

Resumed from the 5th October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

*Vote—Departmental, £16,500 (partly considered):*

**MR. WATTS** (Katanning) [5.50]: I have not very much to say on these Loan Estimates. For a few years now they have been relatively unimportant in view of the great restrictions that have been placed on Loan expenditure during the war. In the majority of years prior to the war we were dealing with sums of money which ran into millions of pounds on these Loan Estimates. At present, and rightly so, we are dealing only with money which runs roughly into a few hundred thousand pounds, and which is really only to enable essential things to be done, and not even all of them. There are one or two matters to which I should like to refer in the few minutes I propose to occupy on this subject. The first is a statement made by the Premier in regard to our rights under the agreement made with respect to the Commonwealth Savings Bank, which provided that we would draw 70 per cent. of the excess deposits. The Premier pointed out that only a small fraction of the amount to which we were entitled has been drawn, and that he had received a request from the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank that he should limit the amount to an even smaller fraction for the balance of the year. The Premier informed the Committee that he had declined to accede to that request, but had agreed not to go beyond the approved borrowing schedule.

I should like to hear from the Premier whether, in the event of there being an increase in the savings bank deposits after the war, we are likely to lose our rights in the 5¼ millions or so which we are not drawing out but which we could draw if the war position was not with us.

The Premier: That is a proposal about which negotiations are now proceeding.

**MR. WATTS:** If that is the position and we are not to lose our rights over that money, I shall be satisfied. It seems to me that the only alternative open to the State so that we may not run the risk of finding ourselves without this money at the conclusion of hostilities—money which is coming, I think, from the right source and at a comparatively small cost to the State—we should

claim to take it now and invest it in Commonwealth War Loans, so that it may be the property of the State instead of merely existing in the Commonwealth Bank. If the Premier has undertaken negotiations in this matter, in all probability he will be successful and, if so, there will be no complaint in that regard.

I was struck by a rather ingenuous statement made by the Premier when introducing the Estimates. He said that in the depression years the trust funds were exhausted and the State fell into a rather awkward financial position. I do not know what he thinks are the depression years. I have always laboured in the belief that they started in 1929 and finished roughly at the beginning of 1934. They really comprised the years 1930 to 1933. May I point out that during the greater part of that time, all but a few months was the only period during the last 20 years when there had not been Governments of the political complexion of the Premier's. If this is the period to which the hon. gentleman referred, his statement requires some clarification. The trust funds were not exceeded during those years that I have endeavoured to define as the depression years—and surely no-one could seriously argue that definition—they were exceeded before that period.

The Premier: Not for very long.

Mr. WATTS: It would have been more generous of the Premier if he had undertaken to explain this statement, which I have suggested is somewhat naive or ingenuous. He might have told us that the trust funds were actually exceeded during the period in which a Government of the same complexion as today's Government, and the Premier himself to some extent because he was in office, was in charge of the affairs of the State, and he might have said that it took the Government that succeeded that Administration and was in power during those depression years a great deal of time and effort and financial strategy to get the State out of the awkward financial position which had been created substantially, if not entirely, by its predecessors.

The Premier: I think I was more generous about the difficulties experienced by the people of that time.

Mr. WATTS: I am taking exception to the phraseology of the Premier. I understood that the depression years existed between 1930 and 1934 and, in consequence,

the statement that in the depression years all these funds were exhausted could be taken to imply that the Government of the day exhausted them, when the facts are to the contrary.

The Premier: That is a fact, but those concerned were not entirely blameworthy.

Mr. WATTS: Those funds were exhausted at the end of 1929.

The Premier: Not until 1932.

Mr. WATTS: That could not be correct because in the session of the year 1930, about the month of April or May, the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, as will be found in "Hansard," setting out the position word by word and line by line, said that the State was about £8,000,000 overdrawn and that its creditors were becoming restless. That was within five or six months of the end of the year 1929. The Premier of that day set out in the record which the Premier himself can look up, the fact that various funds had disappeared and had been used up during the year and the years before, and it had not been possible to replace them.

Mr. North: He said we had lived beyond our means.

Mr. WATTS: He said it was the practice of that time and that it had led to somewhat drastic results. It was not his fault. The impression might get abroad, from the Premier's remarks, that the position was the reverse of that which I have indicated.

The Premier: That was not intended.

Mr. WATTS: We have cleared up that point, as we always do when we have a little discussion. Then there is the question of metropolitan transport. That position has to some extent been allowed to drift in recent years. I am not referring to the recent years since the beginning of the war but the last seven or eight years. I admit there has been an increase in the number of vehicles available and an increase in the distance of some of the routes covered. There has grown up great congestion and there has been considerable difficulty from time to time, even before the war, experienced by people living some distance from their business places in getting sufficient transport to suit their needs. We have a lot of room in Western Australia; our metropolitan area is not cramped. We have to go a long way to cater for a comparatively small population. Trolley-bus lines are now running out beyond Wembley, a consid-

erable distance, and are likely to go even longer distances than that. Soon there will be demands for increased services in all directions in the metropolitan area. Because of these long distances and the relatively small population compared with metropolitan areas elsewhere in the world, we have to pay particular attention to the metropolitan transport problems. That aspect of the matter has not been given sufficient consideration by the responsible authorities. The Premier told us that a number of new trolley-buses was being obtained.

We have had debates in the House recently on the subject of how the trolley-buses are being loaded and unloaded, and concerning the congestion and difficulty which exist in regard to them. It was not until a debate took place in the House, as I understand the position, that the Government made any determined effort to evolve a means to overcome the difficulty. The committee appointed, as a result of the debate in this House is, I believe, taking some steps which I hope will be satisfactory. We should look forward to the avoidance of these difficulties in our metropolitan area, and not wait to be forced into action.

The Minister for Justice: Action has been taken.

Mr. WATTS: It was not noticeable when the debate took place, and that was only a few weeks ago. There is a great need for efficient transport at low cost. We should have more thought for the future and not go along from day to day as we have done in the past. The Premier made some reference to the goldfields water supply extension. This supply now serves many areas apart from the goldfields. There was, undoubtedly, a conception of statesmanship that has few equals in the world when this scheme was decided upon, and, bearing in mind the capacity of the engineers then, it was something of a miracle. That it has been so successful is a tribute both to the engineers and the Government that put it into operation. I understand its capital cost at the 30th June, 1941, totalled £5,959,000. It seems to have been handled, from a financial point of view and so far as the payment of charges incurred are concerned, in a very satisfactory manner.

A sum of £2,500,000 has been redeemed by sinking fund. Certain debentures have been paid off, and, remaining out of that

capital expenditure at the 30th June, 1941, is an amount just over £1,750,000. The undertaking supplies in addition to the goldfields a great number of agricultural districts and towns, mining centres and other places. Without it, of course, the goldfields of Western Australia would not have been able to exist. There are, however, numerous anomalies in regard to the rating of those who use the scheme, and the Minister for Works has received a deputation on the subject. I find that some of the agricultural lands are rated at 6d.; some at 4½d.; some at 3d. and some at 2d. The charges for water vary to a large extent. The goldfields areas are charged varying sums for the service rendered to them. The cost, for example, per thousand gallons ranges as high as 10s. in some places, in others it comes down to 7s. 3d. and in others it is as low as 2s. 6d. I do not think, despite the reply given by the Minister to the deputation and published in the Press, that is a suitable state of affairs to be allowed to continue. There is little encouragement to a farmer who requires 1,000 gallons of water to find that he has to pay a holding fee of £5, a rate of 6d. per acre and probably £50 for water whether he uses it or not if he has a substantial block, and if he uses excess he would have to pay more.

The Minister for Justice: Would you make it a flat rate throughout Western Australia?

Mr. WATTS: I would not say that. Western Australia is a very wide area covering, as it does, 960,000 square miles of the Commonwealth.

The Minister for Justice: More than that.

Mr. WATTS: That is near enough. It is time that something approaching equality was achieved in connection with these different districts. The agricultural districts should be placed on an equality basis, one with the other. The goldfields concerned should have some measure of equality one with the other. Some are rather low and others inordinately high. No-one would suggest that those that are low should be increased in order to bring about equality. The only thing to do, therefore, is to bring the high ones down to the level of those that are not so high. The lack of foresight in this matter has been most noticeable because it has given rise to this terrific inequality which today calls for rectification. I do not think we could do that on the face, but on the basis of agricultural areas and towns,

and mining towns and mines themselves which would be included among the mining towns—

The Minister for Justice: At Norseman people pay 10s. per thousand gallons.

Mr. WATTS: I had that in mind when I said they paid an inordinately high amount. I do not say that the whole of Western Australia should be put on that basis, but that some better method than the existing one should be found so as to give satisfaction and justice to the various sections concerned in the use of this supply of water.

The Minister for Justice: Would you make it a flat rate?

Mr. WATTS: I have said sufficient to indicate that the matter could be dealt with on the basis of the agricultural areas and agricultural towns, and mining towns and areas, being equalised as among themselves. By doing that we would take a step in the right direction without getting involved in the treatment of the whole of Western Australia which consists of 900,000 odd square miles.

The Minister for Works: You are aware of what the price was before the scheme was installed?

Mr. WATTS: I am aware that it was something extraordinary; that champagne could be purchased almost as cheaply!

The Minister for Works: It was up to 50s.

Mr. WATTS: That is not a very progressive outlook. We do not want to say that what was good enough for grandfather is good enough for us. The whole trend of modern thought is that what is good enough for us is not good enough for those who come after us, let alone that what was good enough for grandfather is good enough for future generations. We do not want to go back to the days of the pioneers; we must go forward. Therefore, while I admit that 30 years ago champagne was nearly as cheap as water, these days—

The Minister for Works: The latest extension carried out a few years ago is not a grandfather scheme.

Mr. WATTS: Grandfather was alive in 1900 and also in 1925. I cannot be misunderstood in that regard. I have always had, from a personal electoral point of view, a great deal of sympathy for the observations made by the member for Albany insofar as they concern the port of Albany. Other remarks that he makes from time to

time do not always meet with my approval. But I have a great deal of sympathy with the case that he puts forward on behalf of the port of Albany.

Mr. McDonald: His recent speech was one of the best made in this House, and a number of people said so.

Mr. WATTS: The member for West Perth reminds me of the fact that in a recent speech the member for Albany was at his best. I regret he is not present just now to hear what I am saying. It might give him some small measure of satisfaction, more particularly as my remarks follow those of the member for West Perth. These Estimates contain nothing to show that the long existing unsympathetic attitude of the administration to this harbour is to be altered. In effect no expenditure is to be made on the port facilities. I represent an electorate which commences some 25 miles north of Albany and embraces the greater part of what we know as the "Albany zone." With the exception of the Albany Road Board and the Denmark Road Board districts the Katanning electorate comprises the balance of the zone, as known at present.

We feel that the development of these districts has been hampered, and is being hampered, and that trade is being diverted from its proper channels because of the refusal or neglect on the part of the administration of this State to give it reasonable treatment. The primary products of the hinterland of this area were derived, in 1939-40, from 3,772 acres under productive fruit trees; 134,621 acres sown to wheat with a yield of 1,361,418 bushels; 71,232 acres of oats; 1,110 acres of potatoes; 2,781,272 gallons of cream sent to the factories and 10,550,553 lbs. of wool. Yet I remember, on one memorable occasion—I think it was in November, 1941—the Minister for Works suggesting that if the people of Albany wanted something done for their port they should see that something was grown in the hinterland to warrant it. That reference will be found, if one cares to look, in "Hansard" of that time.

