

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 12th September, 1956.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Marketing of Potatoes Act Amendment Bill.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.33]: I wish to take this opportunity of saying a few words in support of the motion; and, like other speakers, I join in paying my tribute to the memory of our colleagues who passed away recently. When the motions of condolence were moved, I spoke to them and therefore shall not repeat my remarks.

I also want to join in the welcome that has been extended to our new members and to congratulate those who were re-elected at the Legislative Council elections this year. Like other speakers who have mentioned the fact, I have been favourably impressed with the debuts that these new members have made, and I am sure they will find that they will get a warm welcome from all the older members in this Chamber and, to the best of our ability, and from time to time, we will assist them in any way possible.

It is not my intention to speak at length, but I want to say something about the goldmining industry because it is of vast importance to the State of Western Australia and yet does not seem to be given the due recognition that it should receive. From recent trends, it seems fairly obvious that we might be in difficulties in this State in regard to unemployment. There are some significant trends at the moment, and we read in the daily Press about how there is considerable unemployment not only in the city but also in the country

areas of Western Australia. In this evening's "Daily News" there are headlines to the effect that the Premier has warned that men may soon have to be sacked from Government jobs. That should cause everyone to think; and, of course, it is our responsibility to submit whatever propositions we are capable of submitting to overcome this problem.

We have a golden opportunity of going a long way towards meeting this situation by encouraging and enlarging the scope of the goldmining industry. Members are well aware that for the past 60 years the State of Western Australia has had a great deal to thank the goldmining industry for. Almost right throughout the history of this State our economy has been geared to the goldmining industry, and that industry has never failed us. It has always been and still is one of our most vital industries and one on which a good deal of the State depends for its existence.

Just to illustrate the point briefly, I would mention that last year the value of the gold yield was £13,036,338; in other words, in every month that goes by, over £1,000,000 worth of gold is produced in Western Australia. Every year a figure of approximately £5,000,000 is paid out directly in wages. As can be visualised, the sum of money expended on stores and commodities produced in this State is also very high.

In addition, we have to realise that towns like Kalgoorlie, and those north of that centre, where there are railways, schools and populations—towns like Meekatharra, Cue, Mt. Magnet and Wiluna, which are household names, which have railway communication, and which support communities and provide all the amenities that go to supporting those communities—are almost directly dependent for their existence on the goldmining industry.

Yet we have the remarkable state of affairs that for many years the price of the commodity that those towns produce has remained static. The price of wheat, wool, timber, dairy produce and everything else has gone up, but the price of gold has remained stationary. It is a remarkable tribute to the people engaged in the goldmining industry that they have been able to carry on all these years the way they have in spite of rising costs all the time. There would be some solace if we could say that we have now reached the stage at which costs would not go any higher, but I do not think anyone is brave enough to make that prediction.

On the other hand, it is clearly evident that costs will continue to rise. If they do, it may mean that the existence of this valuable industry will be jeopardised. If such a terrible thing were to happen to Western Australia, the consequences would be disastrous. Accordingly, I think we

could come to the conclusion that the continuance of the goldmining industry, particularly for Western Australia, is of paramount importance.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is important, too, for the whole of the Commonwealth.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: That is so. If its existence is jeopardised, something will have to be done about it. I understand that next month there is to be a meeting in America of the World Bank. Apparently the price of gold will be brought up during the discussion. Australia is a member of the International Monetary Fund; and only a few days ago we heard from the Acting Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Fadden, that he is going to attend that meeting at which he will urge an increase in the price of gold. He did not think however, that there would be much prospect of success.

I think it was yesterday that I read in "The West Australian" the following cable:—

London, Tuesday—The South African Finance Minister, (Mr. J. T. Naude) said in London yesterday that unless his country could get a higher price for gold, 17 South African mines would almost certainly have to close. Mr. Naude is on his way to Washington to press at a meeting of the International Monetary Fund for increased payment for gold. The closing of the 17 gold mines would mean an annual loss of gold worth £56,250,000. Some of the older mines were operating at a profit margin of less than 3s. 1½d. for each ton of ore brought between 6,000 to 10,000 feet to the surface. South Africa would accept almost anything in the way of increased payments he said.

So it seems that this meeting of the International Monetary Fund is to have vital consequences so far as the goldmining industry in South Africa is concerned. I presume it will also have vital consequences for Australia and the other gold-producing countries. Consequently, it is remarkable that the matter is being given so little prominence, and apparently so little recognition by the public in general.

It is a pity that Sir Arthur Fadden seems to realise before he proceeds to this conference that his mission is likely to be a failure. It would appear that the public, particularly in Western Australia, should be more aware of the position. If Sir Arthur Fadden has that view, he should invite representatives of the producers from this State to accompany him. If he were to invite a representative of the Chamber of Mines and a representative of the prospectors' association to go with him to Washington to meet the representatives from other gold-producing countries, I submit that the vast importance of this situation might be realised and considerably more agitation put forward. I have respect

for Sir Arthur Fadden's ability, but he does not come from Western Australia, where this industry is part of our life blood. I do not mean to be critical of him, but one could hardly expect him to appreciate the situation as far as we in this State are concerned.

That proposition I offer in all sincerity. The consequences at stake are so very serious that it is well worth consideration. Nothing but good could result if two representatives of the producers in this State—one drawn from the Chamber of Mines, and the other from the prospectors and small mine-owners—were to accompany Sir Arthur. Let us suppose that the International Monetary Fund does not increase the price of gold. If that were so, I would say that something would have to be done within Australia itself.

In that regard I want to say that the Commonwealth Government will have to face up to the position and spend a far larger amount than it has done in the past in assisting this industry. The assistance that Government has given in recent years has been all right in a way for marginal mines, but it has not had the effect of encouraging prospecting; it has not had the effect of inspiring confidence in the industry at all.

We know that comparatively recently the Big Bell mine, one of our largest producers—which supported the district of Cue, which employed a great number of men, and helped to maintain the Murchison district—went out of production, and nothing so far has been found to replace it. Drilling is now taking place on the Great Fingal mine and great hopes are held that developments will be such that that mine may reopen. We also know that the Sons of Gwalia mine at Gwalia, which again supports that district, and which fell upon bad times in recent years, has now attained a new lease of life, and its prospects are assured.

In that regard, I want to pay tribute to this Government and previous State Governments for the way they have fostered the goldmining industry within their limited financial capacity. I know that the Chamber of Mines, together with the prospectors, are well satisfied with the assistance that has been given to them by the State Government. Drilling programmes have been undertaken, State batteries have been improved, and assistance has been given to prospectors and small mine-owners, but the industry is barely holding its own.

Last year our production was down. I have not the figures, but I think it was down about £500,000; and, of course, that is a trend which has to be arrested. The goldmining industry, if it is encouraged and developed at the present time, will provide employment as it did during the last depression. It will open up parts of

the State which are at present languishing, and it will support railway systems and communities in parts of the State where they must be maintained. However, with the continuance of the goldmining industry, there is little prospect for the future at such places as Laverton, Leonora, Wiluna, Meekatharra, and other centres.

I hope that the Ministers and other members of this Chamber will apply their thoughts and their influence towards assisting the goldmining industry in the best possible way. The industry has always meant so much to this State of Western Australia; and if it gets due recognition, it can do much for the State in the difficult times that lie ahead. I do not know how my poor remarks will get to the Federal Government; but I sincerely trust by some means or other Sir Arthur Fadden will pay serious attention to the making of a real bid when he goes to Washington and, like the Minister in South Africa, will put up a real fight for an increase in the price of gold. I feel that he hardly knows enough of the situation himself to be fully equipped to handle it; and it is for that reason that I hope serious consideration will be given to the views of capable men who can be found on the goldfields of our own State, and who will be able to tell the powers that be what this industry means and what has to be done to maintain it in the future.

That ends the major part of my remarks, but I just want to comment on the recent Legislative Council elections. On looking through the statistics, I find that the number of electors on the roll who voted in my case was about 75 per cent.; and that, I think, was about the figure of those who voted elsewhere. It satisfies me that the people will vote in Legislative Council elections if they have the opportunity of doing so.

I was amazed to read in the Press some time ago that one member of Parliament criticised the Government for assisting to put people on the Legislative Council roll. On the one hand we are always complaining that people do not enrol and that they do not take an interest in these elections; yet there was quite a deal of criticism because officers of the Electoral Department went out and took a hand in giving assistance to those who were entitled to be on the roll.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It was very good of them.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: That seems a remarkable state of affairs to me, because it should be the aim and endeavour of all concerned to put on the roll as many people who have the qualifications as possible. The fact is, of course, that at present the qualifications are so involved and intricate that the average person has difficulty in understanding them. One only has to go around to do some enrolling oneself to find out how the average person has

difficulty in understanding what qualifications entitle him to go on the roll for the Legislative Council. That does not apply to any one section of the community, but to all sections, irrespective of their walk in life and their educational capacity. That is my experience.

As I have said here before, I hope that something will be done whereby every adult person who occupies a house, and every spouse of such person has a vote. I have said repeatedly that many countries are doing away with the democratic system of Government, but I for one hope that that state of affairs will not come to Australia.

During the course of his remarks, Sir Charles Latham had a tilt at "The West Australian" for the lack of interest it showed in the reporting of the doings of Parliament. I notice that this afternoon there is not even a reporter here.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It should have been chastised for the photo which was in this morning's paper, too.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: This all adds up, in my estimation, to the fact that the institution of Parliament is, these days, undergoing a critical period. Other countries have dispensed with Parliament, and many people in Australia have nothing but derogatory remarks to make about it. To my mind, that is a bad state of affairs. I agree with Sir Charles Latham that the Press of this country should report the proceedings of Parliament more than it is doing at present and more than it has done in the past; otherwise it is simply playing into the hands of those elements that want to scrap Parliament and substitute some other form of government for it.

I come back to my theme: that we have to keep improving the institution of democracy, and where possible, to keep improving Parliament. We must get the public to take an interest in the doings of Parliament, because that is the place where laws are made; and unless Parliament has the respect and interest of the public at large, things are not going to work out for the best. That is why I say that I would like the public of this State to have a bigger stake in the Legislative Council and take a greater interest in it. My experience, gained from the recent elections, is that they will take an interest in it and will record their votes at elections for the Legislative Council if we give them the opportunity of doing so.

I hope we are not going to stand for this out-moded franchise for the rest of time, but that the House, during this session, will stand up to the proposition that the time has now arrived when the franchise should be overhauled and brought up to modern requirements; and these modern requirements are, in my opinion,

that a larger section of the community must be given the opportunity of enrolling.

If a Bill comes before the House this year to amend the franchise in some way, I hope that it will be given careful consideration, and that it may even be referred to a select committee, because I am sure that evidence can be obtained to support, beyond all question, the proposition that the time has arrived when an overhaul of the franchise is warranted and should be made. With these few remarks, I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

HON. W. F. WILLESEE (North) [5.8]: I wish to express my regret at the loss of the late Hon. Harry Hearn and the late Hon. C. W. D. Barker. Mr. Hearn's passing meant a definite loss to the commerce of this State. He was a man who had adopted this country. He was a self-made man and therefore his passing was a great loss to Parliament. In the case of Mr. Barker, I feel that Mrs Barker must be highly gratified because of the many tributes tendered to her late husband; and I hope she gets much consolation and satisfaction from the views expressed about him by so many members of this Chamber.

Congratulations are obviously due to those of our new members who have acquitted themselves so well in their maiden contributions, thereby giving promise of a high standard of debate in the future, and of being of considerable benefit to this Chamber, as a House of Parliament, with ultimate advantage to the legislation of the State.

In another place, during the session, attention has been drawn to the failure of the MacRobertson Miller Aviation Co. to give a satisfactory service to its clientele in the North-West. I do not intend to reiterate the readings taken from the various newspapers with regard to the complaints raised about the company; nor do I intend in any way to disparage its flying record, which is one of the best in the world.

Apparently the company falls down in the service it gives to the people of the North-West. It seems there is something lacking in this section of its administration. A company which has enjoyed a subsidy of £150,000 to June of this year should be able to give to a remote area of the State a service which would be satisfactory to the consignee at all times. It follows that if a person decides to put on an M.M.A. plane, a heavy parcel or a part for a vehicle, he takes a calculated risk with regard to having this vehicle, or whatever it may be, available for sale to a client immediately rather than delayed for an unknown period.

When a person takes this calculated risk, and is prepared to pay additional money by way of freight, it is completely frustrating to find that, although the merchant

involved has done everything desired of him so that the goods are duly received into the aviation office, somewhere along the line, either by off-loading or neglect to put the parcel on the plane at the time when delivery was made, the required result is not obtained.

This has been going on for some years. Complaints have been steadily increasing, but this particular facet of M.M.A. does not seem to have been overcome. With the merger of the company with Airlines (W.A.) Ltd., it was thought there was a possibility that we would get a better service, but the contrary has been the result. After so many years of operation by this company, it is time that some competition was allowed on the run, and that might have the effect that we desire.

