

Federal Aid Roads Agreement. Certain items of equipment will be available to local authorities at the prices paid by governmental and semi-governmental bodies.

Concern was expressed by Mr. W. R. Hall about what he termed the deplorable condition of the Great Eastern Highway from the end of the bitumen surface as far as Coolgardie, and he stated it was imperative that the road be bituminised to Coolgardie. The highway is a declared main road from the boundary of the City of Perth to Southern Cross, and, as Mr. Hall mentioned, it has been constructed and surfaced with bitumen as far as the No. 5 Pumping Station at Carrabin. The only section of the road, therefore, which comes within the jurisdiction of the Main Roads Department and is not bituminised, is the 36 miles from Carrabin to Southern Cross. It was anticipated that the bitumen road would extend to Southern Cross by December, 1942, but the war prevented this and subsequently it has not been possible to do other than minor maintenance work. However, it is anticipated that work will be resumed on the road within the next two months.

The 140 miles of road from Southern Cross to Coolgardie is not a declared main road, and the responsibility for its maintenance is that of the Yilgarn and Coolgardie Road Boards, which have done little or no work on the road in the past few years. The Main Roads Department has made funds available annually for maintenance and minor repair work and during the past twelve months has constantly maintained a power grader and motor truck on the road. A great deal of the road from Carrabin requires construction work, and even when men and plant are available it will be a big problem to carry out extensive improvements to approximately 180 miles of road where weather conditions are severe and construction materials are relatively poor in quality. The expenditure of £30,000 had been authorised previously for construction work on the road, and work will recommence immediately plant and manpower are available. In the meantime, maintenance of the road will be continued.

I think I have succeeded in replying to the more important matters mentioned by members during this debate. As I emphasised earlier in my speech, I could not deal with every point that was raised, but if

there is any matter that a member referred to and feels that he would like further information upon, then, in accordance with my usual practice, I shall be only too happy to oblige him with whatever details are available.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved: That the Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor by the President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT

Received from the Assembly and read first time.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 3rd September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 7.53 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 21st August, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.**ANGLE-PARKING REGULATION.***As to Departmental Reports.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Works:

1, Was any report obtained on angle-parking in St. George's-terrace from officers of the Traffic Department or any other department before its adoption?

2, If so, will he lay such reports on the Table of the House for the better information of members?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes, from the Traffic Advisory Committee and the Police Department.

2, The reports are on Public Works Department file No. 175/34 which I will place upon the Table of the House.

RAIL GAUGE STANDARDISATION.*As to Commonwealth Proposals.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Have there been any recent proposals (from the Commonwealth Minister for Railways, Mr. Ward, to the Government of Western Australia) differing in substance from those submitted to the conference held when he and other State Ministers for Railways met recently to discuss with the Federal Minister the standardisation of rail gauges?

2, If so, will he intimate the nature of these later proposals?

3, Has he seen a paragraph in "The West Australian" of yesterday's date setting out a message from the Premier (Mr. Wise) that there has been no hold-up by his Government of the standardisation of rail gauges as affecting this State?

4, May this be read as meaning that he and other members of the Western Australian Cabinet favour the Federal Minister's standardisation proposals?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No. A full statement of conference happenings will appear in to-morrow's "The West Australian."

2, Answered by No. 1.

3, Yes.

4, The Premier will make a statement on this matter in due course.

KALGOORLIE ABATTOIRS.*As to Power for Chillers, Etc.*

Mr. LEAHY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is it the intention of this Government to have the electric power line extended to the Kalgoorlie Abattoirs and electric chillers installed before the hot weather sets in?

2, Is it possible to have cement floors renewed, as old ones are in a very bad state, particularly in the offal treatment section of the works?

The MINISTER replied:

1, and 2, Negotiations for the supply of electricity to the Kalgoorlie Abattoirs have been proceeding for some considerable time and it is now anticipated that arrangements with the Boulder Council will be finalised within the next fortnight which will permit of the R.A.A.F. line being used for the purpose.

Approval has been given for improvements to the abattoirs, including the erection of chillers. This work is part of the general plan and will be undertaken as soon as arrangements for electricity supplies have been completed.

BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION—ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES AND BREAKDOWNS.*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 14th August on the following motion by Mr. North:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the existing and estimated future requirements of electric current for power and lighting purposes in the metropolitan area and the adequacy of the existing plant and present authorised extensions to meet such requirements and whether and to what extent any additional

generating or distributing plant is desirable to safeguard the continuity of electric current for industrial and private purposes in the metropolitan area and in particular:—

- (1) The causes and circumstances of and related to the recent breakdowns in supply.
- (2) What measures should be taken to avoid a recurrence of the like character in the future.
- (3) To what extent (if any) industrial users of electric current should acquire private auxiliary or emergency generating plants.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.35]: I desire to thank the member for Claremont for his reasonable approach to this matter. He discussed the motion in a well-balanced way and did not, at any stage of his speech, try to inject into it any criticism or condemnation of those responsible for the management and operation of the power plant at East Perth. He informed the House that he had brought the motion forward in response to a request made to him by the Claremont Municipal Council. That council, and the Nedlands Road Board, were the two local authorities that, at the time of the breakdown, demanded that a Royal Commission of inquiry into the breakdown at East Perth should be set up. I think it was the Nedlands Road Board that circularised all local authorities in the metropolitan area for the purpose of trying to persuade other local authorities to present a demand to the Government for the establishment of a Royal Commission.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, no other local authority, apart from the Claremont Municipal Council, agreed to the request, as circularised to them. They all replied, stating that they considered there had been sufficient controversy already over the breakdown at East Perth and that they were not in favour of the establishment of a Royal Commission for the purpose of carrying out any special investigation. I think the attitude of the local authorities that refused to be drawn into the demand for a Royal Commission was fair and reasonable, and took into account the great strain that had been placed on the power plant at East Perth during the war years. During those years the demand for additional power for industrial purposes increased considerably due to the fact that

many industrial establishments that operated only one shift prior to the war, operated either two or three shifts during the war. Therefore the demand of those establishments for electric power was increased twofold, where the double shift was worked and threefold where the three shifts per day were operated.

Hon. N. Keenan: What was the percentage increase over the whole lot?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not the figures of the overall increase, but I think it safe to say that the total increase in the demand upon the power house was at least 33 per cent. When the war ended, the management of the power house realised that the 12,500 kilowatt generating plant should be overhauled and repaired as soon as possible because it had been operated right through the war without having received the necessary overhaul and repairs. Therefore, in February of this year that generating set was stripped and the process of overhauling and making repairs was commenced at the Midland Junction Railway Workshops. The work was put in hand in February with the object of having it completed before the winter commenced so that the whole of the generating units at East Perth might be available to carry the heavy load and supply all demands during the winter months.

When the 12,500 kilowatt set was stripped, it was found that the repairs required to the turbine section were much greater than was anticipated prior to the stripping, and consequently much longer time was needed to complete the overhaul and the repairs. As a result, this set was not available and ready for operation when the large 25,000 kilowatt generating set broke down towards the end of May of this year. In effect, therefore, the 37,000 kilowatt units covered by the two generating sets were not available. That left only the balance between the 37,000 kilowatt units and the total capacity of 57,000 kilowatt units—a total of about 19,000 kilowatt units—available for use by the consumers of electric power. That supply, of course, was far short of what was required to meet the normal needs of consumers; more especially during the winter months and it was necessary to introduce a very severe system of rationing in order that hospitals, special types of industries and

similar requirements should be fully met and that the reasonable needs of ordinary consumers might be provided to the fullest extent possible.

The information that seems to be most desired by the member for Claremont on behalf of the Claremont municipality is as to why the breakdown in the large 25,000 kilowatt set occurred. The breakdown was a mechanical one. It could not in any way be foreseen, and therefore no action at all could have been taken to prevent the breakdown from occurring. It would be wise for members to recollect that the power plant is a mechanical one, and like all mechanical plants is subject to breakdown either of a serious or a minor character. It is a machine just as a motor vehicle is a machine and is liable to break down at any time. Just as it is impossible to foresee and prevent breakdowns that occur at times in motor vehicles, so it is impossible to foresee and prevent a breakdown of the kind that occurred at East Perth in May last. However, in order that members might have a full explanation of the reason for the breakdown, I arranged with the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, Mr. Dumas, to set out as briefly as possible and in non-technical terms, the actual reason for the breakdown. I propose to read the appropriate paragraphs of his report, which are as follows:—

At about midnight on 23rd May a "short" occurred which burned out the coils of what is known as the "exciter" on the 25,000 unit generator. The exciter is a comparatively small generator on the same shaft as the turbine and alternator sections. This exciter generates current for the excitation of the main alternator and, when the exciter failed, the main alternator then ceased to generate electricity. It was hoped that the failure was due to a fault in the exciter itself, which was immediately removed for examination.

At the same time steps were taken to obtain the necessary exciting current for the main alternator from other sources and the turbo generator was then given a run with the exciter removed. As the alternator failed to generate electricity, it then became apparent that the fault was in the main alternator itself and there was no alternative but to take this down and ascertain the extent of the faulting.

After stripping, the rotor itself, weighing approximately three tons, had to be disconnected from the turbine section, lifted out of its bearings and taken to the repair section of the power house for testing and examination. This indicated that the insulation

on two coils had failed and the current had shorted across to the body of the rotor. Spare coils were in stock. These were replaced, the insulation of other coils gone over, and the whole rotor thoroughly tested before it was replaced on its main bearings.

During this period the exciter had also been rewound and the machine was given a trial run, coming on to partial load on 11/6/46—i.e., 18 days after the initial breakdown. The work was of an extremely skilled nature and only a few men could be employed at any one time. From the time of breakdown until the time the machine was again running work on the repairs was carried out continuously.

That is a concise explanation of the trouble that occurred and the steps that were taken to overcome the trouble as quickly as possible. I hope there is no idea in the mind of any person that the technical men, and for that matter all the employees at the power house, do not continually give the very greatest possible measure of skilled service to the maintenance and operation of the power plant at that centre. If any member were to go down to the power house at any time, he would find that the top technical men and all the employees under them regard this power plant as the most affectionate father might regard his favourite son.

Hon. N. Keenan: Or his errant son!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They regard it as being absolutely their prize baby, as it were—something that has to be cared for and watched and safeguarded and polished and kept in 100 per cent. efficient order.

Mr. Withers: And that applies to most generating services.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was to me a very great encouragement to find the tremendous amount of pride these men had in the plant under their care and supervision, and I understand that what I saw there is general in relation to most plants of this description all over the world. Whilst I think of it, I may also say that it applies to all the pumping stations on the Goldfields water supply pipe line. It might be that in engineers and electricians and highly-skilled tradesmen of that kind—and perhaps in all tradesmen, for that matter—there is this great pride in their work and in the machinery and plant which are under their care and control. It can be said without

the slightest exaggeration that the men at the East Perth power house are completely concentrated all the time on the task of keeping the plant in continuous operation and of supplying the full quantity of electric power to the consumers which the generating sets at that plant are capable of producing when in full working order.

The member for Claremont desired also to know what steps the Government had taken in recent years for the purpose of increasing the total capacity of the power generation plant in the metropolitan area. I think that in a general way it is well known that the Government, some considerable time ago, approved of the establishment of a second power station in the metropolitan area at South Fremantle. In connection with that decision, we sent to England Mr. Taylor, general manager of the East Perth power house; and he, by virtue of a great deal of battling, as it were, and with the co-operation of Mr. Troy, our Agent General in London, was able finally to get a very high priority for the requirements in regard to the new power house now in process of being established at South Fremantle. Members will realise it was not at all easy during the war to get a high priority in obtaining plant for the purpose of generating electric power. Power houses in Great Britain and in Europe were No. 1 targets for the different Air Forces during the war, and many power houses were blown to smithereens as a result of bombs being dropped on them. So the demand in Great Britain itself and in Europe for power generating plant and equipment was very great, and still is, and will be very great for many years to come.

Except for the war, a second power house would probably have been established in the metropolitan area before now, but war conditions interfered so seriously with any plans or any attempts in that direction that progress during the war years and since has been restricted, to a great extent. However, members of this House may accept the assurance that no possible step has been left untaken by the Government. We have been pressing this matter over a considerable period; but even with all the pressure in the world, it has not been possible to make any more progress than that which has been achieved up to date. The new power house at South Fremantle will not be mak-

ing electric current available to consumers for approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ to three years; so the fact that a new power house is being established at South Fremantle will be of no value in meeting the demand in the metropolitan area for electric power during that period.

In the meantime, the State Electricity Commission is investigating the possibility of obtaining a number of smaller units than would normally be purchased for the purpose of installing them at East Perth. The plant to be installed at South Fremantle in the early stages consists of two 25,000 kilowatt sets, or a total generating capacity of 50,000 units. The inquiries of the Electricity Commission regarding the possibility of obtaining smaller sets in the meantime will extend to any part of the world where it is reasonably possible to obtain smaller sets for the purpose of having them brought to this country as soon as possible, so that they might be installed and be available as a reserve capacity in the event of any of the units now at East Perth breaking down for some reason or other.

The Commission may succeed in obtaining one or more of these smaller sets, but there is no certainty about that. However, I think it most unlikely that the two larger sets at East Perth will in future be out of action at the same time. That was the unfortunate feature of the recent breakdown. Had the 25,000 kilowatt set kept operating for an other month, the 1,500 kilowatt set would have had its overhaul and repairs completed and would have been re-installed at East Perth and generating current for consumers. But unfortunately the overhaul and repair of that 12,500 kilowatt set had not been completed when the bad breakdown occurred in the larger set. So we were placed in the unfortunate position of having the two larger sets out of commission at the same time.

