

the standardisation of railway gauges is gone on with, we in Western Australia at any rate will benefit thereby.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.54 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 26th September, 1945.

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

QUESTIONS.

SAWMILLS.

As to Manpower Position.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Forests:

1, What is the position of the State Saw Mills in respect to manpower?

2, (a) Which mills, if any, are short of manpower?

(b) What number of men are required at each mill?

(c) In what capacity are the men required at each mill?

(d) How many employees over the age of 65 are working at each mill?

3, Is any similar information available as to the Railway Mill and privately owned mills?

4, If so, what is the position in respect to these mills?

5, What steps have been taken to ensure that such manpower as is necessary to bring the mills up to full strength will be made available?

6, In view of the immediate necessity for an increase in the production of timber, and the tremendous strain that has been placed on the employees working in the industry in their efforts to keep up production whilst the mills were working short-handed, will he immediately make further strong representations to the Commonwealth stressing the urgency of the position in Western Australia?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for Forests) replied:

1, Twenty-one experienced men are required. A number of men who are not skilled in the industry have been employed during the war, adversely affecting efficiency. With the return of the regular employees replacing these the output and position generally should materially improve.

2, (a) Pemberton, Hakea and Holyoake; (b) Pemberton 7, Hakea 12, Holyoake 2. (c) Pemberton: 4 navvies, 3 fettlers; Hakea: 3 fallers, 3 navvies, 3 mill hands, 3 experienced yard men; Holyoake: 2 fettlers; (d) Deanmill 3, Pemberton 9, Hakea 3, Holyoake 3, total 18.

3 and 4, (a) The Railway Mill at Bank-siadale is actually short of 4 navvies, 2 fallers and 4 mill hands. Three of the employees at the mill are over 65 years of age.

(b) The Government is not aware of the present individual position in respect to privately-owned mills, as men are being released daily, but it is understood that similar manpower difficulties obtain throughout the industry. An investigation in July of all bush mills indicated the following requirements:—Men for falling, hauling and delivering, 114; men for tramline construction and maintenance, 92; mill hands, 180; others, 22; total, 408.

5, List submitted every 14 days to the National Service Office. Constant applications have been made over two years to manpower authorities to release key men from the services, and a large number of these applications are now being reviewed by the Military Department. The Deputy Controller of Timber sponsors all applications for releases from the services.

6, The labour requirements of the timber industry are being constantly urged and the manpower authorities are representing to the Army the early release of a large number of timber workers.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to the Enginedrivers' Pool System.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Railways:—

1, How long has the pool system of enginedrivers on the Western Australian Government Railways been in operation?

2, Has the introduction of the system justified the change over from the policy of individual drivers operating the same engine continuously?

3, Was it not a fact that drivers and firemen, accustomed to operating the same engine continuously obtained more efficient running, and took a greater pride in engine performance?

4, Is it a fact that railway time tables were run on schedule regularly before the introduction of the enginedrivers' pool system, and that this system has contributed largely to the continued late arrival of many trains?

The MINISTER replied:—

1, Pooling of engines was introduced on the Kalgoorlie line in 1905. The system was gradually extended to other lines.

2, Yes; savings effected by the pooling system include:—Considerable reduction in number of locomotives required; fuel in raising steam at change depots; stores for preparation work; time in preparing and stabling. Under present conditions it would be impossible to work the services in this State under any other system. The pooling of engines has world-wide operation. (On the Trans-Australian railway the one engine pools through from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie with eight changes of crew en route.)

3, There is no reason why enginemmen should not attain the same efficiency on a pooled engine. No railway system can afford to provide one engine per crew and have that engine standing idle while the crew is off duty.

4, The pooling system does not give any more reason for late running than any other system of locomotive working.

(b) *As to Empty Coach on Kalgoorlie Express.*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Railways:—

1, Is it a fact that an empty A.M. coach was taken from Perth to Kalgoorlie on the 11th and 12th September, 1945, attached to the express, thereby limiting the travelling accommodation for intending passengers?

2, When it is found necessary to take these coaches to Kalgoorlie empty, could this not be done by attaching them to a goods train?

The MINISTER replied:—

1, Car A.M. 313 was sent to Kalgoorlie attached to the express on Monday, the 10th September. The attaching of this coach did not affect the accommodation provided for intending passengers. No coaches were displaced by the A.M. coach and therefore no additional accommodation would have been available had the A.M. coach not been attached.

2, Yes, when time permits.

PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT.

As to Covering Pigs in Transit.

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the fact that contributions to the Pig Industry Compensation Fund amounted to the sum of £10,139 17s. last year, that this year's contributions should be approximately the same, and that payments are not likely to exceed £3,000—

(a) Will he extend the provisions of the Pig Industry Compensation Act to include pigs killed in transit to fat stock market, or bacon factories, in vehicles other than those of the owner of the pigs;

(b) If not, and in view of the fact that the Pig Industry Compensation Fund finished the year with a credit balance of £1,933, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) The Pig Industry Compensation Act is used for the purpose of controlling disease. It provides compensation for diseased animals. Compensation for mortalities occurring amongst pigs in transit to the markets by accident and other causes comes within the category of business losses and, it is considered, should be carried by private insurance.

- (b) A reserve fund is necessary to make provision as a contingency against a future outbreak of swine fever or other pig plagues. A fund is being established for such an emergency and when this meets requirements the rate of tax will be reduced to the absolute minimum.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Premier.
- 2, Child Welfare Act Amendment.
Introduced by Mrs. Cardell-Oliver.

HARBOURS SELECT COMMITTEE.

Power to Adjourn from Place to Place.

On motion by Mr. Styants resolved:

That the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the development of the outports of the State have power to adjourn from place to place for the purpose of taking evidence.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

- 1, Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment.
- 2, National Fitness.
Adopted.

MOTION—COLLIE COAL.

As to Full Use, Etc., by Government Utilities.

Debate resumed from the 12th September on the following motion by Mr. Wilson:—

1, That this House recommends that 100 per cent. of native coal be used on all lines of the railway system, except the Marble Bar-Port Hedland line, and that 100 per cent. of native coal be used in other Government utilities requiring coal in this State.

2, That a board of experts be appointed from all interests identified with the production, sale and use of Collie coal to determine the basic standing and equitable value from every standpoint of the native coal versus the coal imported from Commonwealth States, and that such standard have currency for ten years.

3, That in order to avoid importing coal and to safeguard the Railway Department from under-supplies, roof-covered store dumps for Collie coal be constructed at convenient depots throughout the State, and, also, that the use by the Fox carbonation methods of using Collie coal be proceeded with.

4, That the Railway Department adopt a scheme of mixing hard and soft Collie coal, thus showing a financial improvement on the cost of native coal as at present supplied to that department.

5, That the covering with tarpaulins of wagons of coal at the pit's mouth, and during transit, be initiated.

6, That the cost of the tarpaulins, etc., be paid from royalty on local coal.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [4.45]: I feel that probably this is the most opportune motion to have come before the Chamber for a long time, and that the member for Collie is to be commended for his persistency in re-introducing this subject after a lapse of 10 or 12 years. I feel, too, that this motion contains the essence of the solution of the majority of our coal troubles for a long time ahead and, if passed by the House and its objective achieved, the whole position will automatically improve in every direction, as is indicated in its wording. Large numbers of men will be returning soon from the various Services to seek employment in the coalmining operations at Collie and they will, of course, be capable of producing large quantities of coal. We know also that established industries will in the near future make far greater demands on the Collie coalfields than they have for several years past. We also contemplate the establishment of quite a number of new industries which will absorb quantities of coal such as Collie was not called upon in the past to supply. The gold-mines will embark upon greater production so that the demand for coal will also greatly increase from that direction as well.

Included in the motion is a suggestion that there shall be a decrease in the quantity of imported coal, which means decreased importations of Newcastle coal. That decrease, which will mean the more extended use of local coal, will have a vast bearing on the future employment of men in the Collie mines. I venture to assert that with the increase in the amount of coal required and the establishment of new industries, the Collie fields will be capable of absorbing from 300 to 500 men above the normal number hitherto employed there. Recent events in connection with Collie must bring this subject into clear perspective, and to members of this Chamber must appear as of the highest importance. The fact that Western Australia has been once again caught, if I may use the term, "flat-footed" so far as coal reserves are concerned, goes to show how highly necessary it is for the adequate storage of coal to be provided for in various

parts of the State. That step is highly essential if chaos is to be avoided in the future.

During the last six months there have been three occasions on which this State has suffered many losses, much unemployment and great inconvenience. There is no doubt that if the storage of coal reserves of an adequate nature had been provided for, much of the losses and inconvenience and the decreased output of products that Western Australia is capable of manufacturing, would have been avoided. It is claimed that the consumption of stored coal is greater than that of fresh coal. It is also plain that if bins were placed at various positions throughout the State, Collie coal could be stored and would turn out to be almost as good as Newcastle coal. The establishment of these bins, although an expensive project, would be well repaid in a very short time by the avoidance of further disruption in industry generally. It is up to the State to provide at least a safe working margin of coal supplies for the industries of the State.

The Woolnough Commission claims that the admixture of soft and hard coals gave excellent results in the fire box and tended to eliminate steaming. I take it that the department has gone fully into the recommendations of that Commission; if it has done so, it must have provided a sufficient answer to the claims of that recommendation. If that recommendation is correct, I think there has been an insufficiency of scientific research, because there is no doubt that Collie coal, if given the correct treatment and care, has propensities which would enable it to be used after storage, provided a scientific method of storage were adopted. The tests made in connection with the mixing of hard and soft coals have proved that, from the point of view of the enginedrivers, they were satisfied that increased efficiency had resulted from the mixing of the two coals. The Woolnough Commission claims that a 10 per cent. increase in efficiency is possible by the correct mixing of the two coals, hard and soft. It is plain that the cost of the installation of the machinery required for mixing would not be so heavy as to be excessive, if the mixing were correctly and properly done.

The final point I wish to raise with respect to the mixing of the hard and soft coals, is that the effect would be to

lengthen the life of the coalmines to a very appreciable degree. The motion also suggests the covering of wagons at the pit mouth. On a similar motion that was debated in this House, controversy ranged around the actual cost, it being contended at that time that the cost of the tarpaulins for covering the coal at the pit mouth and during transport would be too great; but I argue that it would not be too great when one considers the inconvenience caused by insufficient coal supplies when a crisis confronts this State, because of the large expenditure that is incurred on each occasion when a stoppage takes place. The use of tarpaulins would minimise losses in transit on long journeys. It has been maintained that the use of tarpaulins on short journeys would not be justifiable and I think that is correct. On long journeys, however, it is a different matter. The quantity of coal that continually falls alongside our lines should be sufficient indication that great savings would be effected by preventing the coal from falling off the trucks and thus becoming useless. In addition, we must add an amount of saving because of the avoidance of fretting.

I now wish to deal with two further points—inability to obtain regular and constant supplies of Collie coal, as mentioned by Hon. J. C. Willcock when Minister for Railways, as a contributing reason for the importation of Newcastle coal, and also the obviating of bushfires from sparks during harvest time. Undoubtedly, a regular and constant supply could be maintained if bins were established at various parts of the State. I contend there should be no difficulty in keeping Collie coal. I could mention other countries which have overcome the disabilities under which we in this State are labouring. I refer to the prevention of the depreciation of our coal once it reaches the pit mouth. I feel that that statement cannot be justified or borne out by the experiences of this State over the past six months. So far as concerns the elimination of bushfires during harvest time, other countries have used efficient spark-arresters and by those means have obviated fires which otherwise might have been caused by sparks from the engines at the time when grasses or fodders were drying. If this State were to adopt an efficient type of spark-arrester—

The Minister for Railways: Can you name one arrester that is completely efficient anywhere?

Mr. KELLY: I am told that the United States and Canada both have an excellent type of arrester which has eliminated about 95 per cent. of fires previously caused by sparks.

Mr. Cross: Those countries do not use Collie coal.

Mr. KELLY: But they use a similar type of coal, as I stated earlier. The calorific value of the coal is similar in both of those countries. That brings to my mind other types of spark-arresters. I can quote Sweden as an example. Sweden uses a type of improved arrester which utilises all the smoke, the sparks, and everything else. These are returned back to the chamber for use in the generation of gas. In 1933, the Minister for Railways said that to build up reserves of Collie coal throughout Western Australia would be highly expensive. There are many projects in this country that are highly expensive, but there are few that have been capable, like the coal industry, of throwing this State into the degree of reverse that we have experienced in the past six months because of the emergency not having received sufficient attention and the reserves not having been kept up to the requisite degree to obviate the trouble with which we have been faced. The same applies to a remark made at that time by the Minister for Railways, when he claimed that the advantage of bins was highly problematical.