Last year Reg Ansett, of Ansett Airways, endeavoured to come to this State with three DC 3's, but for some reason he was not granted a permit by the Federal Department concerned. I feel there is an avenue for him in the North-West. His company does not ask much: merely to be allowed to enter into competition with other companies. Its flying record is equal to any, and Ansett Airways has competed with the foremost of aviation companies in Australia—and competed successfully. However, its service was lost to Western Australia last year by departmental judgment, and I for one cannot see where the reasoning came from.

I hope that when our new State ship comes on the run, shortly, many of the aggravating disabilities at present obtaining will disappear. Consignees suffer great disappointment at times when they endeavour to have goods off-loaded at out-ports in an endeavour to make up for shipments that may have been missed at Fremantle.

To illustrate the point, I can quote the instance of a man who could not get his cargo loaded at Fremantle. He paid overland freight all the way to Carnarvon, knowing full well that when the vessel got to Carnarvon it would off-load 300 tons of cargo, and also that it would be in port for some 18 hours. I think his total cargo loading was about 13 tons. However, after off-loading cargo and with about two or three sling-loads of cargo still to go on the ship, it pulled up its anchor and left. As a result, this man was forced to take the rest of his consignment back by truck.

That is the sort of thing that is constantly happening, as was mentioned by Mr. Logan during his Address-in-reply speech. In view of the fact that it is known beforehand that a vessel has to off-load 300 or 400 tons of cargo and that it can handle only 10 or 12 tons to each hatch, and further, that the ship has to leave the port at a certain time, some consideration should be given to loading a ship whilst unloading is going on.

If the cargo is at the wharfside and is left there during the whole time that the unloading is going on, surely some provision could be made for loading it into the ship while it is off-loading other cargo. I know that excuses will be put forward for this sort of thing; but I feel sure that if this problem were tackled in a proper and genuine way, it could be overcome.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Does that not call for co-operation by the waterside workers?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It has nothing to do with the waterside workers.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I am merely asking.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: A reply could be given along those lines on the basis of additional overtime being paid, or of breaking into the meal hour. Alternatively, the seamen could have an extended period granted under the safety regulations in so far as working so many hours at one stretch is concerned.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You have heavy tides there, of course.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: No; it is not a tidal port. Even if it were, the vessel is in port for about 18 hours, during which period this problem could surely be overcome.

There is another aspect that is unsatisfactory. I have asked about it on many occasions, but as yet I have not been able to obtain a satisfactory reply. On occasions, at Port Hedland, which is a tidal port, I have seen three vessels in port at the one time. Two of them were going south and one was going north. Notwithstanding the fact that there were three vessels berthed at that port, there was still some cargo left on the jetty when the last of the three vessels sailed away. I have mentioned that fact for what it is worth. It has been happening for years. I only hope that it can be overcome, because it is a constant bugbear to merchants in the North, and one is filled with complete frustration and dismay when one sees three vessels berthing within a short period and yet a long time elapsing before the arrival of the next ship.

The Minister for Railways: They have to pass each other.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: I fully realise that there would be some excuse offering, but there is no necessity for three vessels to be in Port Hedland at the one time, even although they have to pass one another.

The Minister for Railways: There must have been if some cargo was left behind.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: Obviously, I cannot convince the Minister for Shipping.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There must be some explanation. Who is to blame?

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: For the past three months, at any rate, vehicles travelling from Carnarvon to Geraldton and through to Perth have been subjected to what appears to me to be something in the nature of a blitz. The owners of these vehicles have received approximately 30 summonses, which have been lodged against them in the past six or eight weeks. The local hauliers are very concerned about the position. The summonses emanate from Geraldton; and should any of these owners desire to defend the charge, they have to travel all the way from Carnarvon to Geraldton.

In most cases, the charge involves only a minor breach. Generally, it is merely a question of faulty sidelights, no rear-vision mirror fitted to the vehicle, or other such minor faults. We know full well that, any large vehicle travelling along the Carnarvon-Geraldton section during a dry period is very difficult to maintain in tip-top condition, especially with regard to smaller accessories such as side-lights, rear-vision mirrors and so on which are required under the Traffic Act. One has often found, even when driving a utility, that one has lost a number plate or some other small accessory belonging to the vehicle.

Whilst there has been a number of prosecutions in the past, no doubt these have been justified; because if it is found that a vehicle is travelling down consistently without some minor attachment, or the driver is responsible for some other breach, then a prosecution is warranted. Lately, however, the number of prosecutions has gone beyond the normal police control. I am told that one man was awakened at 2.30 a.m. and told that his truck had to be taken on to the road so that it could be checked with a portable weighbridge. Some prosecutions are now pending in regard to under-loading, and I have doubts whether this portable weighbridge is the last thing in efficiency.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You mean over-loading, do you not?

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: Yes; that is so. In one instance a vehicle had 128 bales of wool on it. To support the weight carried, the driver was in possession of a cart-note which showed that the wool had been weighed at the shed where it had been pressed, or at the wool store in Carnarvon. I am certain that it is weighed at one or the other of those two points. In any case, one can almost bet on the fact that wool goes about six bales to the ton. In this instance the police claim that the weight carried was 28 tons, whereas the weight stipulated on the cart-note was 22 tons. I cannot believe that there was a discrepancy of six tons in this load of wool.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Perhaps it was the tare of the vehicle itself that was at fault.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: No; in this instance that could not be so. I am told that the truck showed the true weight which it had been licensed to carry. The weight of the vehicle would not be taken into consideration. The ultimate result of all these prosecutions being laid against the hauliers will be an increase in the transport fees charged to the producer. At the moment it is costing hauliers £300 a year for licence fees and for additional fees that are paid following prosecution. They cannot carry this extra impost, so it will mean that the growers and the pastoralists will have to pay.

Therefore, I hope that some reason will be advanced as to why this great number of prosecutions is being made; and at the same time, I trust that some consideration will be given to the conditions under which these contractors work, and that some allowance will be made for them. It must be remembered that there is no weigh-bridge in Carnarvon; and even if overloading does occur, it is possibly due to the fact that a grower often comes in late with more wool than he originally intended to send south, following which the haulier agrees to cart it for him.

Similar remarks can be applied to the way the Transport Board treats the people in that area. Recently there was an instance of a road board which damaged its end-loader very badly; and after summing up the problem, it decided that it would purchase a new machine in Perth and send the old one down as a trade-in so that it could continue with its work as quickly as possible. As the local authority did not have a vehicle of its own available, it chartered a truck to take the old end-loader down to Perth and issued instructions to the driver that he should bring the new machine back together with 10 tons of cement.

However, when the vehicle arrived in Perth its departure was delayed because it was on hire, and the Transport Board would not allow it to carry 10 tons of cement on the return trip. Ultimately the vehicle proceeded on its way north with the new end-loader but without the 10 tons of cement. Such action is quite within the realm of the Transport Board. On the other hand, if the road board had taken its own truck to Perth, there would have been no need for it to apply for a licence or to obtain permission to take the end-loader back. Surely the regulations could be overlooked in an emergency such as that!

The road board was only trying to save time by chartering the truck to transport the damaged end-loader to Perth because it knew that any time lost meant a loss of employment for the men engaged on the job in hand. If it had been a question of the 10 tons of cement being transported for resale it would have been a different matter; but obviously it must have been known that it was for the use of the road

board, and that this local authority was not going to resell it. The overall distance involved from Perth to Carnarvon via Geraldton was, shall we say, about 1,500 miles.

It seems to me that the people in the North are continuously working against a lack of knowledge and consideration by those in authority, and it is only fair that they should receive all the assistance possible to help them to overcome their various problems. Instead of that, every one of their actions is stalemated because of an Act which apparently must be interpreted exactly as it is written.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It shows a lack of commonsense on the part of the Transport Board.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: I also draw attention to broadcasting conditions throughout the North Province, which, in effect, is the North-West of this State and which, by way of parenthesis, represents one-sixth of the whole of Australia. There is no question that the worst reception obtained by wireless listeners throughout Australia is in the North-West; and at present it is the worst it has ever been. These are broad statements and perhaps members think that they need qualification, but nevertheless they are true. Over the years the only action which various road boards and municipalities and other listeners have been able to take has been to go to the post office and lodge a complaint form or, alternatively, write to the A.B.C. stating that the broadcasting service is unsatisfactory.

In the past we have had at Carnarvon two or three visits by a radio inspector who has come up from Perth to test the interference of the various machines. Also, many wireless sets are tested. This costs the listener quite a few shillings in fees one way or another; but unfortunately, after the municipality has taken the inspector on his round of the district, it is found that about a fortnight later the conditions are as bad as they were before. There is no guarantee that the suppressors which are fitted to the machine will last. Also, very often new D.C. appliances that are purchased are not fitted with suppressors; and so the problem goes on because, with the purchase of new electrical apparatus by people in the district, more radio interference is encountered.

-I have wondered why Commonwealth legislation has not been passed to ensure that at least all new machinery and appliances were fitted with suppressors from the time of manufacture. I made some inquiries along this line and found that the biggest offender was the Commonwealth Government, and the greatest cost would fall on it. I suppose that is why the matter has been left as it is for such a long time.

Without criticising the conditions unduly, it is only fair to offer something constructive to alleviate the situation. In

the first instance, if the two-kilowatt station at Geraldton were transformed to a 10-kilowatt station, radio listening throughout the Gascoyne and Murchison districts would be improved. I do not think that with a 10-kilowatt station at Geraldton the reception in Broome, Port Hedland or Derby would be improved. The only remedy would be to build a regional station for those places.

This is not a new idea to the powers that be, because a regional station has been recommended for the past 10 years by officers who were sent north to make reports. I do not know what happened to the reports, but certainly they have not been given effect to. A regional station at Broome or Port Hedland is needed much more now than at any time previously because of the position caused by increased electrical interference.

In the Kimberleys the reception is so weak from the Western Australian broadcasting stations that the people rely on the Asiatic or Queensland stations for their news and entertainment. The only satisfactory reception they can get is from Radio Australia. For some reason the hours of that service were changed to suit international listening. I understand that Radio Australia is a propaganda station, so the Kimberleys has been deprived of the use of its best broadcasting station.

The people up there cannot hear the Western Australian stations, so the answer is to set up new ones just as has been done in various centres in the South-West with resultant better reception. One of the greatest anomalies in the latest Budget is that wireless fees are still increasing, yet in the North-West the reception gets steadily worse.

The Minister for Railways: People there should not be made to pay any fee.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: I agree. They should be paid a bonus for listening to the Western Australian stations. I am told that a new station will be available to North-West listeners on the 60-metre band. I do not know of any wireless set that has been wired to take the 60-metre band. I understand such a set will cost at least £20 more than the average set. If a person likes to take the risk of listening to the 60-metre band station he can give his old set away, because it cannot be sold at all. Further, he would have to pay £20 more than the cost of an average set for a new one and take the risk of being unable to get better reception. That is typical of the treatment meted out to the North-West. It happens all the time.

I intend to touch briefly on the proposals which were put before the Commonwealth Government to alleviate the disabilities in the North-West. It was in 1951 that an all-party delegation from Western Australia, arranged by the State

Government and headed by the then Acting Premier, submitted to the Federal Treasurer the proposals that had been put before it up to that date. It was in 1953 that the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia carried unanimously an all-party resolution, because nothing had been heard from the Commonwealth as to the 1951 proposals. That resolution read—

That, in the considered opinion of this House, it is essential for the defence and development of the Commonwealth, as well as in the interests of Western Australia, that in view of the decreased population and production of that part of the State lying North of the 26th parallel of South latitude, new methods must be tried to develop and populate that area and therefore this House is of the opinion that, as one important means to that end, effect should be given for a period of ten and preferably 20 years, to the income tax exemption proposals submitted to the Federal Treasurer in 1951 by an all-party delegation sponsored by the then Government of the State, or to proposals similar to them, and the House also considers that the Commonwealth Government should actively co-operate with the State Government in making available the large sums of money required to provide, in that part of Western Australia, better transport, education, health, water and other essential needs and services, and requests the Hon. Premier to forward this resolution to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth asking that the Commonwealth Government agree to take action accordingly.

It is known that from time to time in the period intervening between 1951 and the present day, representations have been made to Federal Ministers by members of all parties of the Federal Parliament for favourable consideration of the proposals referred to. So far, none of these efforts have produced tangible results.

In the last half-century while the population of Australia has increased by many millions, the population of North-West Australia, despite very considerable Government expenditure, has scarcely increased at all and today it is said that its entire population numbers less than the employees of the Myer emporium in Melbourne.

It is essential to develop and populate this area. Obviously it is beyond the capacity of Governments to supply sufficient capital for all that is required for this purpose. Public works alone will not bring considerable population to this vast territory. Indeed it can be accepted that the duty of Governments is to supply public works to serve a population already in an area.

Surely the way to ensure development on a substantial scale in this area is, as elsewhere, to make owners of private capital willing and indeed anxious to invest it in the area. This is not so at the present time; in fact there is strong evidence to the contrary. More and more the profits earned by those few who have invested in the North are being invested in the southern parts of the State. When property is sold the proceeds are rarely reinvested in the North. They are almost invariably invested in or around the capital city.