MR. NORTH: You have some reserve power at present?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, when they are all working, and they do not all break at the same time. If the necessity arose, we would have sufficient to meet all demands. But if all the sets are worked all the time, then we are heading for trouble because it is not possible to run these generating sets continuously without putting

such pressure upon them as inevitably brings about a breakdown of one or more of them.

Other questions raised by the member for Claremont are as to the provision likely to be made to ensure that current will be made available to hospitals and special industries in the event of another serious breakdown, and as to what extent manufacturers should purchase and install private generating sets to meet an emergency of this kind. I have already explained that during the severe rationing period in June power was made available to hospitals and to a number of special industries to enable them to continue their operations without interference. The Commission is continuing to inquire into the possibility of further improving that position in the event of an emergency developing in the future. Furthermore, the Chamber of Manufactures recently appointed a special committee to confer with the Commission on the question of the extent, if any, to which owners of industrial establishments in the metropolitan area should install private generating sets. So I think we might, with confidence, leave that question to the negotiations which will be carried on between the Commission and representatives of the Chamber of Manufactures.

Mr. North: That question will be answered there?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think as a result of those negotiations we will probably find some recommendations being put forward as to the extent to which private generating sets might be installed, but I am not in a position to anticipate what the recommendations of the Commission and the committee in question will be.

The member for Claremont also asked whether any proposal had been developed to enable the 40 cycle frequency, as generated at East Perth, to be changed to 50 cycle when the change in the cycle frequency in the metropolitan area is effected. When that cycle frequency is changed over a cycle frequency set will be installed at the East Perth power house, and it will be capable of changing the existing cycle frequency at the East Perth power house to the new cycle, to the extent of 25,000 units, so that when that stage is reached there will be 25,000 kilowatts coming out at the new cycle, and the balance, whatever it might be, at the old cycle. It might

be that there will be some technical difficulty in producing and distributing electric current at two different cycles from the one source, but it must be remembered that we will not be able to change over the cycle in the whole of the metropolitan area at the one time. That change-over will have to be effected in stages. In other words, we will have to change over blocks from time to time as opportunity offers.

Hon. N. Keenan: Will not all the motors have to be altered?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, in time. Whenever the cycle frequency of an area is changed all the motors in the area will have to be changed. However, the change-over will be gradual and be done district by district so that it will be necessary, for some years after it is commenced, to generate and distribute a fair amount of electric power on the old cycle frequency, to meet the needs of the districts which, up to that time, have not been changed over.

The Commission is investigating the likely future needs, not only of the metropolitan area and what might be regarded as the outer metropolitan area, but also the district ranging as far as up to 60 miles from the city of Perth. It will be seen, therefore, that the Commission's investigations, as to the likely future needs of those who rely upon the metropolitan power scheme for their source of supply, are extensive and are taking into account in a generous way what those needs are likely to be. When this investigation is completed the Commission will be in a position to devise a policy as to the requirements of generating sets for, say, the next 20 or 30 years, as the case might be. I assure members that the Commission is fully seized of the vital importance of increasing the capacity to generate local power. It realises that we are living in an age when the demand for electric current is increasing all the time, and it believes there will be a considerable amount of industrial development in the metropolitan area, and close to it, during the next three to five years and, unless we are in a position as a State to provide the power needs of industry, then, of course, we will place upon our industrial development a severe handicap.

Obviously if a manufacturer is thinking of establishing an industry in or near to the metropolitan area one of his first in-

quiries is as to the availability of electric current. Unless he can be assured that he will be able to get it in the quantities he requires his answer to the establishing of his industry in our State will most certainly be, "No." The Commission is fully seized of the importance of governmental policy regarding industrial development, and is anxious to co-operate as far as possible with the Government in furthering that policy.

I think it would be most unwise for this House to agree to set up a Royal Commission, a Select Committee or any committee of inquiry into this matter, because it was, only last year, that Parliament agreed to set up the State Electricity Commission which is, in effect, a Royal Commission except that it has the advantage of being permanent. Its duty is to manage the Government's power schemes, to develop them on a co-ordinated basis, to expand our capacity to produce electric power to the required extent and to see that such power is generated so that it is available in full quantity to all those requiring it. It would be unfair to anyone to suggest that the Commission has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, because its period of operation has, so far, been a very short one. It would also be unfair to assert that the Commission has failed because in the first few weeks of its existence an unforeseen breakdown occurred in the power station at East Perth.

The technical men on this Commission are well regarded. Their qualifications are of a high character and I am convinced that they have the necessary technical knowledge and ability to develop our power system on a progressive and adequate basis. I am satisfied that they are qualified to see that no avoidable breakdowns occur in the power systems owned by the Government. So I ask members to pay to the Commission the compliment that is due to it, and that is the compliment of believing it is capable of handling the duties which Parliament has placed upon its shoulders. The member for Claremont indicated in his speech that he, at any rate, would be reasonably satisfied if the Government could, in reply to the speech he made on the motion, indicate that everything possible had been done to overcome the difficulty brought into existence by the recent breakdown, and also if it could

be shown that the breakdown could not be foreseen and therefore not prevented.

I have tried to deal fairly fully with the other questions the hon. member raised and I hope the information made available to the House on the several points brought forward by him is considered sufficient and satisfactory. In view of what I have said I sincerely trust that members will not carry the motion. In fact, the member who moved it might feel, in view of the information which I have given on behalf of the Government and the Commission, that he is justified in withdrawing it after further members have taken part in the debate.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.13]: I regret that the Minister for Works is under the impression that the Nedlands Road Board was guilty of some, at any rate, rude conduct, in making what he calls a demand in respect of the matter now under discussion. We are all acquainted with the fact that a certain class of the community invariably frames every request that it puts forward in the form of a demand. We frequently see pronouncements made which might very well be entertained as ordinary requests, but where we find the flourish "We demand that such and such be done." I am certain that is not and never would be the attitude of the Nedlands Road Board. I do not think the word "demand" was used, but if it was the Minister has more knowledge of the matter and I am not prepared to contradict him, although it would surprise me to know that it was. I am certain of this that the road board, if it did use the word, did not use it in the violent sense that it is sometimes availed of, but rather as an alternative to the word "request."

What the board wanted to achieve was that the attention of the public and of the Minister, too, should be drawn to a very serious state of affairs that had caused a great deal of inconvenience and suffering to people in the Nedlands district and had also caused loss amounting to many thousands of pounds to a great many workers—leaving out of account altogether its effect on the dislocation of industry. The matter was one of such grave importance that naturally the board wanted to have the fullest inquiry made into the question of how it happened and also the fullest possible discussion upon how such an experience

could be avoided in the future. That was the whole intent of the road board; and if the Minister thinks the board was guilty of discourtesy in putting forward its suggestions, I undertake, without having any special commission to do so, to apologise on the board's behalf, and to assure the Minister that that was not its intent at all.

The Minister for Works: I never suggested the board was guilty of discourtesy.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The word "demand" was emphasised by the Minister, and I took it he could not mean anything else.

The Minister for Works: The board was entitled to make demands if it wanted to.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is another point I wish to make clear. Neither the Nedlands Road Board nor any member of it, nor yet any other person that I know of, has ever indulged in any criticism of the East Perth power house employees, or made any suggestion whatever that they were not possessed of full capacity to do the work they were employed to carry out. In addition, there was no suggestion that those people have ever shown any desire to shirk their duty. On the contrary, the whole matter has been regarded from the point of view that as far as those workers were concerned they had done everything within their power and capacity; if there has been any suggestion to the contrary it did not come from the Nedlands Road Board nor from any member of this House.

The Minister for Works: No; that suggestion came from the Claremont Municipal Council.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Is that so?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. North: There had to be a scapegoat!

Hon. N. KEENAN: I carry the responsibility for many sins, but I do not carry it in respect of any sins outside my own electorate.

The Minister for Works: And I do not blame you.

Hon. N. KEENAN: On the other hand, there is ground for legitimate criticism not of the workmen or of the engineers or even in respect of those at the very top of those responsible for the conduct of the East Perth power house. That legitimate criticism can be directed at those who deter-

mined the policy regarding the plant that was to be installed and what the character of that plant was to be. Before proceeding on those lines, which I intend to do at very limited length, I desire to avoid repeating any criticism of the blunder—an undoubted blunder—that was committed in connection with the purchase—it is true that the transaction took place over 30 years ago—of a plant of only 40 cycles, a transaction that was put through in direct opposition to the advice of the engineers who were employed to advise the Government of the day. That phase has been dealt with in another place and it is unnecessary to repeat the point at length. Unfortunately, that blunder of 30 years ago which was, as I have mentioned, precipitated in direct defiance of outside professional opinion employed to guide the Government, was perpetuated on a much larger scale only a few years ago when another 25,000 kilowatt unit was purchased.

One thing that the public would like to know is why that purchase was made of a 40-cycle unit so recently as 1936 or 1937. Such a plant was at that time completely outmoded in the commercial world. That simply meant that every factor operating in Western Australia had to face considerable expenditure because the ordinary type of motor purchased when commencing an industry had been designed for 50 cycles. It meant that all manufacturers were at a disadvantage because they had plant that was designed for a supply of current the furnishing of which was by a unit that had gone entirely off the market. Where the machine installed at East Perth was obtained from is a matter of curiosity. It was so completely outmoded that I am afraid it must have been picked up in the backyard of some machinery firm in England.

Mr. Cross: When did you find all this out?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I found it out by doing what the hon. member could do, if he desired to make the investigations.

Mr. Cross: It is remarkable that you said nothing about it at the time.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not intend to enlarge on that phase because undoubtedly the blunder was made. It will mean that, as the Minister has just told us we are converting to 50-cycles, a very large loss

will be incurred by every owner of a factory in Perth. They will have either to replace their present motors by new plant or have them so considerably altered that the owners will be involved in very considerable outlays.

The Minister for Justice: Kalgoorlie has the 40-cycles.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Quite possibly, but the Government is not the only blunderer by any means! As a matter of fact, I had something to do with the electric works at Kalgoorlie. In those days it was the commercial practice to use the 40-cycles, but that was many years ago. I think the change in the commercial world came about 35 years ago. In many instances on the Goldfields—I do not know if it is so now, but the member for Kalgoorlie will be aware of the position—machinery is still there although it was put in over 40 years ago.

Turning now to a consideration of the very regrettable breakdown, I shall endeavour to point out to what extent blame must attach not to those who are operating the plant but to those who determined the policy of relying upon a particular class of machinery to carry out certain duties. I think we all remember that in 1936 or 1937 when the new 25,000 kilowatt plant was installed, there was a general attempt made by way of advertisement and otherwise to increase the consumption of electricity. I can remember the slogan that was displayed all over the place—"Buy More Electricity." It appeared on the tramcars and on the walls of buildings. The reason for it was that at that time the estimated capacity of the plant was a good deal in excess of the then demand by the public for the supply of current. The result of that propaganda was very successful, and the response by the public could aptly be described as magnificent. The department went on with the policy it was forced to adopt to enable it to meet the demand. It will be a matter of great interest to discover to what extent it coped with the situation. There was no suggestion that some increased plant might become necessary. I should very much like to know—perhaps some day the Minister may be able to tell us—what was the capacity of the plant in 1939. I am not referring merely to the 25,000 kilowatt plant, but to the whole lot.

The Minister for Works: It was 57,000 kilowatts.

Hon. N. KEENAN: And what was the load? What was the actual amount called for by the public, by those who had established factories and relied upon electric power because they had been invited to do so, and also by those who had installed electric lighting facilities in their homes as they had been asked to do so? Generally speaking, what was the consumption demand for electrical supplies that were available? I believe, and it is a matter of general belief, that the load was almost equivalent to the full capacity of the plant—and the result, of course, was inevitable. Naturally the load could not have been to full capacity, because in that event the smallest breakdown of the smallest unit would have brought about disaster. On the other hand, the load was almost the equivalent of the full capacity of the plant in the sense that only a small margin of safety was left, and what exactly that margin of safety would be is a matter of interest to those who are making inquiries.

I admit there was some justification in some respects for the statement made by the Minister. He said that all these matters would have been rectified but for the war, and that the Government would, but for that, have obtained additional plant and thus been in a position to ensure a proper margin of safety. If those concerned had been associated with private enterprise, I do not think much value would have been attached to that excuse. It would have been said that those responsible should have looked after that phase from the start and laid down the principle that the load should never exceed a certain figure, which would have been well within the margin of safety. Upon inquiry, I find that private enterprise throughout Australia was able to increase plant during the war. That applied also to municipal enterprises. In other words, there had been a big increase in consumption not only in Western Australia but throughout the Commonwealth. That applied not only in respect of industrial and local governing undertakings but of private consumers who had increasingly availed themselves of electric power for radiators and other forms of electrical equipment, much of which had come into use in recent years. All this meant a great increase in the use of electric current. That happened in Adelaide.

Mr. Styants: There was a special reason for that in Adelaide.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There may have been reasons but it did happen there to a large degree, yet an Adelaide company—I have the figures that I can give to the House—during the war increased—

The Minister for Works: I hope you will tell the whole story.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I will tell it as far as I know it. The Electricity Supply Ltd. in Adelaide is a private enterprise.

Mr. Styants: Not now; it is Government-owned.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It was a private enterprise when what I am about to relate happened. That company increased its output during the war by not less than 50 per cent., and its capacity by a 12,000 kilowatt turbo alternator in June 1942—in the very middle of the war. In fact, June was one of the very worst months of the war, as the Japanese had made their attack and carried it down almost to the very shores of Australia. Not only did the company do that, but it installed two large boilers for the purpose of getting power for the new plant. The boilers were installed in 1940. The total increase of the plant's capacity was 50 per cent. above the pre-war figure.

The Minister for Works: I doubt that.

Mr. Styants: Why was the company able to do it?

Hon. N. KEENAN: The reason is that as soon as the capacity was just above the load the company took steps at once.

The Minister for Works: The Commonwealth Government took the steps because of the establishment of a large munitions industry in Adelaide.