It was for that reason that I quoted these figures. They obviously show that the hon. gentleman was either grossly ignorant of the position—which I am unable to believe—or else was most unsympathetic to the reasonable requirements of this district, which appears to be the only alternative. When I

was in Albany a few months ago I was impressed, as I had been often enough before, by the lack of equipment at the jetty. An Allied ship was there at the time. It had been badly buffeted by a storm and its cargo severely damaged. It was a very valuable cargo although I cannot say what it was. A great deal of it had to be removed from the vessel. There was, on the jetty, no crane able to lift the goods that had to be taken from the ship. In order to get greater lifting power a larger crane was telegraphed for, but it was then discovered that the jetty was not able to carry the additional weight!

When one considers the needs of the district which this port is intended to serve and the utter lack of proper facilities there, one cannot be enthusiastic, to say the least of it, about the treatment that has been meted out by the Governments of this State, particularly in the last few years, because there has been a good deal of noise made about the port of Albany during that period. The Committee will agree with me that it is high time for some consideration to be given to this place; that it should be made fit to handle the wheat grown in the zone so that it should not have to be transported four times the distance to another port, about which port I will say something after the tea adjournment.

The Premier: That is not on account of the facilities at Albany.

MR. WATTS: It is, because Albany has no facilities to handle bulk wheat. When, by representation to the Minister for Lands, who treated me in the most reasonable manner, I asked for facilities at sidings I got them.

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

MR. WATTS: I was pointing out that although wheat bins had been erected at sidings in the zone there was no means for dealing with it in bulk at the port. In consequence the wheat in many instances has had to be conveyed to a port located at a much greater distance away, with substantially increased cost to the producers concerned. There has been no justification whatever for the neglect or failure to attend to the reasonable requirements of the port of Albany.

I wish also to make some reference to the port of Bunbury. This port is also the

centre of a large producing area. I suppose it serves a population of not less than 25,000 or 30,000 people. There has been considerable expenditure on this port and I notice that a slight expenditure is contemplated in the current year. I do not object to the expenditure on this port, but I do hope means will be found to ensure that the port will be able to serve the district in the years to come in the efficient manner we are entitled to expect it to be served. The other night the member for Albany read some comparative figures dealing with the production of the areas around the ports of Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton, and I myself have already given some figures. There has been great production around the port of Bunbury which is essential to the welfare of the Commonwealth and the feeding of its people. Therefore the port of Bunbury stands just as high in the matter of the requirements of the people it serves as does the port of Albany for the people it serves. My complaint is not that Bunbury has received attention but that the other place has not and that there is no warrant for this failure or neglect.

I feel that the position of the Bunbury Harbour is a difficult one. The most skilled experts should be set to work and, if it is necessary, a large sum of money should be spent to open up the port in some other way. The expenditure would be justified provided we were satisfied that the work, when done, was likely to stand for all time. We have to remember that there have been great changes in shipping during the last few years. The last 30 years have witnessed an enormous increase in the size of vessels to be handled in the ports and a considerable increase of equipment has been necessary. Therefore if shipping is going to use our ports and serve the people in close proximity to those ports, facilities must be provided to handle the ships in quick time. No unnecessary delay can be permitted, because this adds to the expenses of shipping and of those whose goods are shipped. So, if we can prove, as we can in this case, that there is great need for a port in the south-western portion of the State, there is every justification for taking steps to put that port in proper order. This is not only a matter of importance to the South-West; it is of importance to the whole of the State.

I hold the view, and doubtless the member for Bunbury would endorse it, that the



south-west portion of the State is the part where development and population must be expected on a greater scale than anywhere else. Of course we want people to settle in other areas of the State, but climatic and soil conditions there do not lend themselves to closer settlement and heavy population as do the areas in the south-west corner of the State, provided we go the right way about developing those areas. We should think of our South-West as another State like Victoria. It has an area of about the same size, and the productivity would be enormous were we able to clear it and make use of it to the extent that is warranted. All our efforts should be directed towards its development.

I have no complaint whatever to offer on the expenditure made on the port of Bunbury, but would welcome further expenditure there, provided I was assured that experts had dealt with the problem so that the results would be completely satisfactory. At the same time I can appreciate to the full what the feelings of the member for Bunbury would be if the port he represents and the area in which all his hopes are centred had been given the same scanty consideration as the port of great interest to me, to wit, Albany. I can imagine his raising his voice high to heaven in protest against the continuance of such a state of affairs, had those circumstances arisen. Therefore I have no doubt that he can appreciate the attitude some of us have adopted in regard to the fate of the southern part of the State so near to my own electorate.

What irrigation works will do in future for other districts which I think can really be regarded as being in the Bunbury area is difficult to prophesy, but I am inclined to think that they will probably revolutionise the productivity of that area. I do not hesitate to say that if they can be established, it is our duty as Parliamentarians to encourage every move to enable production to be increased and transported conveniently and reasonably inexpensively to the people who desire to export. Beyond this I do not desire to dwell upon the Loan Estimates. The expenditure proposed by the Premier in introducing these Estimates, by and large, meets with no opposition from me. The only opposition I have to offer is that to which I have substantially made reference, namely, the fact that no expenditure is provided for the port

of Albany. That is the greatest blot on these Estimates that could possibly exist.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth): Some years ago a remark was made by Mr. Theodore in the Commonwealth Parliament that Parliament was losing control over the public accounts. I recollect hearing similar references in this Chamber from the member for Guildford-Midland.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: Tell me when we have been asked to vote on the expenditure of money as a matter of course.

**Mr. McDONALD**: I think there is a lot of truth in that statement.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: That has been the position since the Financial Agreement was made.

**Mr. McDONALD**: Mr. Theodore also said that opportunity was not sufficiently provided for members to obtain that knowledge of the accounts which they should have. Some years ago a very sound reform was made providing for a uniform basis of presenting the public accounts of the various States, but I would like to see further consideration given to the form of our accounts. The Premier, in introducing these Estimates, referred to the matter of trust funds. Trust funds undoubtedly place a very great responsibility on the Government and the Legislature. In the schedules presented with the public accounts giving the balance sheet of the Government of Western Australia for 1942-43, trust accounts are shown in round figures as amounting to £4,200,000 Governmental and £2,200,000 private.

On the other side of the balance sheet are shown trust fund investments divided into governmental, private and banking accounts. That is not very informative. Other members may have a better knowledge than I have of these accounts but it seems to me that some schedule should be attached to indicate the nature of these investments. In the course of his remarks the Premier referred to the depletion of trust moneys that occurred some years ago. His remarks lend point to my observation that Parliament should know something in detail of how the trust funds stand from time to time.

The Premier: They are used in advance of loan raisings.

**Mr. McDONALD**: I was going to say that the Premier's references to trust funds remind me of the fact that it has been the practice—and I believe it still is—for trust funds sometimes to be used in advance of

loan raisings. There is something to be said in favour of saving money by such a practice. A certain amount of interest may be saved if one can be sure that the loan money will be recovered in course of time, because in the meantime resort could be had to trust funds and the amount reimbursed from the loan moneys when received. But that practice, convenient as it may be in one sense, is somewhat dubious from the point of view of principle, and the shortage to which the Premier referred in the course of his speech we recollect arose from that practice.

In the years immediately before the financial depression trust funds had been used in advance of loans being received, but when the Financial Agreement was made the basis of loan raisings in 1928 and 1929 was altered and the expectations of the then Administration were disappointed. Between 1928 and 1929 and between 1930 and 1931 the annual loan raisings fell by £1,000,000. The inevitable result occurred. At the end of 1929 and 1930 the loan funds were not there to replenish the money which had been taken out of trust account. It is now history that a substantial part of the embarrassment in the way of funds which fell on this State during the depression period arose from the fact that a practice long continued—to use trust funds in advance of loan raisings—had resulted, owing to the change-over brought about by the Loan Council in particular, in disappointment in loan raisings and consequent inability to repay the moneys which had been taken from trust account.

The Premier: That was not peculiar to this State. It was Australia-wide.

Mr. McDONALD: That may be. I cannot speak for the other States, but it represented a particular burden on this State when the loan raisings fell off so much during the depression period.

The Premier: They stopped completely. They did not fall.

Mr. McDONALD: Not only that, there was an obligation to replace those trust moneys.

The Premier: You need not worry about that.

Mr. McDONALD: We saw one immediate result following, and that was some embarrassment in connection with the State Savings Bank. So, to my mind, it is important that the trust funds should be re-

corded in accordance with proper practice and responsibility, and I should like to see in the Public Accounts some indication given to members of this Committee as to where those trust funds are. I cannot tell, although perhaps members more conversant with public accounts may be able to do so. For example, has any part of these trust funds, totalling some £7,000,000 as shown in the balance sheet of the Government of Western Australia, been used in advance of loans or not? I believe not in the present case because the loan credits appear to make it unnecessary to resort to trust funds. But if at any time there should be a resort to trust funds in advance of loan raising, then that is to my mind essentially something which the Public Accounts should be framed to show.

Again, there is the matter of how far our public accounts reveal the true position. I am not suggesting anything sinister about the accounts. I am only questioning whether the current practice is based upon sound foundations. In looking at the accounts accompanying the report of the Railway Department, I find in the figures relating to the State Ferries that there is a separate and distinct item of depreciation, whereas in the statement of the Railways and Tramways I can find no separate item of depreciation, unless it has been charged in what is called working expenses; and if it has been charged in working expenses then that would not be in accordance with the usual acceptance of that term.

The Premier: It is not depreciation. It is maintenance kept up to the level of the value of the asset.

Mr. McDONALD: That may or may not be the case.

The Premier: It is the case. There is a certificate from the head of each department to that effect in the Commissioner's report.

Mr. McDONALD: We find in the past that maintenance has not been kept up. There was a time when maintenance was in arrears—so we were told—to the extent of £500,000. The plant had become so depreciated that £100,000 a year had to be provided from Consolidated Revenue in order to pick up depreciation of rolling-stock which had occurred during the depression years. I understand that at the present time one of the objectives of the accounts and the Budget is to set aside in

reserve a sum of money in order to pick up depreciation which has taken place and cannot be met at the moment. Whether that sum of money is set aside and put into a reserve account at the Treasury, or perhaps at the Railway Department, I do not know, but it is not shown in the way of depreciation.

Under the State Trading Concerns Act—and by the way the Railway Department does not come under that Act—the Auditor General is required to insist upon a debit of such an amount of depreciation annually as he thinks proper. That appears to me to be a most necessary and salutary part of the State Trading Concerns Act. But in the Railways Act, so far as I know, there is no provision whatever to require such depreciation to be charged. Depreciation is not confined to rollingstock. There are buildings, installations, plant, boilers, machinery and a hundred and one things which are subject in some cases to very heavy depreciation and for which in ordinary private trading concerns depreciation would be written off, and properly so, against the life of the particular asset to the extent of 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. a year. One is somewhat concerned when reading the accounts of a great undertaking like our Railway Department, in which a quarter or one-third of our national debt has been invested, as to whether if proper provision were made for depreciation the deficit would not be very much more extensive than is shown by the accounts. I am not saying that the practice as disclosed by these accounts has not been followed for many years and perhaps by many Administrations.

The Premier: No. They have been improved very considerably during the last few years.