Some major inducement must be offered to attract capital and enterprise to the North and to ensure that labour is willing to go and remain there. This inducement must obviously be so overwhelmingly in favour of the North that people in large numbers will be willing to risk their savings and endure adverse climatic conditions and many hardships of droughts, cyclones, high transport costs, poor medical and educational facilities and other deterrents. This inducement must provide the ultimate hope of being able to keep all the money they might succeed in earning—not only that portion left after taxation. If they are only to retain this latter proportion, then they may as well devote their energies to enterprise in the salubrious climate of the south, away from the major difficulties and lack of amenities to which the North in its present sparsely-populated condition must continue to expose them.

The case for taxation relief finished up with this paragraph—

Surely the attempt is worth making. The alternative is to leave this vast area—the nearest portion of Australia to the teeming millions of Asia—in its present de-populated condition an invitation to other nations anxious for living space to try their hand at making a better job than we have succeeded in doing.

The only answer after five years of effort was a minute reduction in taxation made in the last Budget which extended not only north of the 26th parallel, but right across Australia. The estimated total reduction is £515,000, of which I would say less than one-third would be applicable to the North-West of this State. At the same time the Government took five times as much from the people by way of taxation as it gave in relief.

At that period a proposal was put forward to bituminise the road from Carnarvon to Geraldton at an estimated cost of £1,250,000. It took a long time to get an answer to this request, and it appeared to have been shelved constantly. From year to year we have depended on the meagre hand-out from the State Government, being the allocation from the Federal Aid Roads Grant derived from taxation, which has been spent through the Main Roads Department.

We do not know the amount we will get for this purpose because the Minister may be directed by the Government to spend the funds in some other manner. It is a hand-to-mouth existence in the extreme. Although great strides have been made over the last three years, and a considerable length of bitumen is being laid on that road, I feel that the urgency is lost sight of by the Commonwealth Government. In view of the fact that an all-party case was made out, without any political bias, it has not been given its true place in the national existence.

Many proposals were also put forward for the establishment of a deep-sea port at Point Torment, in King's Sound. It is most interesting to note the result of a survey of Northern Australia from Carnarvon to the western boundary of the Gulf of Carpentaria. That indicated there were three large land masses capable of very greatly increased production and population, namely, the West Kimberleys, the East Kimberleys, and the Barkly Tablelands. The report states:

The rainfall south of the Kimberleys is too light and unreliable to permit of the land being used for any purpose other than grazing, and these areas can be regarded as reasonably developed. Failing the discovery of oil or mineral wealth it is unlikely that the existing population will be materially added to.

A survey by a party of the C.S.I.R.O. of the country within a 300 mile radius of Darwin has shown that little good land is included, and it does not appear possible that Darwin's hinterland will ever be a source of material production. The western railways of Queensland at Dajarra and Mount Isa already tap the Barkly Tableland and the eastern portion of the Northern Territory, whilst the Adelaide-Alice Springs railway taps the southern end of the Territory. The Victoria River region in the North-West of the Territory is linked up with Wyndham as its outlet.

Throughout the world there are approximately 20 million acres between latitudes 20° north and south of the equator under irrigation. In the East and West Kimberleys there are numerous rivers, two of which have flood flows comparable to that of the Nile, and vast areas of plain country suitable for irrigation. It is without any shadow of doubt that the ultimate production will be enormous and the Kimberleys will carry a large population.

If, therefore, Northern Australia is to be developed and populated on a national basis, it is reasonable to judge that the ports of Derby and Wyndham—and possibly a port in the Gulf of Carpentaria, will become the principle ports on this very long stretch of coastline.

It is just as important to the nation that the port for the West Kimberleys, with a great future, should be as properly designed and sited, as Darwin, the future of which is problematical.

The State of Western Australia has immense areas in the south to develop and it cannot, and should not, be asked to pour into its North-West the capital funds necessary to develop and populate the country. The State Government is willing, however, to share with the national Government the cost involved, and to carry out the actual work. By its knowledge of the country, by the experience of its officers and by its local control, it is felt that at least in the early stages of development this system would prove the most satisfactory, subject of course to Commonwealth approval of any project which it was financially assisting.

It is therefore necessary to make a decision regarding the transfer of the town and port of Derby to Point Torment.

If the present site is retained then the West Kimberleys will be handicapped for all time, or the ultimate cost of transfer will be greatly increased.

It is a matter of interest that the Kimberleys branch of the Pastoralists' Association strongly supported these recommendations.

It is quite obvious that the North-West must be viewed on a national basis with regard to expenditure, with regard to outlet, and with regard to the future of Western Australia. When I consider how little the Commonwealth Government has done for the North-West—not only the present Liberal Government, because other Governments in the past could have done more for the North-West than they did—I am disappointed to find that since the last budget was introduced, the Minister for Territories, Mr. Hasluck, has this to say with regard to the Northern Territory.

What the Commonwealth Government is doing for the Northern Territory was outlined in the House of Representatives tonight by the Minister for Territories (Mr. Hasluck).

The Commonwealth, he said, was spending about £12,000,000 a year in the territory.

Health services had been developed to the point where medical aid could be brought swiftly to anyone there.

Schools as good as any being built by State Governments were being constructed. Water and electricity supplies were being provided. Though the Commonwealth had not been able to embark on any major project it had spent in the past five years nearly £2,500,000 on railways that served the territory.

Bear in mind that the area within a 300 mile radius of Darwin is not considered good country capable of producing very much. This article continues—

Mr. Hasluck said that Northern Territory stock routes were now as good as any system of stock routes in Australia.

The Commonwealth had not provided a network of all-weather roads, but there were 12,000 miles of roadways which were trafficable at speed in the dry season.

Side by side with Government expenditure, which attracted population, mining investment had transformed some townships.

Tennant Creek, a town of only 300 people a few years ago, now houses 1,200 and Rum Jungle—near-bush not so long ago—was a thriving centre.

Surely those same results could be achieved in Western Australia if the Government were prepared to spend money on the same scale; or even if the allocation were equally divided, so that we had £6,000,000 and the Northern Territory had a similar amount. I feel sure that we in Western Australia could do anything that the Northern Territory could do, on as big a scale. Who knows, for instance, that there is no uranium in the North-West? It has not been looked for. Reports show that the mineral potentiality is undeveloped.

We know, of course, that the rivers in the North-West are equal in capacity for irrigation purposes to anything in the world. Yet there is this line of demarcation between the Northern Territory and the North-West of Western Australia, £12,000,000 being spent on one side of the line and nothing on the other. After all, we are all Australians; and it is the responsibility of any national Parliament to see that all parts of the Commonwealth receive equal rights and an equal expenditure of the Australian people's money.

Why the Commonwealth continues to ignore its responsibility to the North-West, I do not know. It cannot be that the North-West citizens are not as good as any others; they are the salt of the earth. It could be that the North-West, in a very few years, will become the Achilles heel of Australia. Its potential, if it has not been realised by people in high places in Australia who should realise it, is being realised by other nationalities throughout the world; and I can well imagine how the Asian people must watch our treatment of this area of land. I can well imagine, too, how interested they are in rice production, and the fields which the North-West could turn loose for this purpose, given water and the necessary harnessing of its natural attributes.

How long will it be before some minor dictator, backed by Russia, submits some proposal for the acquisition of this area for his own nationals? The island of Formosa, which is not as big as Tasmania—or as rich—could be put into the North-West many times over, and it has a population of 11,000,000; whereas, in the North-West, we have approximately 10,000 people whom we have been governing for 60 years.

If the day comes when we lose the North-West, the people who exercise control from Canberra will be freed of one great responsibility—something which has been a bug-bear to them, and which they have never faced up to—but will meet another problem which could easily involve an alteration of the whole of the Australian way of life as we know it today, and no democratic Government could stop it. If that day ever does come, God help us!

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [5.53]: On referring to some notes that I came across recently, dealing with my speech on the Address-in-reply last year, I found that the opening sentences concerned an expression of regret that two members who had been with us for some time were no longer here. I refer to the late Bob Boylen and the late Charlie Henning. I note that this year, too, it has to be recorded that there are two gaps in our ranks, caused by the death of the late Harry Hearn and the late Don Barker.

I have looked back through the few short years I have been in this House—10 altogether—and I discovered that there had been a turnover of three-quarters of the House in that very brief time. I do not know whether that means that politics is an unhealthy occupation, or what the reason may be; but it is a fact that just on three-quarters of the members of the House during the last 10 years have given way to newcomers.

We remember James Cornell and Harold Seddon—your two predecessors in office, Mr. President. I think we might spare time also to mention the names of a few other former members who were here for a long time and gave good service. I refer to Sir Hal Colebatch, Vernon Hamersley, Joe Mann, Leonard Bolton, Frank Welsh, George Miles, Alex Thomson and Charles Baxter. We remember with gratitude the work they did; and I do not think it does any harm from time to time to spare a moment to reflect on the activities of our predecessors, and to indicate thereby that they are not altogether forgotten.

I join most cordially with other members in extending a welcome to those who have taken their seats in this Chamber for the first time—Hon. G. C. MacKinnon, Hon. G. E. Jeffery and Hon. R. C. Mattiske. I agree entirely with Mr. Heenan when he said that not only will they be welcome, but that any assistance any members can

give them, irrespective of party, will be cheerfully given if and when the occasion arises. I would also like to tender my personal thanks to Sir Charles Latham, who took over the job I had when I secured the adjournment of the debate in the first instance. As members know, I was not able to be present, and Sir Charles gave a very interesting address.

Many points have been raised by members who have spoken on the motion; and one of the most interesting speeches was that just delivered by Mr. Willesee concerning conditions obtaining in the North-West. I have not been any further north than Exmouth Gulf; but for a long time I have cherished the idea of going to the North-West and seeing what is there, and I hope that one of these days I may be permitted to pay a visit to that part of the country and obtain some idea of what that huge hinterland of Western Australia is like.

It is not my intention to make a long speech, and I certainly do not want to be provocative. I desire to touch on a few matters, and I hope that what I have to say in regard to them will arouse the interest of the Government. In fact, I hope that the Government may be induced to give some help in that direction. I will not be drawn by the challenge of Mr. Heenan in regard to the franchise. A Bill is to come before us dealing with that matter; and not only I, but other members, will have an opportunity to criticise his remarks when that measure is presented.

His Excellency's Speech contained many interesting features, but some of them were rather disquieting. For instance, there was the information that although we had passed through prosperous times, there was the prospect of some recession and some unemployment; that there was a difficulty in getting necessary loan funds in order to carry on; and that there was a deficit of £1.8 million, and a necessity to increase charges in connection with public utilities. All these things struck a depressing note.

Side by side with that, was the reminder that we had had a very good season; that Providence had been kind to us in giving us an excellent harvest after a very trying period about last July, when most people were prepared to give things away and run sheep into their crops. This year, unfortunately, conditions at this stage do not seem so bright. Many areas badly need rain and, in the opinion of a number of people, any rain that falls will come too late to enable crops fully to recover. So I am afraid we must be prepared for a poorer harvest than was obtained last year.

I want to touch on two or three matters concerning my own electorate and also to mention a few points in connection with the traffic problem, which concerns the State. In the Speech, which was no doubt prepared by the Government, regret was expressed—I understand it is the Premier's

opinion—that the Federal Government had not sold the whaling station to Western Australia. In passing, I would say that there are a lot of people in the area in which the whaling station is situated who did not agree with the Government's view that the station should be sold to Western Australia. In the first place, they knew that if it was bought privately it would immediately become liable for road board rates, and that would help in the maintenance of the road between Carnarvon and the whaling station.

They were firmly of the opinion that more would be spent in the town by a private company. It was claimed that the Government had spent about £10,000 in Carnarvon during the year. But when that was analysed, it was found that it referred almost wholly to lubricating oils from the local station, which probably would not have been purchased from that source unless the price had been competitive with that at which the product could have been bought elsewhere. Another cost which the local company had to meet was Federal and State taxation, and a State instrumentality would not be liable for charges of that nature.

So there were quite a number of very good reasons for saying that there was wisdom in the action of the Commonwealth in selling the whaling station to a private company rather than to the State Government. We have been told over the last few months that times are difficult and not too much money is available. I consider that the action of the Federal Government in selling the whaling station to a private company will have afforded some relief to the State Government by its not having to find a substantial sum to cover the purchase of the station by the State.

I do not want to deal in detail with many of the matters mentioned in the Speech. The list is far too long and, to a certain extent, the items covered will be dealt with in legislation which is to come forward. Quite a lot of legislation has been forecast, including the Local Government Bill. So I can see that for this session at least we will have our hands full in dealing with all the legislation which is to be brought down.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Premier said that he is going to finish by the end of November.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Next year!

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am inclined to think that there will be a great deal of debate on some of the Bills which are to be introduced.

The Chief Secretary: No; they will be so clear that they will fly through.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: It may be that the Government intends the debate on the Local Government Bill to be spread over two years; and I do not think that would do any harm.

The Chief Secretary: No, we do not want it to take that long.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: However, we will consider that matter when we come to it. I fully agree with the remarks that my colleagues from the Midland Province have made in regard to the necessity for something to be done urgently to the Geraldton harbour. The Geraldton harbour handles a tonnage second only to that of Fremantle in the actual yearly turnover for the State. The condition of the Geraldton harbour was not too bad until a year or two ago, but then we had a few cyclones and they caused considerable damage.