There is nothing problematical about the successful use of bins, because, although the Minister at that time said that we in this State had invariably been able to have on hand sufficient supplies of fresh coal, that has not been the case, as has been demonstrated in recent months. The Government must set itself out in no uncertain manner to overcome this difficulty; for there is no proof that because the disturbance that has rendered this State so impotent over the past week has apparently been settled, there is no likelihood of a recurrence. For that reason alone, the motion must commend itself strongly to all members of this Chamber. The scientific approach to Collie coal and its so-

called deficiencies, should be one of our main considerations from now on. I believe that a certain amount of scientific research has already been carried out, but it has apparently not overcome the chief bottlenecks, which I consider can be dealt with under three headings: storage, spontaneous combustion, and spark-arresters. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, and I trust that the Chamber will see fit to pass it in its entirety.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.3]: The member for Collie who introduced this motion naturally did so in the interests of that area he represents; and there is none of us, I think, who will seriously complain of the terms of the motion or of the sentiments which he expressed. He began with the belief that 100 per cent. of native coal should be used on the entire State railway system. He did not say that it should be Collie coal; because, I presume, he had in mind the fact that at some future time there may be some other native coal that could be used with advantage; and I think that is a very proper point of view. I am strongly in favour of using native coal to the extent of 100 per cent.—which means to the full extent of our requirements—provided that it can be used for all those requirements, and provided that it is available. As to whether it can be used, I think that evidence is accumulating that it can be used, not only for the production of power in the same way as it is used for the production of power at East Perth; but also for the production of both domestic and industrial gas. That last matter, I would say, is still in the experimental stage; but nevertheless evidence is accumulating that it can be used for those purposes; and, as soon as we are satisfied that satisfactory results can be achieved by its use for those purposes, I think we should be agreeable to its being so used.

The other aspect presents rather greater difficulty, especially, as the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie mentioned a moment ago, in the light of the experiences we have had in recent months. To say that we will use 100 per cent. native coal is very right; but, to be sure that we are going to it; but, to be sure that we are going to have sufficient native coal to comply with all our requirements if there should be a

recurrence of the difficulties recently experienced, is another matter. So it seems to me that we should make provision for the use of 100 per cent. of Collie coal, or native coal, in our public enterprises; but, at the same time, we should make some provision that if it be not available we should have some alternative source from which we can draw our fuel supplies. If we do not do so we shall possibly land ourselves in the same position in which we have been in the last few days, with somewhat disastrous results. The rest of the motion deals with methods whereby a reserve of coal can be built up; and, if that reserve of coal that could be built up would be sufficient to cope with all normal expectations of trouble, all deficiency of supplies over a period, the need for alternative systems of fuel supplies, not to be used unless there was no native coal, would not be so obvious. But I do not know whether this reserve of coal can be built up.

It is true that there is an amount of coal in Western Australia. The estimations made of the Collie fields alone disclose, as I think the Premier said yesterday, that there is sufficient coal there for any possible estimated requirements for many generations to come. But we have to get it out, and we must have it before we can place it in these reserve stocks which the member for Collie proposes. However, let us assume that we can get those reserve stocks and put them safely away. The hon. member has satisfied us that the pessimists—the gloomy ones who have argued that Collie coal cannot be kept in storage for any length of time because of the loss of virtue that ensues—are wrong. I think he has proved that, not so much, I think, by the speech he made on this motion as by the one he made on a similar motion many years ago, on which occasion, if he will remember, he went into the matter in rather greater detail than he did on this occasion. So I think we can satisfy ourselves that, if the systems proposed by the hon. gentleman on this and that other occasion were put into operation, it would be practicable to store Collie coal, or native coal, for a considerable time. So supposing the output for a reasonably lengthy period was sufficiently greater than the consumption, it would be possible to build up a considerable reserve. If that can be done—and on that point I am not at the

present moment quite satisfied, because I doubt the possibility in the reasonably near future of obtaining this surplus over consumption—I would be quite satisfied to see the whole of the motion put into operation.

The difficulty I perceive is this: It appears that we have never in this State, for many years, and long before the war, had any great surplus of production from these mines. We have not, as I understand it—and the member for Collie can correct me if I am wrong—had a very large number of persons here who are skilled in the industry; and we are going to require, especially if the terms of the motion are to be adopted, a very greatly increased production, for we have not only to cope with the things with which we have been coping in the past, but also must undertake the use of 100 per cent. of native coal, which means taking out of consumption all other types of coal. We are going to have a greatly increased demand because of the proposal for electrification of the South-West and, subsequently, of the Great Southern, and probably later on of some other area of the State.

There is to be a further consumption at the power station which is contemplated at Fremantle. We know very well that certain industries such as the galvanised wire-netting industry, have been delayed on account of the inability to obtain coal during the war period. It is to be expected that there will be increased demands for coal for some years to come by our railways, because there are not lacking indications that there will be increased settlement in various parts, a measure of decentralisation, and other things that will undoubtedly require transport of heavy goods, and therefore a greater consumption of the fuel which, under the terms of this motion, will be the only fuel to be used. So quite obviously we must produce vastly more coal than in the past before we can by any means build up desirable reserves.

If we cannot build up those reserves, the motion falls down, because without reserves the member for Collie must realise, as I do, that there must be an alternative system to provide fuel supplies on these major works, or else he cannot obtain his desire. So, while I support the motion, I do ask that before the Government—whatever Government it

may be—complies with the desire of the hon. member, it will assure itself, this House, and the people of the State that we are not, by compliance with this motion, to run the risk of further suffering any difficulty such as we have had in recent months.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands) [5.14]: I do not propose to traverse the ground covered by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, who has dealt with some scientific aspects of the question with which I am not acquainted. I would like to congratulate the member for Collie on introducing this very important motion and to say, incidentally, that I intend to support it wholeheartedly. However, it appears to me, as to the Leader of the Opposition, that before we can achieve the objective the member for Collie has in mind, there is a great deal of ground to be covered to assure that supplies of fuel will be available. I know, too, that it may be in the minds of some members that it impinges on what might be regarded as the real prerogative of those in charge of the Railway Department and its kindred institutions. But, after all, we can be sure that this motion postulates that the House has a duty, at any rate, to see that those delegated with authority to deal with something which is a very vital product of the State, shall see that every means are exercised to ensure that its development is fostered.

I hope it will not be suggested that either the mover of the motion or those supporting it—and I hope all members will vote for it—are doing anything but their duty in trying to ensure that there should be put to the maximum use a product we have in almost inestimable quantities. In common, I think, with practically all members in this House, I feel that we must exercise ourselves in the promotion of whatever is in the best interests of the resources at our disposal in this State. If we fail to do that, the future of the Department of the Minister for Industrial Development is hopeless. It is the obvious duty of every member to support any scheme that has for its object the greater use of this product. I am not prepared to discuss the merits of the suggested gasification of coal, but I understand it is beyond the experimental stage and that, despite criticism by certain people who claim to know something about it, others who are equally well informed are

convinced that the system referred to in the motion is one that has been tried and proved effective.

The expansion and development of the State must mean greater use of gas and electricity, and, if we are to give housewives the conveniences that they have for a long time been denied, we must anticipate a tremendous increase in the demand for electricity and gas. Another factor will be the establishment of the South-West power scheme, which will give a tremendous impetus to the industry, and it therefore behoves us now to take steps to see that that aspect of the matter, together with all others, is thoroughly and impartially investigated. As the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie pointed out, had we had an opportunity thoroughly and impartially to investigate the use of Collie coal, its storage and so on, we might have been saved the debacle that the whole State, and particularly the metropolitan area, has been subjected to in the last few days. The installation of the South-West power scheme will call for the employment of a great number of men, both skilled and unskilled. I can see continuous employment for those people, and on that account I think the Government and every member of the House will see fit to support the motion. It is unfortunate that in the second portion of the motion the member for Collie did not give greater scope to the purposes of the investigation.

In the light of what has occurred in the last few days, I think the time has arrived when every avenue in connection with the production and use of Collie coal, or any other coal resources in Western Australia, should be thoroughly and impartially investigated. That would be of advantage to the State. I am not in a position to discuss the merits or demerits of the proposal regarding the storage of coal, but I think its possibilities depend on the sincerity of purpose and degree of interest with which such matters are approached. In spite of the fact that I am a layman, I think the difficulties are not insuperable, and it is the duty of every member of the House to support the member for Collie. If the House passes the motion, I trust that, as a result of the investigation, we will be able to prepare for the greater use that will have to be made of coal, for the production of both electricity and gas, and that in the final analysis it will be proved that Collie coal can be of a

value to us that—for reasons that I will not discuss at the moment—it has not been up to date.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison) [5.20]: I desire to occupy a few moments in referring to the motion moved by the member for Collie. I assure the hon. member that time has marched on since he last moved a similar motion. As a case in point, when he moved the motion on the last occasion, the gasification of Collie coal was considered, by those who ought to have known, to be a practical and physical impossibility. Recent experiments, however, have proved that theory to be entirely wrong, or at least we are hoping it will be proved entirely wrong. Experiments up to date have shown that the gasification of Collie coal is quite possible. If further developments and experimental work are carried out successfully, it will mean that the whole of the domestic supply of the metropolitan area will call for the utilisation of Collie coal, increasing the output materially. I only raise the point to show that there is a big difference between the scientific and expert expressions of opinion regarding Collie coal today and when the member for Collie last moved a similar motion.

The House is well aware that the public utilities consume practically 100 per cent. of Collie coal. I think the figures would reveal that approximately 500,000 tons of Collie coal are used annually. With the exception of probably 5,000 tons the whole of the coal consumed is produced at Collie. We use all Collie coal on our railways, with the exception of the Marble Bar-Port Hedland line. I believe a very small percentage of imported coal is used on our railways during harvest time, but with those two exceptions all the coal used is Collie coal. In other words, about 99 per cent. of the coal used in Western Australia is Collie coal. I feel sure that, as time progresses—having regard to the activities that the Government is now displaying in relation to experimental processes and the fact that there are individuals engaged, and one in particular who seemingly is quite an expert on coal—we will find that Collie coal can be used much more economically and advantageously than has been the case in the past.

I would point out to the mover of the motion that preliminary investigations show that it would require a great deal more examination and testing than has been the custom up to date, in the more practical way, but utilising railway engines, to test the quality through furnace tests. Those who should thoroughly understand what is required suggest that laboratory work is essential, and I can cheer up the member for Collie by saying that is now under consideration. We will have experts in laboratories testing and examining, in order to ascertain the actual qualities of Collie coal, and that should give a better indication, through the results of that experimental work, of the proper way to conduct further tests in the furnaces—by “furnaces” I mean the fireboxes of railway engines. I assure the member for Collie that, so far as this portion of his motion is concerned, the Government has taken the only forward step available to it at the moment, and will proceed along the lines of progressive scientific investigation, which ultimately will show clearly the most economical and practical way of using 100 per cent. Collie coal, to the advantage of the State and its people.

I am not satisfied that all that could have been done has been done. I am not satisfied that some of our departmental experts have lost any peace of mind in regard to these matters. Human nature is apt to take the line of least resistance, and as Collie coal has supplied our wants uneconomically, it seems to be the opinion that we can continue along those lines indefinitely. I wish to say that this cannot be done. A much livelier interest must be taken by the scientific men in our departments with a view to ascertaining by research whether the mixing of the coals will give the most economical standard possible, so that we may rest assured that every ton of coal when used is giving its maximum value. That is the object of the mover of the motion and I assure him that it is also the object of the Government.

After proper scientific investigation into the quality of Collie coal comes the next factor in the hon. member's motion, namely, the bunkering of Collie coal. The coal at Collie occurs in seams in close proximity to each other and yet those seams produce coal of varying qualities. So I suggest to the hon. member that, by scientific investigation, the best means of

preserving a standard of Collie coal for the purpose of bunkering might be discovered. It might easily be that some coal would last longer alone or it might last longer if adulterated. It might give better results if two coals were mixed, rather than introduce coal of a third quality. There are many factors which must be discovered and considered in order to ascertain the best mixture and the most suitable form of storage to be adopted.

It is assumed by men who have given consideration to this aspect that the submerging of Collie coal in water is the most economical way of preserving it. When I say "economical," I mean that more of the value of the coal would be retained if it were held in large quantities in water, but side by side with that must be realised the fact that this would be an expensive process, and it would become more expensive as the storage or bunkering accommodation was distant from the wet areas of the State. Going to my electorate and even further north where water is none too plentiful, bunkering would be much more expensive than it would be around the city or in southern centres. All those factors need to be scientifically investigated. It would be wise to have scientific investigation to determine which of the coals, if any, should be mixed or whether it is possible to bunker some without any mixing.

I do not believe for a moment that the scientist cannot master any situation. He has never failed humanity, no matter how great the problem set for solution. I believe that with correct control and by the employment of an expert, as mentioned by the hon. member, some formula might be discovered for treating Collie coal that would not be injurious to the value of the coal but would preserve it indefinitely. All these matters will be the subject of close investigation, and seeing that the hon. member has been patient for so many years, I hope he will be prepared to wait until I find my feet and am able to give the matter closer examination than has been possible so far. I am not at all satisfied about some of the happenings of which Collie coal has been the victim.