Mr. McDONALD: I am glad to hear that. I may be wrong in the matters that occur to me in scrutinising these accounts, but I cannot see where the ordinary prudent and essentially specific provision for depreciation of all assets is made in the case of the Railway Department as would be made in an ordinary private trading concern which has to maintain its solvency or meet its liquidator. If it is not done, the sooner it is done the better. I do not care whether the deficit thereby increases to half a million pounds. What I do care about is that we should know the facts

exactly as they are and make provision accordingly.

I regret very much that the Committee has not had the opportunity to peruse the Auditor General's Report of this year. It is to be available tomorrow, but there will not be much chance of digesting it before the close of the session. In the Auditor General's Report of last year the assets of the State which were insured against war damage were shown to be worth £30,000,000. That is a matter of some interest, because if our total loan indebtedness is £96,000,000 or £97,000,000, it discloses that, for the purpose of war damage insurance at all events, we have assets of an insurable nature totalling £30,000,000. Of course the real assets of the State total a great deal more than that sum.

The Premier: As far as war damage is concerned, railways would not come under that.

Mr. McDONALD: Precisely! There are many assets of the State which would not be the subject of war damage insurance.

The Premier: The pipe line is worth £3,000,000, but you would not insure it for that sum.

Mr. McDONALD: That is a specific item. Again, I would like to say that if Parliament is to get a better knowledge of the state of our accounts and the position of the country's finances, more detailed specific values of our various assets should be shown. What is done in the accounts is to say that we owe £96,000,000 and we debit that on one side, while on the other side we show all sorts of Governmental assets, but with no detail. There is no segregation of values. If what I suggest is done members would be very greatly informed. Such detail is customary in accounts of that description.

The Premier: We spent £3,000,000 on roads and they are worth that sum, but we could not get that amount for them. They do not pay any interest, either.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not suggest that the assets are only those that could be put up for sale by auction. I am saying that as the accounts are presented I agree with Mr. Theodore that a great deal more would need to be included. I think it should be included if Parliament is to be invited to express any worth-while opinion on the public accounts and what may be done

in order to improve and aid the public finances.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Theodore's speech before the Financial Agreement or after?

Mr. McDONALD: I think in 1929.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Just after?

Mr. McDONALD: Yes.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He would not say that today.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know what he would say today.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He is too keen to-day.

Mr. McDONALD: The money being spent on the North-West of the State is a very modest sum. We have some small expenditure for harbours and jetties and some small expenditure for water supplies. I know that the North-West part of our State is that part which is most exposed to enemy action, but the lessons of the war and the situation we stood in a year or two ago all point to the importance, not only from the aspect of wealth but also of security, of that great region. The North-West of our State seems to be an area that may well merit the early attention of the Government for the information of members as to any measures which can be formulated in order to ensure its development.

The Premier: If we could find oil there, that would give it a boost. The Minister for Mines has referred to minerals.

Mr. McDONALD: I was glad to hear the Minister for Mines refer to minerals. It seems to me that if minerals other than gold can be located and developed, that will be a most valuable ancillary to our gold production.

Mr. Rodoreda: Gold will be ancillary to that.

Mr. McDONALD: I think the hon. member may be right. I remember reading not long ago a statement by one of the officers of the State, or it might have been some other authority, that the wealth from blue asbestos would vastly exceed any wealth obtainable from gold. That being so, there are in that mineral, if I may so call it, and in other minerals, opportunities for the development of our northern areas which may well turn out to be of the greatest possible value to the State.

I want to say a word also as to the South-West of our State. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that when we come to consider the post-war period,

there is no part of our State that so much demands the attention of those who have the responsibility of planning for the future as the South-West. I am glad to see that some inquiry has been made into the possibility of basing an extended electricity distribution scheme at Collie. That is a matter which depends amongst other factors on the density of population. But when we come to take in more population, as we must, we cannot be too early beforehand in saying to what extent not only can we proceed with water conservation measures and irrigation measures that have been referred to, but also to what extent we can proceed with extensions of electric power for factories, farms and homes in that part of the State in which we have the greatest prospect of a dense population. If we are to read one lesson from the last three or four years of war, it is that the post-war period is going to be written very largely in terms of electric power.

The public debt of this State, of some £200 per head, causes some concern to those responsible for the control of the State, and the reports of the Grants Commission indicate that the members of that body have viewed our financial position as possibly becoming, to use their own word, critical. But obviously we can reduce the burden of our debt—which is necessarily and inevitably great in view of our enormous territory and our small population—if we increase our population so that the debt is spread over so many more people. In the inquiries which the Government is no doubt making into the prospects of the State in the immediate post-war period, this matter of additional people is one for the most urgent consideration, and, from the point of view of the large debt we carry per head, it is perhaps, if not the key, at least one of the main solutions to the problem of bringing our loan obligations and the burden of interest into reasonable proportions according to our revenue.

There is a much more elastic conception of borrowing than has been the case in the past. If I may say so with respect, Mr. Chairman, I agree with you that the orthodoxy of the old system must be modified to some extent in terms of more recent experience and better knowledge. I do not think we ought to fear incurring substantial additions to our debt when the time is ripe, but it is generally agreed that

there comes a time when, with an expanding revenue and general prosperity, we should accumulate from our reserves sufficient money to reduce the debt incurred in order to meet more difficult times. I am not altogether satisfied that the State is doing all it can to build up its financial strength at this time. When we have no unemployment, when we have an abounding revenue, when our taxation returns under the Uniform Taxation Act have been pegged to those obtaining in the peak years of our taxation experience, that appears to me to be the time when we should be able to show financial results of a kind that have not been possible in this State in the past.

I suppose it is necessary to borrow, but I am reluctant to see a programme of even £500,000 or £600,000. The position is much better than it was but, when a State like Queensland puts £5,500,000 into reserve, it seems to me it would have been a great achievement if, in this time of lighter demands, a better employment position and many other advantages, we could have dispensed with any borrowing in order to allow the recuperative process of our sinking fund to operate, and then to create a margin on which we could draw in more difficult times. Some of this money that has been borrowed is going into avenues which to my mind are very dubious as a destination for borrowed money. I know it has been the practice in the past to spend borrowed money in these directions but, according to these Estimates, money from Loan is going into rollingstock.

The Premier: That is for increases.

Mr. McDONALD: If it is to be used for increases, it is more excusable; but if it were to be used for replacements, that would be quite untenable.

The Premier: Well, it is not.

Mr. McDONALD: I accept the Premier's word without question, but there is nothing here to show that this money is for increases in rollingstock.

The Premier: Yes, they get written-off.

Mr. McDONALD: It just says here, "Continuation of rollingstock programme" without anything to show that that means an increase in our rollingstock. As to last year, opposite the same comment in connection with loan expenditure, we find, amongst other things, reference to modification of "P" class locomotives. That again would seem to me a doubtful avenue for loan expendi-

ture. It seems to be more in the nature of repair work, which should be charged to revenue.

The Premier: The hon. member can get particulars of that in the report of the Commissioner of Railways, which refers fully to these matters.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not think that deals with the position to which I am addressing my mind, which is how far or exactly to what extent loan funds are to be used for the maintenance of existing stock and installations, and how far for additional capital expenditure. When we come to what may be called legitimate capital expenditure we find that loan funds are being spent and have been spent according to the practice of many years past on various public buildings.

The Premier: That is quite wrong from an accountancy standpoint. That is a relic of our system.

Mr. McDONALD: They are being spent on public buildings and, without professing to be an accountant, I do not see any objection to spending loan funds on public buildings. But what I do comment on is that as far as I can see there is an absence of any provision for writing-down the value of those buildings.

The Premier: They are paid off by sinking fund payments. Our sinking fund contribution this year was £800,000.

Mr. McDONALD: The sinking fund is meant to redeem the loan in 57 years.

The Premier: All our public debt as at 1937 will be redeemed in 57 years.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes. Of course, if sinking fund is going to meet depreciation of assets, the debt is not being reduced at all. If £800,000 is set aside as sinking fund and the assets are depreciating all the time, the debt is being paid off to some extent, but the assets may be of minor value.

The Premier: It has not cost anything if it is all written-off.

Mr. McDONALD: No, but from the point of view of maintenance of the asset, which appears as being worth £50,000 in the books, if that asset was erected 50 years ago it is not worth that sum now, and it seems to me that some provision should be made in the accounts to write-off the value of buildings so that depreciation written-off can be used to replace those buildings or restore them to their original value. So far as I see,

there is no provision made in these accounts for anything of that kind.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We have the advantage on the other side that the State trading concerns pay interest on money they do not own.

Mr. McDONALD: The State trading concerns constitute a subject on which I made a comment last year. The system of accountancy is, I think, archaic. It is completely out of step with any modern accountancy practice and does not show the true position. The accountancy practice laid down by the State Trading Concerns Act has to be observed, but the sooner it is departed from and brought into line with the facts the better it will be for the State trading concerns and the greater will be our knowledge of where we stand. All I want to say regarding the State trading concerns is that, as I think the Minister remarked, depreciation must be charged under the terms of the State Trading Concerns Act. In that case we have some chance from the point of view of the actual values being assessed in a proper perspective. We are dealing tonight with Loan Estimates of comparatively small dimensions. It would have been a magnificent achievement if, for the first time in the history of the State for at any rate many years, we had been able to finance operations without any borrowings.

The Premier: We are reducing our indebtedness and that in itself is not a bad achievement.

Mr. McDONALD: We are, but in times such as the present of comparatively buoyant revenue, it is not merely a matter of reducing indebtedness but by how much we can reduce the indebtedness.

Mr. Watts: Would we be reducing our indebtedness if we had the opportunity to spend?

Mr. McDONALD: That is another point. In the case of the railways, the mystery of it all is that with an increase of approaching £500,000 in revenue the actual net returns amount merely to £2. That appears to me like the case of Marie Celeste—something never to be explained.

The Premier: If costs go up you cannot make as much profit. Ordinary commercial practice is that when costs go up prices are increased. We have not done that, and I gave the Committee an assurance on that point last year.

Mr. McDONALD: But the class of carriage occasioned by the war has been of a profitable type, namely, passenger traffic.

The Premier: Wages have gone up by about £1 per week, on top of which we had to pay war damage insurance, pay-roll tax and so on. Although earnings have increased, we have not increased the charges to the users of the railways. No commercial firm would carry on like that.

Mr. McDONALD: But they are doing so.

The Premier: When their costs increase they increase their prices.

Mr. McDONALD: Firms could increase charges only to the limited extent permitted by governmental authorities.

The Premier: But Parliament would not allow us to increase railway charges if we attempted to do so.

Mr. McDONALD: I will not attempt to argue any specific case. If the Minister for Railways, however, made out a good case for increasing charges—

The Minister for Lands: It would have no effect.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know that that is so.

The Premier: You know what happened regarding the Fremantle Harbour Trust's charges on wheat.

Mr. Watts: That was because the Government had no case.

The Premier: The Minister made out a good case.

Mr. McDONALD: I am sure members would listen to any good argument advanced by the Minister in support of any proposal to increase railway charges. The Premier has mentioned the Fremantle Harbour Trust and we know that that body has been recording such surpluses that the idea of increasing charges against the farmers, who are faced with considerable difficulties at the present time, naturally and properly demanded some inquiries. If the railways were returning a surplus of £500,000 or £1,000,000 a year, I think there would be extreme reluctance to increase charges.

The Minister for Mines: If there were surpluses you would not mind accepting concessions, but you would not agree to increased charges in the event of a deficit.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know that one should.