As the Minister for Shipping, who saw the area, well knows, the harbour requires a large sum to be spent on it to bring it into a working condition. Our Government spent a lot of money on the ports of Albany and Bunbury; but I should say that Geraldton, because of the tonnage handled by it during the year, and because of the fact that it is a most important link with our North-West ports, should receive a high priority in the attention to be given to our ports, if it is to continue to handle produce in the future.

The Chief Secretary: Why did you spend the money at Albany and Bunbury and not at Geraldton?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Over the last few years, tremendous sums of money have been spent on the Albany and Bunbury harbours and, relatively speaking, they are in pretty good condition. Geraldton has suffered because it has not had the money spent on it, and it has suffered considerable damage through cyclones, which has not been the case with the other ports. That is why work on the Geraldton harbour should have a top priority. I want briefly to quote from a letter which I received as regards some of the effects that have stemmed from the bad condition of the port. This man, in writing, says—

Live sheep for Singapore: In the past there has been a large export from here and now exporters are very reluctant to arrange shipping because sheep may not be picked up. Some weeks ago some of our own sheep were left on the wharf and had to be returned to paddocks. Other sheep which came from Northampton had to be held on agistment until taken by another ship about three weeks later.

Chaff for Singapore: A good trade has been built up but is now being lost to Fremantle.

Fodder for Singapore sheep: Until recently chaff and hay have been taken on ships here to feed sheep on the way to Singapore. This was for sheep from Fremantle as well as Geraldton and Carnarvon. Now all fodder being taken on at Fremantle.

Fodder for Kimberley cattle sold to Philippines: A friend of mine and I had made arrangements to supply 320 tons of baled hay for cattle going to Manila. As the State ships will not guarantee to call here we have lost the first lot of 80 tons and it looks like we shall lose the rest.

Crayfish for Singapore: The Golden Gleam Company has recently built up a nice trade in cooked crays for Singapore and we have gone to considerable expense in installing cooking facilities. Now we either have to pay cartage and freezing charges whilst waiting in cold storage in Fremantle or lose the business altogether.

Tomatoes for Singapore: This is good export business and at this time of the year, when all tomatoes have to come from Geraldton, growers have to pay rail freights to Fremantle.

Flour: The flour gristed at the local mill, which has been enjoying a good trade to Malaya and northern ports, is affected in the same way as other products.

The above will help to give some idea of our present difficulties and I hope you will endeavour to have something done to make the port safe enough to ensure that captains will bring their ships in.

That is the position in regard to trade in Geraldton. Referring to the interjection of the Chief Secretary, I do not think that Albany and Bunbury can put up a case comparable to that which can be put up for Geraldton. It is not as though the existing facilities in those ports have seriously deteriorated; but that is the position in Geraldton.

The Chief Secretary: That is what I am wondering. Why was all the money spent on the other two when it was so urgently needed up there?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The critical position has developed only recently.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Since the change of Government.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I would not say that.

The Chief Secretary: I thought it might be that!

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: A lot of trouble has been caused by cyclones, and now the sea wall has been damaged. In addition, a good deal of dredging work requires to be done to make the port safe for ships. I know that some assistance has been promised, but there is a necessity for further help if the port is to serve its purpose as an all-weather port all the year round. In view of the tonnage handled yearly, I think the work deserves serious consideration.

On the 8th August I asked the Chief Secretary the following questions:—

(1) Is he aware of the serious menace to the town of Geraldton being presented by the gradual sand creep threatening housing areas in the town?

(2) Will he inform the House what measures the Government is taking or proposes to take to deal with this problem?

The reply given was—

(1) and (2) The Department of Agriculture is conducting trials on a small scale to determine the suitability of certain plants for preventing the movement of sand south of Geraldton. The responsibility for seeing that action is taken to deal with this problem appears to be that of the Geraldton Municipal Council, which has power under the Geraldton Sandhills Planting Act, 1872, and the Sand Drift Act, 1919, to require land-owners to take the necessary preventative measures.

There are times when a problem is beyond the capacity of the local people. They require not only expert help in solving these special problems but also, in many cases, assistance, plant and money in order to remedy the position if it is likely to become serious.

To give members an idea of how serious sand drift can become, I can remember speaking to a surveyor friend of mine who had to re-establish a survey at a point north of Geraldton—Point Gregory. The survey had been made about 40 years before, and one of the landmarks was a peg on a sandhill. It was clearly marked on the plan; but after he took his bearings, he could not find any trace of the survey peg or anything to give him a clue as to what had happened to it. After some time, he went to the trouble of taking a boat out to a rock about a quarter of a mile from the shore. He took his bearings from there and came straight on to the line. He found by measurement that that sandhill had shifted a quarter of a mile in 40 years.

That is the way sand drifts in certain areas. Of course, it depends a lot on the prevailing wind, and sometimes on the growth on these hills or measures taken to deal with the problem. There is one stretch of sand, Mahomet's Flat, which is threatening the town of Geraldton itself, and there is another to the south of Geraldton; and those who travel to and from Geraldton, can see it on the eastward side. The sand is gradually creeping on to the road, and in a few years' time might cover it. But that is not the most serious problem. If that sand reached a certain point it could block the Greenough River, which would mean that the whole of the area could be flooded; and that would result in tremendous loss to the people of the district,

The matter should be examined closely with the idea of trying to suggest some solution of the problem. One of the troubles is that the sand in Geraldton has a very high calcium content, and it is not easy to grow a cover which will prevent soil erosion or sand drift. Incidentally, the rainfall is light and the wet season short. Altogether it is a problem which cannot be dealt with in quite the same way as problems in some of the southern areas are being dealt with. They are having trouble at Swanbourne; but there they are able to grow marron grass in quantity, and that has helped to overcome the problem. As a matter of fact, marron grass is often used in threatened country areas; and if a growth of marron grass can be established, it will act as a brake to any further sand creep.

That will give members an idea of the general position with which we are faced at Geraldton. I have been doing some research on the question of sand creep, and I have found that there are a lot of things that can be done according to the peculiarity of the problems in certain areas. One, of course, is to plant cereal rye grass. That grows very well in certain areas. In some places where roads have been threatened because of sand drift, cereal rye has been planted and has overcome the problem. But owing to the wind and the calcium content of the soil, that grass is not suitable for the conditions in Geraldton.

Another method, which has been used with some success, is rubbish tipping. If they can stop the sand from blowing by forming a compost from the tipping of the rubbish, and thus form some sort of soil, it is often possible to get a growth which will prevent soil erosion. A method employed in South Africa has been the mechanical planting of suitable grasses. They have tried to overcome some of their problems in that way. One of the methods has been the planting of acacias, three feet deep, and sometimes they have planted pines. On other occasions a coarse wheat that grows under salt-water conditions had been used as well as cereal rye. In other cases they have put up barriers like fences.

Generally speaking, the problem can be overcome; but it takes a lot of plant and equipment, a good deal of money, and plenty of work. I hope that the Government will take serious notice of this problem, because soon it will be a menace in Geraldton; and if the sand blocks the Greenough River, there will be a tremendous outcry from the people in the district.

Another problem not altogether unlike the one I have been discussing, is that of light lands on the west side of the Midland line. There is a tremendous area of country there; and, like the Esperance plain, it has a great potential for settlement. It has a regular and reliable rainfall, but it requires a cover of plant growth to be established before the land can be properly developed.

Sitting was suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Before the tea suspension I had commenced a reference to the light lands in the area west of the Midland line. We have known of that very huge area, stretching from Yanchep to Dongara, as land that would one day be developed. It consists of sandy soil, but it has a regular and reliable rainfall; and with the knowledge that has been gained as to the values of fertilisers and trace elements, a good deal of that land can be brought into production.

At the same time, where the soil is very sandy—and a lot of that country is—it has to be covered with plant growth before it can be brought into full production. Those of us who have been successful in doing that, will know that it takes some years before the land reaches a productive stage, and has a grass cover which will keep it safe from the ravages of soil erosion which takes place if the areas are abandoned before they reach that stage.

Mr. Eric Smart, who is well known in this country as a farmer of great ability, and as one who has done a tremendous amount of valuable work, contends that the development of that area is a rich man's hobby; that one has to have money to bring it into production. He says that the best means of doing that is to have a reasonable amount of heavy land, say, in the area east of the Midland line, quite close to one's scene of operations, and then to gradually treat the other area. He contends that over a period of years, by careful cultivation, it will be possible to bring it to the desired production stage.

Quite a number of settlers have been encouraged by the Government to take up land in that area, but they possibly underestimated the length of time that would be necessary to bring that land into full production. One thing they did not anticipate, however, was that the values of produce would drop while costs would rise against them. Some of them—though not all—are in difficulties; and those of us from that area contend that if there is talk of developing, say the Esperance sandplain, preference should be given to this area, so that the man whose lands are partly developed may be able to fully develop them and bring them into production.

If those areas are left bare, we will have to contend with the problem of soil erosion, which might mean not only the loss of that land that has been cultivated, but also the creation of a very real menace to the farmers nearby. Accordingly I would ask the Government to get the Department of Agriculture to examine the position very closely in that area with a view to giving the necessary aid which some of the settlers require.

As I said earlier, I intend tonight to touch on the question of traffic. Before I start however, I want it to be clearly understood that I am not levelling any charges against the present Minister for

traffic. He has not been on the job long, but I think he has got plenty of energy. He has, however, a man-sized job in front of him. There are probably certain difficulties of which he is not fully aware. I had the job of Minister for Transport, which linked up with traffic; and while I was not Minister for traffic I know some of the problems which are in the province of that Minister, and perhaps I could give him a few hints as to the dangers he might avoid.

At the close of my period as Minister, we were developing a zoning system in regard to metropolitan transport. The idea was that there should be a definite area confined to an operator, or an operator group. They would know exactly what their responsibilities were; and instead of having a limited franchise, they would have a franchise for a reasonable term, during which they could build up their fleet and service the area concerned. Prior to that there had been a great deal of trouble by the overlapping of routes; there were too many small companies which were not capable of carrying on.

So after discussing the matter fully with the departments concerned, and the operators, that system was agreed to. I find that things have not worked out entirely as expected, and that it is now proposed to establish a transport trust. That was an alternative suggestion that had been considered by us. We thought that there were distinct advantages in favour of the zoning system; but apparently the transport trends and the financial position of the companies did not enable them to take advantage of the running of the zones as suggested.

I feel that the Minister is quite right in two matters. Firstly, he said that the metropolitan transport should pay its own way. That is something which I have contended as being right ever since I had the job of handling transport. I think it is both necessary and desirable that, in an overall view of transport, the man who lives in the country and to whom transport means so much, should be given some help in the matter of transport to attract him to the country and keep him there. I cannot see any logical reason why the people living in the metropolitan area should be helped in the matter of transport to the extent of crippling those transport institutions that have provided those means of travel.

In the metropolitan area the Government has—with its trolleys, its tramways; and its buses—the pick of the transport area. It has a lot of short "pick-ups" which the other transport systems do not have; it also has many other advantages over private transport operators which are not always appreciated. For instance, a private operator buying a bus has to pay £9,000 for it. That includes £1,500 sales tax, and duty, which the Government does not have to pay.

The private operator, if he is a company and makes a profit that he wants to distribute amongst his shareholders, has first to meet the impost of company taxation, which again the Government service does not have to pay. The private operator has to pay the Transport Board 6 per cent. of his gross takings as a contribution to the maintenance of roads; the Government pays 1 per cent. In spite of all this, the private operators have to try to make a profit; whereas the record of Government undertakings has been one which has shown consistent losses.

Having run the tramways and the public system myself, I am not throwing the blame altogether on the operators of the public service for being inefficient. I will say, however, that the conditions under which they have to render that service are such as would not be tolerated by a private operator aiming to do a job with a view to showing a profit.

For instance, there is the tram depot in Hay-st. That depot and the workshops were originally built to service trams. Now the same depot has to service trolley-buses as well. This is an entirely different class of work, and there is not the room or the facilities to do the job. Then again, the Government runs three different systems of transport, which none of the other operating companies do. On only one of those three systems—that is, on the buses—does the Government line show a profit. It shows a loss on the operations of the trams and trolleys. That again is something that a private company could not afford to do.

Accordingly I suggest that those matters should be examined and overhauled; because if we have money to spend on schemes to beautify, and perhaps advance the interests of a town, it is vitally essential—if we are to render a competent service, and wish to do it in the cheapest possible manner—to create a machine which is modern and up-to-date in every way, and one which is also efficient and serviceable.

Another thing which both the Government services and the private services have to contend with in the metropolitan area is the private motorcar-owner. The private bus-owner has to respond to any increase in fares that may take place from time to time. As costs rise, the man who owns a car—and who may have bought it cheaply and, being a mechanic, fixed it up and put it into operation—says to three of his friends living close by, "I can pick you up in the morning and take you to your offices in town. I can bring you back to your home in the evening, and I will only charge you what you would pay by bus."