Dealing with spark-arresters, I suggest to the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that he should make further inquiries into the

type to which he referred. I have been assured, just as this House has been assured over the years, that a spark-arrester has not been invented that is more effective than the one now in use. I do not wish to discourage the hon. member, but I invite him to obtain the specifications of the one he considers so valuable and I undertake to have it thoroughly tested by the department with a view to ascertaining whether it would be more effective than the one now in use. Many types of spark-arrester have been invented, but the trouble is that when applied to a locomotive, they rob it of its steaming power on account of blocking the draught. There are spark-arresters that it was thought would prove successful, but in practice they have not been satisfactory. So I would like the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, or any other member who has a patent to be tried out, to let me have it, because I am anxious to afford all possible protection to the valuable crops of the farmers in close proximity to our railways.

Reference has been made to tarpaulins and their cost. I have been assured that the tarpaulins used to cover coal are those which have been more or less discarded or considered unsuitable for other purposes.

Mr. Seward: The coal is very rough on the tarpaulins.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Probably the hon. member would contend that none of them is fit for the work.

Mr. Mann: And you make a full charge for them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I understand that is so. In the wet season I do not know that the coal is covered when in the southern portions of the State, but when it is conveyed over long distances to the drier parts, where atmospheric conditions depreciate the value of the coal, tarpaulins are used. The question of bunkering has been brought under my notice. The department is giving effect to a policy of providing for the storage of quantities of Collie coal. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we must expect a tremendous increase in the consumption of coal during the next few years, and unless we can be assured of uninterrupted production, it is going to be very difficult to carry on the experimental work.

Mr. Thorn: Cannot you assure us of that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Nobody living can assure us of that.

Mr. Thorn: Not in present circumstances.

The Premier: Or in any other circumstances.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Uncertainty of production must interfere with the investigations that are being made. However, I think we may look forward with confidence to constant production, because the miners realise fully that it is essential to their welfare that such experiments be carried out uninterruptedly.

Mr. Thorn: Thanks; you have answered my question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not like the imputation conveyed by the interjection and so I will deal with that matter now. I subscribe to the argument of the member for Collie on this point. It is not always the fault of the miners that operations cease, notwithstanding that so many people readily condemn them immediately work stops.

Mr. Thorn: I did not say anything about that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I venture the suggestion that there is no member on the Opposition benches who would work under the conditions which some of these men operate.

Mr. Thorn: Why do you not improve them?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Berry: Why do you not use Diesel oil?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member does not like it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Not many members opposite would like to know that one-third of their existence on this planet had to be spent in the bowels of the earth, such as miners generally have to do. We should consider that aspect of the matter. I know from my own experience, as do you, Mr. Speaker, of the constant pin-pricking on the part of employers when using the economic position to provoke men into a cessation of

work, believing that they can by such pressure keep them under control. Any member can get a glimpse of these tactics by picking up the daily paper. It is astounding to notice the number of cases that unionists or unions have to take before the court for enforcement.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the Minister is getting away from the motion.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That could be so, but I was provoked into that by the Opposition. Although I have not yet had very lengthy observations of the respective mines at Collie, I will say unhesitatingly that the men down there have been obliged to work under most adverse circumstances. This brings me to the point of coal production. It is a very strange thing that while the companies have always made particularly good profits at Collie, they have never until recent date, and then only some of them, made any endeavour whatever to introduce into the mines up-to-date mechanical contrivances for the mining of the coal.

Mr. Thorn: That would only do men out of work.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They would rather have the men on the shovel. It may be said of one company at Collie that it does realise the value and the virtue of installing modern machinery, and does appreciate the inhuman task of constant shovelling by hand labour. It is introducing up-to-date methods. Had companies done this in the past production at Collie might have increased materially over the last few years, seeing that modern machinery has been installed in other mines elsewhere. The men are not altogether to blame for all that happens in Collie. Today I would give an instance showing that even under the adverse conditions under which these men labour, they have, since they recommenced work, produced 2,155 tons of coal. In other words, I have just been informed that in the last 24 hours the miners of Collie have produced that large quantity of coal. That indicates eagerness to get the mines into production, and furthermore, their eagerness is also shown by the fact that they are going to work on what is regarded in normal times as a holiday, namely next Saturday.

The men at Collie did not cease work once during the war period. I do not like this condemnation. Because things may happen in the other States let us be fair to our people here and be frank about the matter. The miners at Collie even volunteered during the war period to work on Sundays so that this country should not be short of coal. They have done much in many ways and volunteered to do much in the country's struggle for existence. Members should view that aspect of the situation and not be so ready to condemn. The recent trouble was not of the Collie miners' making. It may be attributed to complicated and cumbersome forms and regulations and may be regarded more in the nature of a lock-out than as a strike. I am not prepared to accept allegations by individuals who will not truly reflect upon the position. Their allegations are not fair to the men, either.

It is not altogether an attractive means of livelihood for men to have to go down to the bowels of the earth, away from the daylight, and live as animals are accustomed to do. Working as they are under these conditions they are entitled to greater consideration than they received. The wages earned by the miners at Collie are nothing exceptional. I know that very few of those who criticise the miners would, even under economic pressure, do the work that they are doing. I agree with the member for Collie who moved this motion. There may be times when the miners are blameable, when the worker does wrong, but those times are not 100 per cent. Very often they are provoked into taking the only action open to them to get redress, fair play and justice.

In conclusion I would remark that the member for Collie, as he has said, has always had to fight. That is perfectly true. The history of the development of coal-mining throughout the world presents a very ghastly picture. There have been very few changes within the last 100 years. Whatever slight changes there have been during the last century, there still remain many objectionable features associated with coal-mining. The member for Collie has had to fight and is still fighting, on behalf of the miners. I contend that no blame can be attachable to him for any of the adversities under which the men at Collie are working. He has always done his best and taken his

full share of responsibility. When he leaves, as I suppose he must some day, I feel sure that those whom he has championed all through life will say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [5.55]: Ever since I can remember the greatest factor in my existence has been to find a market for a commodity that I could produce. I suppose everyone who works for a living, whether by hard labour or in business experiences difficulty at times in disposing of those things which he produces. Here tonight, for the first time in my life, I have heard of a commodity that exists in this State in thousands of millions of tons, that is eagerly sought after by all and yet with all these resources at our disposal we are not able to produce it. That, to me, is astounding. The coal position is not new in Western Australia. I understand, and indeed I know, that Commissions were appointed as far back as 30 years ago to deal with the question of the production and utilisation of native coal, and of Collie coal in particular. Everyone seems to have struck the note that there will be a terrific demand for native coal in this State. Apparently, however, there is not going to be the slightest effort made to fulfil that demand—so we are told. We are not on the right track.

Let us hope there will be that terrific demand for our coal supplies, and that all the manpower resources available in Western Australia will be called upon to meet it. We would all welcome such a state of affairs. That would mean not only work for our own people, but the consumption of more local goods, the bringing of extra revenue into the country, and less revenue going out of it such as has been going out of it in years past. If that is the only problem that has to be solved, it does not amount to much. There are thousands of men in Western Australia and there will soon be many more quite capable of producing coal at Collie if given the opportunity. From inquiries I have made I find that only a small area at Collie is at present producing coal. Most of the coal-producing areas are held up in a non-productive state, and are not adding to the coal quota of Western Australia. I understand many acres of ground are held by companies at Collie under exemption and are therefore not pro-

ducing a ton of that much-needed commodity. If we desire that coal should be produced why not throw open those areas so that other people may put them to better use?

The Minister for Lands: At present there is more concentration on the other areas.

Mr. TRIAT: If I held an area of 100 acres of coal-bearing country I would not be expected to be allowed to make use of only 10 acres of it.

The Minister for Lands: A good deal of the area concerned is Crown land.

Mr. TRIAT: That may be so. There are, however, other fields that are capable of producing coal in tremendous quantities. So much for the bugbear that it is not possible to produce enough coal for our requirements. The Minister for Mines has only lately taken over the portfolio, and no one can expect him to have a complete knowledge of the conditions that apply at Collie or in connection with any other of our coal-fields. I feel sure, however, that after a while, when he has more leisure, he will get a good grasp of the situation. No doubt he will devote a good deal of time to investigating present methods of winning coal and the conditions that exist at Collie. I feel sure that the situation will ultimately be rectified. Other men of experience have made investigations and they have often found that stumbling blocks have been put in their way. One hon. member who has been in this Chamber for 30 years told me last night that he could never understand the agreement which controls Collie coal. That agreement was entered into many years ago.

Apparently the coalmine owners have not to worry at all about the cost of winning coal. By some strange process, which I have not been able to fathom, the agreement which was entered into many years ago removes from their minds all cares and worries such as ordinary business men have to suffer when finding a market for the goods they sell. These coalmine owners are guaranteed a certain profit, no matter what the cost of winning the coal may be. The whole thing seems to be a close secret, and I have not yet been able to get to the bottom of it. The higher the cost of coal that is produced the more profit do the owners make. In the case of most business firms the reverse is what appertains. When the price goes up the profits fall because the costs of production are greater. The crowd at Collie, how-

ever, has nothing to worry about. I trust the Minister for Mines will give close attention to the agreement. How long it has been in existence I do not know. I hope he will put the coalmine owners on their mettle and see that they produce coal at a reasonable price.

War years are disturbing; one cannot take much notice of them. But one will find a continuous increase in the price of coal from Collie: I am talking about the return to the owners. If we read the latest report of the Commissioner of Railways we find that in 1941 the price of Collie coal was 25s. 1d. per ton; and that in 1945 it was 33s. per ton, an increase of 7s. 11d. over that short period of four years. But wages have not gone up to that extent; nor have railway freights—not over the period as a whole. There has been a jump during the last 12 months on account of the increased wages of some of the men. There was an increase of 7s. 11d. from 1941 to 1945, which was not due to increased railway freights or increased wages. To what it was due, I do not know. But it does show that there is a tendency for the price of coal to increase considerably because, as I said before, some agreement has been entered into whereby the owners of the field have very little worry about costs of production.

I am given to understand that when coal is purchased for Western Australia, there is never any test of the calorific value of the article to be acquired. Whisky or beer has to be of a standard quality before it is offered for sale. For low grade or second-grade wheat or chaff there is a different price from that fixed for a better quality product; but with regard to imported coals, no test has been made. I believe that a parcel of Bulli coal came here recently, which was mostly dross and was of no use. The same applies to some Collie coal. There is no difference in price for coal of a high B.T.U. value and that of a lower B.T.U. value. The Minister would be well advised to have experts fix a scale of values based on the heating qualities of the coal. By that means we would secure a better grade of product.

Much has been said about the keeping qualities of Collie coal. I recently made an inspection of the power house at East Perth, which is a big consumer of Collie coal. It uses fines. It does not use big coal,

but small fine coal; and even the fines have to be reground to make them extremely fine so that they can be blown into the boilers. Disintegration of the coal makes not the slightest difference. They do not care about that at the power house; they want small coal. I have inspected coal on the gold-fields, where the climate in summer is very hot. I am told that there coal can be kept under any sort of shed for six months and shows no sign of damage.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Who told you that?

Mr. TRIAT: Men in the railways. They showed me big pieces of coal that they said had been laid aside for several months. They said, "Have a look at it for yourself." Whether what they said was true, I do not know; but I presume they would not lie. There is, of course, a soft coal that does deteriorate in the atmosphere; but the hard coal will not deteriorate so quickly.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Ask the member for Kalgoorlie whether he has been able to keep coal.

Mr. TRIAT: He may tell me that I do not know anything about it. Anyway, those men told me that the coal will not break up. Some years ago, the member for Collie made the statement that coal which had been stored for 12 months had not broken up, so that the contention is not a new one.

Mr. Doney: Is there one particular pit from which it comes?

Mr. TRIAT: I do not know much about it; I believe that some coal is hard and other coal is soft. The soft coal has a tendency to break up much more quickly. The question of cleaning and blending of coal comes into the matter. I mentioned this some time ago; and again I would quote authorities on the subject, because I do not know sufficient about the matter to speak for myself. I would quote Dr. Kent, who, I believe, was coal technical adviser to the Midland Junction Workshops, and also, Mr. Fox, who is supposed to know a lot about coal. They made a test at the East Perth power house of all the coals they had there, and Mr. Fox made a statement, which I believe was supported by Dr. Kent, that the amount of dross in the coal at the power house was equivalent to £15,000 per year by way of freight charges for cartage to the power house. The figure was astounding and I could hardly believe it, but they said that was the position. The amount of

dross carted each year to the power house in that coal cost the State Government £15,000 in freight alone.

Mr. Styants: That is non-inflammable material.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. That could be taken out of the coal if it were treated at Collie.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You are referring to stones.

Mr. TRIAT: Stones and dross. There must be a terrific amount of dross in the coal used at the power house; yet, by a cleaning process which is in operation in other parts of the world, it could all be eliminated. The motion also suggests the blending of coals. If that were done, not only would the quality of the coal be immediately improved, but also there would be a fixed standard of coal, because every ton of coal supplied to any consumer would contain the same number of heating units. What do we get today? There will be one consignment of a hundred tons with probably a B.T.U. of 10,000. The following consignment will have a B.T.U. of between 8,000 and 9,000. There is nothing regular about the standard. But I am given to understand that, as a result of blending and cleaning of the material, a guaranteed standard can be obtained. By those means anyone who desires to buy local coal will know, when he buys it, that he is getting a unit of coal that will give a certain heat from every ton. That is an important matter.