**Mr. Patrick:** The Government should adopt the Henry Ford system and when profits are made lower charges.

**Mr. McDONALD:** In view of the fact that the Minister for Railways has been able to report increased revenue to the extent of over £400,000 and the net return to the State is only £2, I would be pleased to hear how that came about and I certainly think such a result requires explanation. There may be one that is a complete answer to the obvious comment that readily comes to mind as to why a concern capable of making so much money loses its capacity to record any profit. I feel that the Public Accounts do not tell us all that should be told and could be told. I leave it to the Premier and his assistant Ministers to earn the fame that should attach to Western Australia as the first State to have the opportunity in the future so to frame its accounts that they can call more effectively upon the assistance of members of the Committee to forward the financial prosperity of the State.

**MR. NORTH (Claremont):** During the recent international conference at which representatives of 44 nations met to consider food problems confronting the world, to which the Minister for Lands referred recently as not being satisfactory from this State's point of view, in the agricultural sense, some interesting propositions were advanced that, if extended to this State, would be of great assistance. I have listened to the debate on the Loan Estimates, the general criticism of the Loan Council and the references to the work to be done in the post-war period, and I am sure we must all realise that, notwithstanding what we may desire, those results cannot be achieved within the limits of the present system of Loan Council finance. At the international conference to which I have alluded, definite proposals were considered whereby undeveloped countries would not only be provided with the requisite finance but with the necessary plant and world experts to guide operations with a view to advancing the projects in mind. That would be of great assistance in a country like Western Australia where we have large areas of unused territory with a good rainfall but with a small population. I would strongly urge the Government to keep in touch with the proposals of that conference—I do not

know whether the Premier has received any information about that international conference or whether the details would have to come through the Commonwealth Government—for in connection with such important matters the interests of Western Australia should not be overlooked.

We have plenty of good land, a first-class climate, much room for development and all the minerals and metals with details of which members of this Committee are familiar. For years past it must have occurred to most of us that the Loan Council has not now the financial power to assist the States as they would desire during the next few years. My remarks are coupled with the changed viewpoint of the Commonwealth Government with regard to immigration. One would not expect millions to be spent in Western Australia while she has a population of less than 500,000 souls. Until we have a much larger population we cannot look forward to a rosy future, and until such time arrives we shall have to continue as in the past with the annual scramble for funds.

I urge the Minister for Railways, who has given us the detailed estimates for his department, to look into the question of transmission of electric power without the use of cables. In America that has become an accomplished fact and it has proved of tremendous advantage there. That would be very helpful in this State, particularly as the Premier has been telling us at great length in the Press that he cannot provide a large power station at Collie because of the loss of current in transmission, that loss being so appreciable that it would not pay to undertake the work. The scheme embarked upon in the United States of America for the transmission of electric current without cables has already had exceptional results. A wireless station has proved so powerful that the inhabitants of nearby villages have been able to erect aërials and collect all the current they require to light lamps for nothing. That has turned the minds of a great many people to the question of the use to which the poles that line the "Polish Corridor"—I refer to Stirling-highway—could be put in the post-war period, and there are those who have conceived the idea that they will be very useful for stringing up certain citizens that have incurred their displeasure. The sooner we can get rid of those poles the better it will

be from many points of view! They are a menace from the standpoint of aeroplanes, interference with wireless installations and so on. We should certainly examine the possibility of transmitting current without the use of cables. I believe the Minister's experts are opposed to transmitting current underground because of excessive costs. In the circumstances the scheme for transmitting current without cables should receive the early consideration of the Government.

The Minister also announced that he had purchased six Diesel coaches for use in the country districts. I trust he will set aside at least one of the buses for use on the suburban railways to see whether he cannot provide an improved and faster service in the slack periods. It has been suggested that it would be possible to run a 10-minute service with a Diesel car with smaller loads and under an improved time-table. I hope the Minister will bear that suggestion in mind when the new chassis arrive. With regard to buses and trolley-buses, I trust that the committee set up to deal with the importation of new chassis, will succeed in securing some. I am informed that if some of the private companies are not able to secure new buses very soon, some they now have on the road will be no longer serviceable. I trust the Government will be able to assist them.

The Premier: We have endeavoured to import a few from Great Britain.

Mr. NORTH: And I hope the Government's efforts will be very successful. Another matter concerns the trolley-buses and queueing in St. George's-terrace. I have never been a prominent advocate of the queueing system because obviously there are two sides to the question. If I am asked to assist in the matter by any local authority I am only too pleased to do so, but I have never taken an active part in advocating the queueing method although it may have some advantages. What could be done, but is not being done in spite of the fact that there are certain improvements in the service—we have more and more cars, as the Minister told us the other day—is for the Government to have designed here three or four large trailer-trolleys built on the lines of the petrol trailers. Such trolleys with trailers would give a load of 80 or 90 persons, and they could get away and take the queueing right off the roads. Nearly all of the parts could be made here, in the Midland Junction Work-

shops. Two or three large trolleys could be supplied, built on the trailer principle carrying three axles and three sets of wheels. If the vehicle is not large enough to take the crowd waiting, send another one. The Minister has a splendid staff and a large work-shops, and with two or three trailer trolleys at peak times he could entirely obviate the queueing and other troubles.

I wish to remind the Treasurer of the experience of Tasmania when its representative appeared before a certain Select Committee to explain her financial position. I understand that the explanation was given by an official of the Tasmanian Government, who took the figures over 50 or 60 years and worked out how many public works Tasmania could have had if she had never borrowed a penny. He found that if that principle had been adopted from the start, Tasmania by the present time could have built double the value of public works that she has built out of her debts, and the interest on those debts. Many years ago the policy of the Labour Party was never to borrow but always to build works out of revenue.

Mr. Needham: Reproductive works.

Mr. NORTH: If that were the policy of the Labour Party, it would have definite evidence to show the Commonwealth Grants Commission that on those lines we should be in a better position than we are in today, having followed the borrowing principle.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury): I was rather pleased tonight to hear the Leader of the Opposition give some commendation to the South-West. It has been unusual to hear such praise, especially from the Country Party, of the progress, and possibilities of progress, in the South-West. In connection with that aspect I would say that all the expenditure that has taken place over a period of 40 years or more on the Bunbury Harbour may not have been judiciously made, in view of the circumstances of the time. People could not visualise spending thousands of pounds per annum on keeping up the old patch-work system. They did not visualise that the progress of the South-West would become such as it has been in the last few years. It is a pity that they were not able in days gone by to take such broad views as Lord Forrest took in an earlier period, and spend a good deal of money at once. We have less depth of water in the Bunbury Harbour today than we had when I entered Parliament. Dredg-



ing is not the solution. There are other means. I have been endeavouring to get a new plan for Bunbury Harbour in this respect. I am convinced that the plans got out fairly early in the piece by Ransbotham, Shields, and other engineers for the Bunbury Harbour earlier in the century were sound. The question, however, has always been, does the proposal justify the expenditure?

I am never inclined to draw comparisons, but I want to make the Bunbury Harbour justify its requirements on its own status, and not by contrasting it with the Geraldton or Fremantle or any other harbour. A sum of £10,000 is proposed, and perhaps may be a fair amount on Estimates of this description, for harbour improvements; but if the figures had two noughts appended to them, making the amount £1,000,000, I would say the Government was ranging along on the right lines. We shall not get anywhere with present methods. We have had experience of those methods in connection with our main roads. There was a time when we depended on road boards to give us arterial and all other roads throughout the country; and there never was a good road, because the boards never had sufficient funds to make a good road but were always spending money on the mending of roads.

Mr. Patrick: The roads were not so bad before the motors came.

Mr. WITHERS: Today we have comprehensive schemes of road-making. Today we have roads which notwithstanding war traffic are standing up well. We ought to be brave enough to launch out on a scheme of construction and development warranted by the times. The Premier when introducing the Estimates enlightened me on the question of power. I read the statement by the Minister for Works published in "The West Australian" of a couple of weeks ago. One had to read between the lines as to what was in the Minister's mind. I tried to visualise something in the nature of speeding up a national scheme for power creation and distribution in the South-West to supply the whole of the South-Western Land Division. The original scheme, I understand, was to establish a plant in the metropolitan area, bringing the necessary coal from the mines by rail. I raised no objection on the Address-in-reply to that aspect, but I want the Premier to keep on thinking along those lines, so that the South-West may at any rate get a power station of its own.

We have definitely a scheme for the South-West, and I hope and trust the Government will not only be considerate in the matter but will persevere in it so as to have this post-war job ready. Let us be prepared when the war is over to launch out on some definite scheme of this kind for the metropolitan area, for the South-West, and adjacent areas. South-western development has made wonderful strides because attention has been given to it by past Governments and this Government. There is the matter of irrigation. As the Leader of the Opposition said, that might be extended far afield. We are only in the infancy of irrigation. Our possibilities of catchment are unlimited. We need not stop at such schemes as the Sampson's Brook scheme and others. All the ranges in the South-West conserve large quantities of water which could be utilised during the summer months, in the absence of rain. I realise that it is useless to wait for the evil day, or for that matter to wait for the good day, and that we ought to be well prepared for the development of our hinterlands after the war.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Pilbara): I rise simply to make an observation relating to water supplies for Port Hedland. It is recognised that the question of water supply in country districts will prove of major importance in the immediate post-war period. All Governments, State and Commonwealth recognise that something should be done to ensure to people in provincial towns an adequate water supply. I draw the Government's attention to the lack of water in the Port Hedland district. The supply of drinking water for the people of the township itself is obtained from a point 20 miles away. In the summer months it is necessary to draw on a supply 60 miles away, and the water is transported by rail. That water is used for drinking purposes. I have received a wire this evening from the secretary of the road board at Port Hedland in which he states—

Owing to heavy demand for drinking water ex railways by civilians an Army officer in charge states he is unable to cope with requirements owing to insufficient trucks.

That matter may well have to be dealt with, but the water is distributed to the townspeople by a cartage contractor and the cost is 3s. 6d. per 100 gallons. In addition the town is served by a supply the reticulation

system of which is 40 years old. The water is obtained from two wells about a mile from the townsite. Due to the high degree of salinity the water cannot be used for drinking and it is fatal for the housewives to wash clothes in it. It is only used for general washing-up purposes and for shower baths. Because of the corrosion in the pipes the supply is very poor. Many of the people have adopted the practice of taking a book into the shower because, if the party next door is having a shower they will have to wait until he is finished. They read the book during that period.

**Mr. Needham:** What about the morning paper?

**Mr. W. HEGNEY:** The morning paper costs 10d. when it arrives! The people do not think it necessary to have the paper. The local water board recently made representations to me to see if an adequate water supply could be made available to the town. I realise, and so do the local people, that a comprehensive scheme is out of the question at the moment for more reasons than one. Some 13 years ago the engineers tested a source of supply from the Turner River about 20 miles from Port Hedland. I understand that the scheme was practically approved, but further tests have since been made and they show, I believe, that the water may turn salt if a very heavy draw is made upon it. A scheme could be inaugurated many miles from Port Hedland and I believe that in the post-war period that problem must be grappled with.

I impress upon the members of the Government that the supply of water is very limited. Representations have been made to the Government to take over the responsibility of the Port Hedland supply from the water board owing to the small population and the cost involved. We believe that if asbestos pipes are made available and greater storage facilities constructed or wells sunk nearer the town, the difficulty would, for the time being, be overcome. For the water that the people get—which cannot be used for drinking purposes—they are required to pay 6s. 6d. a month and the hotel £1 a month. When the hotel was being renovated some time ago the board, before it would agree to the renewal of the license said that it must instal a septic system. That was done and now the position is reversed. The septic system was installed and

a demand made on the water board that it supply the necessary water. This could not be done and, unfortunately, the antiquated system of sanitation has had to be reverted to.