That is happening all over the world, and it is not a very easy problem to tackle. If that man takes into account the cost

of running his vehicle, and compares it with the cost of paying bus fares, he will find that in most cases it will cost him more. But if he likes to have a car for convenience, the amount of fares which he collects off these individuals would constitute a contribution to the cost of running his car.

One of the difficulties in the metropolitan area concerning traffic is the lack of arterial roads to clear the congestion at peak periods. The railways do take about 10 per cent. of the traffic offering, and the rest of it is taken by the buses. I remember bringing forward a Bill—and other members will also recall the measure—dealing with the chord line which I felt would have gone some way at least towards providing the answer.

That measure is still on the statute book. I would point out that 80 per cent. of the resumptions have been paid for. That would have provided for marshalling yards to be transferred, from their present site, some distance out of the city at a convenient spot. The land resumed would have been used in part for parking and as a bus station. That I think is the answer to the excessive running which in some cases buses have to do, and the fact that buses are parked in our busy streets, cutting down the already limited amount of moving room for motor-vehicles.

The question of through-routing has been exercising the Minister's mind, and he made a statement that he was in favour of through-routing. I think he must have been talking to Mr. Green, the Town Clerk; and then after considering the matter, he said he was not, and then again that he was. But the position is that the area around Perth is unbalanced. If we had the same population east of Perth as west, buses could be run through and back again.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: It will not be long before they do.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: In the morning there is the inward flow, and at peak periods the outward flow. It is clearly demonstrated by what the railways had to do when the Perth railway station was built. In those days most people travelled by rail. The Railway Department kept carriages in its marshalling yards which it put into service when the outward flow of traffic took place at night; and something like that should happen in regard to the buses. The scheme of parking which I suggest could provide for one, two or three decks in order to carry these buses or cars, and would go a long way to relieve the traffic congestion in and around the city.

With regard to through-routing, we can take the case of the Metro Co. as most of its traffic comes in from the south and the west; and if it had a through route, it would have to travel $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to return

to its parking place in order to get its vehicles to take the peak flow at night. The company estimated that it would cost £200,000 to obtain the necessary buses to do the additional travelling; and as companies are faced with difficulties, that is rather a serious item. If it would cost a private company that sum of money, it would cost the Government the same. I think the position is not quite parallel, because I know of two routes where the Government does through-route, but it picks up a good deal of traffic on these extensions, which enables the system to pay.

The railways, which help in clearing the peak traffic, have instituted a system of railcars which I think is very good. After all, it was only modernising an old system of transport which was completely out of date and could not be expected to compare with the modern convenience and comfort of a road vehicle. At the time when these railcars were introduced, we were assured the running costs would be very low, but I am very doubtful if these hopes have been realised.

At one time the train services in the metropolitan area were estimated to be losing £1,000,000 a year; and part of that loss it must be admitted came on to those sections of line which do pay, because those sections have to carry the burden of non-payable lines, whether in the country, in the extremities, or in the suburban area of the city.

I would like some information from the Minister on how the ingoings and outgoings, particularly for the metropolitan area, are panning out, because I know the private bus companies operating a road service are finding it very difficult to keep their vehicles filled with passengers. Many passengers now travel in a decent railcar at a lower cost. How much, I do not know, but I do know it is sufficiently low to have a considerable bearing on the takings of the company. So this and the other questions I have put forward do, I suggest, want some very serious consideration.

We may find that we will have to even out those fares so that there will be reasonable competition between the two. That was secured in my time by appointing the Transport Board as a fare-fixing authority, but unfortunately its powers did not extend to the metropolitan railway lines. At that stage the diesel railcars had only just commenced running, and we thought it wise to wait and see how things would pan out. But if it has not justified itself, then some overhaul or assessment will have to be made to the metropolitan service.

This big load to the State occasioned by loss on railway working could be either minimised or cut out. It should not fall on those sections of the country where the lines do pay. I hope that some of these observations may be worth while. I have

not made them from a party point of view. I have put them up as suggestions for those in responsibility, and whatever is done, should be done for the benefit of Western Australia as a whole. I support the Address-in-reply.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [7.53]: I wish to associate myself with the expressions of regret of other members of this Chamber in connection with the demise of two of our members; and I also wish to associate myself with other members in extending my good wishes to those newly elected to this Chamber. I would like, too, to include in my remarks my congratulations to Mr. Roberts, Mr. Browne and Mr. Ashley on their appointment to responsible offices, and I feel sure their service will reflect credit on this House.

I wish to make reference to a small but very significant alteration which you, Mr. President, instigated at the commencement of this session. I refer to the alteration made in regard to the reading of prayers before the commencement of each sitting. I have no doubt that the practice you have initiated will be one which will be recognised as the procedure to be followed for all time in this Chamber. When I first came to this House I expected to find what you have now initiated; and, with other members, I appreciate the alteration.

With other members, I question the wisdom of the Address-in-reply. I have no doubt it has been part and parcel of the procedure of Parliament since the days of responsible Government, and I realise that it gives members the opportunity to discuss matters, all and sundry, pertaining to their constituencies and the general state of affairs in Western Australia. If I could feel that notice was taken of the advice proffered by those in a responsible position, I feel that possibly some good would result from our endeavours. However, from my observation during my time in the House, I have concluded that very little notice has been taken.

The appointment of a public accounts committee, a public works committee, and a committee dealing with the regulations which are laid on the Table of the House at the commencement of each session of Parliament, could be of tremendous advantage to Parliament and to this State. No doubt the opportunities given to members appointed to serve on these committees would prove of tremendous importance. From time to time during the Address-in-reply in this House over many years, several members have expressed the opinions I have voiced regarding such committees. Yet we have no evidence of any interest being taken by the Ministers. I am not referring particularly to the two Ministers here at present. We have had occupants of the Ministerial benches of varying party allegiance, but none have listened to the sound advice given, and no action has been taken.

A regulations committee could do a magnificent job in studying the regulations that are gazetted during the parliamentary recess and could aptly employ its time in the investigations and report to Parliament at an early stage of the deliberations of the House in the subsequent session. I am sure that many regulations go unnoticed because there are hundreds of them laid on the Table of the House when gazetted. They go unnoticed because hon. members are very busy attending to the debates, or to the duties of Parliament prior to the introduction of Bills, and the study of previous Acts to see what the effect amending legislation will have; and their time is occupied also in the various Government departments, in attending to the needs of constituents. Therefore the committee would be well occupied in the study of these regulations.

A public works committee, to which reference has been made from time to time, would, I think we will agree, render yeoman service to the State if it were established. But Ministries come and go; and while, when they are in Opposition they say that it is a good thing, when the opportunity comes for them to implement the idea they do not avail themselves of it for reasons best known to themselves. I would venture to say, however, that the reason is because there would be a certain amount of interference which ministers and departmental heads would resent.

A committee could be set up to safeguard the finances of the State which, today, are in a parlous condition, due mainly to the fact that matters have not been closely scrutinised and economies have not been effected. A public accounts committee would be charged with the duty of seeing that the utmost economy was observed. I am not suggesting for a moment that a public works committee or a public accounts committee should waste time on investigations of a frivolous nature. Such committees should make investigations into works costing over £25,000.

The Minister for Railways: Are you talking of honorary committees?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I have not considered the payment of members in that capacity; but they should be paid whatever expenses they incurred, and expenses would be incurred in taking evidence and travelling. I would not suggest an increase in their present salaries.

The Minister for Railways: They would not be able to retain their seats in those circumstances, because they would have accepted an office of profit.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: South Australia pays a small amount.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I doubt whether the members appointed to these committees would require to be paid. I would say they would carry out their

duties in the interest of the State, in which we are all vitally concerned. The Minister has raised the question of an office of profit. That problem could possibly be overcome. Federal members of Parliament sit on various committees and receive some slight remuneration; and, as Dr. Hislop has pointed out, the same thing applies in South Australia. I do not think the question of remuneration and its consequences upon members of committees is one that we need be vitally concerned about, because Parliament in its wisdom would overcome it in due course.

The Minister for Railways: It might cost more than you say.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I doubt that very much. Let us look, for instance, at the Railway Department. This could be very nearly a full-time job. A committee investigating it would do a good service to the State; and I think the Minister, on receiving its findings, would say that at least the committee had given some sound advice and had undertaken its job with a view to effecting economies which are necessary in all Government departments.

It has been truly said that if private enterprise ran a business as Government departments are run, it would go broke. There is a difference; we have to be realistic. I do not say there is a parallel to be drawn between the two, but I do say that there is room for investigation into the administrative and overhead costs of departments such as the Railway Department, the Department of Agriculture, the Lands Department and so on. A committee charged with the responsibility of such an investigation would do a fine job and, I think, would earn the gratitude of the taxpayers of Western Australia.

The question has been mentioned from session to session, and I hope the Minister will seriously consider my suggestion and give an indication of what the Government proposes to do in regard to it; and let the Government's opinion be a firm and considered one. It is high time that we had various committees watching the affairs of State more closely than is evident at present—the finances of the State particularly.

Hon. J. D. Teahan: You would never be out of work.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: We do not want to be out of work today, or at any time. Ways and means could be considered whereby the committees could function along the lines that not only I, but also members in another place, have suggested. I hope we will see some tangible evidence of a desire to do something in this regard.

From time to time I have wondered whether it would be advantageous to have two sessions of Parliament instead of the one that we now have which commences some time late in July and finishes

close to Christmas Eve. Would it not be more advantageous to have a session commencing some time in May and sitting through to the latter end of June? We would of course, receive Supply and pass it, and we would then deal with the Address-in-reply; and various Bills and other matters which the Government and other members desired to bring before the House would be introduced. We could have a session devoted to the question of Supply and to the disposal of the Address-in-reply, and then we could meet again in September. This would be necessary because the Budget has always been introduced early in October, and we must assemble so that it may be dealt with.

I have wondered about this since I have seen the various Parliaments of the Commonwealth working. The South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales Parliaments have two sessions. If we had two sessions, we might derive some good in that we would curtail the Address-in-reply debate which drags on. Admittedly that is the responsibility of members; and I am not absolving myself, either, from any blame in that regard. I do think, however, that we could alter the custom which has operated all these years, without serious effect; and I do not think that adverse circumstances would arise from the change. I submit that idea to the House for its consideration.

In South Australia, Parliament meets in May and passes the Budget. The Address-in-reply is introduced, and then Parliament adjourns. When it resumes, the Ministers have all their Bills ready, and they introduce them, and the real business of Parliament proceeds forthwith without the delays which we so often see in Western Australia.

A matter that I am somewhat concerned about—I am not alone here in my concern—is the attitude of the Labour Party at its last congress, held in July, regarding its continued trend towards the left. I refer in particular to the motion passed by the Australian Labour Party Congress whereby it would not accept a communist member as president, secretary or fully-paid officer, but would accept one as a committee member of the executive.

Along with many other non-labour people, and also many rank and file members of the Labour Party, I view this trend with great concern. I am sure that it is wishful thinking on the part of the congress to say it is satisfied a communist would not use his influence within the executive provided he was not the president or secretary or a paid officer. That is wishful thinking when members of their executive and committee can swear allegiance to the communist party. Surely the communist party will slowly but surely whittle away the Australian Labour Party, which has a very fine reputation.

The Chief Secretary: You would not worry about that.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Yes; and I think that many people who do not support the Minister's party would be greatly concerned about it; because whatever opinions we may express here, and however bitterly we may oppose one another on the hustings and elsewhere, many people of my political thought do recognise the work of the A.L.P. and the important part it plays in the life of this nation. We, together with its own members, view with grave concern this steady trend of communistic influence that is spreading in the party.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You are quite mistaken! That is a mis-statement.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am glad the hon. member thinks I am mistaken, but I am not satisfied to accept her statement in refutation of my own.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You do not know.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I do know. I can only be guided by what has been told to me by supporters of the Labour Party. When a motion concerning this question was passed by the Labour Party Congress in July, supporters of the party in various parts of my constituency expressed grave concern at this trend of events. They doubted the wisdom of that move; and I, with many others, doubt the wisdom of it. I hope that, as time goes on, the Labour Party will take steps to remove these people from executive positions within their own organisation.

This is a question about which even the rabid Labour men are most extremely concerned. However, it requires more than merely lip service from the supporters of the Labour Party to oust this communistic influence from its ranks. I will leave that thought with them; and I hope they will take the necessary steps, in their own way, to deal with this grave problem in due course.

For some time I have been concerned with the apparent lack of responsibility shown by leaders of the trade union movement to ensure that greater effort is made to increase the output of labour in return for wages paid. From time to time we talk about a better relationship between employer and employee; but on many occasions it is noted that the leaders of the trade union movement fail to live up to their responsibility in this regard by not striving to obtain stability in this country by ensuring that a full day's work is done in return for a day's pay.

Nobody—not even those who hold opposite views to Labour—wishes to return to the conditions that existed in the past when we were forced to make a reduction in wages. That is not the solution to our present problem. The solution to all our troubles is in the hands of those who

are in responsible positions. It is up to them to ensure that the job costs as little as possible. This, in turn, would increase production, with consequent benefit to the worker.