Mr. Styants: It was a No. 1 priority.

Hon. N. KEENAN: What was the priority here? One can always trot out the fact that something is a No. 1 priority.

The Minister for Works: Everyone knows that there was a great aggregation of munitions industries set up in Adelaide.

Hon. N. KEENAN: What about the annex at Midland Junction and the small arms factory at Welshpool?

Mr. Watts: Did you ever ask for any new plant?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The municipal works at Brisbane were also considerably increased during the war period. The growth in output at the Brisbane City Council power house from the beginning of the war to June, 1946, was 53 per cent. It is not .1 per cent. here.

The Minister for Works: The increased output here was at least 33 per cent.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The increase in capacity—

The Minister for Works: You were talking about increased output, which is a different thing altogether.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. That is correct. The increase in capacity in the municipal works at Brisbane was from 37,500 to 56,250 kilowatts, a very substantial increase. I have not worked out the percentage, but it is clearly over 50 per cent. Our capacity, as I say, has not increased at all.

The Minister for Works: It increased just before the war by 100 per cent.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In the case of the Bulimba power house, the load increased from 1939 to 1946 by 102 per cent. The capacity increased from 30,000 to 40,000 kilowatts, again a very considerable increase, and during the war. Therefore, the excuse of the war is really only an excuse; it is not an explanation.

The Minister for Works: That is not true.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It remains simply as an excuse.

The Minister for Works: That is not true.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is my version.

The Minister for Works: Of course it is. That does not make it true.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I ask that my version be accepted as correct.

The Minister for Works: It is not true.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I speak not as an expert nor as one who can speak with extreme accuracy; I acquired my information just as any other member would acquire his, by inquiring, and I am told that no plant should ever allow the margin of safety to be less than 33 per cent., which should be the very lowest figure available over the load. If it is not possible to have that margin standing by, then the units of the plant should be so adjusted that they will be balanced;

for instance, instead of having one 25,000 kilowatt machine, there should be two 12,500 kilowatt machines. These would be more expensive to work, but only one of the two under normal conditions would break down at the same time. If one did break down the other would be available to fall back on. We have installed here the excellent new machine of 25,000 kilowatts; we have the old machine and some scraps of units which apparently were of very little effect at any time.

What I wish to know is why more foresight was not shown, why it was not anticipated that the demand caused by the advertisements to which I referred, would be so flattering and therefore would impose a large load on the plant, and why provision was not made at once to increase the margin of safety. No such provision was made and that is a matter not of criticism of the men, not of criticism even of those in control of the plant, but of policy. It certainly requires answering. Again, the Minister told us tonight—and it is common knowledge—that this 12,500 kilowatt plant, although there was a slackening of the demand when the war came to an end, was not repaired during the whole interval of nearly six months. It is said that that failure to repair it was due to the fact that some parts were unobtainable in Australia and apparently could not be shipped from England. But if the position had been properly appreciated, what could have been done was to order those parts to be sent out here by air for the purpose of making the 12,500 kilowatt machine available immediately. That was not done and we have heard no reason suggesting why it was not done.

I do not want to labour this matter, because all that the public wants to know are the real facts and we can only guess at them so far. We are told some small version which may or may not be accurate; we are left in the dark. The public wants to know why in a matter of so great importance it should be left in the dark. It was suggested by the Minister that because we have an Electricity Commission the matter could be left to it, but I submit that is a most hopeless proposition. It is asking men to criticise themselves, and whoever has done that? It is unreasonable to ask the Electricity Commission to sit in judgment on its own acts. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that

the members of that Commission have only been appointed very recently; the Commission has been in existence for only a short time and can in no sense be held responsible for what happened in the war years or in the year that has elapsed since, or the greater portion of that year. Therefore, that suggestion is of no use for the purpose of answering what I consider to be a very legitimate demand for an open inquiry into the cause of the breakdown.

The cause, in my opinion, whether I am right or wrong, was simply overloading the machine and asking it to do too much, and not having a proper margin of safety to enable that overloading to be avoided. Of course, we have the fact at the very outset that the capacity of the plant was insufficient to carry out the policy which it was intended to carry out. I, for instance, would personally like to know if the engineer in chief, or the engineers in chief, or any other technical officer, was ever asked to report to the Government whether, in fact, the capacity of the plant was sufficient to meet the growing demand; and whether, if that suggestion were made, why it was neglected and not given effect to. The Minister has undoubtedly conjured up some comforting thoughts that this will not happen again.

The Minister for Works: The Minister did not say that.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I did not say the Minister said it. I am translating his thoughts for him.

The Minister for Works: You are pretty good at straying from the truth when it suits you.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister said that we could be quiet and placid; we need not bother our heads about what is happening, all will be right in the future—in two and a half years' time or in some such period, when the plant at South Fremantle will be erected and running. But that is not the right reply to the charge or criticism. It cannot be answered in that way because the point is this: Why was this allowed to happen? Why was a load put on the machinery without any possibility of the supply being made available under then existing conditions? How did that happen? Was it done by the policy of the Government of the day to keep the supply up? Did

the Government say, "It does not matter what risk you take. Keep up the supply"! Or was it that the proper technical officers did not advise the Government that the load was so excessive. Whichever way it was, an inquiry would discover the truth.

There is only one other matter about which I would like to say a word or two, and it is that if an inquiry takes place, beside the actual matter covered by the motion moved by the member for Claremont, it might well be that the inquiry might cover also the fact that accidents are far too common at the East Perth power house, accidents of a character sometimes fatal, for I believe one man was burnt to death at the power-house. It is very regrettable; but nearly all regrettable matters have a cause, and if the cause is removed, the danger of a recurrence will also be removed. The main question is that raised in the motion, namely, what is the policy of the Government, and how does that policy differ for the future from what has been pursued in the past? Are we to run this plant up to its deadly limit, knowing full well that we are taking a risk but hoping that the risk will not go wrong? That is what happened when the breakdown took place. For at least six months, or possibly eight or nine months, we were taking a risk.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: For three months!

Hon. N. KEENAN: We were taking that risk of a breakdown in the plant.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Only for three months when the second unit was out of commission.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The second unit came into commission in 21 days after the plant broke down. The 12,500 kilowatt unit was laid by for more than six months.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: No, for three or four months.

Hon. N. KEENAN: And all the time we were taking a risk. We were carrying on the plant at full load without the ghost of a chance, if anything happened, of saving the position. Is it not reasonable to assume that something will happen? The Minister has said that no-one could foresee the breakdown in the plant. No-one could eventually foresee it, but any ordinary person will tell you that if you use an electric plant to its full capacity, or even a steam engine to its full capacity—a steam engine is tougher than an electrical generating plant—the day

will arrive when it will break down. A plant cannot go full speed ahead all the time and continue to function efficiently. The public want to know about these matters, and surely they have a legitimate right to know. They want to know why that risk was taken and why there was not a larger margin of safety.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Because it would cost about a million and a half to get another plant, and it was not easy to get one.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In the first place, the authorities need not have taken the orders for the supply of current. The hon. member seems to assume that if any person asked for a supply of electricity and the granting of that supply thereby increased the load beyond the safety margin, he was still bound to give that supply.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It was not beyond the safety margin.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It was so far beyond it that there was no hope, when the plant broke down, of giving anything more than a small supply from little units which have been there from ancient days. That required foresight. It was a gamble on the possibility of doing things which might have got through but did not get through. The public are entitled to know about these things.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Would you refuse to give power to industry if it wanted it?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is a pertinent question. Would I refuse to give current to industry if people wanted it? Certainly I would refuse if that increased the rate of consumption beyond the safety point.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: But it had not.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is what happened, and we want to know why. It may be that whoever was in charge, the Minister for instance, was very enthusiastic about giving power to new factories, or factories that were increasing their output, and was prepared to take the risk and give that new power because he thereby got what he conceived to be a great gain in secondary industries. That may be so.

The Minister for Works: That is not correct.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It may be justified but it is not to be justified from the point of view of the public. That is what they want to know.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The plant ran for eight years without a breakdown.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member had better address the Chair.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I propose to do so, and also propose to ask that my left flank be protected from fire. I will not detain the House longer, but I reassert that the Nedlands Road Board is only desirous of having an inquiry because it is a case which really is one of a major disaster. It desires that inquiry be made so that no such occurrence may repeat itself in the future. I hope the motion will be agreed to.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [5.50]: Since I have been in this Chamber I have respected the opinions of the member for Nedlands, but on this occasion he has done something which is out of the ordinary for him, namely, he has dabbled in a subject of which he knows very little.

Mr. Mann: Of whom are you speaking?

Mr. CROSS: In cases of that kind, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Mr. Watts: That is what we thought about you.

Mr. CROSS: This move for an inquiry was sponsored by a man with no knowledge at all. I notice that the inspiration for the motion came first of all from the Nedlands Road Board.

Mr. Watts: You have been fortified by the Minister with all kinds of information.

Mr. CROSS: The road board asked for an inquiry into the present restrictions of electricity and as it concerned the Nedlands district in particular.

Mr. Watts: I wish you would give me the file; I would make better use of it.

Mr. CROSS: It went on to refer to the delay in ascertaining the real fault and cause of the breakdown. I suppose I am in a fortunate position in that some of the technicians at the East Perth power station are not only in my electorate but are close friends of mine. I may therefore have information which the member for Nedlands did not have. It is all very well to find fault and become wise after the event. The hon. member spoke about conversion from the 40-cycle to the 50-cycle frequency, and told us of the disadvantages of the 40-cycle

rate. I point out that that was discovered ten years ago, but the hon. member said very little about it then. I can also recollect that when he was a member of a previous Government, we had the 40-cycle frequency. That was at a time when the electricity system in Perth was in its infancy but he did nothing about the matter then.

Mr. Abbott: Other members on this side did.

Mr. J. Hegney: Give them the facts.

Mr. CROSS: This is a case of there being fatigue in steel. Some members may know that it is hardly possible to give a reason for fatigue in steel. A motorcar which runs over corrugated roads may suddenly break an axle without warning merely because of fatigue that has developed in the steel. Technicians nearly all agree that such a fault is something that can be expected, even in normal circumstances, although it is of extremely rare occurrence. In the ordinary course of events, such a fault is not expected to develop in a generator until the machine has run for 11,000 or 12,000 hours without stopping for inspection, and even then the fault would probably not have developed. I would like to remind the member for Nedlands of something he does know, namely that a 15,000 kilowatt machine was ordered from Great Britain in 1938 and that it was delivered in 1940 and put into operation.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You mean the 25,000 kilowatt plant?

Mr. CROSS: Yes. Does the hon. member also know that the Electricity Department was making inquiries in Great Britain in 1939 with a view to securing another machine?

Mr. Mann: How did you know?

Mr. CROSS: Does he also know that early in 1940, when the machine ordered in 1938 was installed, that Great Britain absolutely shut down on the export of generators? During the war the purchase and import of all power generating plants were under the direct control of the Commonwealth Government. Not one of these plants could be imported from Great Britain, except under license. Machines that were due to go from England to China early in 1940 were kept back. In London and Manchester they have what is known as the grid system. That could not be used here because we have only

one power house. The idea of establishing a power station at South Fremantle is to enable the metropolitan area also to work on the grid system.

In Great Britain, as many as seven, eight or nine power houses are linked under the one system. It may be that each of these has a generating capacity of 20,000 kilowatts. If the power breaks down in one city, seeing that it is connected with other cities on the system, the necessary power can be sent through to that place at which the breakdown has occurred. Experts declare that this is the best way to handle the business. They also find that the 50-cycle frequency is better in every way than is the 40-cycle. In Western Australia in the dim and distant past, when the old power house at East Perth was taken over and when the late Mr. Tom Molloy entered into a contract to buy current from the Government, the 40-cycle system was in operation. It has not been altered since. No Government has been game to face the alteration because of the almost prohibitive cost. We find the same position in private business. If a man starts with one set of machinery and, in order to effect a complete change over to some more modern machinery it will cost him a lot of money, he is reluctant to scrap the old plant, and continues to try to manage under the old system. If there had been a change-over at East Perth to the 50-cycle frequency, we would have had a torrent of abuse from the Opposition because of the waste of money. They would have said, "Fancy throwing away plant worth approximately £1,000,000 in a time like this!" They would have been horrified.

Mr. Mann: You are not helping the Government much, I am sorry to say.

Mr. J. Hegney: He is drawing the Opposition case.

Mr. CROSS: The Opposition never had a case.

Mr. Mann: If so, why do you not sit down?

Mr. CROSS: The department has taken every step that was possible in the circumstances. Members opposite speak of the 25,000-kilowatt plant as though it was the only unit in the power house. The establishment there already has generators which can generate a total of 57,000 kilowatts, not only 37,500. What has happened

in Perth has been going on for years. During the war the department foresaw that more power generating units were required. Every effort was made to get the additional plant but it was not possible to secure it. Then the Americans came to Western Australia in great numbers. Has the member for Nedlands any idea of the volume of current used by our allies? At one stage, the Americans were using nearly as much current as the rest of the metropolitan area. All that extra load was put upon the power house and could not have been foreseen by anyone. No-one could foresee the war in the Pacific in 1942. In any case, the department in 1940 was attempting to get units which ordinarily would have been installed in 1942. It was impossible to get those units because the position in Great Britain had deteriorated to such an extent with bombing and losses of one or two power houses that the Government refused to allow any generating plants to leave that country. Then they were put on to making other things. I need not detail what happened in Great Britain.

Mr. Watts: You do not know.

Mr. CROSS: Members know what the position was in Great Britain after Dunkirk. The people of Great Britain had to go without many things in order to deal with matters of greater urgency, and that affected Western Australia. The war lasted for six years and in the meantime not only did the Americans come here and use a considerable amount of current, but a lot of new industries sprang up, including the munitions works at Welshpool.