If we are going to have 100 per cent. utilisation of native coal then we should have a standard coal so that those who buy it will get reasonable value for their money. The Minister for Mines suggested that inquiries would be made later into the production of coal. I am of the opinion that not only an inquiry should be conducted, but a board set up for the production of coal at Collie. At present it is controlled by the people who operate the mines, that is the owners, plus officials of the Mines Department, who, I believe, are inspectors of mines. Apart from those there is no other body which is consulted in any way in regard to the production of coal.

The Minister for Lands: The Federal Coal Commission has charge of it.

Mr. TRIAT: It has now, but that has not always been the case. I hope it will not always have charge of the production of coal at Collie. I am given to understand that much ability is to be found among the men who are working underground in the production of coal at Collie. Not only are they able to produce coal in big quantities, when they are working, but they also have a lot of ability in knowing how coal should be produced, how the mines should be worked and what machinery should be used. That knowledge, among men who are actually in practice hewing coal every day, should be valuable. When the Government gives consideration to an inquiry into coal production recognition should be given to some of these men who are capable and have their own opinions as to how coal can be won more easily than today. Under the system of mining at present I am told, by a member of this House who was a member of the Government, that many small veins at Collie are left behind because they are not big enough to be handled by the company. A coal vein of three feet is not as valuable as one of six feet. Such a vein is not hewn, but covered and left covered. Men in Collie have told me that that is so, too. I hope that something will be done to recover that coal, which at present, is wasted. Even if we have a lot of coal we cannot afford to waste it.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: A six inch vein in a goldmine is not very valuable.

Mr. TRIAT: It might be, but if it was low grade ore it would be left behind. The question of values, however, does not arise here. The point is that a small coal seam does not break as much coal as does a big one. The Minister for Mines said that most of the coal used here is Western Australian coal. The Commissioner of Railways, when dealing with the consumption of coal by the power house, gave the following figures for 1945:—

Collie coal, 159,074 tons.
Imported coal, 10,827 tons.

Therefore, a fair amount of imported coal is used in the power house.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Because the power house cannot always get Collie coal.

The Minister for Lands: It does not like Newcastle coal.

Mr. TRIAT: According to the report, the power house has been using imported coal each year back to 1941. An enormous quantity of imported coal is used by the Perth Gas Works. They use all imported coal. The railways use a fair amount of imported coal and, before the war, the Midland Railway Company used only imported coal. If the statement made by the Minister that it is possible to produce domestic gas from Collie coal is correct—and I believe it is because I have had a lot to do with the men responsible—there is a possibility of the utilisation of Collie coal for domestic gas in Western Australia. I will not agree that the gasification of Collie coal is only in the experimental stage. From the information I gave to this House some time ago members will know that it is beyond that point, because gas of a quality superior to any gas in Perth has been produced from Collie coal, and the test was made by Metters, the stove people.

Mr. Watts: It has not been put into practical use on a large scale yet.

Mr. TRIAT: No, it has not been put into operation. What makes me rampant is that we cannot get any move made in Western Australia to introduce anything that is local, no matter what it is! Everyone in the State seems to have the idea that we cannot use or produce any local article with advantage to Western Australia. The tests to which gas from Collie coal was actually subjected were made under the supervision of competent engineers at the Midland Junction Workshops. Their report has not been made public, but portions are available. I have given figures in this House that have not been challenged. Again I say that Collie coal has produced a gas of superior quality to the best gas produced by Newcastle coal in Western Australia! That is a fact and cannot be denied. Yet no move is made to use Collie coal for this purpose. Why, I do not know.

Mr. Mann: There are too many tall poppies. They badly want lopping.

Mr. TRIAT: We heard the Minister for Mines declare that the cost of oil, used in boilers, was $3\frac{1}{2}$ to one compared with coal, so that it costs $3\frac{1}{2}$ times as much to provide oil to produce the same results that can be achieved with Collie coal. On a previous occasion I gave some results dealing with oil burners at Midland Junction

which showed that those costs were higher. I will give some further results tonight in connection with B.T.U. values of oil as against coal, and members will then understand why oil cannot equal Collie coal for cheapness. For the purpose of easy understanding Collie coal can be taken at about 10,000 B.T.U. per lb. and the cost at the mine, say, £1 per ton. On that basis we can, for £1, purchase 22,400,000 B.T.U., or for one penny we can purchase 93,500 B.T.U.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. T. IAT: At the tea adjournment I mentioned that for £1 we could purchase 22,400,000 B.T.U. of coal, or for 1d. we could get 93,500 B.T.U. Taking oil fuel at 1s. per gallon, the present price, which is equal to nine pounds weight, the heating value is 18,000 B.T.U. per pound, so for 1d. one could purchase 13,500 B.T.U. in oil. The difference between oil and coal, on that value, and at present-day prices, would be approximately 90,000 B.T.U. in favour of coal. That is, 93,500 B.T.U. from coal and 13,500 B.T.U. from oil, for one penny! Before the war oil cost less than it does now. It then cost 4½d. per gallon, so extending it to the pre-war price, one can see the comparison of the pre-war price of oil as against the present price of coal, which is much in excess of pre-war. Let us assume we can purchase oil fuel at 4½d. per gallon; for 1d. we would purchase 36,000 B.T.U., so again we have a difference in favour of Collie coal, taking the present price of Collie coal as against the pre-war price of oil, of 57,500 B.T.U.

It is obvious that the statement I made in this House, in speaking to the Address-in-reply, about the difference between the cost of oil fuel and the cost of gas from coal, at Midland Junction, was correct. I will give the figures. The quantity of oil used on that occasion was 250.7 gallons of oil, at 1s., or £12 10s. 8d. That was imported fuel, and the money had to go abroad. The quantity of Collie coal used for the same experiment, on the same day and from the same number of hours, was 3,685 lbs. of Collie coal at 20s., costing £1 12s. 11d. so on that occasion, for exactly the same work, the figures were in favour of Collie coal to the extent of £10

17s. 9d., or more than 3½ to one. In the face of those figures Collie coal must have a wonderful future. I have made a comparison on the present costs of Collie coal, with all the war loadings and so on included, as against the pre-war price of oil, and even then the Collie coal can lose the oil as regards heating value.

Before tea I made the statement that the coal was not tested, but one or two members have spoken to me about it and I believe that what I said may have been misinterpreted. I have no doubt that the coal is tested at the face, at Collie, but when it is trucked to the metropolitan area and sold to the consumer there is no test of the coal on the truck, and so the man who buys the coal may get 9,000 or 10,000 B.T.U. of coal, as the case may be, and I understand there is no discrimination in price. The Minister for Mines told us that experiments are being made into the utilisation of Collie coal. I suppose experiments have been made since 1916, and probably before that, but certainly from that time onwards, and it is regrettable that even today, with all the knowledge at the disposal of the authorities, there are few local authorities in Western Australia that have any faith in Collie coal. That was obvious to those who had any interest in the experiments that have taken place over the last 12 months in the gasification of Collie coal, and even today it is safe to assume that many members of the Coal Panel in Western Australia have not a lot of knowledge of coal or of its work, and their methods of obtaining knowledge are very slow.

I understand that the process of coking coal, which appeared in the paper this morning, on an announcement by the Minister for Industrial Development, will take some time under the technical method, whereas a practical demonstration could be made within six weeks. If these ideas of testing and proving the value of the coal are to take place under the old processes we will be making tests for the next 10 or 12 years and will get little further with the matter. There must be plenty of technical knowledge available on Collie coal. When a man who understands coal is given the value in B.T.U., and the components of the coal, he should immediately know what it is worth. I do not think there is any question of extra tests

being made. Take the tests, for instance, to be made on railways. I heard a statement by the Minister tonight that, if the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie could find any spark-arrester that was an improvement on the present one, he would welcome it.

In the last session of Parliament I announced to the House that the engineer, Fox, claimed that he had a spark-arrester that could practically eliminate sparks from Collie coal, by a method of totally consuming the coal in the firebox. His explanation to me was simple. He said the present method of using a firegrate in the modern engine is on the type of firebox used for hard coal in England. He explained that to get a head of steam a quantity of air had to be forced through the boilers, with the result that it took a lot of the light coal with it and distributed it over the fields, red hot and burning, and the spark-arrester could not entirely prevent that. His method was different. He said it was a common method, used in many countries where a light grade of coal is consumed. The firebox arrangement is totally different, and instead of having a forced draught of air, steam is put underneath, and the steam going through the coal transfers the gas into one that will burn immediately, and the extra steaming power is got in that way. In my presence he assured a railway authority that it would increase the heating and steaming capacity by 25 per cent., with the almost total elimination of sparks. The reply made by the railway authority in my presence, which I mentioned 12 months ago, was that the matter would be held over for a few months and consideration given to it.

This sort of thing makes me very sceptical about the promises of a lot of scientific research and investigation. If I had been the engineer in charge of the railways, I would have said to that man, "Go ahead." Even if it cost £200, I would have tested the idea on one boiler and, if that were successful, it could be applied generally. Success in this direction would have meant a big step forward in eliminating the destruction of crops caused by locomotive fires and in improving the steaming capabilities of the engines. Yet nothing has been done. So I repeat that I am sceptical of promises

of research and investigation. Let us get down to some practical work and demonstrations.

It is not my intention to delay the House at this stage. The Government and members as a whole are anxious to put Collie coal on the map to the greatest extent possible. Let me quote an authority on the use of native coal, an opinion that was given as far back as 1916—

The admixture of these two coals (Proprietary and Premier) gave excellent results in the firebox, the faults of both coals being minimised and the steaming improved. Although the Proprietary and Premier coals were selected for these tests as typical of the hard and soft coals, it is anticipated that a mixture of any of the hard and soft coals would show similar results.

That was nearly 30 years ago, and what has been done? Not one solitary thing has been done to use a mixture of those two coals. How can we expect from those dealing with the scientific side of the question any further results within the next 20 or 30 years? I trust that the Minister will not only give consideration to this matter but will also see that his officers obtain quicker results, and either prove or disprove the contentions of those who know what they are talking about when they say that it is possible to use Collie coal to much better advantage than it has been used in the past. I commend the member for Collie on having introduced the motion. He has been a fighter for Collie for many years, and I regret that he was not appointed a member of the coal panels that have been operating for some years because, in my opinion, he has more knowledge of Collie coal than have 99 per cent. of the people who pose as authorities from the scientific point of view.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [7.42]: The object of the motion is to obtain the approval of the House to several propositions, the principal one being that the use of Collie coal should be encouraged in every way possible. I do not think there is any member who would not favour that proposition. A good deal of extraneous matter has been introduced into the debate, particularly along two lines. Firstly, there has been an apology, as I understood it, by the Minister for Mines for the coalminers in connection with the recent strike and, secondly, there has been some ill-

informed criticism of a mining company carrying on operations at Collie. I should have expected the Minister for Mines to show a better sense of proportion than to take up the stand of apologising for men who were undoubtedly breaking the law. I am not in a position to judge whether they had provocation or not. Maybe they had; maybe they had not, but, as I understand the British law, provocation has never been accepted as a defence. When a Minister of the Crown, who is sworn to observe and sustain the law, apologises for law-breakers, I can only conclude that he is lacking in a sense of justice. Unquestionably, coalmining is a difficult occupation, but I know many worse ones.

Mr. Wilson: Which ones?

Mr. ABBOTT: Nursing is one, and who would like a white-collar job that necessitated the wearer's poring over a ledger day in and day out? Think of the monotony of that! Coalmining at least is a man's job. As for the remuneration of the Collie miners, I am not in a position to say whether it is reasonable or not, but I do know that a special tribunal was appointed by the Commonwealth Government to see that a reasonable remuneration was awarded to the miners. I do not propose to discuss the merits or demerits of the recent strike. Certainly it was not a lock-out, and it was ridiculous to suggest that it was.

Dealing with the criticism of the company, the Minister for Mines and also the Minister for Lands must know that the present arrangement was the result of arbitration proceedings which Mr. Justice Davidson conducted in this State. In his award he prescribed for the company a fixed amount per ton by way of profit on all coal produced. In all these years, that has not been altered, except when the amount was reduced by 2d. per ton as the company's contribution to the miners' pension scheme. It was not fixed on a percentage basis, and so the increase in the price of Collie coal has been due to factors entirely outside the province of the company. Probably increased wages and freights accounted for the rise in price. Therefore I cannot see how the company can be blamed.

Mr. Triat: The company has a guaranteed profit.

Mr. ABBOTT: It has a guaranteed amount per ton.

Mr. Triat: Equal to 8 per cent.