I am given to understand by the secretary of the road board that if the position is not altered shortly the local hospital will have to revert to the same system. This is a very important hospital at the moment and, with a hot climate like Port Hedland, a bad sanitation system is dangerous to the health of the community. I am directing these remarks to the members of the Government, not to give the impression that they have been unsympathetic to any proposals I have submitted but merely to let members know the position. If the circumstances are fully known to the Government it will, as soon as possible, see that the work is put in hand.

**MR. MANN (Beverley):** I am sorry there is nothing on the Estimates for a research laboratory. We are faced in the southern areas with an outbreak of disease peculiar to the merino sheep. Many of the merino ewes in the subterranean clover country are not breeding owing to a peculiarity. I can quote the case of one man who mated 900 ewes this year to merino rams, and all he got was a total of 92 lambs. We attribute this trouble to the subterranean clover. In these districts there are some good flocks and they will die out if this disease continues. I have spoken to the departmental officials here and they say they have not the facilities or the labour available to carry out the necessary research work. In addition we have a form of dermatitis affecting the sheep. This is spreading too. In the months of February and March an irritation is set up on the skin which has a scurf-like appearance, and the sheep bite the wool. When shearing time comes along it is found that from the commencement of the green feed this scurf-like skin has left the animal's body with the wool as it has grown, leaving a clean skin underneath. I have also discussed that matter with the Veterinary Department and have been informed that there is no cure for it. This trouble is spreading rapidly, which means that these flocks will be enormously reduced. A man might have been getting a 12 to 14 lbs. clip and be reduced to an 8 or 9 lbs. clip. It is es-

sential that this research work should be carried out. We have no laboratory facilities in the State.

Following on the remarks of the member for Bunbury, when he was speaking of the South-West, I would mention that another important matter to Western Australia is that of contagious abortion. The C.S.I.R. has developed a serum with which to inoculate heifer calves before attaining the age of six months. This serum is alive and must be used within a week. We can transport the culture by plane to Western Australia, but there are no facilities in Western Australia to deal further with it. The result is that thousands of cows are going sterile due to this contagious abortion. I agree with the member for Bunbury that in the post-war period and the years to come the South-West will play a prominent part and accommodate an enormous population. I pay a tribute to the Veterinary Department which has done remarkably good work in connection with braxy-like, toxic diseases, and research generally. Today we are breeding artificial sheep and this research is very necessary as otherwise our flocks will dwindle.

Mr. Seward: We have the blowfly, too.

Mr. MANN: I am sorry to say that the blowfly is always with us. The member for Gascoyne and other members representing northern areas know the trouble experienced in their electorates. I have seen flocks in the south shorn for a month, which have been struck at the back of the horns, in the case of rams, by the fly. The ewes have also been struck. I saw three flocks, not yet shorn, of which 75 per cent. were struck. Shearers are not available and the flies are striking at the shoulder and going along the back, with the result that the losses will be very heavy. Reverting to the matter of contagious abortion, if the serum comes here, apart from the culture, it will be necessary to have the cattle inoculated by expert men, because it is a live serum. If we can save some thousands of cows from this trouble, we will do an enormous amount of good. We have not the necessary laboratory facilities for the higher research so essential to the betterment of the State.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan): I wish to refer to the matter of water supply extensions. From time to time I have made representations to the Water Supply Department to get certain extensions. Because

the revenue to be derived from them will be insufficient, in the opinion of the department, they are not made, notwithstanding the fact that an urgent plea is put forward to have these services made available, by the people concerned. They are willing and anxious to pay a reasonable amount. The rate of interest affects these propositions because of the fact that the cost of the loans is included in the amount made available to the Water Supply Department. The practice is to add on, I think, a half per cent. to the loan rate. That is passed on to the Water Supply Department for the purpose of investigating in water supply extensions, etc. The department then adds on about 2½ per cent. to cover the cost of overhead and administrative charges. Assuming a loan is raised at 4½ per cent., it means that the income to be derived from the work is £7 10s. per £100. This might be all right when the money is raised at 4½ per cent., but if the interest rate is lower, the reduction is not reflected in the amount charged to the persons desiring the extension. Hence the cost of these extensions is difficult for many prospective consumers of water.

My district is on the outskirts of the metropolitan area and people in the north-eastern portion particularly require extensions. People from Inglewood to Middle Swan and Greenmount, from South Guildford to the Welshpool-road and extending into Victoria Park are clamouring for water supply extensions, and because the amount chargeable is, say, 7½ per cent. it is difficult for them to be served. Let me mention a place almost adjacent to the Great Eastern Highway. The extension passes on either side of the property and the owner cannot pay the amount of the guarantee required by the department. He is therefore starved for water, although there is water all round him. For that person 7½ per cent. is too high a rate.

This afternoon I visited the Welshpool district and met a number of people there who are clamouring for water supply extensions. One man has a fairly large area and about 90 head of cattle. He is engaged in supplying milk to the metropolitan area, but is unable to get a satisfactory extension of the water supply to his premises. During the past year it has been difficult to obtain asbestos piping, but I understand that representations are being made to over-

come that difficulty. Because of the existence of borderline cases, many people are suffering hardship. They are unable to secure a service because of their low rating, which will not permit the provision of sufficient money to meet the charges for the extension. This is a matter that should receive attention. When the loan interest rate falls, there should be a corresponding decrease to the consumers of water.

Last night I raised the question of sewerage connections, but found that I should have reserved my remarks for the Loan Estimates. On these Estimates, an amount of £47,935 is provided for public buildings, including sewerage and equipment, etc. It is my duty to bring to the notice of the Minister the fact that certain schools in my district, only three miles from Perth, past which the sewerage mains run are not connected with the system. A private person similarly situated is served with a notice by the department to have his premises connected with the main. The time is long overdue for connecting these schools with the deep drainage system. The State school at Lower Inglewood is a large one with many children in attendance; the sewerage main passes on both sides of the property, but it is not connected. There is another school at Bassendean adjacent to my boundary. The member for Guildford-Midland and I have been asking for this school to be connected. On the other side of Bassendean, in Middle Swan, up-to-date sewerage provision is also required. On the Rivervale side, residents have complained bitterly. Some years ago the health officer made a report which I read to the Chamber. He condemned in no uncertain language the conditions prevailing at the Rivervale school and other schools in the district. I hope the Minister for Health will take some interest in the health of the children attending those schools and discuss the matter with the Education Department.

**MR. CROSS (Canning):** No money seems to have been provided on these Estimates to procure new land for schools in the metropolitan area.

The **CHAIRMAN:** The hon. member is not in order in referring to it if there is no provision.

**Mr. CROSS:** It should be there. The Estimates should provide for the purchase of land for schools that will be required after the war. On the east side of Canning

Highway, in the new area around Carey-street and Oxford-street, there are about 150 children who have to walk 1½ miles to the Forrest-street school, and that school is overcrowded without them. It is well known that suitable land for a school is available in the district and the department should take steps to obtain it.

The Minister for Lands: I have already inquired into that.

**Mr. CROSS:** The land should have been obtained before now. If it is not purchased, other people will have it for building purposes. After the war there will be considerable building activity in that area. It is a good district and not far from transport. There is no provision on the Estimates for additional accommodation for the Cannington school. Children have to go from Riverton, a distance of three or four miles, to the Cannington school, and the only accommodation provided for many of them is a hall. There is no room for them in the school. A school should be provided at Riverton. This is a well-populated district, and more settlement is taking place. It is the only district in the metropolitan area to my knowledge where houses are being built at present. I dare say that similar conditions exist in other parts. The department should take a long-range view of the matter and procure suitable land now. Some months ago I spent three or four hours with the director discussing the requirements of the greater metropolitan area. I consider that land should be obtained for secondary schools in various parts of the metropolitan area. A comprehensive review should be made of future requirements of land and schools, not only in the greater metropolitan area but also in some of the larger country centres. I support the vote, but regret that money has not been provided to meet future requirements in this direction.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Railways, Tramways, etc., £377,000; Harbours and Rivers, £24,500; Water Supply and Sewerage, £66,882; Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources, £101,000; Development of Agriculture, £85,750; Roads and Bridges, Public Buildings, etc., £70,000; Sundries, £63,472—agreed to.*

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

**STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.****THE PREMIER:** I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the introduction and passing of the Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day.

Question put.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion having been moved without notice requires the support of an absolute majority. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the motion passed by an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

**BILL—LOAN, £350,000.***Message.*

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

*Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** [9.15] in moving the second reading said: We have discussed the expenditure of loan moneys and this Bill is to provide for the raising of the money. As members will observe, the amount to be raised is, comparatively speaking, very small; but we still have authority under former Loan Bills to raise sufficient money to carry out the works which we proposed to undertake, in addition to those provided for by this Bill. It will not be necessary to raise all these moneys because, as I mentioned when introducing the Loan Estimates, a fairly substantial amount is coming back in Loan repayments and on account of the money which we can get under the Savings Bank arrangement. This measure is usually treated as a formal one. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth): I merely wish to say that the amount to be raised under this Loan Bill represents an increase of £40,000 on the amount raised under the Loan Bill of last year; but in view of the Treasurer's statement as to the extent of the Loan programme and as to the amount still in hand from Loan funds from last year, the difference in the amount is not relevant in the present circumstances, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1943-44.***In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

*Vote—Department of Native Affairs, £17,500 (partly considered):*

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [9.20]: I wish to say a few words with regard to the fisheries vote. When speaking on this vote last evening, the member for Bunbury referred to the waste of fish that was taking place. He said that hundreds of dozens of fish were being destroyed as the result of certain regulations. If that is so at a time like this, when it is exceedingly difficult to procure fish, both on account of its scarcity and its high price, I think it is time something was done about the matter. I fully realise that our fish, particularly in the estuaries, must be protected. It is wrong that undersized fish should be netted. Many people with whom I have discussed this matter contend that under the present regulations there is a tremendous wastage of fish. At present fishermen are not permitted to send into the market mullet less than 11¼ ins. in length. It is some little time since the size of mullet for market purposes was increased from, I think, 9½ ins. to 11¼ ins. The fishermen maintain that under the present regulations it is impossible to comply with the law. First, they cannot procure the right netting, as it is not available in the State. As a result, the netting which they are forced to use catches the smaller fish, many of which are injured in the net and wasted. I recently presented a petition to the Minister, ostensibly signed by those engaged in the fishing industry in the Mandurah district, in which it was said that the fishermen, in order to secure one box of marketable fish, had to catch at least four boxes. Many of the fish caught are so injured that, when released, they die. The member for Bunbury bears out what I have said, namely, that there is a tremendous

wastage. I suggest to the Minister that he should cause an independent inquiry to be made.

Some considerable time ago a fishing demonstration was held in the Mandurah waters. I was present; the Minister had his representatives there and the fishermen had theirs. The demonstration was designed to prove that the regulations were satisfactory and that fish of the prescribed length could be caught without resultant loss. I am by no means an expert in fishery matters, but I do know that the inspectors, or the representatives of the Minister, and the representatives of the fishermen did not agree. The fishermen still contend that considerable loss must take place if the regulations are enforced. I understand that this law applies to the whole of the Commonwealth, although I am not sure on the point; the Minister says it does, but fishermen here say that what applies to our Eastern seaboard does not necessarily apply to our Western coast. Their contention is that it should not apply here. In view of the seriousness of the position, I ask the Minister to give the matter his immediate attention. I trust he will adopt my suggestion to hold an inquiry, as I think it would result in benefit to all concerned. I recently presented the Minister with a petition—in fact, with several petitions—so he is aware of the facts. I feel sure he will give the matter his early attention and that the result will be satisfactory, not only to those earning their living by fishing but to the public as well.