Mr. Watts: Nothing to speak of; the Minister told us that.

The Minister for Works: I said it was nothing by comparison with the metropolitan area of Adelaide.

Mr. CROSS: The position is that this motion was born in ignorance and the member for Nedlands passed it on. He is a man who is generally well versed in his subject, but on this occasion he knew little of what he was talking about. I think he spoke with his tongue in his cheek, because he is not a man of mean capacity. He would realise that there has been a great increase in the consumption of electricity and would know that the Americans put an extra strain on the already limited capacity. I think it was ridiculous to bring up the

motion, because anybody with commonsense would understand that, there having been a long war, even today many things are unobtainable or in short supply.

Mr. Thorn: I can imagine what you would have done if South Perth had asked you to bring up the motion. You would have been tearing the place to pieces.

Mr. CROSS: I was probably the cause of South Perth not bringing it up.

Mr. Thorn: Then they had complaints.

Mr. CROSS: Some of the technicians there were able to advise the road board members. The people of South Perth are not so foolish as those of some other places. I notice, in the motion put up by the Nedlands Road Board, that it wanted an inquiry into the subject in Nedlands in particular. There is not one factory in Nedlands and nothing is produced there. Nedlands should be the first place to be deprived of current, because it would only affect the residential population. Anything that affected the snobs in Nedlands—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think we will discuss Nedlands.

Mr. CROSS: Very well!

Mr. Thorn: You are flying in pretty high society yourself.

Mr. Mann: It is very high society.

Mr. CROSS: I oppose the motion before the House.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [6.4]: I listened with considerable interest to the able speech of the Minister for Works. He certainly tackled his job in an efficient manner and to some extent succeeded, but he dealt only with the point that was strongest in his case, that owing to the war the Government could do nothing to replace the plant. I notice that the member for Canning dealt with it from the same aspect, but that is not the only aspect dealt with in the motion. What I and the public want to know is, if the Government knew the position why did it not take steps to warn the public and allow the manufacturers to anticipate and prevent the loss that occurred? I have been informed by one manufacturer that not long ago he asked the department whether it was advisable for him to scrap his plant, and he was told that there was no reason

why he should not do so. If the Government was warned by its experts, as apparently it was, because the argument of the member for Canning was that the Government had been seeking to obtain increased plant which could only be explained by its knowing of the dangerous situation, what steps did it take?

I want to know what risk the public will run in the future. The Minister adopted a very careful attitude in this respect, and did not deal with that aspect. When it was suggested that he had, he immediately said that he had not done so; I agree that he had not done so; it was carefully left alone. All he said was that some portion of the community was in touch with the Commission. I do not think that is sufficient, that one section of the community—the manufacturers—should be the only ones to know what risk they run of future trouble of this character. I say a public inquiry is warranted so that not only manufacturers, who take thousands of units, may know whether the plant is likely to be closed down in future, but also that the housewives may know so that they can get in a few extra candles. The average housewife was put to no end of trouble to provide illumination, and candles were even sent here from the Eastern States. If there is any possibility of a breakdown in future no doubt the merchants will take steps to see that there are some means of illumination and cooking available, so that the average housewife should also have warning.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It is like a motorist seeing the undertaker before going out on the road.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is a weak argument, but I suggest it is similar to the inspection carried out on an aircraft before it takes off. After an aircraft has been in use for a certain time it is taken down, to have weak points dealt with. I think it is only reasonable to know the possibilities. It may be—the Minister rather suggested it—that there is no reasonable risk for the future.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: There are possibilities, but not probabilities.

Mr. ABBOTT: The Minister did not say so. In fact he took steps to deny that he had said so. I want to know whether the plant will go for another 10 or 12 years, in all probability.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: There have been similar occurrences in other parts of the world.

Mr. ABBOTT: The member for Canning commented that no objection had been placed before the Government of the day regarding the installation of the 40-cycle units. If he had been in the House or had listened he would know that the mover of this motion pointed that out in 1926. I quote from "Hansard" of that year, Volume 1, page 716, where the member for Claremont is reported as having said—

It deals with an equally important question that is now commencing to form one of our disabilities, namely the standardisation of electrical power in Western Australia.

So even in those days there was a warning given from this side of the House.

Mr. Cross: There was nothing done from that side of the House.

Mr. ABBOTT: Except to warn the Government, and that is the object of this motion, to warn the Government and the public. If an inquiry had been held in those days, it is possible that the tragedy of not changing over to 50-cycles in 1926 would not have occurred. I commend this motion to the House and hope the Government will face a public inquiry, and not permit the motion to be defeated.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [6.10]: I do not know whether the Minister quite realises the intense public concern about the electricity supplies of the metropolitan area. I have met with it everywhere, in shops, in houses and in small industries in my constituency. I am not only concerned as to why the breakdown happened. The people want to know whether it will happen again, and the Minister can give us no assurance that it will not recur. This motion is a constructive one. It is not a heresy hunt but asks us to look at the past in order to learn lessons for the future, with which we are all concerned. If, as the Minister suggests, every possible foresight has been exercised and every endeavour made to secure adequate supplies or coverage or safety, then by all means let us have this inquiry, and the result will be that those whose policy has been questioned will be completely vindicated. What is there to fear on what the Minister says? I tell the Minister most emphatically that the people

expect Parliament to make some inquiry into the matter. I should not like to vote in order to stifle that inquiry.

The Minister for Works: Only two local authorities took the matter up, despite all the urging.

Mr. McDONALD: I am concerned with the ordinary people in the streets, the old and infirm, those in little shops or factories, those who shared in the loss of £600,000 which was estimated to be the industrial loss in this State through that stoppage. I am concerned also that we should not, with the best intentions, commit such blunders in the future. I admit in advance to the member for Canning that I know nothing about electricity. All I know about it is what some people who do understand it have told me, and what the people are saying. I would like to be assured that the Fremantle power house is justified. I have heard it said that, after the experience of the recent war, it is a complete mistake to put a power house on the coast. I have heard it said that the obvious place—I know there are difficulties about water supply, but they might be overcome—to put such a power house is Collie, which is inland and safe from aggression by air, where it would be adjacent to coal supplies.

The Minister for Works: How many seconds would it take planes to go from Bunbury to Collie?

Mr. McDONALD: It would not take long but, as in the battle for Britain, it might be difficult for them to get there.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [7.30]: The breakdown in the power plant at East Perth was a most unfortunate occurrence and it would be difficult to find anyone, in the metropolitan area particularly, who was not adversely affected by it. It was not my intention to speak on the motion but for the specious reasoning indulged in by the member for Nedlands. He touched on a matter of which I have some firsthand information. It arose out of the question: If the power station that supplies Adelaide and the area for a considerable distance around Adelaide could get replacements and additional machinery for the purpose of generating more current, why could not the State-

owned power house at East Perth have done likewise, the implication being some inefficiency or neglect on the part of the Government-owned concern at East Perth?

Whilst I was in Adelaide in May of this year making certain personal inquiries, not at the expense of the State, regarding the better use of outports and the provision of better facilities for them, I was shown over Port Adelaide by the General Manager of the South Australian Harbours Board. I went to the electric power and gas station and saw there a very up-to-date method of handling coal. I learnt something about the extensions to the station and the additional output created during the period of the war. It is significant, as was pointed out by the member for Nedlands, that this additional machinery and great increase in output was obtained about 1942. However, that was coincident with the Commonwealth's intention to place a large number of war industries in and around Adelaide because of its favourable geographical position. If it were possible to find any part of Australia likely to be immune from bombing attacks, it would be around the southern part of the central State, which would be the region of Adelaide. I found that it was not the company that obtained the additional machinery; it was the Commonwealth that got it for the company.

The Commonwealth realised that it was absolutely essential to make machinery available because Australia, to a great extent, had been thrown on its own resources to supply munitions and materials of war. The efforts made by the company during the war period, despite all the priorities it had received, were so displeasing that a Bill was introduced in the South Australian Parliament providing for the compulsory acquirement of the works. Speaking from memory, I think the first time the Bill was presented to the Parliament of South Australia it was defeated by one vote in the Legislative Council, but since then another measure has been introduced, and I understand that the Adelaide electric lighting works have now been taken over by the State Government.

The very fact that the East Perth power house was able to increase its output during the war by 33 per cent. without any additional machinery is something of which those responsible might well be proud.

True, as the member for Nedlands said, additional plant has not been installed at East Perth since about 1938.

Mr. Cross: The 25,000 kilowatt set was installed in 1940.

Mr. STYANTS: Well, 1940; but I still say that much credit is due to those responsible for their having achieved such an output. The member for Nedlands said that we should have got additional machinery and plant to prevent the continual overloading of the station. The East Perth power plant was not the only machinery that was overloaded during the war period. It would be just as logical to ask why we did not get additional locomotives during the war period, because they were being worn to a condition of breaking down practically every third or fourth run they made. They were doing excessive mileages. We had the same experience with the Diesel electric rail cars. They covered enormous mileages, and there was insufficient time between trips to permit of their receiving the maintenance attention they required. The same thing applied to trolley buses and trams. Private transport companies also experienced similar difficulties in maintaining their petrol buses and other means of transport. They had great difficulty in keeping the engines in order, keeping the running parts going and obtaining tyres.

Not only did the East Perth power plant have forced upon it the duty of increasing its capacity and running to meet an overloaded demand; other sections of our machinery, even to tractors on farms and that sort of thing, were overloaded during the war period. Consequently it is unfair to say that we should have been able to get additional machinery for the power station. We secured a certain amount of war industry in Western Australia, but I should say, after having journeyed around Adelaide for a day, that we did not get one hundredth part for the war industry in this State to use additional current, of what was obtained in South Australia. This particular type of machinery came from England, and England experienced all the difficulties that we had in order to keep her transport running, and, in addition had nightly and often day and night bombing to contend with. Consequently her manufacturers were altogether too busy to supply us with additional plant or replacements.

The member for Nedlands said there was a demand from the public to know the cause of the breakdown. I do not think there is a demand of that sort at all. What the public is demanding is an assurance that all possible precautions are being taken to ensure that there will not be a recurrence, and the Minister has given an assurance to that effect. He said that everything possible was being done to prevent another breakdown. It must be understood that breakdowns and failures are incidental to all types of machinery, no matter how good it may be.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Even motorcars.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes; motorcars, Diesel engines, internal combustion engines, aeroplane engines—possibly the finest type of engines in the world—fail for some unforeseen reason or other. Breakdowns are incidental to any sort of machinery. Taken all round, I consider that the East Perth station did an excellent job during the war, and I do not think that any post-mortem at this stage would be of value to anybody. We have the assurance of the Minister that everything possible has been done and is being done to guard against the occurrence of another breakdown, and he has also assured us that if a breakdown does occur it will be remedied at the earliest possible moment.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [7.41]: The member for Kalgoorlie repeated more than once that he had the Minister's assurance that everything possible was being done to prevent a recurrence of what took place—the subject of this motion. Am I to understand from his statement that he is not satisfied that, before the breakdown took place, everything possible was being done to prevent its happening? Did he intend to convey that the assurance he has now received has improved the position for the future as against the position in the past?

Mr. Styants: No; conditions have improved.

Mr. WATTS: Not according to the Minister for Works.

Mr. Mann: According to him there cannot be an improvement for a couple of years.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister painted a picture to the effect that, before this matter can be brought to a solution, 2½ or three years

may elapse, and he is trying in all countries to get hold of some sort of plant, which may or may not be available, and in any event will not be of the most modern and suitable type, to prevent a repetition of the situation that arose three months ago. I am one of those who are not very much concerned as to the excuses that can be put forward for what took place. I am reminded by the speech of the member for Canning of the statement attributed to the Duke of Wellington, "He that is good at making excuses is good for nothing else."

Mr. Thorn: A distant relation?

Mr. WATTS: May be so, but it is applicable to the hon. member, because he certainly seized the whitewash brush and, in the manner of the most complete artist-painter, he proceeded to whitewash the sins of omission and commission to which the member for Nedlands had made reference. The hon. member was supplied with the necessary paint before he started, supplied by the Minister for Works.

The Minister for Works: That is not true.

Mr. WATTS: And even then he did not make a very great success of the performance because, towards the conclusion, he began being insulting to his fellow citizens in another part of the metropolitan area, which is nothing for the member for Canning.

The Minister for Works: The only information the hon. member had from me was the terms of the motion carried by the Nedlands Road Board.

Mr. WATTS: What I am interested in is this: The people of the metropolitan area were put to the greatest inconvenience, loss and expense that at that period of the year could be imagined by what was virtually a complete failure of the power and lighting plant on which they have been obliged to rely over a period of a good many years. If the breakdown had taken place in the summer instead of in the middle of May when the winter was upon us, I would not like to suggest what would have been the loss to this community in comparison with what it was. And the only assurance that we can receive from the Minister up to this stage is that every step possible is being taken to prevent a recurrence. Was not every step possible being taken to prevent the happening before it occurred in May last?

The Minister for Justice: Yes.

Mr. WATTS: Exactly! I am not inclined to deny it. What guarantee have we and what guarantee have the people of this metropolitan district that the same precautions being taken now will not result in another breakdown of a similar or worse character in the course of the next three months?

The Minister for Justice: What guarantee have you got that a motorcar will not break down?

Mr. WATTS: It was because the Nedlands Road Board and the Claremont Municipal Council desired to prevent that state of affairs from occurring, that they sought, though perhaps not in the choicest phraseology which would meet with the approval of the hon. gentleman sitting opposite to me—but at least in words they understood themselves—to obtain an assurance by inquiry and the publication of the facts. In my view, if the record of the Government in this matter is as clear as the exponents of the Government's case would wish us to believe, then there is no sufficient reason why the whole of the facts should not, by the earliest inquiry, be placed before the public to the complete satisfaction of the Government in those circumstances and, I take it, to the satisfaction of the members of this House. If the Government is unwilling to submit this matter to any inquiry at all, then, in my opinion, it is the strongest circumstantial evidence that there is something in the record of management of this affair which the Government is not prepared to disclose to the people of this State.