Mr. ABBOTT: It is a fixed amount; I do not know what the percentage might be. This does not apply to the coal being sold to the public. Since the selling price was fixed in 1943, the company has been selling to the public at a loss. A good many ill-informed statements have been made during the debate. The motion reminds me of the curate's egg—good in parts and bad in parts. I shall vote for the motion because the encouragement of local industries should be one of the first objects of the Government, as it is certainly one of mine. Whenever it is possible to use Collie coal economically, it should be used.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [7.49]: It appeals to me as being somewhat ironical that we should be dealing with this motion tonight when, for almost the last week, the lives and industries of the people in the metropolitan area have been thrown into a state of chaos owing to the lack of coal supplies from Collie, and yet we are discussing ways and means by which we may increase the consumption of Collie coal. I have had close on 20 years' experience in the practical use of Collie coal. I fired it when it came fresh out of the mines in Collie when I was stationed at that depot; for eight years I was a fireman in the metropolitan area and fired the coal under all conditions, from shunting engines to express trains; and I fired it from Southern Cross to Laverton and Leonora under varying atmospheric conditions and for long distances from its place of origin, and climatic conditions had a great effect on the quality and condition of the coal. I can, therefore, say that Collie coal can be classified under two heads, that of hard and soft coals. The hard coal is deemed to be hard, or is termed hard, because it has a greater amount of fixed carbon than has the soft coal, which has a greater percentage of what are known as volatile hydro-carbons.

I am quite in accord with the object of the motion to endeavour to use 100 per cent. native coal for Government utilities. I know that that is the policy of the Locomotive Engine-drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Union, and it is not a policy of that union which originated of late years. I remember, as one of the managing body of that union, that an agreement was ar-

rived at about 25 to 30 years ago with the coalminers—on the understanding that the mineowners and miners would produce and supply to the Railway Department the best coal available at Collie—that the engine-drivers' union's policy would be to use 100 per cent. of that coal. The members of that union have stood loyally by that agreement; they have not advocated the use of imported coal; but, as far as the mineowners and the miners are concerned, they have not fulfilled their obligations. Very shortly after the agreement was arrived at the engine-drivers were complaining bitterly about the quality of the coal coming from the mines at Collie.

In my opinion, if the same class of coal were supplied to the Railway Department for everyday use as is supplied to the department when a test is made, there would be no complaints about the quality of Collie coal. As the union's representative, I fired on a number of the tests between Perth and Brunswick Junction on heavy goods trains with different classes of coal; and I always made the comment that if the same class of coal were supplied for everyday use as was supplied for those tests, about which the mineowners knew beforehand, there would be no complaints about the quality of Collie coal. So it is quite evident that the best quality coal available in Collie is not being supplied for everyday use, and that position has been aggravated considerably during the war years. Whilst generally I believe that the policy of the Railway Department should be to use 100 per cent. of Collie coal, I consider that Collie coal is unsuitable for locomotive use when it is taken great distances into hot, dry and dusty localities such as Leonora, Laverton, Mt. Magnet and Sandstone.

It is necessary, on account of the vagaries of the coal required on those runs, to store quantities at various depots, because the engine has to run to Laverton and back again for the major portion of the run on the bin of coal with which she leaves Kalgoorlie, with a topping-up at Laverton. It is impossible to keep Collie coal there under the climatic conditions and get the reasonably good service from it which can be had from imported coal. So there is a limitation to the use of Collie coal in those out-depots. It probably takes a fortnight to get the Collie coal to Laverton and, unless

it is stored there in a building, when it will keep reasonably well for a fair time, it deteriorates. If it is put on a coal stage, it is unfit for locomotive use after it has been on the stage for a fortnight. It disintegrates very rapidly; and when it is put on the tender, if it has not already disintegrated, the fireman—for the purpose of getting reasonable working conditions, so that he may not be blinded with dust when the engine is in motion—damps it down with water. Immediately the water is put on the coal it falls to pieces and the fireman is endeavouring to get along with coal which, so far as its lumpy condition is concerned, is little better than sand. I therefore do not think Collie coal is suitable for areas of that description.

If the suggestion in the motion be adopted to have roof-covered store dumps, it would certainly keep the coal a little better, but I would not advocate that method. The better plan would be to have a quick transit of the coal from the mines to the particular depot where it is to be used and to consume it as quickly as possible, so that this can be done while it is in a fresh condition. Where it is necessary in places such as Laverton and Leonora to store a certain quantity of coal for reserve purposes, no good purpose would be served by endeavouring to store Collie coal there. I believe that Newcastle coal, or imported coal, in small quantities should be stored there in preference to Collie coal. The Railway Department at various times has issued an instruction to all concerned in the transit of Collie coal to treat it as perishable traffic. After a great deal of experience of that instruction, I can say that it was honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

As a fireman and a driver between Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie and as the union official, I was often compelled to report various officials of the Railway Department for kicking off trucks of coal into a siding and leaving the coal there in an exposed condition in order to pick up a truck of firewood or a truck of chaff which had been put off for mechanical defects, such as hot boxes. Invariably, the result of those complaints was that after a lapse of a month, six weeks or two months, the head office of the union, from which the complaint was put through from the branch office in Kalgoorlie, said that as a result of the inquiries

made it was ascertained the information was correct, that certain numbered vehicles had been put off and had stood there for a certain number of days, but that a recurrence would not take place. Nevertheless, the practice was continued, so that actually, while the Railway Department officials in Perth were endeavouring to get quick transport of the coal to Kalgoorlie, their efforts to do so were frustrated.

As to the blending of Collie coal, I was pleased to read a report in "The West Australian" newspaper that the Fuel Technology Bureau had approved and recommended the blending of Collie coal. I believe that as a result of the blending a great deal of benefit will accrue not only to the department in a financial sense but also in the more punctual running of trains. Another result will be improved working conditions for the engine crews. The quality of Collie coal has deteriorated considerably during the war years. That deterioration has been brought about principally by manpower shortages and mechanisation, with consequent lack of vigilance concerning the type of coal and the non-inflammable material which has crept into it and been supplied for use on the locomotive. I had an experience of the blending of Collie coals in 1913 in Collie. They had there an overhead coal stage. The method of blending was rather crude but it had very beneficial effects. They had those three-compartment coal trucks. The overhead crane would pick one out of the truck and tip it into the bin. To each three trucks of hard coal there would be emptied over the top, for the length of the bin, one truck-load of what is termed soft coal. The soft coal had the effect of stopping the clinking propensities of the harder coals, and the harder coals had the effect of giving a greater body and better steaming qualities to the lighter coals.

The objection to using the lighter coals is that on account of the forced draught through the ash pan and through the fire-bars the volatile carbons are lifted and quantities of cinders are carried through into the smoke box. Using exclusively the light coals on a heavy service—such as a full goods train from Brunswick Junction—one would be fortunate in getting to Perth without having to clean out the smoke-box, which is an objectionable job. It is

dusty work, blinding to the eyes and very hot. However, if the smoke-box is not cleaned out, the height of the cinders in the smoke-box gets to the spark-arrester and burns it and then there are complaints from the farming community—and justifiable complaints—that their properties are being burnt out. The objection to the heavier coals is that many of them contain a fair amount of iron which is blended into the coal itself. I have seen this type of coal. I have thrown a shovelful into the fire-box when there was a furious blaze and watched the iron melting. The result is that there is hard clinking from one end of the fire-box to the other, no air can get through, and the fire will not burn properly, so that steam pressure cannot be maintained and the train is held up while the fire-box is cleaned out. This is a particularly hot job and one that it is not fair to ask men to undertake during a journey.

I am satisfied that from the blending of the two coals there would be better conditions for the men, better financial results for the Railway Department, and a better service for the public in that trains would not be delayed because of difficulties in raising sufficient steam to keep up to schedule. Every time a train runs late it is not because of the engine. Most of our late running is caused through an excessive amount of traffic and work which has to be done at particular stations. The advantage of blending the coal is that there is uniformity of quality, a point which I think was touched upon by the member for Mt. Magnet. Uniformity of quality would make for standardising of firing methods. At present there is such a vast difference in the methods to be employed for the different types of coal that there is no standard at all. If the methods were standardised there would be a better quality of coal giving a better performance, and young firemen could be trained in a standard method of firing. There would also be a standard size of coal, which is very important.

At present one gets big lumps of coal, unless the coal happens to have been put through a coal crusher. Large lumps of coal as big as one's body are sometimes provided, and then there is a lot of fine dust; and instead of the fireman being able to look after his other duties, he has to be pelting into those big lumps with a pick

or a hammer in order to reduce them to a reasonable size for the purpose of producing steam. From the engine-man's point of view, there would be no difficulty in raising sufficient steam under a method of blending. There would be no clinking of fires or emptying of smoke-boxes, and that would considerably improve the lot of the engine-crew. From the department's point of view there would be economical working, a better performance and a more punctual running of trains. I believe that quick transport and consumption of coal would be a better proposition than that proposed in the motion of putting storage bins at different depots.

If Collie coal could be taken from the mines and transported to Kalgoorlie in three days and consumed in the next four days, the coal would remain in good condition, and there would be very little of which to complain. That did operate for two or three years in Kalgoorlie, and there was very little complaint; but the position gradually deteriorated until at present coal takes any length of time to get to Kalgoorlie. With regard to the use of tarpaulins, that has been tried and is reasonably effective, although the costs are high. On account of the sharp edges of the coal, the vibration of the trucks, and the wind flapping along under the tarpaulins, they wear out very quickly, and the cost of repairs is very great. But the Railway Department has many of these tarpaulins in use, tarpaulins which had outlived their period of service for other classes of traffic. The department patched them up and the use of the tarpaulins was not so expensive. But even assuming we had to find new tarpaulins frequently, without making any charge on the royalty on Collie coal, as suggested in the motion, I believe the Railway Department would show an immense profit by the better and more economic working which would result from the blending of the coals and the covering of the coal for three, four or five days, as the case might be, from the time it left the pit's mouth to the time it was put into the bins at the various depots.

I believe that a much better quality of coal can be provided in Collie and that the Railway Department, if it earnestly set itself out to do the job, could make much better use of the coal than at present. It has been suggested by the Fuel Technology Bureau that a huge crushing plant should

be installed at Collie capable of handling up to 1,000 tons a day, and that the two coals should be blended as they came through Collie. I have no objection to that except that under that system there would be additional handling; and each time Collie coal is handled, particularly in hot weather, there is a tendency for it to disintegrate, and that is fatal to its use as a fuel for a locomotive. At present most large locomotive depots throughout the State have a crushing plant and an overhead bin; and, with a little trouble in shunting either in Collie or at the depot when the coal gets there, and by seeing that the trucks are placed in the proportion of three trucks of hard to one of soft coal and are emptied into the bins in that order, I believe there would be much better service than at present and there would be no need to spend an enormous sum of money to provide a huge crushing or mixing plant at Collie.

If the Railway Department sets itself seriously to this business, it can secure much better results than in the past. Apart from the instances I have mentioned, which were common practice in Collie, of the blending of coals in the proportion of three to one, the Railway Department conducted a number of experiments which, I understand, have been found to be eminently satisfactory. They have proved to be a great improvement on the system of using all hard or all soft coals in a particular district. As a result, the department should have quite a lot of information on hand, and if it sets about the task it can do much to improve the performance of Collie coal, and if the mineowners and the mineworkers set themselves to do so, they can provide a much better quality of Collie coal.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [8.11]: My contribution to this debate will be short. In supporting the motion I want to say that one aspect has not yet been touched upon, and it is one with which I was concerned some years ago. It is, that the taxpayer is always called upon to pay for the experiments into the methods of using Collie coal satisfactorily. As has been mentioned by the member for Kalgoorlie, the costs of experiments with spark-arresting appliances, fire grate appliances and other things have been borne by the Government, that

is the taxpayer. The people who have been producing the article have merely produced it and said to their only consumers of coal, namely the State and the State instrumentalities, "Here is the Collie coal. We want you to be patriotic and burn this local product." The Government has been put to enormous expense over these years to find a means of burning Collie coal. We know that we can burn it and get very satisfactory results, from the steaming point of view, provided that we are allowed to use an open spark-arrester. But over the years of experimentation going right back to the Rotherham period in 1900 and 1901 when the department used the bell funnel, as it was termed in those days, on the locomotives for the purpose of retarding the sparks—

The Minister for Justice: Were you working in those days?

Mr. WITHERS: I was working very hard at that time firing Collie coal between Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Styants: They were train arresters, not spark-arresters!

Mr. WITHERS: They were such a success that before long the department arranged for the old funnel to be put up inside the bell funnel without the public knowing what was done. Eventually they took the bell funnels off one by one so that the public would not notice. That was all done at the State's expense in order that we could burn Collie coal, not only satisfactorily, but so that it would not destroy the property of the public adjacent to the railway. The member for North Perth now says, "What about the companies getting the blame for this and for that?" In 1930 I was so concerned about this matter that I asked a question. At that time I knew some people very well in Amalgamated Collieries, and was taken to task for daring to ask such a question in Parliament. This is the question which I asked on the 2nd October, 1930—

Mr. WITHERS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What has been the total cost to the Railway Department for the alteration to, and provision of spark-arresting and fire grate appliances, to make it possible to burn Collie coal? 2, What amount, if any, has been contributed by the Collie coalmining industry to assist the Government in this direction?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, In view of the long period over which Collie coal has been used on the railways, viz., 32 years, it is not possible to give the total cost

but many thousands of pounds have been spent in bringing the appliances to their present condition. 2, Nil.