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:** I wish to make a few remarks about the trout hatcheries at Pemberton. I was in Pemberton a fortnight ago and was wonderfully impressed by the good work being done by the Acclimatisation Society there, work which has the commendation of all the people of the State. It is done voluntarily by busy-bees and the achievement is worthy of witness by every responsible person in the State. The South-West areas seem particularly suitable for the purpose of trout raising. There are many fresh water streams and these do not contain fish of commercial value. There is the marron, but this has no commercial value. Trout is excellent food. From what I could learn, the eggs were imported from the Eastern States and hatched at Pemberton. A gentleman named Mr. Glew, a schoolmaster, takes great interest in this industry, if such it can be called. Personally,

I think it will develop into an important industry. The man in charge, Mr. Graham, is known to me and he invited me down. I saw the trout and young fry, known as fingerlings or yearlings, from one to two years of age being fed. The young fry, I am told, should not be released until they are twelve months old; if they are released sooner the loss is very great. Trout up to 11¼ lbs. have been caught; they were hatched from eggs brought from the Eastern States and apparently these were of excellent quality.

Trout raising is now definitely established in the waters around Pemberton and in the South-West generally, but there is still much experimental work to be done. The Fisheries Department has taken a keen interest in the work. Dr. Serventy has visited Pemberton and given those interested valuable advice. The fish provides an excellent food and excellent sport. I am not an angler myself; when I am fishing I always feel there is bait on one end and a fool at the other, and I am not a very patient fisherman. However, by establishing trout in our streams, we will encourage tourist traffic. I believe it has been of great assistance to New Zealand and Tasmania.

**Mr. Doney:** How would you encourage the trout?

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:** By spending more money and extending hatcheries. I believe there are big hatcheries in Victoria, but they have not sufficient fish to satisfy the demand. More money should be spent in Western Australia and greater encouragement given to those who are doing good work in this connection. I do not see any reason why trout should not be deposited in all of our fresh-water streams. I do not think we have taken sufficient interest in this matter.

**Mr. Perkins:** Will not the trout breed themselves?

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:** I am told that if they are released from the hatcheries too young the mortality is great, but if they are bred until they are what are called yearlings, the mortality is very small.

**Mr. Sampson:** Is it at Esperance where this can be done?

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:** No. We have not sufficient fresh water there. Mr. Glew is the man who established the hatcheries, and Mr. Kelly, a businessman, has taken a keen interest in them, and has a number of colleagues who assist him. I believe that if

it had not been for the late Mr. McCallum Smith's bequest the hatcheries would not have been established, and would not have been able to prove the value to Western Australia which we expect them to be. I believe that in the United States the commercial value of trout is greater than that of salmon.

Mr. Doney: That will take some believing!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have seen the hatcheries in our State, and I consider it is only fair to the people there that members should take a greater interest in what is being done. There are quite a lot of new things of that kind we do not seem to want to see, but those people should be commended, encouraged and assisted. I believe the department will assist them, because I have spoken about it to the Minister. He has not been to see them yet, but he realises that the hatcheries will be of great value. The people at Pemberton are interested in the industry, and this Government and all of us should be interested also.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): I should like to assure the Minister that if he wants to spend any money on research into the conservation of our fishing industry he will receive my wholehearted support. This is a very modest estimate—some £7,000 a year—devoted to a most important item in the food of the people. There has been some justifiable concern as to whether the fish resources of our coast, particularly in our estuaries, have not been depleted by failure to enforce proper supervision of the fish taken. There is much research to be undertaken in order to find out what size fish will reproduce and to ensure that they are not taken on a commercial scale before reaching that stage. I am glad the Minister has secured the services of Dr. Serventy for this State. He is an expert who will be able to go into this matter and advise the department. The conservation of our fish off the coast of this State is very important. It is so important that the Minister would be well advised to ask the Treasurer for an adequate sum of money to ensure that all proper inquiry is made and every proper precaution taken to protect and build up this valuable source of wealth.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (in reply): I want to reply first to questions asked by the member for Williams-Narrogin last night. He said he would like to know the result of expenditure in a cer-

tain portion of this State in reference to a spur line put in under the jurisdiction of the Harbour and Lights Department. I will be able to explain privately just what good value we have received throughout the State since the inception of that line. The information must be given privately for obvious reasons. If the hon. member would be satisfied to see me later in reference to that particular matter, I shall be able to give him an assurance that the line has been a blessing in disguise and has been of great benefit to Western Australia. I am very pleased to have the assurance of support from at least one member, the member for West Perth. The most frequent complaints I have received since I have been in charge of the Fisheries Department have been from fishermen, and representatives of fishermen, concerning regulations that have been imposed upon professional fishermen since we have been in co-operation with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research on the very lines indicated by the member for West Perth.

I believe that the depletion of fish in Western Australian waters for a number of years past has been caused through lack of knowledge, lack of proper plant and proper-sized nets, and that sort of thing. A big programme was mapped out by the C.S.I.R., although many of the investigations proposed were retarded through the outbreak of hostilities. The regulations relating to the prohibition of netting fish under a certain size were brought about as a result of investigations made by our Fisheries Department in co-operation with the C.S.I.R. The recommendation was that this particular breed of fish should not be caught below a length of 13 inches. However, the department, on account of the conditions that existed, increased the size from only 9½ inches to 11 inches and one quarter. That was a half-way measure, and was a concession to the fishermen, because the correct size of net for catching fish of only 13 inches in length was not available. So the department decided to increase in short stages the size of the fish that were permitted to be caught until a proper-sized net became available.

The department did not introduce regulations just to penalise fishermen. The average fisherman seems to think that the regulations introduced are designed to be a hindrance to him and to persecute him. A factor

to be taken into consideration is that the professional fisherman is, so to speak, here today and gone tomorrow. He is not much concerned about the future of the fishing industry. There is a big difference of opinion between the professional fisherman and the department. The department endeavours to protect the fish and give them every opportunity to increase, or at least to keep up their numbers. The professional fisherman is concerned only about the amount of fish he can put on the market and the profits he can make.

Mr. Doney: The professional fisherman is not here today and gone tomorrow.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: So far as posterity is concerned, he is. He is not concerned about posterity. He is not concerned about the industry in 50 or 100 years' time. He is concerned about the industry only as it exists in his time and what he can get out of it.

Mr. McLarty: Some have spent their lives at it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I agree, but they are not very concerned about what is going to happen to the industry in the future.

Mr. Doney: They must have some concern for the preservation of the fish, otherwise their livelihood would go. You know that is so.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It is not so!

Mr. Doney: I know that it is so.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I know it is not so. What do we all look forward to?

Member: More fish!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: We are looking forward to security and ease, if we can get it on this earth. The fisherman is no different. He looks for security for himself for the time being. The main bone of contention so far as the fishermen are concerned is the size of the nets they are permitted to use in certain waters.

It is said a vast amount of fish is destroyed by illegal means. It has been put to me that there are various methods of catching fish by nets. One is by the set-net method, and the other is by hauling. They are not permitted to use a net designed to catch 11¼ inch fish by using it as a set net. In certain areas they are permitted to use this particular net for hauling purposes or bull-ringing or splashing, as it is called. There

was a demonstration at Mandurah, when fishermen protested against a regulation, to indicate that a net this size would destroy hundreds of fish. The report of the Inspector of Fisheries was to the effect that, by hauling the net, practically no fish whatever were killed, because in the hauling process undersize fish go through the mesh, but the usual practice is for the fishermen to set the net and leave it all night. The fish get into the net, struggle to get free and many are lost. That occurs as a result of the use of prohibited methods. If the legal method of hauling nets is used, I am given to understand that the loss of fish is negligible. Another point regarding the haulage of nets as compared with the set nets is that it is much easier for fishermen to set their nets than to trawl them. Not only is it harder trawling the net but the cleaning of the net involves more work. I am informed by the inspectors that it is very much easier to set the nets than to "bull-ring" them.

Mr. Withers: They get greater results from hauling than by setting?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes, although it involves much harder work. However, I can assure the hon. member and others interested that the matter is receiving further consideration. The member for Murray-Wellington recently presented a petition of protest to me, and the reason why he has not received any reply is that the Chief Inspector of Fisheries has been in the Eastern States attending a conference and I have been too busy during the past week to give it my personal attention. The Chief Inspector has now returned and I hope to deal with the matter and give the hon. member an early reply.

Mr. McLarty: Will you authorise an independent inquiry?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I cannot promise that. Who is the independent person that could conduct the inquiry, and what knowledge does he possess of fishing?

Vote put and passed.

Votes—*Harbour and Light and Jetties*, £33,048; *Fisheries*, £7,278; *North-West Generally*, £200—agreed to.

Public Utilities:

Votes—*Goldfields Water Supply Undertaking*, £135,750; *Kalgoorlie Abattoirs*, £5,751—agreed to.



*Vote—Metropolitan Abattoirs and Sale-yards, £47,864:*

Mr. SAMPSON: Has any progress been made regarding the killing of stock, and has some painless method, such as that in use in England, been adopted here?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: All systems of humane killing have been inquired into, including one that was suggested about four years ago by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It is considered that the present method compares favourably with any other system.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage, £140,455; Other Hydraulic Undertakings chargeable to Revenue, £69,945—agreed to.*

*Vote—Railways, Tramways, Ferries and Electricity Supply, £213,600:*

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** [9.52]: Quite a lot has been said about the Railway Department and the various sections in connection with it. The Commissioner, his staff and all connected with the Railways have been condemned. Some of the criticism has probably been deserved, but there has been a lot that I would class as captious, while some has represented political propaganda. The latter I do not like. It seems to me that some members who have ordinarily a very high personal standard deteriorate, politically and morally, by their condemnation of others who are doing their best. There is one member that I hold in the highest esteem in every sense; yet he said he hoped the "Minister would get burnt out." That hurt me more than much adverse criticism.

Mr. North: Do you say someone in this Chamber said that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. I know that member is in no way fiendish and in fact is a man of very high standing.

Mr. Watts: He must have been in a very bad temper that night!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Perhaps the hon. member intended to ingratiate himself with his constituents and allowed himself to say something that ordinarily he would not give utterance to. I think members of this Chamber should be paragons in the eyes of the public. We hold high positions and the public should look up to us as members of Parliament. I candidly admit

that if the Government could secure a spark arrester that was really efficient and not detrimental to engine power, the inventor would soon be worth thousands. The Government and the departmental officials are sincere in their desire to secure some appliance that will deal effectively with the spark nuisance.

Mr. Patrick: Does not a claim stand for that, because of cases in the law courts?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, we are protected by law. The department is doing everything possible to deal with the problem and certainly does not wish any farmer to be burnt out. We know that such properties are assets of the State. I am a farmer and so are many of my colleagues, and naturally we are rather alarmed about the position. If I were to say that in order to protect the crops I would no longer run any trains, what would the people say? The position is difficult. If we could get adequate supplies of Newcastle coal it would be all right, but with Collie coal it is difficult.