Mr. Cross: It would be an absolute waste of time!

Mr. WATTS: When I came to this Chamber this evening I had by no means made up my mind that I would vote for this motion, because it will be remembered that I had taken no part in any public discussion on this matter hitherto. But for the reasons I have just given, based on the attitude of the Government in its resentment of any proposal for an inquiry, I am convinced that there is the need for an inquiry and I shall certainly vote for the motion.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [7.48]: My remarks on this motion will be exceedingly brief. The feature that has struck me most

in connection with the debate, and in fact with the raising of the question at all, is the remarkable fact that only within recent months this Parliament agreed to vest an entirely new authority with the responsibility of managing and organising the electricity supplies of the metropolitan area and elsewhere. Yet almost before that authority has settled down to its task it is suggested that a committee of laymen—that is, a Select Committee of this House—could better ferret out the causes of the dislocation to electricity supplies earlier in the year and make recommendations with regard to action to be taken in the future to prevent any recurrence of such trouble. That fact in itself is an unwarranted vote of no confidence in that body so recently created by the deliberate act of this Parliament. The Minister for Works demonstrated clearly to any member who wished to take cognisance of the facts that it has been utterly impossible for the past half dozen years or so for the Government or any instrumentality responsible for the generation of electricity to procure from any part of the world those additions and renewals to plant and machinery that might have been necessary in order to guard against the occurrence of only a few months ago.

When we bear in mind the facts that have been revealed to us—that the unfortunate happening was one of those rare misfortunes that can occur and one which may not happen again in a considerable period of years; and the impossibility of securing replacements and parts generally, together with the terrific strain upon the East Perth power station plant, I feel there is very little cause for complaint. I repeat that every single member of this Chamber knows full well the difficult task—in fact the impossibility—of the Government making satisfactory arrangements for renewals, replacements or additions to the plant at East Perth on account of war conditions.

The Minister for Works: The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nedlands are so clever at foreseeing breakdowns that each carries a spare pair of braces in his pocket.

Mr. GRAHAM: That interjection might be particularly appropriate, as I believe it to be. There has been no general public demand for any such inquiry. It was stated

by the member for Claremont that this subject arose largely from the request of local governing authorities—that is, two of them—that operate in the territory under his jurisdiction. I have said on previous occasions that I refuse to be impressed by representations from those particular organisations. After all, local governing authorities exist because of the wish and at the will of the State Parliament. They have certain responsibilities and powers delegated to them, and they operate over a limited sphere—that is, in their road board or municipal council district. It is an impertinence on the part of these people to suggest to the Government of this State how best it can govern this State. Local governing authorities would resent this Parliament telling the Cottesloe Municipal Council or the Nedlands Road Board or the Claremont council or any other local authority what it should do with regard to purely local or domestic matters which it had the power to discharge under the charter given to it by this Parliament.

I, for one, irrespective of the matter under discussion, am not going to lend any helping hand to the carping critics of local governing bodies or to those inspired moves by people who I believe are motivated largely by a desire to discredit the Government or belittle the State Parliament. These attacks by local governing bodies are, to my mind, all too frequent, and I would suggest that we should in no uncertain manner, notwithstanding the good intentions of the member for Claremont—which I do not intend to belittle in any way—indicate to local governing bodies that they have a particular function to fulfil with regard to a particular area; in other words, that we should tell them to mind their own business.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [7.55]: I would not have spoken except for the extraordinary remarks of the youthful member for East Perth.

Mr. Withers: What has he done now?

MR. MANN: It is a sad reflection on the people of this State and particularly on local governing bodies which have played a very prominent part in the development of Western Australia that they should be told they have no right to raise a matter like this before Parliament. This Parlia-

ment has the glorified position of the supreme power over the whole State; but I say without any disrespect to Parliament that the work of local authorities is just as sincere and probably of a higher degree than that of Parliament, because there does not exist in those local authorities the filthy party bias that has been exhibited here tonight. Those bodies consist of men who desire to help their particular districts. The remarks of the member for East Perth are some of the most objectionable I have heard made about local governing bodies, but they are characteristic of the man who made them. As for the member for Canning—

Mr. J. Hegney: You cannot discuss him!

MR. MANN: The Speaker will keep me in order. The reason I support the member for Claremont is this: If there is nothing to hide, why is the Government concerned about concealing the cause of the breakdown?

The Minister for Works: Let us have an inquiry every day about everything!

MR. MANN: No. I suppose this is the first time any inquiry has been sought on a matter like this. What about the people of the metropolitan area during the breakdown—the people who had no electric light, no gas and no trams and who were in a hopeless position? This is not a vote of no confidence.

Mr. J. Hegney: What else is it?

MR. MANN: What a childish idea the hon. member has! What a warped idea! If this were a vote of no confidence, I say candidly I would not support it; but it is not a vote of no confidence.

Mr. J. Hegney: What else is it?

Mr. Cross: It is an inquiry sought from political motives.

MR. MANN: It is not! Few members are so politically biased as the member for Canning. He refers to the snobs of Nedlands, but he himself desires to float in very high society. He knows where he would perch himself if he could. The member for Kalgoorlie seemed to whitewash the Government, too, but it should not be a question of whitewashing the Government. Let us have an inquiry either by a Royal Commission or a Select Committee and let us find out what the whole trouble is. We should find out what the position is so that we can prevent its happening again.

Mr. Thorn: If the position had been reversed there would have been a vote of no confidence on this side of the House.

Mr. MANN: If this party were on the Government bench, there would not be one Labour Party member who would not be flogging this party for all he was worth. It is characteristic of members on that side, but we are not following in their footsteps. The member for Claremont was justified in moving the motion, and I support the remarks of the member for Nedlands. Give us an inquiry; that is all we are asking for.

MR. OWEN (Swan) [7.58]: It is not my intention to delay the House long on this matter, but there is a little information I have been seeking and maybe it would come out of such an inquiry. I am not at present concerned with the cause of the recent breakdown or the three particular points raised in the motion. I think the breakdown was brought about by a set of very unfortunate circumstances; and my little knowledge of electrical matters, and particularly of the generating of electricity, persuade me that it could not altogether have been avoided. The fact that the turbine of the No. 5 generating unit broke down some time prior to the main trouble caused an extra load to be thrown on the other units and no doubt that was responsible for the big breakdown. Unless the operators, or overseers, had electric eyes so that they could see what was inside the moving machinery, it would be impossible for them to know that it was going to break down. I also feel that in the future there is the possibility that the generating plant might again fail; therefore ample reserve units should be provided. But what I am concerned about is that part of the motion, which states:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the existing and estimated future requirements of electric current for power and lighting purposes in the metropolitan area and the adequacy of the existing plant and present authorised extensions to meet such requirements.

Within the Swan electorate there are quite a few extensions which were authorised, and some that were not authorised, but in respect of which the Government accepted a considerable sum of money as a guarantee. Because of the war, some of these extensions

have been postponed. One extension has since been finished and another started, but there are others not yet commenced and we have not been able to ascertain whether there is any possibility of these extensions being made in the near future, with our present plant, or whether they will have to wait until the South Fremantle generating plant is in operation. The people living along the route of these proposed extensions are very concerned. They do not know whether to expect to be supplied with current in the next month, in the next year or in the next three years. We can imagine their position. Some of them require a lot of power and they do not know whether to install other forms of power, such as Diesel or oil engines. If they go to the expense of installing other power—costing in many cases £200 or £300—and the electric current becomes available within a few months, they will have wasted their efforts and money. Although I am not altogether enamoured of the idea of having this inquiry, I would like to have that information. If it could be given, I, and many of my constituents, would know what to expect in the future and could take action to bring our properties up-to-date in regard to power. I would like to have that information whether it be made available with or without a Select Committee.

MR. HILL (Albany) [8.3]: I wholeheartedly support the motion. I sometimes think of a remark made by Mr. Winston Churchill on one of his American visits when he told the people of America—

I, like the President of the United States, am the servant of the people. I would be sorry to see the position reversed.

Sometimes one would be inclined to think that the position is reversed in this State, and that members of Parliament and Ministers are not the servants of the people.

Mr. J. Hegney: Who said we are not?

Mr. HILL: The attitude of some of our Ministers would make us believe that they, and not the people, are the masters.

Mr. Thorn: That is right.

The Minister for Works: Terrific!

Mr. HILL: I feel that this inquiry should be made.

Mr. Withers: By a Select Committee or by a Royal Commission?

Mr. HILL: Parliament can decide who shall hold the inquiry.

Mr. Cross: Do you—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HILL: If this inquiry is held and it is shown that the servants of the people have fallen down on the job, they will be blamed for it; if not, they will be exonerated. If I were a Minister I would welcome the proposed inquiry.

The Minister for Works: This is a vote of no confidence in the State Electricity Commission.

MR. NORTH (Claremont—in reply) [8.5]: When the Minister for Works finished his speech, I had rather weakened towards withdrawing the motion. His reply was temperate and he answered, largely, the complaints I had raised. But during the debate other questions have been raised and, in particular, I was concerned at the exuberance of the member for Canning when he began to find that the motion was a ridiculous one and should never have been born in this House. In the ordinary language of the man in the street, it might be said that the whole of this Parliament is ridiculous, but to say so would be unparliamentary, and Mr. Speaker would ask me to withdraw. The famous Bernard Shaw has talked of the "great Parliamentary sham." So it is true that many weeks after the horse has bolted we are asking for an inquiry by laymen. Those laymen would ask a lot of experts the why and wherefore of the position. I can see that side of the matter quite clearly, but this Parliament, like others, is a mirror of the times. We do not come here to be the initiators of things, but to be a big reflection of present-day life. So, when the trouble occurred, two of the local authorities operating in my electorate wrote to me about this motion. I admit quite freely that there is another local authority—Cottesloe—which did not move in the matter. The reason why Claremont and Nedlands moved—and this is my answer to the member for Canning—is that they are purveyors of Government electricity.

The Minister for Works: There is another reason.

Mr. NORTH: The people of Cottesloe buy their current direct from the Government. The local authorities of Claremont and Ned-

lands probably get many complaints on this subject and, until this trouble, many of the people might have believed that their current came from the local bodies. As a consequence, the local authorities wanted to get to the source of their troubles, and the motion has therefore arisen. The most important thing we have learned tonight from the Minister for Works is that the Electricity Commission is now scouting the world for extra plant for the East Perth power house. That in itself is a simple statement that it is not satisfied with the present position. Also I was interested to learn that it is the intention of the Government that, when the new 50,000-unit duplicate plant is installed at Fremantle, there will be added to its output 25,000 units from Perth at 50 cycles, giving 75,000 units to cope with the bulk of the demand, and leaving more than 30,000 units in reserve, at 40 cycles, to take over the other section which will remain on 40 cycles.

Mr. Cross: You mean 40,000 kilowatts.

Mr. NORTH: A kilowatt is a unit. The point there is that we will, when the scheme is in force, have an enlarged supply of current. Other questions were raised during the debate, and there will be still others if a Select Committee is appointed. It is not likely that any member of this Chamber would personally wish for a Select Committee during a session just before an election. I have just come off a Select Committee, of long duration, which dealt with gaols. We spent weeks on the matter and it is not a job one looks for. At the same time, the members of this side of the House have definitely urged the appointment of this committee, and the House should have the opportunity of deciding whether it be appointed or not. If this committee is appointed I am sure we can do much to try to find out a few extra things that the Minister has not told us, and we might even bring forward some new ideas for the State Electricity Commission to follow out.

The Minister for Works: If this motion is carried it will, in effect, be a vote of no confidence in the State Electricity Commission.

Mr. NORTH: If the State Electricity Commission had been in office for the past few years I would agree with the Acting Premier, but, seeing that it has just been formed, I think we could excuse that Com-

mission from any charges while conducting this inquiry. The committee has been asked for and the road board and the council want it.

The Minister for Works: One road board and one council.

Mr. NORTH: I press for a division.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	21

Majority against ..	7
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AYES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Owen
Mr. Brand	Mr. Read
Mr. Hill	Mr. Seward
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Willcock
Mr. North	Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Cross	Mr. Needham
Mr. Fox	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Snyants
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Telfer
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triest
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Withers
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Berry	Mr. Collier
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Wise
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Coverley
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Millington
Mr. Perkins	Mr. Panton

Question thus negatived; the motion defeated.

MOTION—STATE HOTELS.

As to Use as Community Hotels.

Debate resumed from the 14th August on the following motion by Mr. Perkins—

That where a local community desires to take over a State Hotel to be run by it as a "community hotel," on a co-operative basis, giving good service and using profits for financing local amenities, this House considers that the Government should adopt a policy designed to make possible and further this objective.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [8.16]: I intend to support this motion. As a matter of fact, the more one thinks of it—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Justice secured the adjournment.

The Minister for Justice: I do not wish to speak on the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Will the member for Toodyay continue?

Mr. THORN: As a matter of fact, I think it is good business for the Government and for the State to lease or sell these hotels. Last session, when the Estimates were before the House, I suggested to the Government that it get rid of the State hotels either by leasing them or selling them. They would then become a business proposition to the Government and would be on the right side of the ledger. The Government would get a profit from them. As I see the position at present, there are one or two State hotels that are carrying the rest, and that is not a business proposition. In the Eastern States, as mentioned by the member for York, there are a number of community hotels. There is one at Mildura, which is a goldmine and able to support all sorts of social services such as Red Cross and other institutions that are carrying out social work in the district concerned. The same applies further down the Murray at Barmera, where there is an excellent hotel. Recently the Leader of the Opposition and I dined at the community hotel at Nuriootpa in South Australia, which is a good proposition and well conducted.