However, to show that such is not the case, I can remember two occasions when I was travelling along a country road, and in each instance the road was parallel to the railway line. Many months separated these two incidents and the places where they occurred were many miles apart. I do not know how many men are in a railway gang today; but on these occasions, at 2.30 p.m. there was not one man in the railway gang on his feet performing any work. However, when they saw my car approaching, several of them jumped up and attempted to show that they were doing a job.

The blame for such an occurrence lies entirely with the foreman. If he is imbued with a sense of responsibility, he should ensure that his men are gainfully employed. There is no doubt that the days of stand-over tactics practised by employers have gone forever, and we do not want to see such conditions return; but, nevertheless, in place of that the men apparently have adopted the attitude, "What we do not do today, we can do tomorrow." The result is that our cost structure goes up sky-high and, in turn, production is affected by these rising costs.

Each and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that such a state of affairs does not continue, and I am amazed that men in responsible positions are permitting such things to go on. If an employer lacks the proper approach to his responsibilities to the State generally, one cannot blame his understrappers for adopting a similar attitude. When a foreman in charge of a railway gang or any other gang shows that he is fair and reasonable, and that all he expects from his men is a little co-operation and a fair day's work, invariably it will be found that the men will respond to such an attitude and will say, "This go-slow policy has to cease."

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: We will be paying the dole to many men soon.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I have stated very clearly that we do not want to return to those days, or to conditions which forced us to put men on the dole; and we will not revert to such conditions if the men do a fair day's work. That is all that we are asking.

The Minister for Railways: Plus markets.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Yes; but if we keep building up our costs, we will price ourselves out of the market, because the cost of production and the attitude the workers adopt towards their jobs will prevent us from placing our goods on the market at a competitive price. No matter

what legislation is passed, it will be of no avail until the individual realises his responsibility in regard to the advancement of his own State. In Australia we enjoy conditions of which we are very proud, and we do not wish to see such conditions change or our standard of living lowered. In fact, we all desire to see those standards improve.

We have only to look at the United States to see what is being done there. That country enjoys a far higher standard of living than we do, yet its cost of living is considerably less than ours in proportion to the wages paid. That is because the output per man per hour is far greater than that obtaining in this country, and the worker in the United States is much better off as a result. However, the worker in this land of ours could be on the same footing as his fellow-worker in the United States.

The Chief Secretary: Machinery also plays a great part in the United States.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: The leaders of the trade union movement have responsibilities to the State in this regard. However, from time to time their attitude seems to be towards encouraging workers to do the least they possibly can. In these enlightened days no one can smooch to the boss, and no boss expects that. The other phrase that comes to my mind would be unparliamentary, so I cannot express it. However, I think I have conveyed to the House what I mean.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: It is a good word.

The Chief Secretary: It all depends on your staff.

The PRESIDENT: Order, please!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Nobody wishes to crawl to the boss; and, in fact, those days are gone. We look for greater responsibility to be shown not only by the worker himself, but also by the individual who is in charge of the job. We also look to the leaders of industry to have a greater sense of responsibility so that our production will be increased, to the benefit of everyone. I trust, therefore, that trade union leaders will be awakened to a sense of responsibility along the lines I have outlined.

From time to time during this session of Parliament the Licensing Court has been subjected to a great deal of criticism both by members and by the Press. This criticism is not unjustified because great improvement could be made by the Licensing Court. In fact, the Act itself needs a thorough overhaul. In travelling from, say, Wagin to Narrogin, and even in travelling to centres in the North, one finds that there are hotels that have to provide bedroom and dining-room services apart from selling liquor. In these days of fast transport nobody stays at these hotels overnight. Perhaps one or two may stop at

them to have lunch. However, the necessity for these small hotels to provide accommodation, especially when they are situated between larger towns where there are more modern hotels, is a feature that needs revision by the Licensing Court.

The Minister for Railways: The provision of accommodation would occasion no loss to the hotel proprietor if there were no travellers using it, because it is already there.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am surprised at that statement, because I would have thought that if a hotelkeeper did not have to provide board and lodging at his hotel his costs would be reduced. I hope that the Minister is right, and that I am wrong. However, it does not seem to be right to me.

The Minister for Railways: The accommodation already exists in those hotels that you mention.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That may be so; but the fact remains that the cost of the upkeep of those places still has to be met. There are only about 30 or 40 miles between these hotels, and such places should be licensed to sell liquor only.

The Chief Secretary: Shy-poo shops.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No; I did not say that, because I do not like that expression. Let us have inns that are licensed to sell fermented and spirituous liquors only. I am surprised that the Licensing Court has refused licences for new hotels in places where they would be an acquisition as a tourist attraction. There is much talk of the value of the tourist trade to Western Australia, and it is said that if we are to attract tourists we must provide suitable accommodation for them. Yet when a move is made to build a good hotel in one of the seaside centres, the application is refused. That is astounding. We should encourage the building of hotels of the proper type to attract the people we want to see so much in this State—the tourists.

The Chief Secretary: Have licences been refused?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: To my knowledge the Licensing Court refused an application on the last occasion. If we are to attract tourists, we must provide the requisite accommodation. With the terrific amount of money that is spent in the bars and lounges of hotels, better sleeping and board accommodation should be insisted on by the Licensing Court, over and above improvements which are made in many cases to the bathroom and toilet facilities in hotels. I know that improvements are costly. As a building contractor, I am aware of the heavy expenditure involved in providing better bedrooms and hot-water services. But any such expenditure could be recouped very easily by the higher tariff which could be charged for a superior type of accommodation.

There is much room for improvement in the attitude of the Licensing Court to the building of hotels in the country. It is amazing to find that the court does not take steps to see that any recommendations it makes for improvements to be carried out are, in fact, carried out. I know of instances where, on subsequent visits, the court has not dealt with the licensees for such failure. I know of instances where improvements were only partially completed and, just prior to a visit by the Licensing Court, building tradesmen could be seen engaged on renovations, with paint brushes, hammers and saws, and carrying stepladders from room to room. The court should insist that its recommendations are carried out in full. In centres where there are police officers stationed it should be their responsibility to see that hotelkeepers carry out in full the recommendations of the court.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We need a few motels in this State.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I agree. The motel business is the answer to the problem of providing accommodation for tourists. It is only in its infancy as yet. We have found what an attraction such places are in Canberra. I am sure that similar accommodation will be built in all States. That is the answer, if we wish to attract tourists to Western Australia. We must give them the best because they are the ones who spend the money here, and we need to attract money from the Eastern States and overseas.

Another subject with which I wish to deal is film censorship. Many of the films shown today are unsuitable for children. Admittedly the censorship authority has thrown the responsibility on the parents to keep their children away from unsuitable films.

Hon. L. A. Logan: In some theatres mixed films are shown.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That is so. In some theatres the programme consists of a film suitable for adults only, and another for general exhibition. Recently when I was in the Eastern States I saw a programme which had as its main feature "The Dam Busters," a film dealing with the air raids over Germany; but the preceding feature was a crime story of a mostly ghastly type. That programme was exhibited to everyone, although one feature was suitable only for people with mature minds. A closer censorship should be imposed on films which have an adverse effect on the adolescent child who may become the delinquent of tomorrow.

The delinquent child is the responsibility of everyone; he is not solely to blame for his predicament. Many factors contribute to his position, such as the influence of the parents and the example set by them. Film censorship would be

one means of preventing delinquency. In some instances the indulgence of parents tends to make children delinquent. Yet no one becomes more upset than the parents themselves when they discover that their children are delinquent. The fault lies with those parents and not with the children. It is about time that parents faced up to their responsibilities.

Here I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Arney, magistrate of the Children's Court. When he was appointed, the most suitable person was chosen, and he has done an excellent job. I am sure that the great problems which confront him every day would be greatly reduced if more care were taken in regard to the censorship of films and literature and the attitude adopted by parents.

The subject of land settlement has been of interest to this Parliament and to the public of Western Australia. Everyone welcomed the news of the proposed land development near Esperance. It will be good for this State if it can encourage American and foreign capital. But if the proposed development is to be a State undertaking, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is land much closer to railways and roads which could be developed more cheaply. There are many millions of acres of undeveloped land lying close to and not a great distance from the rail-heads, roads, telephone communications and water services.

If we have to go afield through the need for development of land, and if we have to spend a great amount of money to provide the facilities I refer to, we will be paying very dearly for something which could be achieved at a much lower cost by developing land which is much closer to transport and to markets. It must be remembered that at distant centres we might have to provide shipping facilities, and that would be costly. If the development of the port of Albany in the last three years is any yardstick, then the development in other districts will take a much longer time. We should approach these matters in a more realistic way, having regard to the economic aspect.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The Government has no money to spend on Geraldton, so it cannot have any funds for Esperance.

The Chief Secretary: It is just as well that Mr. Bennetts has already spoken! He will not appreciate your remarks.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Another matter on which I wish to comment is the supply of young school teachers to country centres. It is a mistake for the department to send very young girls from the college to one-teacher schools in country areas far removed from their homes. We realise the necessity for teachers being sent to such places, but these girls should be replaced by young men; because too often, to the

concern of the parents of the girls, loneliness prevails, and in a short time the girls marry. Then they have to forfeit part of their bond to the Government in respect of the unexpired portion of their contract, or go back to their job after marriage. This is a matter which is causing concern to the parents of many of these young girls, not because of the pitfalls—

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Does the hon. member think that marriage is a pitfall?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No; I do not, far from it. If the hon. member had been paying attention, he would have heard me say that I considered that instead of young girls being sent from training college to schools in the country areas, it would be far better for the department to send young men of the same age. Their services would be retained, and they would serve their allotted period and would not be lost to the department as is the case with girls who relinquish teaching to get married. That happens all too frequently in the country districts. They teach for 12 months and then marry.

The Chief Secretary: They are quick workers!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Then they have to sacrifice their bond or else return to the school at a later stage to teach. They would thus have to leave their home and a young baby, and that is not in the interests of anybody. I have given reasons why I think it would be advantageous for the Education Department to send young men—

Hon. J. D. Teahan: Into the pitfalls!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON—to the country, rather than young girls. Members are rather frivolous.

The Chief Secretary: You are the most frivolous.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I can appreciate the reason for their frivolity, but I want to strike a serious note. A number of parents have approached not only me but also the parents and citizens' associations to see whether some change cannot be made in this direction. They are very gravely concerned about the circumstances which confront these girls, and the conditions under which they live in the country. Loneliness does prevail in the bush, and the girls are thrown into company which, in ordinary circumstances, they might not contact. It is in the interests of all concerned that a serious view should be taken of what I have said.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You are casting doubts on the doctrine of the equality of the sexes.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That is another subject entirely, which I am not going to discuss. We are seriously concerned about the financial position of the small dairy farmers in the lower Great Southern areas, many of whom are finding

things extremely difficult. Although times appear to be prosperous in other avenues of primary production, these men have never been in quite the same fortunate position as larger farmers, because dairy farming is entirely different from wheat and sheep farming. It is high time that the Government, through the agency of the Rural & Industries Bank, gave help to these men. At one time loans were made available to assist in the development and improvement of pastures and the purchase of additional stock, but it is very difficult to secure advances under present-day circumstances.

I am aware that the Government is conscious of the position, because only last year I, with another member of Parliament, attended a deputation to the Treasurer seeking assistance for these farmers because of their adverse circumstances due to their not having been able to obtain credit from the banks as was available during the days of the Industries Assistance Board. I hope the Government will be able to see its way clear to give all the help possible to enable these men to improve their position—to secure more stock and engage in pasture improvement. When it is considering the financial position as a whole, I trust that the Government will give serious consideration to assisting these dairy farmers. I support the motion.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [8.52]: With other members, I join in welcoming the newcomers to this House, who have so ably contributed to the debates on questions that have been before us. I have previously expressed my condolence with the relatives of our late colleagues who passed away in recent months.

In his speech, Mr. Thomson wondered whether the Address-in-reply was a waste of time, or whether anybody took any notice of what members said or the points they made in their contributions to the debate. I can assure the hon. member that I have taken some notice of the matters he has mentioned, and some of the points he made were very enlightening indeed. But I am not going to promise him that I can rectify all the difficulties he has referred to.

It is well known that this is an Address-in-reply to the Lieut.-Governor's Speech; and during the debate, all members are entitled to criticise whatever is mentioned in that Speech, or to deal with any question at all that might come to their minds. I do not consider that the debate is a waste of time. The Address-in-reply is very useful and should not be curtailed in any sense. It always has the effect, at the beginning of a session, of a shaking-down period. Members submit all the disabilities or disadvantages that may exist in their particular electorates, and a lot of notice is taken of the points raised.

The different speeches are read by the departmental heads, and criticism is offered or comments are made or advice is given. Information is provided for members. If the Address-in-reply were restricted in any way, I am afraid that just as many hours would be wasted in answering questions in the House as are spent on the Address-in-reply. So I consider it is most essential that this custom, which has prevailed over the centuries under the British parliamentary system, should be preserved.