Mr. Doney: You are really admitting the culpability of the Government.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, the Government is not culpable, but there may be a remedy for the difficulty. Newcastle coal is said not to spark so badly as Collie coal. As I have already remarked, if some ingenious person were to invent an arrester that would deal with the spark nuisance while at the same time not affecting engine power, he would very soon be affluent, for the Government would be willing to pay well for the invention. Generally speaking, the Railways have done a very good job, although many people will disagree with me in that statement. The bulk of the heavy traffic has been associated with the transport of troops and those attached to the Allied Forces. They are accorded first priority and that has imposed a great strain upon the system. Civilian traffic has been handled as expeditiously as possible in view of the position regarding rollingstock, engine power and coal supplies.

Naturally, coal has been the crux of the problem regarding the efficiency of the system. The Collie coalminers have done very well and have produced an increased output of coal. The great difficulty there is that the personnel of the mines does not comprise young men, most of whom have enlisted, and with the older men at

work the problem has been to increase output. The Railway Department has endeavoured to co-operate with the Commonwealth Government which has received first consideration for its requirements. We have coped with the traffic reasonably satisfactorily, despite the great strain imposed upon the system. Dealing with a comparison between the results achieved in 1939 and 1943, the earnings increased by nearly £820,000 rising from £3,600,000 to £4,418,000. The business increase has been nearly 23 per cent. With regard to the passenger traffic, the total increase carried has been 5,676,000, the total increasing from 11,416,000 to 17,092,000—an increase of nearly 50 per cent.

Mr. North: Is that for the whole of the State?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. The passenger earnings increased from £704,000 to £1,360,000, representing an increase of 93 per cent. Of course, the long journeys through the country districts have accounted largely for the somewhat disproportionate increase. Metropolitan traffic showed an increase of only 40 per cent. as against an increase for the country traffic of over 130 per cent. Despite that augmented traffic, the number of locomotives available has declined by 37 from a total of 429, to 392. Some of the engines that have gone off-running have been used for urgent defence requirements and, although the Government was reluctant to release them, to win the war is a first essential and consequently they were despatched to the Eastern States. Another difficulty has been the transfer of qualified tradesmen who have been allowed to go east for maintenance purposes in connection with defence works. The shortage of rollingstock and manpower difficulties have caused much trouble, to an extent far beyond the conception of the ordinary individual who has had nothing to do with such problems. The railway staff has been very loyal and carried out an excellent job.

In Western Australia both the Colliery miners and the railway employees have set an example not only to the Commonwealth but the whole world. Of course, I refer to countries where democratic Government prevails. Members may be aware that there has been far more trouble in the United States of America than in this State. There has been a reduction of 251,800 train miles, equal to about 3 per cent. Heavier

loading of trains has resulted, and will be reflected in increased earnings per train mile of 160.781 in 1943 as against 168.51 in 1939. There is an increase of 3510.38 in the tonnage increase. There has been less freight. Not so much super and wheat has been moved, but there has been an increase in high rates traffic. About two months ago I was over East to have a look round, and even in Victoria, which has an area of only about 87,000 square miles, I was told by the Railway Commissioners that with the exception of the main line their schedule was practically not in use at all, as they could not keep their trains up to schedule or up to timeable.

So when we make comparisons between this State and other States, with the exception of South Australia—where at one time there was talk of “Webb’s Folly,” whereas today the expression is “Webb’s Wisdom”—where an expenditure of £11,000,000 or £12,000,000 was made two years ago, the benefit of which is being felt today, South Australia, as a result, having no trouble from a railway point of view—these facts ought to be borne in mind. Of course, South Australia has only 2,258 miles of railway, and 239 persons for every mile of railway constructed as against Western Australia’s 107. It should be borne in mind that although we have had our difficulties here and many persons have been inconvenienced, they have not been inconvenienced to any great extent.

Mr. Watts called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: During the term of the Mitchell Government in 1933 there was unfair competition with our railways. Millions of pounds are invested in them, and road transport had picked out the high freights, leaving the low freights to the railways. It was a Labour Government that came to the rescue by passing the State Transport Co-ordination Act in 1933. That legislation tended to right the position, and also to increase employment. The striking increase in the railway revenue since then has been maintained. Railway finances have been better, although the unfavourable figures do not disclose the real value of that legislation.

Mr. Seward: If you kill your opposition, you generally do better!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are not trying to kill anyone.

Mr. Seward: You killed road transport.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was not my fault. The competition of road transport would not be so bad if it were fair, but when road transport came along to pick out only the high freights and leave the lowest freights to the railways, that was unfair competition. If road transport had carried freights at the average charge of 1.98d. per mile, it would not have been able to survive the competition of the Railway Department. Our object was to help our farmers and pastoralists to develop the country. Before that, the anti-Labour Government had to do a deal of searching, simply because it could not carry the freight offering on account of the unfair competition. The Railway Department engaged over 1,000 persons at that time; and they have been kept on, and there has been no reduction in personnel. The metropolitan basic wage has increased from £3 9s. to £4 19s. 6d. meantime. That is by reason of an industrial agreement over which the department has no authority at all. The staff have already received increases, and war burdens have been added. In June of 1943 the additions to wages and salaries amounted to £687,000. This year, owing to war loading, we shall have to find another £114,000. Thus the cost in wages has increased by another £180,000 per year since 1932-33. Freights and fares have been reduced. Legislation introduced about 1935 had the result of reducing freights and fares by £105,000.

Mr. Patrick: They have been increased since.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But only to a very small extent, not quite £50,000. Since business has increased, however, the decrease of £105,000 has risen tremendously, of course owing to the increase of revenue. Concessions have greatly increased. Prices of material have increased, and wages and everything else have gone up since 1932-33. Coal has gone up about 4s. per ton, and sleepers have risen to £4 per load; but railway charges have not been raised. When giving evidence before the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission, the Associated Banks of W.A. sub-

mitted the following statement showing increases in costs to the farmers:—

Machinery .. .. .	15%
Spare parts .. .. .	10%
Superphosphate .. .. .	43%
Stores .. .. .	12%
Income tax (£500) .. .. .	83%
Income tax (£1,000) .. .. .	98%
(Both for married man with three children.)	
Basic wages .. .. .	29%
Wages .. .. .	50%
Power kerosene .. .. .	65%
Diesel fuel .. .. .	132%
Wire netting .. .. .	10%
Fencing wire .. .. .	22%
Barbed wire .. .. .	19%
Railway freights .. .. .	Nil

Although other costs had increased from between 10 per cent. and 132 per cent., railway freights remained unaltered. I do not complain about that, because I consider that the country people are paying quite enough. My personal opinion is that we should let taxation pay the deficit.

Mr. Sampson: You are getting most of the traffic now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. Sampson: But unsawn logs are still brought down by motor truck, I believe, and not by rail.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is a matter for the Transport Board. I do not know. Just now the railways with their shortage of rollingstock, manpower and coal find it extremely difficult to cope with the traffic they have. Today there is an accumulation of over 30,000 tons of material to be moved. No farmer or producer in this State has suffered because of increased railway freights. The Railway Department has carried the whole of the burden. While the anti-Labour Government was in power, work of all kinds fell into arrears. I think I heard the member for West Perth mention tonight that there was over £500,000 worth of belated repairs. That is so, and this Government has had to carry that burden. But for improvements due to legislation that would have been very difficult to cope with. Today, only for that legislation the Railway Department's financial position would be hopeless, in a state of chaos. However, on account of that legislation and war activities everything has moved, and the work has been done reasonably expeditiously. The increased traffic offering has been difficult to cope with on account of petrol rationing, of

course. Because of rubber shortage, road transport has not even played the part it would have been allowed to play had the commodity been available.

Some outstanding improvements have been made in recent years at a cost of over £2,000,000. A new railway was built to Big Bell. The main eastern line was duplicated from Tunnel Junction to Mount Helena and from Spencer's Brook to East Northam, eliminating delays awaiting crossing. The permanent way has received attention by means of re-laying, re-sleepering, re-grading, deviations, re-ballasting, widening banks, re-shipplating and cambering.

Mr. Sampson: Of course the Big Bell service stopped long ago!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: These improvements enabled bigger loads to be hauled, and also gave greater over-all speed. But for the improvements the grades would have been heavier than they are, and we would not have been able to haul the same loads and to travel at the same speed.

Mr. Seward: We would be going backwards.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We might have been. Anyhow, those improvements have helped very greatly, and have also been a good avenue for employment. Water supply reservoirs have been enlarged, and new water supplies provided in the dry areas. New station buildings have been erected. Bridges, culverts and stockyards, where necessary, and pig and lamb unloading races to yards have been constructed and are in use. Facilities for handling small stock from motor vehicles have been provided, and new houses for railway staffs in country centres have been made available. Numerous other works have been carried out, in the nature of building platforms, sidings and miscellaneous improvements. The station yards at Northam and Brunswick Junction were completely remodelled to facilitate the handling of traffic, marshalling, etc., and so reduce train delay. The loco. depot at Northam has been re-organised and a new barracks for the men has been built. A new mechanical coaling stage has been erected and a 70ft. turn table installed. Re-arrangement of repair shops and offices has been carried out, and also the strengthening of the subway adjacent to Show Grounds at Claremont. Improvements have been made to the refreshment rooms at Chidlow and

Spencer's Brook, and six big "S" class engines are now used on the Eastern Goldfields run. Two 70ft. turn tables have been constructed.

Mr. Sampson: Do the Army authorities—

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot hear what the hon. member is saying.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is distinctly out of order by interjecting. He must discontinue.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have had to provide an ambulance for the workmen at Midland Junction. That has been a great asset to them, and they were justly entitled to it. We have also given them a canteen at a cost of £2,000. It has been very successful and will have to be extended because the dining-room is not large enough to cater for the present numbers. Mechanical coaling plants have been established in various centres, and the 10 new River type locomotives built at Midland Junction Workshops were placed in traffic in 1938-39 as part of our rehabilitation of engine stock programme. That programme would have been carried out previously except for the war. Our locomotive trouble, had that been done, would not now have been nearly so acute. Also, 26 engines went to the Commonwealth Government to assist it in its war effort. That was a considerable handicap to the department. We have issued two "S" class engines to traffic and they have been highly satisfactory. In 1938 six diesel electric cars were introduced. They have been useful in the country, and have accelerated our services. They have been placed on six different routes. Although I am Minister for Railways and wanted one of these cars to operate between Norseman and Kalgoorlie, and another between Kalgoorlie and Laverton it seemed to me that it was more important to have them operating where they were, and and so I did not press my claims. I will be very happy when we can duplicate the present number, because they will be of great benefit, and will carry twice the number at present being carried by the diesel coaches. They will modernise our system to a large extent.

Mr. North: Is there any chance of a diesel coach for the suburbs?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That remains to be seen. Personally I would like to see electric trains operating in the suburbs. A short time ago I was in Mel-

bourne and Sydney, and my opinion is that the traffic in those cities could not be handled without the electric trains.

The Premier: They have six times the population.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. We also have six new modern type sleeping coaches being built, but owing to the war they have been delayed. We have not been able to get the necessary materials. If we had them on traffic much of the present criticism would be unnecessary. We have placed 334 wagons of various types in service during the last four years and have other vans and wagons under construction. As I mentioned a few moments ago, we sold rollingstock to the Commonwealth Government and we could ill-afford to do so at the moment for £100,000. That sum will be set aside in order to build new and up-to-date rollingstock. The railways have been the prime means of transport of material and personnel of the Defence Services in Western Australia for the past three years. The curtailment of interstate shipping necessitated the use of the trans-Australian railway. That has given us considerably more traffic. Country passenger traffic has increased by over 130 per cent. Quite a lot of that comes from the trans. railway at Kalgoorlie instead of, as previously, by boat. The Service personnel and material, and other requirements of the military people have been attended to, and the Services generally speaking are well satisfied.