I believe that this is a very good move, and I am sincere in saying so. I think it is something that the Government could well consider. We have a community hotel at Cunderdin, which is well on the way to prosperity and is paying very well. There are certain aspects about privately-owned or community-conducted hotels as against Government-conducted hotels. After all, the State hotel simply provides jobs for a manager and so many servants. Those people have no interest in the hotel. In the hotel business one wants people who are well fitted for it. The manager must be a man who can act as "mine host" and do all that is possible for his clientele. That is not so in the State hotels. It is just a job, and they carry out the work of serving refreshments over the bar, or meals. That is where it starts and finishes with them.

Mr. Watts: That is particularly so in some State hotels, at all events.

Mr. THORN: There is a State hotel at Bolgart, in my electorate, and what a miser-

able institution it is! It is a disgrace to the Government. I admit that during the war an hotel was a difficult business to conduct, but the small amount of trade at Bolgart means that we find the manager carrying out the whole of the duties of conducting the hotel. Very often he does the yardman's work as well.

Mr. Withers: Do you want to make them all community hotels?

Mr. THORN: We will leave it to the people to decide.

Mr. Withers: Why do you not advocate the community taking over all the State hotels?

Mr. THORN: I will and, if the people will put their money into it, it will be seen that this hotel can be made a success. Today it is no credit to the Government. The State hotels were instituted many years ago. I think we are becoming more progressive as time goes on and when we feel that these hotels should not be a Government instrumentality we should seriously consider putting them under a different scheme. The member for York put up a very good case for Bruce Rock and the Government should seriously consider the proposals. The State Hotels pay neither license fees nor rates. If the hotels were leased, the Government would get the revenue from the license fees and the rental for the buildings, and thus would be doing much better from a financial point of view than at present. I strongly suggest that the proposals be seriously considered with a view to making a start at Bruce Rock. There has been a request from Bruce Rock, so let us consider that first of all, and I am confident that other communities will soon apply to take over the State hotels in their districts.

The Leader of the Opposition and I were recently at Calingiri and were asked by the local people to advise them how to set about getting a community hotel there. If a community hotel were opened there through the efforts of the settlers, it would affect the Wongan Hills and Bolgart hotels considerably. The community in the Calingiri area is entitled to consideration. If the Government were prepared to lease or sell the Wongan Hills hotel to be run as a community hotel, there would be no further move to establish a community hotel

at Calingiri. My remarks have not been uttered in criticism of the Government. Years ago we started off with State butcher shops, fish shops and everything under the sun, and all of them proved a failure. The State Hotels, from the point of view of the State, are also a failure. Consequently, I urge the Government to give serious consideration to the proposal contained in the motion.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [8.22]: I strongly support this request to the Government to grant a local committee the management of the hotel in its centre. When dealing with the Estimates last session, we discovered that many of the State hotels do not pay and some members, at the request of the residents of various country towns, suggested that whilst the State hotels were owned by the whole of the people of Western Australia, much better results would be obtained if they were owned by smaller sections of the people, namely, those in the towns in which the hotels were situated.

We have evidence of the great success of community-owned hotels in other States of the Commonwealth. Committees consisting of local residents together with members of the local governing bodies have taken over the management of hotels for the benefit of the local people and have improved the amenities of their towns. The money required for these amenities, such as infant health centres, kindergartens, playing grounds, libraries and swimming pools would be forthcoming under the management which local people in an honorary capacity would provide in the interests of the community. Community hotels have proved successful in the Eastern States, particularly in South Australia and New South Wales. I have in mind the one mentioned by the member for Toodyay, Nuriootpa, South Australia, which has been the means of providing funds for amenities and for tourist purposes. The hotel has been designed to cater for the travelling public, segregating the bar trade, and families from near and far make that a centre for pleasure. In this way the local people are able to collect revenue from outside the district, and the money is utilised to cater for the enjoyment of the visitors and for the further improvement of the town.

The State Hotels, as conducted at present, are not a benefit to anybody. They are not run in the same way and with the same interest as a hotel is run by a private individual. They cater for the general public in a routine way and the service they provide falls far short of that afforded by privately-owned hotels. If the State hotels were controlled by local communities who would have the interests of their own centres at heart, I believe they would be managed in a way even superior to that of privately-owned hotels. In this way we should be doing a more definite work towards the uplifting of the people than we are achieving by running these concerns as State hotels with very little benefit to the general revenue of the State.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

MOTION—PUBLIC WORKS STANDING COMMITTEE.

As to Legislation for Apportioning.

Debate resumed from the 14th August 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 £30,000 shall be authorised unless it has first been investigated by such standing committee.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.28]: This motion asks for the appointment of a joint Parliamentary standing committee representing both Houses to enable any proposed public work estimated to cost £30,000 or over to be investigated and reported upon by the committee. In support of the motion, the member for Beverley delivered a shorter speech on this occasion than he did last year on a similar motion, and I think I would do well to follow his lead and deliver a shorter reply than I gave last year.

Mr. Watts: But doubtless you will arrive at the same conclusion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The only point of criticism in his speech was contained in his reference to the wood distilla-

tion and charcoal-iron industry which the Government is in process of establishing at Wundowie. I noticed a few days ago in a speech delivered by a member of the Legislative Council that he, too, expressed opinions which I should say were calculated to disturb the public mind very seriously concerning the industry now being established at that centre.

Mr. Mann: You do not blame me for his utterance, do you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it unfortunate that subversive propaganda of this kind should be circulated against an effort to establish an industry which, if it is established and operated successfully, will be of very great importance to Western Australia and, in fact, prove to be the foundation upon which, at a later time, a fully integrated iron and steel industry might be built.

Mr. Mann: We hope so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The truth is that this industry has not yet been completely established and consequently is not yet in operation; but its construction is proceeding according to schedule and I consider the rate of construction fairly good when all the difficult circumstances surrounding the formation of a new and substantially large industry in these days are taken into consideration. If after the industry is established and has been in operation it only partially succeeds, or perhaps subsequently fails altogether, then of course any person in this House and any person outside of it will be thoroughly justified in condemning the Government and all of those who were associated with it in the project. As to the question of a Parliamentary standing committee to investigate and report upon public works generally, I would point out that such a scheme was in operation in New South Wales for some years but was subsequently abandoned.

Mr. Watts: It was not convenient for the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A similar scheme was in operation in Queensland for some years, but was subsequently altered in such a way as to put in its place a system very much in line with the system in this State. Victoria has a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works; but

it is at the complete discretion of the Government as to whether any proposed public work is referred to that committee for investigation and report. As against the systems in those three States, there is a committee of this kind in South Australia that has been operating for several years and I think it has, within reasonable limits, given a fair amount of satisfaction.

Mr. Watts: Much better than that!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Commonwealth Government also has a committee of this kind and as far as I am aware it has been fairly successful, too. Before anyone could genuinely support a motion of this kind it would be necessary to prove that our existing system is unsatisfactory, that it fails in some important respect or, alternatively, that it is capable of being greatly improved upon and would in fact be so improved if a committee of this kind were to be established. I want to state briefly the reasons which the Government put forward against this motion. The first is that it is considered to be unnecessary. The Government claims that our existing system of developing public works projects and the subsequent consideration and endorsement of them by the Government is satisfactory and has over the years proved itself to be a wise and reliable system. Consequently, if there is no necessity for the committee the House would be unwise to vote for its appointment because, although the expenditure that would be required in connection with its activities would not be great, the money which would be so expended could, I suggest, be very much better used for other purposes.

The second reason is that the appointment of a committee of this kind would to some extent weaken Government responsibility for the development of public works projects and their ultimate implementation. The system in this State, because it places complete responsibility upon the Government, is a good one, as it denies to any Government the opportunity to shed responsibility should any work subsequently be proved to be unjustified or unwise. If we had a committee of this kind and such circumstances occurred, the Government of the time could, and maybe would, shed its responsibility on to the Parliamentary standing committee and seek cover under the fact that that committee had recommended it to

put the work in hand. It is preferable for the Government to have to shoulder complete responsibility for its actions in the field of public works and to be answerable for all its actions therein, in the first place to Parliament and later at the general election to the whole of the electors of the State.

The third reason is that a considerable amount of additional call would be made upon the time of the appropriate officers of the Government departments. In the first place these officers would have to develop their public works proposal, either in accordance with Government policy or in accordance with their own initiative and ideas. They would bring the proposal to the stage to which they now bring it; it would be submitted to the Minister concerned for his examination, and if he were satisfied that the proposal was a necessary and desirable one, he would recommend it either to Cabinet if it were substantial, or to the Treasurer if it were not a proposal requiring consideration and decision by Cabinet. If this proposed committee were in operation, then after all that procedure had been gone through it would call in—goodness knows for how long—the officers concerned and examine and cross-examine them, thus taking up a great deal of the valuable time of the highest-placed officers in the Government service. Such loss of time on the part of those officers would naturally delay the development of other projects and proposals: and it seems to me, therefore, that there would be a slowing-down of the process of developing public works proposals, and automatically a slowing-down of the process of putting such proposals into operation. That appears to me to be a very dangerous weakness in a suggestion of this character.

In a State such as Western Australia, which still requires a great number and variety of public works, it would be dangerous to do anything that would slow down the process of developing necessary proposals and also the process of getting works approved and put into operation. As I suggested earlier, the establishment and operation of a committee of this kind would to some extent cut down the complete responsibility now upon the Government in this matter. The Government is answerable to Parliament and to the country: but goodness knows to whom this committee would be

answerable in the final analysis for any mistakes it might make.

Mr. Graham: To the member for Beverley!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Therefore I think, as I have suggested, that from the point of view of maintaining complete responsibility on the shoulders of the Government, which is answerable to Parliament and the people, it would be advisable to vote against this motion. Those are some important reasons why, in the opinion of the Government, this motion should be defeated. I have no doubt there are many other reasons that could be advanced against the motion, but I think those I have submitted to the House are of sufficient importance to justify members in turning it down.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [8.43]: I listened attentively to the speech delivered by the Minister and also read very carefully the speech he delivered last session when this matter was before the House. The perusal of the Minister's speech of last session and listening to him tonight have in no way altered my opinion on the motion then and now submitted by the member for Beverley suggesting that legislation should be brought down to enable the appointment of a public works committee to be made. For that reason I intend tonight to support the motion, as I did on a previous occasion.

The Minister has stressed the danger of weakening the responsibility of the Government if a committee of this nature were appointed; but I can tell the Minister from my experience in this matter that he need have no anxiety about that. He wanted to know to whom the committee would be responsible. The answer is that it would be responsible to Parliament. It is quite true as the Minister has said, that the Government is responsible to Parliament and to the electors; and that it is the duty of the Government to develop this State in every possible way. No-one questions that. We know it is the duty of the Government to do the best possible for the country it governs; and in doing that, it is directly responsible to Parliament and to the people. But that responsibility rests on the Governments of other States as much as it does on the Government of this State. The Government of

the Commonwealth is also responsible to Parliament and to the people; and although there has been in existence, for practically 32 years, a public works committee functioning under the direction of the Commonwealth Parliament, the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government has been in no way weakened or undermined. So the argument used by the Minister regarding the responsibility of Governments has no force behind it, because the experience in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and the experience of the Commonwealth proves the contrary.

I have no desire, in supporting this motion, to reflect in any way on the system that has obtained in this State up till now; nor do I desire to offer any criticism of any industries that have been established or are in process of being established. The work at Wundowie that the Minister referred to is certainly a credit to the Government of this country and will prove of great value to this State when it is in full operation. But although the system that has been operating here is a good one, surely it is capable of improvement. I consider that the inauguration of a public works committee would improve the system that has existed so far in Western Australia.

Another point made by the Minister was that such a committee would unduly take up the time of officials of departments. I think he is unnecessarily alarmed. During my three years' membership of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Public Works, the committee was very careful about the time occupied by officers of various departments in giving evidence. It must be borne in mind that the inquiries undertaken by that committee are Commonwealth-wide, since it sometimes visits the six States in making its inquiries into certain projects. The committee has a much larger territory to cover than is comprised even in this large State of ours. The committee had a time limit to its inquiries and no time was lost in those days, either by the committee itself or by the witnesses. The Minister said that the cost of the committee and the money expended in that regard could more beneficially be expended in other directions. The cost of the committee would be infinitesimal and, what is more, it would result in a saving of money on our public works.

I have no criticism to offer of the system that has operated here so far. This and previous Governments have constructed some very fine public works. Public works of the greatest magnitude have been put into operation and completed during the regime of Labour Governments. Excepting the Goldfields water scheme and the Fremantle harbour, I venture to say that some of the greatest of our public works have been commenced during the last 14 years. Without in any way reflecting on officers of our departments, for whom I have the greatest esteem, and I know they are men of exceptional ability, I say that money could often be saved if we had a public works committee inquiring into works the estimated cost of which would exceed a certain amount of money.

The Minister for Works: The high cost of Commonwealth public works is not much of an advertisement for the Commonwealth committee.

Mr. NEEDHAM: It has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt that during the time that that committee has been operating not hundreds of thousands, but millions, of pounds have been saved. I will give one or two instances of works inquired into by that committee. It is true that during the six years of this war public works, the cost of which would exceed £30,000, were not automatically or directly referred to the Public Works Committee. During the war years the works were referred to the committee at the discretion of the Minister, but I understand that since the cessation of hostilities the Act has been further amended enabling the committee to revert to its original position so that public works, the estimated cost of which is over £30,000, are to be referred directly to it. Neither do I think, as the Minister said on a former occasion, that investigation by such a committee would cause much unnecessary delay. He instanced some case of emergency where the work was required at once, and said that if the matter had been referred to a committee delay of a dangerous nature might have occurred. That kind of emergency would be remote, and when we look at the programme of public works that has been announced by the Government through the Minister for Works we see that it will last for five or ten years.