His reply meant that many thousands of pounds of the taxpayers' money was spent. From then, to the present, we have had the H.D.T. spark-arrester and all the experiments have been at the cost of the taxpayer in order that our local product might be consumed. It is time that the people who provide the coal bore some of the costs of the experiments carried out with a view to burning the stuff they sell.

Mr. Abbott: They are only allowed a certain price. The arbitration award gave them a fixed and reasonable amount.

Mr. WITHERS: We know what Dr. Herman said when he was a Royal Commissioner dealing with the question of Collie coal. From memory, he said that the owners were making a profit of something like £20,000 a year and that, as a result of his inquiry, he would not interfere with the amount of profit that they had been earning, and that they would be practically allowed to continue to earn those profits in the future. The Premier last night stated that the question of the cost of hewing—that is the price for mining the coal—was not a hardship on the coalowners because they got an increase in price when those costs rose. There is an anomaly in that, insofar as this arrangement is under a very old agreement. It is an agreement that was entered into in the days gone by and Amalgamated Collieries benefit under it but any new company, such as the Griffin mine at Collie, that starts, does not benefit by such increases.

The Minister for Lands: That is a fact.

Mr. WITHERS: I am glad I am right for once.

The Minister for Lands: You are never wrong.

Mr. WITHERS: Because this mine has started in competition with the old-established order, as we may term it—it dared to develop a new mine—why should not it be allowed to share in the concession granted in the first instance? In addition, that company has never been allowed to receive the quota it could supply because Amalgamated Collieries had certain quotas for the Proprietary, the Westralia, in the days gone by, and the Co-operative mines. The Griffin

mine has to take what is left. It is time the Government did something. Last night the Premier mentioned that there should be an inquiry into the whole question of Collie coal production. If it is not overdue it is certainly time that we had one. Such an inquiry by experts into the whole position would give us some information that we have not had before. The Minister in his address tonight pointed out that science can do many things. It has achieved some things that we did not expect. Mr. Fox has gasified Collie coal and he has other ideas in connection with Collie coal.

Now is the time to allow the practical side of things to be demonstrated. It would not be very costly to do that and it could not be a very great failure if it were given effect to. Science does one thing but practical demonstrations do another. If we had a practical demonstration in connection with Collie coal we would learn whether we were using it judiciously or otherwise. I come now to the matter of tarpaulins. The Minister said that if tarpaulins were used to cover coal they would be subject to rapid wear and tear. If the coal was being hauled long distances in gable-end trucks with a ridge pole the tarpaulin would not come in contact with the coal and would be just as safe then as if used on other commodities.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It is very difficult to unload coal out of gable trucks.

Mr. WITHERS: It is, but if the ridge pole is taken out—and it is not a fixture—they can be unloaded the same as other trucks.

Mr. Thorn: You release them at both ends and they fall over.

Mr. WITHERS: Yes, some do that. That is one means of overcoming the difficulty. I am concerned about this question: Why should the taxpayer be called upon the whole of the time to be experimenting and demonstrating what can be done with a commodity that is supplied by a particular company? I think some of the onus should be thrown on the company supplying the commodity, to show us how we can use that commodity at reasonable cost to the public. If we have to take it as it is delivered to us from the pit's mouth, good, bad or indifferent, that is not fair to the public. As the member for Kalgoorlie pointed out, in the days gone by

the locomotive enginedrivers were in bad odour with the Collie miners because they complained that they were getting dirty coal.

Over a period of years we have had two inspectors at Collie to see that a decent class of coal is sent to the railways and to other Government departments. Those men have done a good job for us and have been the means of making the Amalgamated Collieries and others responsible refrain from sending out the walls and tops and bottoms, besides the coal itself. Many a time one got what one thought was coal, but it was almost too heavy to lift and had to be thrown off the tender. It would simply lie there for 12 months and would not disintegrate. It was not coal at all, but it had been bought by the Government as coal. Those inspectors have done a good job in that connection. I think that the member for Collie—and you, Mr. Speaker, in allowing us to digress a little—has been the means of bringing forward in this House something that is worthy of serious consideration. I feel sure that the motion will be carried and I hope that the Premier will then follow up what he said last night, and have an inquiry into the whole of the coal position in Western Australia.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin) [8.23]: I desire to move an amendment to paragraph (1) of the motion submitted by the member for Collie. Paragraph (1) of the motion reads—

That this House recommends that 100 per cent. of native coal be used on all lines of the railway system, except the Marble Bar-Port Hedland line, and that 100 per cent. of native coal be used in other Government utilities requiring coal in this State.

I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (1) the following words be added:—“and further that early efforts be made to open up and use the coal deposits known to exist at Irwin and Eradu in this State.”

It will be noticed that this amendment will in no way conflict with the sense of the paragraph that I have read, because that uses the word “native” as applied to coal, and may be regarded, therefore, as embodying a reference to the deposits east and south-east of Geraldton, as well as at Collie. But I think we know full well it was not in the mind of the member for Collie to have the reference extended to those coalfields at all.

Mr. Wilson: The motion says "all native coal."

Mr. DONEY: I realise that, but knowing the attachment of the hon. member to Collie interests, I do not think he would have had in mind any reference to coal that would compete with the coal in his own electorate.

Mr. Wilson: I did not mean that.

Mr. DONEY: I am not looking at this matter merely from the point of view of Collie. That will be obvious, and I think it is the duty of every member to look at this from the point of view of the best interests of the whole State. No-one could reasonably deny that, after the dire experiences of last week, with the ensuing suffering, inconvenience, financial loss and so on, we should seek to defend ourselves against a recurrence of strikes. At present, as members must realise, we have no defences of any kind against strikes. I believe we should be guilty of neglect of an obvious public duty if we did not take this or any other means of putting ourselves in a position to meet any strike offensive affecting coal. I have been on the coalfields at Eradu and Irwin—if I am permitted to use the term "coalfields"—and have examined the ground, though I pretend to no special knowledge of coalmining, but the reports of geologists on samples from both those districts make eulogistic references to the properties of the coal, and usually end by saying something like this: "and to sum up, it may be regarded as slightly better than the best Collie coal." I think that sentence will be found in the reports of successive Government geologists, from the time of Mr. Gregory down to the last State Government Geologist—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much talking going on.

Mr. DONEY: —who may have submitted a report on the coal from those regions. I introduced this matter into the House in about 1932, but I did not submit it in the form of a motion. I made rather lengthy reference to the possibilities of those fields, so as to interest the Government in the matter. The Government of the day had Mr. John Scaddan as Minister for Railways, and he readily agreed that a railway should be built from some point on either the Wongan line or the Midland line, whichever happened to be the most appropriate, so as to service the products of the Irwin field.

About nine months ago, in company with the Hon. E. H. H. Hall, a member for the Central Province, I attended a large gathering on the site of the adit or tunnel cut from the side of the river into the country, right on the Irwin River.

The Minister for Lands: I have taken a few hundred tons out of it, for tests, since then.

Mr. DONEY: Seeing the ex-Premier opposite me, I will say that he knows a great deal more about it than does anyone else on either side of the House. If I remember rightly, he was the driver of the engine that was driven from Geraldton to Mullewa, using this particular coal. When I mentioned this matter in the House on a previous occasion, I recall that the hon. member tried to convey that the coal was not of good quality. I questioned him as to how he would test the quality of coal and whether it would not be by the ability to take a train or a ship to its destination on time. With that he agreed, and when I asked him whether the train had arrived at Mullewa on time, he was good enough to admit that it had.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: I think you are drawing on your imagination now.

Mr. DONEY: That is possible, but the issue can be decided by reference to the occasion to which I am referring. I do not say that the coal seams are as deep as those at Collie. I believe they are not, but there has not yet been any full investigation of the possibilities of that field, although I know that the present Minister for Lands did interest himself in the deposit to the extent of arranging to sink on the Eradu seam, which is on the north side of the railway. I understand that a great deal more water than coal was struck and that the attempt had to be abandoned, for the time being at any rate. That coal, if mined, would be available for use, not only on the Marble Bar line, but also on the railways radiating from Geraldton until a point was reached farther south where the mileage from Collie would be a little less. I submit the amendment, hoping that it will receive favourable consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville—on amendment) [8.33]: I hope the amendment will not be tacked on to what is already a very good

motion. The Irwin River and Eradu deposits have been well tested and are in course of being further tested, not at the moment, but when the men are able to work. As regards the Irwin River deposits, the tunnel from which the hon. member evidently saw coal being taken years ago has been re-tested and has been found not to be in any way equal to Collie coal.

Mr. Doney: Have you read the geologist's report?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not want to read a geologist's report of 40 years ago. I have read of the tests made in the last five or six months, which are far more important. I would rather deal with the practical side—the engine we are working with the coal. The seams at Irwin River, with one exception, are very small. The one decent-sized seam is only 7ft. or 8ft. wide and is down 500ft. There is another disadvantage, apart from the fact that the quality of the coal is not very good, namely, that the whole of the Irwin country is owned by the Midland Railway Company. That company could demand whatever royalties it liked and could even prevent us from going on to the field. This is one of the few concessions in Western Australia in which all the minerals in the ground are included.

Mr. Doney: Do not your mining laws deal with that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; in those days mining laws and all were sold to the company. If the coal were of good quality and occurred in a seam of reasonable size, we could probably overcome that disadvantage, but the fact that the Irwin coal has not proved to be anything like as good in quality as Collie coal shows that we would be wasting time if we continued operations there. At Eradu, as the hon. member stated, we put down a bore or two and decided to sink a shaft. There is a 22ft. 6in. seam of coal at Eradu close to the railway line. We started sinking on that seam, and reached to within 10ft. of it with the idea of opening it up, to get a fair quantity of coal out with a view to testing it properly for shunting and other railway work, but the water beat us, and we are now getting suitable plant and machinery—or were doing so a month ago—to sink on to that seam.

Mr. Doney: Have you tested the quality of that coal?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We tried to test it with the bore. It was a jump bore, and the water was so strong that the coal we got out was not very satisfactory. That is why we are putting down a shaft, which will have to go 120ft. to reach the coal. It was proposed to sink well into the coal and, by means of a drive each way, get a good sample for testing. As regards both Irwin River and Eradu coals, the tests have been and are still going on. It is obvious to the Government that if the Eradu coal seam is anywhere near as good as Collie coal it would pay to open up a mine there, because it would save dragging Collie coal to Geraldton and from Geraldton to Wiluna and other parts. This would mean a tremendous saving to the Government, the railways and the country generally.

I hope the motion will be carried. Paragraph 1 does not refer specifically to Collie coal. It deals with native coal, and coal may be described as native whether found at Collie, Eradu, Irwin River or anywhere else in the State. That is all the member for Collie has dealt with in his motion. He has not been parochial enough to say in the first paragraph that it shall be Collie coal. The Collie mines have been opened up and are connected with the railway system, and we must first prove definitely that the Eradu or Irwin River coal is suitable, Eradu for preference because it is on the railway line and on Crown Land, whereas the Irwin River deposit is a considerable distance from the railway.

Mr. Doney: A distance of 22 or 23 miles.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I ask the House to retain the motion as moved by the member for Collie with a full knowledge that the Eradu and Irwin River deposits are being examined and tested and that, if they prove to be satisfactory, they will be opened up.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [8.38]: I am sure that members of the Government can have no doubt of my keen desire, which has been expressed on several occasions, for the expansion of local industry and enterprise. The fundamental idea of the motion submitted by the member for Collie is to provide for the expansion of a local industry, and for that reason I propose to support it. There are some points about the

motion, however, that need to be amplified. Paragraph (1) begins—

That this House recommends that 100 per cent. of native coal be used on all lines of the railway system, except the Marble Bar-Port Hedland line, etc.

We have been told that there are difficulties associated with the using of Collie coal everywhere, but the hon. member wishes it to be used to the extent of 100 per cent. on the railways, with the exception mentioned. I am of the opinion that, in order to encourage local enterprise, we should adapt the machines to be employed to secure the best value from our coal. We have the natural coal. We cannot do much about altering it, but we can alter the engines that are using it. I know there has been much dissatisfaction expressed with Collie coal, particularly as to its tendency to spark and so create grass and pasture fires, the responsibility for which the Railway Department is always endeavouring to absolve itself from. However, I think that our engines and machinery can be adapted to use Collie coal in such a way as to achieve the object which the member for Collie desires. We shall then be in a position to recommend that native coal shall be used 100 per cent. in all State enterprises, which, after all, must set an example to the people. Not only can we recommend such a course, but we can demand that it be taken.