I would like to express my view concerning Mr. Thomson's proposal that committees should be formed to investigate departmental expenditure and to make suggestions or recommendations on proposals involving Government expenditure with the object of curtailing expense. That may be all right, but it would certainly slow down the normal functions of Government. In effect, committees of that type would merely be sub-committees of Cabinet so to speak.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Public Accounts Committee of the Federal Parliament does not seem to slow down the proceedings.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I doubt whether it would ever save as much as it costs. We have a public accountant in the Auditor General; and if he finds that accounts are not altogether satisfactory or in accordance with the Votes, he draws attention to the fact in his report.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It is too late then; the money has been spent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know about that. I do not think that such committees would be of any advantage at all. In fact, I think they would cost a lot of money and would obstruct progress. We know that there are committees in connection with the Federal Parliament. I have never read that any of them have achieved anything. I have read the comments of some of the members published in the Press, but we do not see any extra large quotations. More often I read of the members of such committees flying from one part of Australia to another, and I suggest that that costs money.

In regard to regulations, I remember Dr. Hislop putting that suggestion forward two or three sessions ago. But regulations are a different proposition altogether. They can be dealt with here in Parliament. All regulations must be tabled and Parliament itself is a committee to deal with them. I do not know what the hon. member has in mind, or what the system is in South Australia, although Dr. Hislop did explain it on one occasion. If all regulations had to be examined by a committee before being approved or examined by Executive Council, it would merely be a sub-committee of Cabinet; it would be a committee checking on the work of Ministers.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: It would be an all-party committee.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would not matter what it was; it would be a committee checking the work of a Minister and his proposals to Executive Council.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: How much time does Cabinet spend on studying the regulations which a Minister submits to it for approval?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is a matter of what effect the regulations will have. Innumerable regulations are presented which have little effect; and, of course, little time would be taken up with them.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Let us say regulations under the Betting Control Act?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are submitted to the Minister by the Betting Control Board; and the Minister, if he recommends that they be approved, will submit them to Cabinet. If he does not approve of them they do not go that far. In my short term as a Minister I have had regulations submitted to me which I have not accepted. I have just told the department concerned that I did not approve of them, and that was that.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I should imagine that the Postmaster General is wishing that he had taken similar steps.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That may be so. But I notice that the Postmaster General or the Deputy Directors claim that the regulations are not the obstruction that somebody thought they might be. Evidently they are not so bad. Those are my views in regard to the subject of committees. Mr. Thomson said that he would like to have an expression of opinion, and those are my views, but not necessarily those of the Government, because I am only one member of it.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Thank you.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: During this debate there has been a good deal of criticism levelled at the railways, and I do not say that it was not justified. But I will say that much of the criticism has perhaps been exaggerated, particularly that referring to some trivial little things that should not concern the Parliament. But, in other respects, the criticism has been well justified.

A good deal of criticism has been levelled at the diesel locomotives which were purchased by the Government railways after being ordered originally in 1949. The last of these engines only recently arrived in Western Australia. The criticism was directed at the unsatisfactory operation of these locomotives, and there is no denying the fact that they have not been the success mechanically that they should have

been. The principal defects have been broken cylinder heads and pistons, and it is thought—in fact it is now known—that the cause of these faults has been discovered.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Too rigid?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; the troubles were caused by the lubricating system not being able to cope with the severe summer conditions under which the engines operate in Western Australia. It appears that the faults lie in the lubricating and cooling system of the power unit—in the Crossley engines that drive the electric generators. That fault has, to a great extent, been rectified. The improvement over the last few months, particularly in regard to the main line engines which were the ones giving the most trouble, has been marked.

There were times when 13 and 14 of these locomotives were in the workshops awaiting repairs. Today there are only two or three with broken cylinder heads and pistons. The company which supplied the locomotives is supplying replacement parts, and as fast as those parts come along the locomotives are being returned to traffic with the new type of cylinder head and pistons.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is, the replacement parts.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. I would not say that they are a new type, but they are constructed of a different type of metal.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The company is not paying the Government for the loss of time caused by the breakdowns?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The company is replacing the parts, but it is not paying for the losses entailed by the locomotives being off traffic. The latest information I have concerning them is to the effect that over a six-monthly period on the northern line, which is fully dieselised, a saving of over £100,000 has resulted as compared with the normal steam trains hauling not quite so much traffic over the same line.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Over what period?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A six-monthly period; that was for the six months ended the 30th June this year. Those results are very encouraging, and an even greater improvement can be expected when all the diesels are in operation and when our own mechanical staff—the fitters and so on, and even the drivers—become fully accustomed to operating and servicing these locomotives.

Of course, they were an unfortunate buy at the time, but neither the commission nor anybody else could have suspected that circumstances would have turned out as they did. When the locomotives were ordered, no diesel manufacturers were able

to accept orders to be fulfilled within many years. The Railways Commission was faced with the problem of obtaining locomotive power as quickly as possible; and it accepted a tender from a firm which combined two reputable makes of mechanism—the Metro-Vickers electrical section and the Crossley engine. That is a reputable engine, and in normal circumstances the engines could be expected to be highly successful from the commencement of their operations in Western Australia.

But faults or teething troubles when changing over to diesel locomotives are not to be found only in this State. It has happened on other systems in Australia where there was a changeover to the use of diesel locomotives. Trouble has been experienced in the early stages. Mechanical problems were experienced—admittedly not as severe as ours—but one by one they are being overcome, until today the Clyde Engineering Co., a firm manufacturing engines in Australia, is turning out a first-class machine. No doubt that company will be making locomotives not only for Australian systems, but for New Zealand and overseas railways as well.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are all Australian systems buying from the Clyde Engineering Co. now?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Western Australian Government Railways have not bought any, but any future purchases, of course, would be from the Clyde Engineering Co. provided that firm was able to take the order. It is not anticipated that there will be need for purchases of the heavy locomotives for several years to come; but there is a shortage of the diesel railcar, and it is hoped that when more finance becomes available orders will be placed for about 15 railcars.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They ought to be the same as the Budd car system on the Commonwealth railways.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The commission is convinced that all the problems associated with these diesel locomotives will be overcome in the very near future. The major faults have been detected and overcome; but there are still some smaller defects, which do not cause much loss of time, and they will be attended to as they occur.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Have the commissioners tested the different brands of lubricating oil?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not conversant with those details, but I imagine that would have been done.

Hon. L. C. Diver: It is vital.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know that, and I imagine that the commissioners would be taking good care to see that the correct oils were being purchased for the engines.

Hon. L. C. Diver: The Government does a good deal of purchasing by tender and would not necessarily get the correct oil.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The prices of lubricating oils and petrols do not vary because the oil companies' prices are usually uniform. So tenders would be of little use in that instance.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The engineers of the company which manufactures the engines recommend the oil suitable for them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not aware of those details.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They do.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As I mentioned before, the Chief Mechanical Engineer would look after that aspect. No fault has been found with the oil; the fault has been in the cylinder head and the lubricating system. It was found that the lubricating system had developed an air lock. And of course that prevented the circulation of the oil. That is the information that was supplied to me; and it was not supplied to me by the Railways Commission but by Metro-Vickers' No. 1 engineer, who has been out on more than one occasion from Britain to inspect the damage to these machines as they have smashed up. It is the information given by him, and not by the commission, to which I refer.

The other comments on railways are of course directed at the possible rise in freights. It has been said that most industries cannot afford any freight rise. We admit that. I admit that, but I do not admit that all industries cannot afford to carry a reasonable rise in freights. It must be recognised, however, that the time arrives when it is absolutely essential that freights be increased; otherwise the operations of the railway system have to be curtailed.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The time has come fairly frequently.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has repeated itself several times in the last seven or eight years. It has recurred on many occasions during that period, but that is the result of inflation and nothing else. Inflation might have been avoided had some reasonable control been exercised over the general economic situation from 1949 onwards. However, there has been no control; controls were abolished. It was always said that supply and demand would govern the economic position, but that has been proved to be absolutely incorrect. Supply and demand has not equalised the position at all. Accordingly we find that even in recent months, the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer have become very alarmed, and have called conferences to consider what controls may be necessary to arrest the trend.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are not the wages by far the biggest cost on the railways, and have they not been subjected to unbridled increases?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Wages are by far the biggest cost on the railways, but I would not go so far as to say that they have been subjected to unbridled increases; at least, no more than has been the case with any other section of the community, whether it be the wages section, the salaried section, or the business section. Anything that the wage earner has got he has had to obtain through the Arbitration Court. He has had to prove his case; and it was found here for several years—for almost three years at least—that he was not getting his due legally through the Arbitration Court, when the court refused to increase his wages, notwithstanding the fact that the cost of living indicated that his wages should have been increased.

There is, of course, an alternative to increasing railway freights, and that is the pruning of the railways: the cutting away of the dead wood; the removal of some of the branch lines—branch lines which do not pay for the axle grease they use. By restricting the unpayable systems of our railways, and by retaining the full patronage of the section of the community that uses the railways, this might be possible. If these people would patronise the railways it is quite possible that economic freights would obtain; indeed I have no doubt they would. In my opinion that is the only answer to a railway system which has to operate in a reasonable manner.

It has been said that the railways did pay at one time. It is true that they paid in some respects. Their revenue exceeded their operating costs; but, of course, that did not pay for sinking fund and interest.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: At one time they did both.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In the earlier stages they probably did.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That was before the introduction of motorcars.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But we have reached the stage where they are out of date in many respects. They should be reorganised and brought up to date; and then, if road transport is more able to serve the inland community economically, I see no reason why the railways should not be taken away and road transport be allowed to operate.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You know that road transport cannot compete with railways.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In some cases it can.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Not in the case of heavy transport.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In some cases that is possible. Mr. Simpson referred to the metropolitan transport services. I remember the day when road transport ran the suburban trains into the conditions in which they found themselves some years ago. They are gradually climbing out of that position, but it was

because road services were running in competition and alongside the suburban passenger services that the latter fell away. Now we find the position reversed; the railways can operate more cheaply than road services.

I have heard it said that private companies would not tolerate the losses incurred by Government instrumentalities. The reference, of course, was to the transport services. Of course they would not, and they cannot. Under existing circumstances they find they cannot continue to operate; and the reason why the metropolitan overall transport trust is mooted is that every bus operator in the metropolitan area, with the exception of one, said very plainly that he could not continue in business. The reasons advanced were higher operational costs—that is, higher overhead costs, or irreducible costs—and the competition from private motorcars, as pointed out by Mr. Simpson.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I take it that before you increase freights you will attempt to tidy up the Railway Department.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Quite a few months have been spent deliberating that matter, and I fear that quite a good deal more time will be spent in that direction. It is not a question of saying, "We will meet the deficit simply by increasing freights."

Hon. G. Bennetts: Start from the heads and work down.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The proposition is to investigate what is the best path to follow; in what manner economies can be effected without hitting at somebody's pocket. Before any action is taken, members may rest assured that every angle will have been thoroughly investigated. Mr. Bennetts suggested that we start from the heads and work down. We have heard a lot of criticism about the three-man commission.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We had it—

The PRESIDENT: Order, please!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Some of the accusations are to the effect that they fight.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I do not know about that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: My experience is that they have differences of opinion, just as we do in this Chamber. But I would say that that is all to the good. It does not affect the overall position.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There is nothing wrong with their reputation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The overall position on the railways is the lack of funds; and that has been caused by inflation.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is my overall position.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It affects all of us, and that is the whole trouble. The programme laid down by the Minister prior to Mr. Simpson, and indeed by Mr. Simpson himself, would have worked quite well—very well indeed for the rehabilitation of the railways—had it not been for the fact that inflation caught up with it and slowed it down. Previously where £3,000,000, £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 a year was required, today £10,000,000 would be required. I would point out that a £40,000,000-programme spread over 10 years would now be the equivalent of a £100,000,000 programme spent over the same period to do the same job. It has slowed up considerably but there has been a marked improvement in the railway system since 1949. That is proved today.

A far greater tonnage is being carted than ever before, and the wheat farmers of Western Australia have expressed their appreciation of the good job done by the railways in recent months in moving their wheat. So there is a general improvement. There is no doubt about that. The economics are, however, a different matter; and as I have already mentioned, there will be no drastic moves in regard to railway freights until every avenue has been thoroughly explored.

Hon. L. A. Logan: I hope you do not want the country people to pay all the loss.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is a moot point as to whether the country people do actually pay for everything.

Hon. L. A. Logan: They pay all of it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would not say that. Last year the loss on the railways represented the State's deficit. The loss had to come from somewhere and it came from Consolidated Revenue. The bulk would come from the community in the metropolitan area.

Hon. L. A. Logan: That is how it ought to be.

The PRESIDENT: Order, please!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has been mentioned that people in the country districts are responsible for providing all the revenue. I just cannot see that.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Surely the Minister would agree that the deficit would have been greater if country freights had not been raised.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course I do! And it will be greater still if they are not raised again. It is only simple arithmetic, and I would not argue about that one. The point is that it is often said, "Well the man on the land keeps the rest of the community going." He does. But in my opinion, the man on the land is privileged to a very large extent to be in that position. I would say that in the

metropolitan area there are many thousands of people—good, hard, solid working men—who would willingly settle on the land if they had the opportunity.