The appointment of a public works committee to inquire into these works would not cause undue delay. If it did cause a little delay it might be preferable to unnecessary expenditure. It has been suggested during the course of the debate that if the committee were appointed it would be a reflection on the Government, would weaken the Government's responsibility and would be a reflection on State departmental officers. I cannot see that that is so. I am sure that the officers of similar departments in the States of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia are just as jealous of their professional reputations as are the officers of this State, and they welcome the opinions of other experts in their professions outside the Government employment. I think that our officers are sufficiently broadminded to welcome the opinion of others so far as estimates of public works are concerned. There is another feature which is that the very fact that a certain work has been referred to the committee would help those preparing the plans and working out the estimates to be even more careful than they have been in the past in presenting their estimates to Parliament. So, whatever way we look at it, instead of being a drag, causing delay in the construction of public works, weakening the responsibility of Governments or reflecting on the departmental officers, quite the opposite, to my mind, would occur.

By no stretch of imagination can it be said that a committee of the nature proposed by the member for Beverley could in any way weaken the responsibility of the Government. After all, Parliament is the deciding factor and with the report of the committee before it Parliament would either approve or reject it. A committee of this nature could be the eyes and ears of Parliament, and could give to members greater information as to the nature of proposed works than Parliament now gets. I do not think the Minister himself has the time to present fully all the details of important public works. The information obtained by a committee of investigation would enable Parliament to have a better idea of the many details of large public works than it has been able to receive up to date.

Mr. Watts: That is true.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I have already said that in the Commonwealth arena the public works

committee has stood the test of 32 years. The Bill for the appointment of a public works committee was introduced and passed in the 1913 session, and received the Royal assent in 1914. With the exception of the war years, to which I have already referred, it has been in constant operation since. I have said that in the Commonwealth Parliament the operation of the committee has resulted in considerable savings. One proposal brought before that committee concerned a water supply to the Flinders Naval Base. That was an important and costly work. The committee, on its own initiative, suggested a source of supply that had not been mentioned by either the Commonwealth or State engineers. The committee's alternative source of supply was adopted, and the saving on that one job was £61,000. That was a very small amount, compared with other undertakings where large sums of money were saved.

Another instance of the saving of money through the investigations of that committee was in the construction of wooden ships for the Commonwealth Government. The committee discovered structural defects which, had they not been discovered, would have endangered the lives of the crews. Not only were the lives of the crews safeguarded by having those structural defects remedied and the ships' hulls strengthened—which was something accomplished if only one life was saved—but, in addition, £135,000 was saved. Now, as to the cost of the committee; the chairman received 30s. per day and members of the committee 21s. per day. When travelling away from the Federal capital they were allowed 21s. per day travelling expenses, but the total sum of money that the committee could expend per year was £2,000. The average cost, in addition to members' fees and travelling expenses, for officials who may have to travel with the committee, is £1,800 per annum, so taking the cost of members' fees and expenses and those in the case of officials, the expenditure is roughly £3,800 per year. That expenditure is infinitesimal when compared with the good results secured by the committee, and which I think a committee of similar nature could secure in this State.

When the Premier was speaking last session on the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the matter of gaol sites he suggested that I had been

somewhat inconsistent in opposing it and at the same time supporting the member for Beverley in the request for the appointment of a public works committee. I can see no inconsistency in that, because the two things are not analagous. One was the question of a site for a particular building, and that is entirely different from the question of the cost of public works. I consider I was quite consistent in opposing the appointment of a committee to inquire into the question of gaol sites and at the same time supporting the motion for the appointment of a public works committee.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

MOTION—TRAFFIC ACT.

To Disallow Angle-Parking Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 14th August on the following motion by Mr. Doney:—

That new regulation No. 106A, made under the Traffic Act, 1919-1941, published in the "Government Gazette" of the 5th April, 1946, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 30th July, 1946, be and is hereby disallowed.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [9.5]: The angle-parking of motor vehicles in St. George's-terrace was introduced as an experiment on recommendations from the traffic section of the Police Department and the Traffic Advisory Committee. The recommendations also covered Forrest-place. However, approval was not given by me in the case of Forrest-place because it seemed to me that the additional parking space to be obtained by adopting angle-parking in that street would not be great. In addition, there is a great deal of traffic in and out of the two lanes that run from Forrest-place each side of the General Post Office building. The names of the members of the Traffic Advisory Committee are Mr. Rattray of the Local Government Section of the Public Works Department, chairman; Inspector Rowbottom of the Traffic Branch of the Police Department; Mr. Mortimer of the Royal Automobile Club, who I think is president of the club at the present time—

Mr. Thorn: He is secretary of the club.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Councillor Spencer representing the Perth City Council; Mr. Rosman, representing other

local authorities in the metropolitan area, and Mr. Glover representing the Tramway Department. I frankly admit that there are several arguments both for and against the practice of angle-parking. The arguments against it were fairly advanced by the member for Williams-Narrogin when he moved this motion. The arguments for angle-parking—especially in St. George's-terrace—are several. The first is that considerable additional space for parking of motor vehicles is made available. By enabling many more motor vehicles to be parked in the terrace than was the case previously, the pressure on parking space in the other streets of the city proper was considerably relieved. That has been proven during the time that angle-parking in St. George's-terrace has been in operation. It has been much easier to find parking space in Hay-street, Murray-street, Barrack-street and William-street than was the case when parallel parking was the practice in St. George's-terrace. Another reason is that angle-parking in that street has considerably reduced the speed at which motor vehicles travel along it. Those of us who remember the speed at which motor vehicles travelled along that roadway when parallel parking was the practice—

Mr. Watts: I do not see much difference now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —know that the speed of vehicles has been considerably reduced under angle-parking.

Mr. Thorn: It is only reduced when someone backs out in front of the oncoming traffic and stops it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I submit that it is reduced all the way. I think angle-parking has caused every driver of a motor vehicle using that roadway to be much more careful than was the case previously.

Mr. Thorn: It has.

Mr. Doney: If the traffic is slower that would lead to increased congestion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not necessarily.

Mr. Doney: It could not very well escape it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not necessarily. Not only are drivers of vehicles along St. George's-terrace more careful but

the drivers of parked vehicles, when coming out from their parking positions, are much more careful—

Hon. N. Keenan: Who told you that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —than was the case previously.

Hon. N. Keenan: On what statement do you base that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On my own practical experience for one thing and I base it also on reports made available to me by the traffic officers of the Police Department.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is valuable.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I submit that their opinion is entitled to respectful consideration. I think it stands to reason that drivers of motor vehicles parked at an angle will be much more careful in coming out from that position than they would be if their vehicles were parked on the parallel; and the process of getting out is usually, although not in every instance, considerably easier. It is wrong to think that under parallel parking it was quite easy for a vehicle to get out from its parked position. Under parallel parking the ease and speed with which one could get out depended a great deal upon how far the vehicle in front or at the back was away from one's car. As a matter of fact, under parallel parking there have been many instances of motor vehicles being absolutely locked in with no chance at all of getting out until the driver of the vehicle parked in front or at the back came along and removed his car.

Mr. Doney: You can get a similar jam with angle-parking.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no such possibility with angle-parking.

Mr. Doney: The chance is smaller, but not precisely absent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The only jam that is possible with angle-parking would be caused by passing traffic, unless someone parked parallel at the back of a vehicle that was on the angle, but in that case, of course, the vehicle so parked parallel with the footpath would be contrary to the traffic regulations and any person parking parallel at the back of a motor vehicle standing on an angle would be liable to prosecution and a fine.

Mr. Doney: It would equally be an infringement of the regulation if vehicles jammed themselves at the back or up to a stationary car under parallel parking.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I frankly admit I fail to follow the reasoning of the member for Williams-Narrogin in that respect. Under the parallel parking system, as it previously operated in St. George's-terrace, the regulations were fairly often broken by motorists, especially by drivers of commercial vehicles double parking on the parallel system because the drivers might have to deliver some goods into one or other of the buildings in the terrace and consequently had to find places where they could pull up in order that they might transfer the goods from the motor vehicles to the premises concerned.

Mr. Watts: That still applies.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It probably does happen, but I suggest it happens ever so much less than when the parallel parking of vehicles operated in the terrace. I have already suggested that the speed with which motor vehicles travel along St. George's-terrace is generally, and on the average, much less than it was previously. I think it can be said quite safely that every motor driver using St. George's-terrace under angle-parking conditions is much more careful than he was previously. He has to be more careful.

Mr. Thorn: Of course, he has to be.

The MINISTER OF WORKS: He knows he has to be more careful, and because he has to drive more carefully and more slowly it is reasonable to suggest that the safety factor for motorists and pedestrians alike has been increased as the result of the introduction of angle-parking.

Mr. Thorn: That is not correct.

Mr. Watts: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Take the position of pedestrians, for instance. Under parallel parking they were liable to accident on a much wider section of the roadway where they could be hit by a motor in motion. With angle-parking of motor vehicles there is a smaller section of the roadway covered by vehicles in motion and consequently pedestrians have a less dangerous section of the roadway to cross and can go over more quickly than previously.

Mr. McLarty: But they have less chance of seeing cars coming along the road.

Mr. Thorn: My word, they have.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They have not less chance of seeing a car approaching—unless they leave the pavement after walking between two cars parked on the angle and when they leave the end of the parked car, go across without looking to left or right.

Mr. McLarty: That is the danger.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And that is equally the danger with parallel parking. If people go across a roadway without looking to left or right to see whether there is traffic approaching that is likely to hit them, they will be struck under any system of parking and, in fact, would be hit if there were no parking system at all. My point with regard to pedestrians is that they have a smaller section of the roadway to cross on which moving traffic is in operation and consequently, provided they take the ordinary precaution of looking to left or right as the case may be, their position is considerably safer under angle parking than it was under parallel parking. I know the average motorist feels it is very irksome when he has to travel more slowly than he has been accustomed to travel in the past. I know he considers that someone has placed an imposition on him if he has to exercise more care than he has in the past. After all is said and done, I think it is a great thing that motorists traversing our roadways have to travel more slowly. It is a great thing that they have to exercise much more care than in the past.

Mr. Thorn: But such slow travelling is not always the safest travelling.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course slow travelling is not always the safest travelling, for it all depends on circumstances.

Mr. Thorn: Quite so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have watched traffic in St. George's-terrace before the institution of angle parking, and I am bound to say that a considerable number of drivers of motor vehicles exercised little or no care at all.

Mr. J. Hegney: They drive too fast.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The pedestrian and the careful motorist were al-

ways in danger from that type of driver, who has now been compelled, for his own protection and for the protection of his vehicle, to exercise more care and watchfulness than he ever did before. I admit he only does it from a selfish point of view. He is not at all concerned about the other motorist or the pedestrian any more than he was before. It is not in his make-up to be careful or to care about anyone else. His only concern is about himself and the speed with which he can get from one point to another. If angle parking has had a good effect upon that type of driver, slowed him down and made him much more careful, for that reason alone I think the experiment has been amply justified.

Looking at the position on the basis of practical results, I find that there were 10 accidents in St. George's-terrace during the six weeks angle parking has been in operation. They were all minor accidents and in no instance was any person injured. During the six weeks period immediately prior to the introduction of angle parking, there were 14 accidents which, on a basis of fair comparison, indicates that the number of accidents under angle parking has been fewer than was the case under the system of parallel parking. This information should be carefully considered.

I think every member regards the safety factor as being paramount. It should be paramount. The fact that somebody takes two minutes longer to get from the Public Works Department to Adelaide-terrace is, in my opinion, of no importance at all as compared with the safety factor. I know quite a deal about motorists; I myself am one. Many motorists are in a great hurry to get from the starting point to the point of destination.

Mr. Watts: They do it quicker if they hasten slowly.

Mr. Thorn: You yourself were in a hurry once.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When we seek the reason for their haste, we find that it is of no consequence at all. During the time they are out of the car, they waste quite a lot of time one way and another. So I emphasise that the safety factor is paramount.

I have not yet reached a final conclusion as to whether this experiment can be regarded as successful or otherwise, but up

to date I believe it has proved itself to be worthy of further test and further practical experience. I trust that every member, in considering the motion, will regard the safety factor for the careful motorist and for the pedestrian as being the all-important factor.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is perfectly true.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe that as a result of six weeks' experience of the experiment, some improvements could be made. I consider that at present angle-parking is permitted too near to intersections, and it might very well be that the system could be substantially improved from the safety point of view if angle-parking were prohibited within a certain distance of each side of an intersection. In other words, parallel parking of cars should be compulsory for some yards each side of each intersection.

Hon. N. Keenan: How far?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not an authority upon the distance that should be prescribed, but as a layman and a driver of a car, it seems to me that the safety factor would be improved if intersections were kept reasonably clear. With angle-parking as it operates, it is not at all easy for a motorist approaching an intersection to get a reasonable view of the intersection itself in the event of his wishing to turn to the left or the right. Of course, it does not matter for the motorist who is going straight down the terrace, because he has a straight run, but angle parking too near an intersection does, in my opinion, reduce the safety factor that previously existed.

I admit that some of the trucks that park in the terrace appear to be too dangerously long to be permitted there under the angle-parking system. A prohibition against the parking of such vehicles there might be worth while investigating. Some of the trucks on our roads nowadays appear to be—

Hon. N. Keenan: Elongated.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, elongated to an inordinate degree for a motor vehicle. When such a vehicle is angle-parked in the busiest section of St. George's-terrace, it can be an increased element of danger. When it has to back out to get into traffic again, it completely blocks the whole of the available roadway

for other moving traffic. Therefore, that aspect calls for investigation and remedial action.