I find nothing to take exception to in the recommendation that a board of experts should be appointed; experts are required for investigation purposes and I am wholly in agreement with the wishes of the member for Collie in this respect. The hon. member also desires to avoid the importation of coal to this State. I have already mentioned when dealing with other products that one of our essential requirements, if we are to establish and maintain a market, is a guaranteed continuity of supply. That applies to coal no less than it does to primary products. If we are to obviate the necessity for coal importation we must make certain that we will have a guaranteed supply. Events that occurred in recent weeks give one reason to doubt whether at this stage we are justified in attempting to limit, restrict or interfere with the importation of coal so long as our vital industries are at the mercy of one section of the community.

It seems strange to me that at this advanced stage in our civilisation a weapon which is out-moded by centuries is still in use. That weapon definitely restricts the confidence and the faith of people desirous of establishing local industries. I do not condemn the method for that reason alone; I think it is ill-advised because it serves no useful purpose but, on the other hand, inflicts injury on the industry, as well as on those engaged in and dependent upon it. I think members opposite will agree with me that when the strike weapon was first used, it was used against vested interests, and I agree that there were then harsh employers and harsh owners of industry. Those days, however, have gone. I admit that the strike weapon in those days may have served a useful purpose because the injury which it inflicted was on those I have heard described as the barons of industry; nevertheless, the strikers and their families also suffered. Today, however, one industry is so vitally dependent upon another—industries are so peculiarly interlocked—that what affects one industry must affect all other industries, and so the whole community suffers. The result is that such action is far more injurious to the fellow-workers of the strikers today than it was to the now non-existent, visionary, presumed barons of industry.

Mr. Holman: Are strikes mentioned in the motion?

Mr. LESLIE: I am attempting to make sure that there will be no interference with a position where we can be assured that we can limit or restrict the importation of coal.

Mr. J. Hegney: Do you suggest nationalising the industry?

Mr. LESLIE: I am suggesting to members opposite that if they desire to restore confidence in industry generally, and if they desire really to serve the particular section of the community whom they claim to serve, it is up to them to point out that the events which occurred recently and have just terminated inflict far more injury on the men they are seeking to protect than on the men whom they desire to injure.

The Minister for Lands: I think we had this last night.

Mr. LESLIE: The Premier informed the House last night that the coal companies did not care two hoots about what happened.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing anything that happened last night.

Mr. LESLIE: We have heard that it does not matter two hoots to the owners what happens to the industry, and that an interference with the normal activity of the mines has not worried them. Nevertheless, it worried the people in the metropolitan area very considerably.

Mr. J. Hegney: What do you suggest should be done?

Mr. LESLIE: In tonight's "Daily News" we find the report of a death which it is presumed is attributable to the fact that insufficient and alternate means of illumination had to be used as a result of fellow-workers' inconsiderateness to their mates.

Mr. Wilson: It is not fair to bring that into the debate on this motion.

Mr. LESLIE: If we are to proceed with the establishment of industries in Western Australia, we must convince all those engaged in industry that action such as has occurred will have greater repercussions on the people whom we aim to assist than on the big man who is presumed to exist, but in actual fact does not.

The Minister for Lands: Go to the Eastern States where there are no strikes.

Mr. LESLIE: I am speaking of Western Australia. There is another aspect in connection with this motion. The member for Collie has submitted the question of an investigation and expansion of the Collie coal industry or of the native coal industry purely from the industrial side; that is from the point of view of its industrial use. I ask the House to consider it from another angle. Today we find, as the result of experience in recent years, that our wood supplies which are used for domestic purposes are diminishing, and that it is necessary for the suppliers of that commodity to go further afield. I think that eventually the cost and difficulty of obtaining wood for household purposes will become a greater problem. I speak from experience in the country areas when I say that the one-time superabundance of mallee roots and cleared timber is fast disappearing, and in many country towns difficulty is found in obtaining a supply of household wood within anything like a reasonable distance. My experience in the metropolitan area is that the womenfolk have to put up with a

class of timber which it takes a considerable number of years of experience to learn how to coax to burn with any degree of satisfaction.

The Minister for Lands: Some of them find it hard to cut, too!

Mr. LESLIE: I grant that. I believe there is a wide and profitable field for the encouragement of the use of native coal for ordinary household purposes. I am accustomed to using it, and I know it is easier and better to use, and that it can be more economical than wood fuel. Moreover, I find that it will do a far more satisfactory job. For that reason I propose to move an amendment, which I hope the member for Collie will accept in the spirit in which it is submitted; that is, with the object of assisting towards the expansion of that industry, and the making of the burden of our householders somewhat easier than it has been. I therefore move an amendment.

That a new paragraph be added as follows:—

- (7) That investigations be made into the practicability of native coal being mined in sufficient quantity and at a reasonable cost to permit of its general use by householders for domestic purposes.

Mr. Wilson: I will accept that.

Mr. LESLIE: I thank the hon. member. Amendment put and passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, 'Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment.

With amendments.

2, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. McLarty (for Mr. McDonald), read a first time.

PAPERS—CLAIM BY MRS. J. P. JORGENSEN.

As to loss of Oats.

Debate resumed from the 12th September on the following motion by Mr. Watts:—

That there be laid on the Table of the House all papers in the possession of the Police Department regarding the claim by Mrs. J. P.

Jorgensen of Kendenup relative to the loss of 35 (or 37) bags of oats and the inquiries made regarding the same.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [8.55]: In speaking to this motion, the Leader of the Opposition said—

I am authorised by the parties to this matter to say—because I discussed it with them at Katanning a few days ago—this: They do not propose to take action against the Police Department, even supposing that that department was responsible.

In view of that statement, I have no objection to laying the file on the Table of the House.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

MOTION—PUBLIC WORKS STANDING COMMITTEE.

As to Legislation for Appointing.

Debate resumed from the 12th September on the following motion by Mr. Mann:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce legislation for the appointment of a Public Works Standing Committee representative of both Houses of Parliament but on which the number of members of the Legislative Assembly shall be greater than the number of members of the Legislative Council, so that no public work to cost more than £50,000 shall be authorised unless it has first been investigated by such standing committee.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [8.57]: For once, I find myself in agreement with the member for Beverley, in the motion he has submitted to the House for the appointment of a Public Works Standing Committee. The motion deserves very serious consideration and is well worthy of acceptance by the House. It will be realised that our method of conducting our public works policy is open to improvement. It is certainly inefficient from the point of view of protecting the taxpayers from loss and waste. Realising that during the years of responsible government a vast amount of money has been spent on public works; and visualising the necessity for a still greater expenditure in the post-war years, I think the time has arrived when serious thought should be given to a proposal of this description. We have been informed by the responsible Minister that there is in preparation a schedule of public works for this State in the post-war

years that is going to cost a considerable amount of money. Blueprints are already in existence, and we are merely waiting for the release of the manpower and a return to normal conditions to set these national works in operation.

I am willing to say that in the future, as in the past, Parliament will not have any real information in regard to the details of those public works. Parliament should be well acquainted with all the details of such public works. The proposal by the member for Beverley is that this House shall appoint a committee to inquire into all the details of any proposed public work. That committee would, of course, call expert evidence and would be guided by the advice so tendered. It might be thought that the appointment of a committee of that nature would remove responsibility from the Minister. It would do nothing of the sort. The Minister's responsibility would remain intact and, what is more, greater responsibility would be placed on Parliament because members would have more knowledge of the various proposals as a result of the inquiries by the committee than they could ever get simply by a statement of the Minister. If the proposal now before the House is agreed to, it will be nothing new because for many years there has been a standing committee on public works in New South Wales and Victoria and, recently, a public works committee was appointed in South Australia. The House is aware that members of the last-mentioned committee recently visited this State.

I have some little acquaintance with the Standing Committee on Public Works of the Commonwealth Parliament. That committee was in operation for about 28 years prior to the advent of this present war. The Bill authorising the appointment of the committee on public works was passed by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1913. That committee operated until Japan entered the war and commenced to attack Australia. As a result of the inquiries of that committee, vast sums of money have been saved to the Commonwealth. I can remember when the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Cook, introduced the measure in the House of Representatives. He told the House, in the course of his speech, that as a result of the Public Works Committee in New South Wales

that State alone had saved millions of pounds, because of the difference in the final cost and the original departmental estimate of different works. I venture to say that the same thing can be said of Victoria. I know of my own experience that the Standing Committee on Public Works in the Commonwealth Parliament saved the Commonwealth millions of pounds as a result of its work. The motion suggests that any work the estimated cost of which will exceed £50,000 should be referred to a committee on public works. In the Commonwealth Parliament, any work estimated to cost more than £25,000 is automatically referred to the standing committee which consists of three members of the Senate and six members of the House of Representatives. All parties are represented on it.

Mr. W. Hegney: Adult franchise!

Mr. NEEDHAM: It was the unanimous opinion on many occasions, not only of all parties but of all Governments, that the Public Works Committee had rendered splendid service to the Commonwealth during all those years. The expenditure that that committee can incur in the course of its inquiries is limited to £2,000 per annum. When that sum is exhausted the committee ceases its inquiries. The Commonwealth Parliament also has a committee on public accounts. That committee, along with the Public Works Committee, suspended operations immediately we were attacked in 1941, but I have no doubt that when we reach normal times again, both committees will resume operations. Many resolutions are agreed to in this House that are simply pious resolutions, that is, the House agrees that something shall be done, and that is all we hear about it. I do not know what attitude the Government will adopt towards this proposal, but I sincerely hope it will agree to it.

If the House agrees to the motion, it should not simply be satisfied with that, but should see that the Government takes steps to appoint this committee. No time should be lost, because the sooner the committee gets to work the better. I can remember many instances, during my years on the Commonwealth committee, of Ministers bringing down motions referring work to the committee. After four

or five weeks of inquiry, we would be able to make our report or recommendation to Parliament, and in some cases we reduced the price by half and in other cases by 30 per cent. and 25 per cent. Therefore, while a little expense is incurred in bringing a committee of this nature into existence, it is well worth it. The procedure adopted in the Commonwealth Parliament is for the Minister to bring a motion before the House informing members of the intention to go ahead with a certain work the cost of which is estimated to exceed £25,000. He then moves that the matter be referred to the Public Works Committee. That motion is merely a formal one with no debate. The matter is then referred to the committee, which makes its inquiry and reports to Parliament. I do not remember any case where the committee's report was rejected, or even amended. With these few words, and because of my knowledge of the good work that can be achieved by a committee of this nature, I sincerely hope that the House will agree to this motion.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th September.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.10]: This Bill aims to amend Section 10 of the Builders' Registration Act, which was passed in 1939 and amended in 1940. Section 10 sets out the conditions under which persons may be registered as builders, within the prescribed area, and no-one except persons so registered is entitled to engage in building operations, over and above a certain amount. Section 10 sets out that registration generally shall be obtained by examination, and the examination is drawn up by members of the registration board. Those desiring to be registered as builders within the area have to pass the prescribed examination. There are exceptions to that general practice, the main exception being that persons who were engaged in the building industry as builders prior to the passing of the Act

were entitled to obtain registration, without examination, up till the 30th June, 1941. That period has now passed.

The Bill before us proposes, in respect of men who enlisted in the Fighting Services, that there should be an extended period during which they may become registered without having to pass any examination. They will still have to possess the qualification of having had at least two years' experience as builders prior to the 30th June, 1941, or prior to the passing of the Act. There is no objection from any source to the amendment, to the extent that it should apply to all those who enlisted prior to the 30th June, 1941. If that course were to be followed everybody with the necessary two years' practical experience would be on the same footing, and everyone concerned would have an equal opportunity to become registered without having to submit to an examination. The board has suggested, in its comments to me on the Bill, that any person who enlisted after the 30th June, 1941, had full opportunity prior to that date to become registered without examination. The board then raised a query as to whether those who had that opportunity, with everyone else, should be given some further advantage.

The members of the board have asked me to place that point before the House for consideration. They consider that if this privilege of registration without examination is extended to persons who enlisted after the 30th June, 1941, some consideration should also be extended to allowing civilians with the necessary practical qualifications also to be considered for registration without examination, provided they had the necessary experience prior to the passing of the Act. I therefore place this information before members in order that they might know the views of the board regarding the contents of this Bill. The board, in its administration of the Act, obtained, some considerable time ago, the opinion of the Solicitor General regarding men who enlisted in the Services prior to the 30th June, 1941, because the members of the board were anxious that any person so enlisting should have the same opportunity to obtain registration without examination as would be available to those persons who

did not enlist, and who consequently remained in Western Australia.

The Solicitor General advised that, under the Act, the board had no legal authority to grant registration without examination to persons who had enlisted before the date I have mentioned, but suggested that the board would be acting at least with strong moral justification if it in fact considered applications from any of those persons and agreed to their registration without examination. I think a total of 19 applications of this kind were received, and the board granted registration to 15 of the applicants, the other four not having the necessary practical experience as required in Section 10 in respect of every applicant, irrespective of whether he enlisted or not. So the board has acted in accordance with the contents of this Bill up to the 30th June, 1941. It appears, therefore, that the only point requiring consideration in regard to the passing of this Bill is whether the date of the 30th June, 1941, should be extended to include those servicemen who enlisted after that date.