We have given the Commonwealth concession rates, and we have also extended considerable concessions to the soldiers. I mention that to counteract some of the extravagant ideas that the profits of the railways should be much greater because our traffic has considerably increased. We have had to give a lot away, but we are satisfied to help in the war effort wherever we can. We have also inaugurated a road passenger service between Kojonup-Williams, Quindanning and Perth. It is a circuitous route and well away from existing railways. It has been instituted to assist the settlers in those districts and we have received quite a number of letters expressing appreciation.

Mr. Doney: That was not done this past year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was only last year, or a couple of years ago.

Mr. Doney: You mean in the last 11 or 12 years.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have referred back to 1933 in some instances, but this does not go back 11 years. Our costs have been increased, but we have not increased the railway freights. The costs have risen probably by £1,000,000, which means that there cannot be such a large surplus. In fact, to have such a small deficit as is shown, is a credit to the department. The primary producers have been helped in every direction possible. But the Railway Department is only a common carrier, and it has suffered a lot of criticism—and sometimes unfair criticism. Pastoralists in drought-stricken areas have been granted free return of stock railed away for agistment, and 25 per cent. rebate on freight charges on sheep and cattle to replace losses due to drought. That concession creates a load for the department to carry. The department has, in co-operation with the Water Supply Department, played a part in relieving the water shortage. We have converted quite a number of our trucks into tanks. Water was exceedingly short in the Lake Grace district and, I think, in the district of the member for Williams-Narrogin, as well as in other parts of the State. That also cost the department a few thousand pounds. When members know the details they will realise that there is not such a lot of room for adverse criticism.

Mr. Mann: Are your own members satisfied?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are satisfied as far as possible. We would like to do more, but everything that could be done with the resources at our disposal has been carried out. Every effort has been made to protect and assist the people who are producing the real wealth of this country. We know what they are doing, and the adverse conditions under which they are living compared with the city people. We are labouring under no delusions in that respect. I myself am a farmer and I suppose have spent as much money as most other members without very much return. The primary producers have my sympathy together with that of the Premier and the rest of the Government. The State Transport Board has granted subsidies to permit of the operation of the following

road transport services, which have been very helpful to the primary producers—

Cranbrook-Boyup Brook.

Ongerup-Needilup.

Mt. Barker-Forrest Hill-Kalgan River.

Newdegate-Holt Rock.

Newdegate-Ravensthorpe.

The transport of wheat and superphosphate between farm and siding in the Lakes district has been of wonderful assistance to the people of the Lakes district. The 4s. a bushel for the first 3,000 bushels of wheat has put many of these people on their feet. I visited that district this year, and I do not think I have ever seen the people in the mallee so satisfied as they are today. Much of that is due to this Labour Government.

Mr. Doney: You are on the Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister can debate these matters later.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am only trying to tell members that so far as the Labour Party is concerned—

The CHAIRMAN: I will not permit the Minister to discuss anything but the administration of his department.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is what I am trying to discuss, but in doing so I want to tell members that in that administration we are making every effort to assist the people in the country. We do not stand for centralisation, but for the decentralisation of our transport and railway services.

Mr. Doney: Since when?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That has been our policy since before the hon. member came into this Chamber, perhaps. It was our policy before it was adopted by any other party here. We have also introduced the zone system for railways so that the wheat in each district will go to its natural port. If it does not, then we say that a little more freight must be paid because the freight charge on wheat is not remunerative.

Mr. Watts: What is the natural port for Gnowangerup?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member would know better than I do.

Mr. Watts: I will tell the Minister. It is Albany, but the wheat does not go there.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, it should.

Mr. Watts: That is what I say.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The railways do not take it there. The Railway Department is a common carrier and, if produce is consigned to any part of the State, it must be conveyed there.

Mr. McDonald: Is it a common carrier in the matter of a claim for damages?

Mr. Watts: It is a most uncommon carrier then.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When I was in business, if I had anything of importance to transport I insured it. The amount of the insurance premium was not large and if any accident happened to my goods I was entitled to receive payment. If people will not insure their goods, they cannot expect the department to carry them at a low rate and also bear the loss for damage. Everybody who has freight conveyed by the railways is at liberty to insure his property, and if he does so he will be compensated for any damage sustained.

I repeat that we have zoned transport and we expect people to use the natural ports. Large sums of money have been spent on our ports; a million pounds has been spent at Geraldton and at Esperance the expenditure has been about £63,000. Consequently there is no reason why wheat should be diverted from its natural port. It is economically unsound to carry a commodity that is unremunerative for a longer distance than is necessary. If members are in favour of decentralisation, they should take steps to ensure that their produce is forwarded to the natural port.

The railway workshops have done their part in the war effort. During the past few years large amounts of money have been spent on the Midland Junction Workshops. New machinery has been purchased at a cost of over £60,000. A new annexe has been erected, part of which has been utilised for the machining of shells, while a new forging annexe is under construction. An up-to-date tool room has been erected and precision tools have been manufactured. These have been used not only in our own shops, but also in other workshops of the State, and some have been sent to the Eastern States. In these directions the workshops have done very well. The foundry has been enlarged and two new steel furnaces will cope with castings.

Before installing these new furnaces the whole of our castings had to be done outside. We were selling our scrap

material very cheaply, and then buying it back in the form of castings. The fact of being able to do our own castings will be very helpful and profitable. The chemist's shop at Midland Junction Workshops has been enlarged. We have an industrial chemist there who is a very important officer, and we are giving him the accommodation and equipment required. Contracts received represent a value of more than £1,500,000 and the work done has been of a very high grade. The workshops have received no complaints; on the contrary they have received quite a lot of commendation for their work. I am not prepared to give the whole of the credit to the administration and to officers in high places; the men and women who have done the actual work are deserving of credit. They have worked under difficult conditions and the people should be grateful to them.

Amenities for the staff are a necessity in order to secure maximum production and efficiency and to minimise accidents. We are providing such facilities wherever possible. I feel that I am echoing the sentiments of the Government when I say that we will provide amenities such as canteens, dining rooms, change rooms, lockers, etc., wherever possible. At present we have 380 apprentices under indenture, 68 of them being on service. When Labour returned to office, there were only 198 apprentices. In this direction, therefore, we have made a great improvement.

I should like to quote from a letter written by one of my constituents, Mr. W. T. Lucas, of Esperance. He says—

Re railway freights: These are a sore point with outback settlers and traders. The railways being owned by the State, it should not fall to the farmers, miners and settlers of all kinds outside the metropolitan area to pay the upkeep of railways with freight charges. National railways should be kept in commission by everyone. A sales tax of 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. on all goods used in the State with no freights payable would make goods one price in town and country, making rural industries more attractive to settlers.

I promised to read that letter without comment. There may be something in what the writer says.

Mr. Seward: No doubt there is.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for West Perth criticised the railways and said he could not understand why, in view of the increased traffic, the department had not made more than £2 on

the previous year's turnover. The hon. member's criticism was quite constructive; I am not complaining of it. I should like to read what he said and then give the reply. The report of his statement was—

Criticising railway finance in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday night, when discussing the Estimates for 1943-44, the Leader of the National Party said that no matter how much the turnover improved, the Railway Department was no better off. This called for an explanation why, in view of the better revenue, results were not better. It seemed to the lay person that the present golden opportunity to secure greater revenue from war traffic had not been taken. Despite the fact that extra traffic had been paid for in spot cash by the Federal Government, the department over the past year was only £2 better off.

All those freights had to be reduced. The department has submitted the following reply:—

The reason why railway financial results are not better is that operating costs are ever advancing, whilst charges are at pre-war levels. This aspect was dealt with fully previously but the Government decided that no increase be made in fares and freights.

One of the departmental heads happened to mention that railway freights should be increased by 12 per cent., but that did not emanate from the Government.

Mr. Watts: He did not happen to mention it; he told us so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He was a junior head.

Mr. Doney: A junior head!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am prepared to tell members who it was.

Mr. Watts: We know who it was.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was Mr. Rayner, who is a very able officer.

As regards the improvement of £2 only in the net earnings for 1942-43, basic wage increases added £87,600 to the wages bill of 1942-43 as compared with that of 1941-42. Higher payments for Sunday time and overtime accounted for £35,500. The debits for fuel and sleepers were £63,000, and £36,000 higher respectively. War damage insurance for a full year as compared with six months only of 1941-42 added £17,500, and an additional £20,000 was contributed to the accident and fire insurance to offset marine and other losses. £38,500 more than in 1941-42 was spent on much needed repairs to rolling stock, and extra provision was made for clearance of accumulated leave and belated maintenance to the extent of £8,000 and £60,000 respectively.

The foregoing items represent £376,100 of the additional expenditure of £421,593 recorded, and by no means do they exhaust the list of increased burdens which the department has had to bear.

Mr. McDonald: How about Queensland with a surplus of £5,000,000?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The statement continues—

The percentage which working expenses bear to earnings is the usual barometer of railway performance and to have been able to confine the increase in the operating ratio to only 2.32 per cent. in a year in which additional burdens to the extent of £376,100—nearly 11 per cent. of the total working expenditure—had to be absorbed reflects no mean achievement by the administration and staff of the service.

That statement should convince the hon. member that the department has done an excellent job. The hon. member by interjection referred to Queensland. That State is in a very different category from Western Australia. It has 5,666 miles of 3 ft. 6in. gauge lines which is far greater than our mileage, and the population per mile to railway constructed is greater than ours, while the freights are a little higher than those here. Considering the size and other disabilities of this State, members will find that our department has done a reasonably good job even when compared with the other States. I have comparative figures relating to the Eastern States, but I do not propose to give them. I obtained the figures personally when travelling on those railways, and I can say from experience that when everything is considered our railways compare more than favourably with those of the Eastern States. When I returned to Western Australia I commended the Government on its achievements.

Mr. Watts: It depends on how much consideration you have given.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have given the matter a great deal of consideration.

Mr. Watts: I was not referring to you, but to the public.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The public suffer inconvenience in all directions. A person going into a shop cannot now get exactly what he wants. The other day I went to Boans at 1 o'clock to get a meal and had to wait for three-quarters of an hour, and then did not get what I wanted. That was owing to shortage of staff. I should have gone to the railway refreshment room, where I would have been served promptly. I have considered the matter of railway refreshment rooms and have arrived at the definite conclusion—I speak for my-

self only now—that it would pay the Government to take over all the railway refreshment rooms when the war is over.

I should add a few words about the Tramways and Electricity Supply. The trolley-buses are giving an extremely good service. Some mention was made this evening about queueing up for the buses, but I would point out that there is no queueing in Australia and that if it were introduced here we would have still greater congestion. The trolley-bus service between Perth and Claremont compares favourably with any similar service in Australia. There are other points at which the congestion is greater than at the terminus of the Claremont service. The complaints about the congestion appear to be made by some persons desirous of ingratiating themselves with the people living in the Claremont district. Mr. Taylor, the manager, has discharged his duties in a highly commendable manner.

With regard to electricity supply, we are building up to the peak load and very soon will have to instal another plant. Where that will be installed I cannot definitely say, but the sooner it is installed the better. The thermal efficiency of our plant is the highest in Australia and the second highest in the British Empire. It has reached 28.2, which reflects great credit on the management.

Progress reported.

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

Returned from the Council with amendments.

*House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.*