Hon. L. C. Diver: They would not in 1910.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Many thousands on the labour market today would be very pleased to settle on the land with a chance of getting off the labour market. It cannot be done on wages, but there is a chance if one can get started in some type of business, where the work is being done for oneself. Primary production is undoubtedly important to any nation's economy, particularly in a State like this, and a nation like Australia.

Turning from railways, there is one query which I want to answer for Mr. Griffith, who wished to know the position in regard to the owners of land situated in the area to be taken over for the construction of the Welshpool marshalling yards. It is in some respects a railway matter, but on the point in question it is a matter for the land resumption officer with the Public Works Department. Mr. Griffith wished to know if a precedent had been set when one of the occupiers in that area entered into negotiations to sell his block to the Government prior to a general resumption.

I can say that a precedent has not been set in that respect. It was a case of special circumstances where this particular occupier had an opportunity of buying into a business which was being auctioned elsewhere. He therefore sold his own property in order to obtain finance to enable him to be in a position to attend the auction. He entered into negotiations with the land resumption officer to the extent that he would be able to attend the auction with the object of being a purchaser, and with the assurance that the Government would take over his property from him if successful. That was only fair and reasonable.

Whether the property has been auctioned I do not know, but negotiations are still going on. The landholders there can rest assured that when the area is finally surveyed and decided upon and mapped and planned, and diagrammed out, the Government will then be in a position to negotiate with those who wish to dispose of their property.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: And the rest of the land-owners can make the same approach to the Government as had been made by this other person?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: All I can say in respect to that question is that owners in similar circumstances would certainly obtain the same consideration. I have no doubt about that, as it is only being human, and that would be the case.

I was most impressed with the speech of my colleague, Mr. Willesee this evening. He gave a very good account of the North-West and some of the disabilities affecting

it, so far as development is concerned. It is history now, of course, that an approach was made to the Commonwealth Government as a result of a motion in this Chamber and in another place. This approach was made by an all-party committee, and special representations were made to the Commonwealth for various forms of assistance with which to develop the North. The Commonwealth has not replied on the major propositions put to it, although it has replied, in effect, on taxation. It has increased the zone allowance which, in effect, means nothing at all; only a few pounds or shillings to most people.

It did reply earlier to one of the requests for assistance for the Blue Asbestos Company at Wittenoom Gorge, which was refused. Immediately the State Government received that information, it took steps to assist this company, independently of the Commonwealth; but, at the same time, it informed the Commonwealth and suggested that it might help the company to the same extent, which it subsequently did.

The Commonwealth Government has replied to only two of the five or seven requests put to it. It is rather a pity that it did not take a more realistic view of the Ord River proposition. The Ord River dam is not something to be built in a day or a year. The Commonwealth should come in with the State on a £ for £ basis and build the dam over a 15-year period, which is something within the State's capacity and something which would no doubt ultimately bring a greater population to that area. That area could without doubt produce quite a lot of agricultural products.

In my own opinion, when the matter was submitted to the Prime Minister, the Federal Treasurer and Senator Spooner, mention was made of sugar in connection with the development of the land adjacent to the Ord river. That was the death knell of that proposition. The Federal Treasurer made no bones about the fact that Queensland is using only about 60 per cent. of its available sugar-growing areas, where there are materials, roads and everything else.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They can spend £30,000,000 at St. Mary's.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. It is most disappointing that the Federal Government will not even send a reply. It was Parliament's request—not the Government's—that help be given to Western Australia in respect of the Ord River dam, and the development of that area. A request was also made in respect of a deep-water jetty at Point Torment, some 20 miles from Derby.

Out of Derby, on Liveringa Station, a private company has already spent an amount approaching £50,000 experimenting on the growing of rice, and has satisfied itself that it can produce rice economically and in large quantities.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: What is the rainfall?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: About 33 inches or 34 inches.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Is there any irrigation?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is partly from rainfall, but mostly irrigation. The Government has met a request from this company in connection with a creek which provides water to its experimental plot. The Government is committed to £20,000 already, and I do not know how much more. This company, when it develops its objective, is going to have quite a large production of rice, as well as beef or sheep if it wishes, because it is a rotation crop. One year 5,000 acres are planted, and next year the land is given a spell. It can be grazed on; and with irrigation facilities, production will be tremendous.

The object of providing the jetty at Point Torment is to prepare for 10 or 15 years hence when production of this company will need to be shipped. It will also encourage owners of other places on river frontages—pastoralists or private companies—to do the same thing; work the very good soil that lines the banks of these rivers and which stretches for hundreds of miles. So to prepare for 10 to 15 years hence it is necessary to build a jetty which will take a modern ship and provide an outlet for the produce.

There would be a meatworks and an abattoir at Derby. It should be almost up to the capacity of the one at Wyndham in order to plan for the future.

But these things cannot come about unless transport facilities are provided. Some years ago, when listening one night in another place, I heard it said that when the scheme was first mooted the cart was being put before the horse because they were proceeding with only one side of it. That was in reference to the Government scheme to provide bores to step up beef production. It is most disappointing indeed when the Commonwealth cannot see eye to eye with the State Government in looking ahead with respect to development in the northern areas of the State. Development has to come some day, and it is our responsibility; but the State cannot possibly develop the northern areas and the southern areas at the same time. That, of course, is most unfortunate for Western Australia and, as Mr. Willesee pointed out, it could be very dangerous in the years ahead.

I agree with him in that respect. When we see an area of land in the East and West Kimberleys producing next to nothing, and its production is capable of being stepped up considerably—fourfold at least in the beef industry—I would say there is no encouragement to the pastoralist in those areas to do anything to

invest their surplus or their profits, or any portion of them, in the land there. No substantial concessions, over a period of years, have been made, and I think the policy is very shortsighted.

When we look at the economic position, who, holding a pastoral lease, if he has a surplus of £4,000 or £5,000 per annum, or more, will put it back into leasehold land in those areas when he can buy freehold land here in a safe rainfall area and yet get exactly the same concessions for the money he ploughs back? Is it logical to expect him to invest there when he can invest here and build up a capital asset whereas he would not build up a capital asset to the same extent on leasehold land? Until the Federal Government recognises the fact that those living in the North, or any other remote area where it is possible to step up production, need some encouragement, we will not get very far. Can we expect people to invest in the North while there is so much land available for selection in the safe rainfall area of the South-West Land Division?

The population in the North is less now than it was in 1910; there are fewer white people living there today. I cannot see where there are any other attractions to bring people to those parts in large numbers. Goldmining, tin, copper or something of that nature may attract a few hundred, but such undertakings are always subject to market fluctuations.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: Such a population is not permanent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so, because when the end of the gold, tin, or whatever it may be, is reached, that population goes. In my opinion it is most unfortunate that the Federal Government will not take a more sympathetic view of the development of the northern part of this State because, after all, it is part of Australia and it is part of that Government's responsibility. Unfortunately, it seems to abandon the North.

The matter of radio reception was mentioned by Mr. Willesee. I can think of three or four radio stations that have been built in the southern part of the State in recent years to improve radio facilities here, but nothing has been built in the North; and it is not possible to ring up anyone past Carnarvon. Whereas we can telephone to Darwin, through Adelaide, it is not possible to ring up anyone between Carnarvon and Darwin, so the communications in the North, so far as the P.M.G. is concerned, are something that have been forgotten. It is most unfortunate, but, however, so much for the North.

Both Mr. Simpson and Mr. Logan and, I think, Mr. Jones, pointed out the disabilities obtaining at Geraldton. When speaking on the Supply Bill I mentioned that the Government was fully aware of

the disadvantages in connection with the harbour. I mentioned then that this year was a particularly bad one from the point of view of weather conditions. A severe cyclone was experienced in March and it was followed by a series of stormy months. Consequently, shipping is not very anxious to go into the port. But I can tell members that every endeavour will be made to improve the conditions at Geraldton. I know that a fender system will be constructed along the wharf. I am not aware of what other harbour improvements the department controlled by the Minister for Works may have in mind or is investigating, but I do know that the position has not been lost sight of, and the Government has it under active consideration.

There is also the possibility of the control of the Geraldton wharves being transferred to some other harbour authority. No decision has yet been made on the type of authority. At present the wharf at Geraldton is controlled by the Railways Commission but I believe that the control of wharves is not a function of railways; it should be placed in the hands of some other authority. A submission will be made to Cabinet in the not-too-far-distant future on this point and a decision will be arrived at as to whether a transfer will be effected, and who will take over the wharves.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Do you think that a local harbour board would be better?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not in a position to advise the hon. member on that point just now. I have not read thoroughly the reports that have come to hand. A deputation from the various interested sections of the community at Geraldton requested that a harbour board be established, and consideration will be given to that request. I also believe that the mechanisation of the wharves is long overdue. Mr. Logan mentioned this matter in his speech on the Address-in-reply, and it will be my ambition to do something in that respect, but until we set up another authority nothing can be expected in the very near future.

It has been said that the shipping is not the best along the North-West coast; that cargoes are left behind and so on. The very same conditions apply with interstate ships or overseas ships leaving Fremantle. Conditions alter circumstances. Frequently the interstate ships sail from Fremantle leaving cargoes behind. I notice that on the Supply Bill I interjected and said the very same thing about interstate ships, but unfortunately the writer evidently—a mistake, of course—thought I was talking about the State Shipping Service, so according to the report I am telling people that the State ships frequently leave consignments behind. However, that is neither here nor there; it does not matter very much.

It is a fact that with shipping from east to west, or west to east, or from Fremantle overseas, cargoes are left behind; cargoes are often kept on board; and cargoes coming from Sydney to Fremantle will go back to Sydney and come back here again because of weather conditions or some other circumstance that interferes. Ships say they will sail at 8 p.m. and they do sail. Conditions are a little bit different with the State ships. The State Shipping Service cannot cope with the demands made upon it for shipping, northward; and through the winter months it cannot cope with the quantity of cargo offering southwards, but it can clean it all up by the end of the year.

The disabilities associated with the State Shipping Service running to a regular schedule, are many. In the first place, there are tides to catch at the tidal ports; and one of the greatest difficulties with the Darwin trade is the lack of wharves there. That port has only one wharf to serve Darwin. Members can imagine what that means to a shipping service. Early in my career as a Minister, I found that ships were delayed eight or 10 days at a time at Darwin because some overseas or Eastern States ship had secured the berth beforehand. If a ship is held up at Darwin for eight or 10 days it means that everybody else along the North-West coast is being put to inconvenience.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Isn't there something about the "Koolama"?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is at Wyndham. However, new wharves have been under construction for the past three years at Darwin. I think the contract date was October of last year, but the latest information is that these wharves will be completed and ready for use by shipping in November of this year. It is hoped that that will be so. The State Shipping Service will then be able to give a more regular service, and it will also be able to take much more cargo from Western Australia to Darwin.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: How about the ship-to-shore radios?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are installed. The hon. member raised this question when speaking on the Address-in-reply. He pointed out the disability, and he has been successful in having them installed. So when members say that no one takes any notice of what is said on the Address-in-reply, they can see that that is not so.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Hoo-bally-ray!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The ship-to-shore radios as suggested by the hon. member have been installed, although they are not in all ports. There is one at the head office, Fremantle, and there is a ship-to-shore radio on the new ship, the "Koojarra," delivery of which is being taken the day after tomorrow—Friday

next—at Newcastle; and she is expected to make her first voyage from Fremantle to Darwin on the 16th of next month.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: It has been proved to be an advantage.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A definite advantage. Other troubles causing delays to shipping in the North are disputes which arise from time to time. They are not at all infrequent, and although they might only last for an hour at a time, they cause delay. The atom bomb tests, on this occasion, also disrupted shipping to a very great extent.

During his speech, Mr. Willesee mentioned that three ships passed through Port Hedland at the one time. Whether they were all travelling in the one direction I would not know, but I should not think so because Port Hedland is midway between Darwin and Fremantle and with ships passing up and down the coast, they frequently pass at Port Hedland and race each other to get in on the tide. Port Hedland is a tidal port which ships can enter only every 12 hours. If one ship is travelling south and another is travelling north each will try to race the other to get into port. Thus, the fact that three ships may be in the port at the same time is something that frequently occurs and it cannot be avoided at present.

I should think that under normal conditions and with the provision of wharfage facilities at Darwin, a deep sea jetty at Derby, an extension to the Wyndham jetty and the Port Hedland jetty, there will be less delays to shipping along our coast. Now that more ships are on the run the greater will be the congestion at the ports. However, the State Shipping Service does its best and it can do no better than that. I have spoken much longer than I intended; and, in conclusion, I would point out that if any vital points raised by members have been overlooked by me, I will ask the Chief Secretary to answer them when he makes his speech in support of the motion to adopt the Address-in-reply.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. Evidence Act Amendment.
2. Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement.
3. Albany Lot 184 (Validation of Title). Received from the Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 18th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 12th September, 1956.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Moir) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m. and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Marketing of Potatoes Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

Extension of Bolgart Scheme.

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Is it intended to utilise the available water supply situated approximately one mile from Bolgart to supply the State hotel at Bolgart?

(2) If so, when will this work be undertaken?