The point there, as I have already mentioned, is that those who did not enlist before that date had an opportunity to obtain registration without examination. They must have known before that date of the right they possessed, and could have made application prior to their enlistment had they so desired. There have been several cases of civilians, who failed to take advantage of their right under the Act prior to the 30th June, 1941, having made application subsequently for registration without examination. In every such case the board has insisted that the necessary examination should take place and several such civilian applicants have had to sit for the necessary examination, and their registration has depended on whether they were successful in passing the examination. Therefore I merely place before the House the opinion of the board set up under the Act, and desire that members should give consideration to the attitude of the board regarding the point of view I have brought forward on its behalf.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands) [9.21]: As one who took some interest in the framing of the parent Act when it was brought be-

fore the House, I naturally view the amending Bill placed before members by the Leader of the Opposition in a similar light. As the Minister appeared to indicate in his speech, I do not think members can take any possible exception to the provision which is being sought to give an opportunity to those who have served in the Forces and who possess the requisite experience in the trade to be registered without examination. Indeed, it could be aptly termed a patriotic gesture. I am glad the Minister raised the point he dealt with because it has also been brought to my mind as I have been approached by three people in recent days about the same matter. One glaring case concerns a man I know, who had more than the requisite experience in the building trade. He was unable to enlist for reasons over which he had no control, but he offered his services and was directed to undertake munitions work. In answer to my question as to why he had not availed himself of the opportunity to register, he said he had no idea whether circumstances after the war would make it advisable for him again to participate in the trade. He, like others possessing a sense of responsibility at the time, devoted his attention to aiding the war effort.

I suggest seriously to the Leader of the Opposition that, in view of the fact that we know from experience, and we shall have it impressed further upon our minds as time goes by, in view of the tremendous number of tradesmen who have been away at the war and the vast building problems that will confront us in the immediate future, there must of necessity be a very acute shortage of tradesmen. The men that the Bill seeks to deal with should make a material contribution to the building of homes in the metropolitan area and other parts of the State, provided they can satisfy the board as to their qualifications. From my experience, I can assert that the Builders' Registration Board has done a splendid job and has established a satisfactory state of affairs where previously there was chaos.

The Leader of the Opposition could very well consider the acceptance in Committee of an amendment to deal with munition workers and others who have been engaged in equally essential war work, provided they could comply with the conditions set out in the Bill. I think they have a justifiable right to the opportunity to be registered. If

that course were adopted, as a natural consequence there will be undoubtedly an effective contribution by such men and give a much needed fillip that the trade requires in dealing with the vast building programme that stares it in the face today. With the Minister for Works I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he gives the point serious consideration and that either he or some other member should submit an amendment along the lines I have indicated. With this qualification, I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [9.25]: I hope the House will definitely support the Bill. I was rather interested in the comments by the Minister for Works regarding the actions of the Builders' Registration Board and his reference to the fact that it had registered 15 out of 19 builders who enlisted prior to the 30th June, 1941, and had not within the period prescribed by the Act previously applied for registration as builders. I have had brought to my notice a case which appears to me to indicate that the person concerned was one of the four who did not secure registration. In support of the Bill submitted by the Leader of the Opposition, I shall give the House some details of this particular case and read to members the correspondence which has passed between the builder-applicant and the board. On the 24th April, 1944, the builder wrote to the Registrar of the Builders' Registration Board, as follows:

Having been released from the A.I.F., after four years' service, to resume my pre-enlistment occupation as a builder, I hereby make application for registration as a builder under the Act.

In accordance with your letter of the 19th March, 1941, I attach the necessary application form together with copies of character references, etc.

The following is an outline of buildings completed by me during the three years prior to my enlistment in 1940:—

1 Brick dwelling, value £900.

1 Brick dwelling, value £850.

1 Brick dwelling, value £650.

Flinders Street, Mt. Hawthorn, for the Perth Building Society.

1 Brick dwelling, value £600, at Victoria Park, for Hampton Timber Co.

1 Brick dwelling, value £850, at Flinders-street, Mt. Hawthorn, for T. and G., St. George's-terrace.

1 Attic brick dwelling at Olive Grove, Wembley, value £950, for T. and G., St. George's-terrace.

4 Brick dwellings at Mt. Hawthorn, valued at £550 each, for J. K. Farleigh.

1 Brick dwelling at Carlisle, value £375, for United Press, Perth.

The required fee of 10s. 6d. enclosed herewith.

To that letter the board replied on the 28th April, 1941, acknowledging receipt of the communication and stating that the board was unable to approve of his application. The board proceeded:—

In view of the fact that you were within the State and had a opportunity of applying for registration within the required period, which was limited to the 30th June, 1941, it is considered that you should have made the necessary application.

It is the Board's desire to assist all those who were unable, through war duties, to apply by that date (30/6/41) but the rulings given to the Board indicate that privileges cannot be extended where it was possible for the Act to be complied with.

On the 1st May, 1944, the builder replied as follows:—

As the only reason for the ruling of the Board is because I did not register by the 30th June, 1941, I hereby make a request that they re-consider my application to enable me to carry on with my work.

I would like to add that I did write to you and received your reply in 1941, letter was attached to my application, but as no mention was made of a final closing date, I thought there was no necessity to apply before I was discharged from the Army. Had I realised that I must apply before 30th June, 1941, I certainly would have done so.

To that letter the board replied on the 27th July, 1944, stating that it could not vary its previous decision and suggesting that he undergo the prescribed examination. The builder contacted the secretary of the Returned Soldiers' League and put his case. Application was made by the league for a reconsideration of the case and, on the 11th September of this year, 18 months after the original application had been made, the board replied that it could not vary the decision previously conveyed to Mr. Sherwood. Mr. Sherwood was in the Forces at the time this legislation became law. I acknowledge that ignorance of the law is no excuse. That is what the legal fraternity tell us, but I think consideration should be given to the point whether circumstances permitted him to be aware of all the requirements of the law.

Mention has been made of the possible hardships likely to be inflicted upon civilians who, while engaged on war work, failed to

apply for registration. One case cited by the member for Maylands was that a civilian, while engaged on munitions work, was doubtful whether he would return to the trade on the cessation of hostilities. He was actuated by his own personal interests. He must have been aware of the requirements of the law, and the circumstance—although he was probably directed to undertake the work he was doing—did not preclude him from being fully aware of them. On the other hand, this man, who was in the Armed Forces, even though he was in the State, did not have equal facilities for learning the requirements of the law. The notification he received from the board was the only intimation he had that registration was required within a certain time. He saw no newspapers and no Acts of Parliament, and was not aware of the time limit prescribed by the Act.

I have no fault to find with the law, but had such circumstances been known to members when the measure was before the House, I feel sure that provision would have been made to meet them. I go so far as to question whether legislation like the parent Act would have been passed when it was had there been a complete awareness of the extreme difficulties that would later be experienced in connection with the housing problem. Because of an attempt to do justice in the circumstances then existing, Parliament passed legislation, which is now inflicting hardship on certain members of the community as well as on the State. This builder is not a young man. He has three sons in the Fighting Forces; one died while a prisoner of war. He was in the Armed Forces when Parliament passed the law and his circumstances did not permit him to be fully aware of the law's requirements. He has been refused registration, and the board has suggested that he should sit for the prescribed examination. That is a specific example of how the law is imposing hardship.

When we find that a law is unintentionally imposing a hardship, it is our bounden duty to amend it and remove the injustice. I confess that I have not considered the aspect from the point of view of the civilian who failed to register within the prescribed time and now wishes to do so. I take the view of the member for Maylands that such tradesmen are urgently required, and for this reason I am inclined to give sympathetic consideration to the suggestion that they

should be registered. On the other hand, there are no other excusable grounds for altering a law by giving them an extension of time in which to register. I would sympathetically consider registering them from the point of view of the dire necessity that exists for the type of work in which they wish to engage.

Mr. J. Hegney: Has that man been a worker in the industry?

Mr. LESLIE: Yes; the man whose case I have mentioned has in three years built 11 houses of an average value of £800. He enlisted in 1940, and was in the Army when the original legislation was passed. He was advised that the Act had been passed, but was not made aware of the time limit.

Mr. Watts: There was no time limit in the original Act.

Mr. LESLIE: That is so, and he was not aware later on that he was required to register within a prescribed time. A paltry fee of 10s. 6d. would not have deterred him from registering. Any civilian who was considering his future and had not made up his mind whether he would return to the industry would have paid the fee to make sure. This man, however, was not aware of the requirements, and this not because of any fault of his own, but because there were no facilities available to make himself conversant with the requirements of the law. He was quite prepared to fulfil those requirements had he known of them. It is a definite injustice that this man should be deprived of his livelihood. At his age, he cannot take up another trade, because he is a skilled man in the building trade and has been engaged all his life as a tradesman in the industry. I am not suggesting that the board has acted harshly towards this man. It has been appointed to carry out the provisions of the Act.

The only departure which evidently can be made is to amend the Act on strong moral grounds. Apparently the board considers that because this man was within the State—irrespective of whether he was at Esperance or at Broome—he was not entitled to be registered. He may not have seen a newspaper for weeks; he was not aware that a law had been passed requiring him to register as a builder. He became aware of that fact when the board sent him an application form. The board must therefore have recognised him as a builder. I hope the

House will pass the Bill and make provision in it for this type of injustice to be removed.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—in reply) [9.42]: With regard to the points raised by the Minister for Works, it is quite obvious that the board requires some amendment to the law in order to put on a proper legal footing that which the Solicitor-General advised the board could only be done with a moral justification. Beyond that point a question arises as to whether or no there should be the inclusion of civilians. Civilians have not been included by me in the Bill because I was not anxious to extend the scope of the Act beyond those whom I had reason to believe at that time were not able to put themselves in possession of the information that there was a time limit of six months within which they must register under the amendment Act of 1940. I have already pointed out that the parent Act contained no time limit at all, and consequently there were cases I knew of in which applications were sent, when that Act was the law, to persons who had been builders. No time limit was mentioned because none was prescribed by law. Subsequently, when the war was about 18 months old and a great number of people had enlisted in the Forces and many more were trying to do so, as I said in my second reading speech, the Act was amended to impose a time limit of six months.

It is because I believe that that time limit should be removed until a reasonable period after the cessation of hostilities that I introduced the Bill. I did so, dealing with members of the Forces only, as I had conceived the opinion that I would have a better chance of success if I so limited it. There have been, since my second reading speech was made, suggestions put to me that other people have been placed in as difficult a position as members of the Forces. I turn to the point of view expressed by the member for Maylands a few moments ago, and say quite frankly that while I do not intend myself to propose any amendments to cope with such people, particularly if they remained in Western Australia, I am fully prepared that the House should consider those points of view, if amendments can be placed upon the notice paper. I am going to ask the House, if the second reading is carried, to report progress on the Commit-

tee stage, or to delay the Committee stage, in order that members, such as the member for Maylands, may have an opportunity to place any amendments they care to upon the notice paper.

Other persons have been brought under my notice. There are those civilians who were transferred or removed in the very early stages of the war, and for reasons attributable to the war, to other parts of the Commonwealth, such as the Northern Territory, in order that they might engage themselves in building operations for defence purposes. In many cases they have only recently returned to this State, to find that the circumstances do not now exist which existed when they left the State. They now find that laws have been passed of which they have little or no knowledge. I am given to understand an amendment may be suggested by an hon. member in that respect. In all the circumstances, I shall ask the House to agree to the second reading but, if it is desirable that there should be some further alteration of this law to deal out a reasonable measure of justice, I am further going to ask the House that the Committee stage should be postponed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

As to Second Reading.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [9.45]: Mr. Speaker, I have not got the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member applying for a postponement?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am moving the second reading.

Mr. SPEAKER: But the hon. member did not introduce the Bill.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Am I not entitled to do so?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may, on behalf of the member for West Perth, move that the second reading be postponed. The Bill will come up again next Wednesday, provided we get far enough down the list of Orders. It will have to take its turn, and it will probably be at the bottom of the notice paper.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If I do nothing, it goes down to the bottom of the notice paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member does nothing at all, the Bill will be struck off the notice paper.

Hon. N. KEENAN: On behalf of the member for West Perth, I move, in those dire circumstances:—

That the second reading of the Bill be postponed.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.47 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 27th September, 1945.

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

QUESTIONS.

AUTHORISED TRANSPORT ROUTES.

As to Waiving Picking-up Regulations.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the great inconvenience being experienced in the metropolitan and suburban areas, caused by the shortage of transport facilities, will the Government give consideration to waiving the regulations which prevent the picking up and setting down of passengers on any part of authorised transport routes?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Yes, but our inquiries suggest many difficulties.

WHEAT STORES.

As to Acquisition for Fodder Conservation.

Hon. A. I. LOTON asked the Chief Secretary: As it is reported that the Commonwealth Government intends that the State Governments shall have full responsibility for implementing the plans for fodder conservation, will the Government of Western