I propose to read to members a report of the last meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee held on the 14th August at which this matter was discussed. The report states—

Mr. Mortimer: I notice there is a suggested amendment to the regulation being put up in Parliament to abolish the angle parking regulation. I assume the matter will eventually come before this committee, seeing we put the recommendation forward, and I can only say that any suggestion to abolish it now is completely disregarding the conditions that brought about angle parking—traffic congestion, double parking and the impossibility of getting parking space.

Mr. Doney: Since I mentioned all those, he could not say they had been ignored.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am quoting what was said. Mr. Mortimer continued—

It is relieving the congestion in William-street, Hay-street, and even in Murray-street. My personal view and the view of my club (R.A.C.) is that it has been a success.

Inspector Rowbottom: I am in agreement. The Traffic Department regards it as a success.

Mr. Rosman: I am in agreement. Angle parking is a success and should be retained. St. George's-terrace lends itself to this type of parking.

The Chairman: There have been no accidents caused?

Inspector Rowbottom: No.

I have already explained that there have been ten minor accidents, in which the mudguards and bumper bars have been scratched, scraped or bent, but in no instance has there been injury to any person. Inspector Rowbottom continued—

You will get an occasional large lorry, with its rear portion protruding, but we have caught one or two of them. Apart from this, I think it is a wonderful improvement.

Mr. Mortimer: You get some people who think they can drive through at 30 to 40 miles an hour.

Councillor Spencer: I think you will find public opinion is right behind the system.

Mr. Glover: I notice at many intersections—especially at the Adelphi corner, angle-parking is right up to the building alignment and it has caused the Tramways considerable trouble. Only one day last week we had to get the police—a chap had parked there with a huge truck almost at the corner, the bus

had to be manhandled past. I don't think angle-parking should be allowed within 30ft. of the intersection.

Mr. Mortimer: Was it allowed? That is nothing against angle-parking, it is a breach on the part of the driver.

Mr. Glover: I know the Police Department are handicapped at the present time by not having sufficient men available to police the regulations. Perhaps when the new school comes out the situation will be eased. But it is giving a bad impression and I think it might be worthwhile to have a look at the position.

Inspector Rowbottom: I will see to it.

Mr. Mortimer: As far as the success of angle-parking is concerned that has nothing to do with it, it is a breach of the regulation.

I was anxious that members of the House should have the opinions of the members of the Traffic Advisory Committee, as it is their responsibility to study traffic problems and this is one traffic problem to which they have given much consideration. It might be said that they were responsible for recommending the introduction of angle-parking in the terrace and that in consequence they would not say anything against it, as by so doing they would be condemning their original idea. However, I have sufficient faith in the integrity of each member of that committee to believe that he would be thoroughly honest in expressing his opinion.

Mr. Seward: Was that the only Government department that reported to the Government on angle-parking?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. If members of the Traffic Advisory Committee felt that the experiment had failed, I am confident that each one of them would have no hesitation in saying so. It must be borne in mind that the members of the committee represent various sections of the community. I am not sure how many motor vehicle owners and drivers are members of the Royal Automobile Club, but the club has a very big membership. No representative of the club would say or do anything likely to be detrimental to the interests and the reasonable convenience of motorists. I think it cannot be said that any member of the committee has any particular axe to grind as between a system of parallel-parking and a system of angle-parking.

Mr. Watts: They are carried away by the fact that it provides more space. That is all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, the committee is not carried away by that consideration only, as it refers to other factors in the statements which its members have made. Only one other point was raised during the discussion that I want to mention. It appeared to be suggested that it was the responsibility of the Government to provide parking space for motor vehicles within the city area, or in the metropolitan area as a whole for all I know. I wish to make it quite clear that the Government does not accept responsibility for the provision of parking space for motor vehicles either in the metropolitan area as a whole or in the city. The roads are built for the purpose of allowing moving traffic to proceed to and fro; they are not built for the parking of motor vehicles; but, to meet the convenience of motor vehicle owners, they are allowed to park their vehicles on the roadways in the city and in the metropolitan area, and for that matter on the roadways in the country, although in certain places—for instance the city—parking is allowed under qualified conditions.

A person is allowed to park for 20 minutes in one place at a certain time, for half-an-hour perhaps at another time and perhaps for unlimited periods on Sundays, but on some days a person is not allowed to park his vehicle in that place for one minute. I do not want anyone to get the idea that it is the responsibility of the Government to provide adequate parking space, or any parking space for that matter, for the owners of private motor vehicles to enable them to park their cars when they feel inclined to do so.

Mr. McLarty: Whose responsibility is it? The local authorities?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think it is anyone's responsibility to provide parking space for the owners of motor vehicles or for the owners of horses and carts for that matter.

Mr. McLarty: They must park somewhere in order to carry on their business.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Maybe they must park somewhere. If so, I think the responsibility is upon them to find the place where they might park. As time goes

on, I think it will be found that more parking areas will be established, and that the motorist will be called upon to pay a small fee for the right and privilege of parking his car for an hour, two hours, half-a-day or a whole day, as the case might be. I think that is the way in which the position has developed in the larger cities of the other States and in the big cities of other countries of the world. Until the time comes when a vote is taken on this motion in Parliament, I think it can be said that the Minister accepts full responsibility for the system of angle-parking as it now operates in the Terrace. When Parliament votes upon this motion, or rather this section of Parliament, if the majority of members vote against it that will be an indication to me that angle-parking should be continued, at least for the time being, and the responsibility then will be upon this House. If a majority of the members of this House vote against the motion, that will be an indication to me that angle-parking should be abolished, and it most probably will be abolished, and the responsibility for that will also be upon the members of the House.

Mr. Seward: It would be an interesting division.

Mr. J. Hegney: If members vote against the motion, it will mean—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am sorry. If members vote for the motion to abolish angle-parking, that will be an indication to me that angle-parking, in the opinion of the majority of members, should be abolished and the responsibility for its abolition will of course be upon the members of the House voting for the motion. I think the system is entitled to a longer trial.

Mr. McLarty: How long?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should say for at least another six weeks. If the motion is defeated, any member will be at liberty at any time to bring forward a similar motion, I should think. I am not quite sure what the Standing Orders provide in that connection. I do suggest, however, to members who might be inclined to vote for the motion that, on the information and evidence available up to the present, there is no justification for abolishing the experiment at this time, although there is—as I have said—justification for making im-

provements in the system. I think two or three very necessary improvements could be made, and I will undertake to see that they are made in the very near future provided that this motion is not carried.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [9.40]: I feel rather sympathetic towards the Minister, because I think he has put up a case he is not too enthusiastic about himself. Naturally he is being courteous to the Advisory Committee by defending angle-parking as far as he can. I was also glad to hear him say this was only an experiment, because I am one who will take full responsibility for assisting to knock out this regulation. I am a regular driver up and down the terrace, in the country, and elsewhere. I have been driving for 25 years and I consider that the present system of angle-parking in the terrace is most dangerous. We have had figures given to us this evening regarding accidents that have occurred. I would like to have a check-up on them. I want to know the number that have had a smack and not reported it but just gone on their way.

The Minister for Works: That would apply similarly to parallel parking.

Mr. THORN: Yes. These things happen. There will be a very serious accident in the near future if we do not deal with this question. Cars pull out right in the way of other vehicles travelling up the terrace, and one of these days, if a truck comes along like that, the side of a car will be ripped out and two or three passengers will be ripped out with it. Let us take into consideration the fact mentioned by the mover of the motion, that the view of a small car is obstructed when it has a larger car parked alongside it or a big truck jutting right over the line that is marked in the terrace as the area for parking within. Members will find some of these vehicles three or four feet over that line, and a person backing out has no view at all. He just has to chance to luck that persons coming along the fairway will ease up to allow him to get out.

The Minister also mentioned speed. I maintain that the slowing down of motor traffic in the terrace is more dangerous than average speed. Often a car from each side of the terrace will back out and hold up the whole line of traffic. It slows down the traffic altogether. I will agree that many motorists are unreasonable. They think they have

no time to spare. They want to get where they are going. That is not the kind of motorist on whose behalf I am speaking. I am speaking for the motorist who is a safe driver, and I maintain that the slowing down of traffic is more dangerous than a good average speed.

Under angle-parking, pedestrians on the cross-walks or crossing the terrace at any point are in danger because often their view of oncoming traffic is hidden. Consequently they are liable to be injured at any time. Mr. Mortimer, the secretary of the R.A.C., got into the Press on this subject as soon as the motion was moved. One would think he was an authority on everything, for I observe that he gets into the Press regularly on all these matters. The Minister mentioned the membership of the R.A.C. But goodness gracious me! Mr. Mortimer does not express the view of the membership of the R.A.C.

Mr. Read: He expresses my sentiments.

Mr. THORN: He may!

Mr. J. Hegney: He is elected by the membership.

Mr. THORN: That is all right! But there is a membership of thousands.

Mr. J. Hegney: He expresses the motorists' views the same as you express the views of the Country Party when you are up for election.

Mr. THORN: Do not be silly!

Mr. J. Hegney: Do you not express their views?

Mr. THORN: It must be realised that he is not expressing the view of the whole membership of the R.A.C. We must give some members of the R.A.C. credit for having a little commonsense and knowing the dangers of angle-parking.

Mr. J. Hegney: Yes, I will give them that credit.

Mr. THORN: I should think the hon. member would! In my view this is a most dangerous system. It reminds me of looking down a camel's mouth, when I look down the terrace.

The Minister for Justice: It depends on the camel!

Mr. THORN: Exactly! The Minister knows what a jagged set of teeth a camel's mouth contains. That is the appearance of

the terrace today. It is most unsightly and, as I said before, angle-parking is a most dangerous system. Our idea should be to clear the traffic of the city and not hold it up. I am of opinion we should get back to parallel parking.

Mr. Triat: We should get out of the city altogether.

Mr. THORN: That is another point. If we cannot secure parking space in the city let us go on until we can get it.

Mr. McLarty: Where?

Mr. THORN: It is all very fine to say "Where?" The hon. member must either be in favour of angle-parking or double-banking. The position is becoming more difficult every day. I sympathise with the Police Traffic Department that has to handle this matter, but that does not mean to say I am going to approve of a system I consider dangerous; and I maintain that if a motorist cannot get in on the terrace he should go on until he can get in somewhere else. We have been through days when we never had motorcars, and we were able to carry on all right. If we revert to parallel parking, I am in favour of the man who gets into a position first being allowed to stop there. This shifting of traffic every 10 or 15 minutes is only confusing.

Mr. J. Hegney: There must be a limit.

Mr. THORN: We do not expect people to stay there all day and night!

Mr. J. Hegney: Some of them would!

Mr. THORN: All right; but when we impose all these restrictions we only add to the difficulties. I do not see any harm in people that have to deliver goods in the terrace double-parking while making their deliveries, if they cannot get into the kerb. That would be much safer than the conditions obtaining today. We must have sympathy for people who have business to do in the terrace. They have to pull up behind cars that are angle-parked in order to make their deliveries in a good many instances, and all that is happening is that bottle-necks are being created in the terrace and there is congestion and the holding up of traffic; whereas under the old system the traffic moved on. The Minister mentioned irresponsible drivers. I maintain that irresponsible drivers will always be irresponsible whatever we do; whether we have angle-parking or slow them down.

Mr. J. Hegney: A few of them from York struck me the other evening.

Mr. THORN: From York?

Mr. J. Hegney: No, from Toodyay.

Mr. THORN: I am glad it was not York because I was born there, and I do not think the people there would do anything like that—or the people from Toodyay either! The irresponsible driver will always be irresponsible, and we cannot make him any different. As a matter of fact, if drivers were scrutinised a little more carefully many of them would not be permitted to drive. Some of them have only one eye and are half blind. They are irresponsible and always will be. The man who is responsible is on the look-out all the time. He is careful and is not looking for trouble. He respects the vehicle he is driving, and we need not worry about that type of driver. As I said before, I do not think the Minister is too keen on this scheme himself.

The Minister for Justice: Would you not give it a trial?

Mr. THORN: Yes, I am amenable to reason; and if it is the Minister's wish that the system should be tried for a little longer to see whether we can improve on it, I am agreeable. In some Melbourne streets there is angle-parking on only one side and parallel parking on the other. Probably if this is given a little longer trial we might be able to improve the system, but as it exists at present, the regulations should, in the interests of the public and the motorists, be disallowed.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [9.51]: This is a matter on which members can formulate their own opinion. Mine was inclined to be that angle-parking was difficult in the terrace, but having listened to the Minister and the explanations he quoted from the Advisory Committee's report, I think we should allow the experiment to continue for a little longer. As the Minister pointed out, possibly some restriction should be placed on longer vehicles. When the lines for angle-parking in the terrace were marked, not only were the angle lines marked, but also parallel lines in which the vehicles were to be enclosed. But many of the longer vehicles go beyond the parallel line. There is no question that the motorist has to be more careful with angle-park-

ing, and it is more difficult backing out than when a view of the oncoming traffic can be obtained from the side. But the only danger arises from the motorist who is not prepared to drive carefully along the terrace, and be alert for angle-parked vehicles coming out. Nevertheless, it is difficult for a driver so parked to get out because his vehicle is on the down-grade and he has to back out to the crown of the road. Often-times there is a stream of traffic as far back as 50 yards from the intersection so that a driver wanting to get out might have to wait until 10 or more vehicles go past before being able to move on to the highway.

But there is another question. Since the experiment has been tried more parking space has been available in the centre of the city. I refer to Hay-street, Murray-street, and other streets. Angle-parking does give people the opportunity to park for the required periods, namely a quarter of an hour in the daytime, and five minutes after 4.30 p.m. on one side of the road. People who have shopping to do get time to pull into the kerb, do their shopping and then move on. To that extent, if the motorist is careful in the terrace there is a contribution to the congestion of traffic in the main city block. I can remember St. George's-terrace when I was a lad working in the city. In those early days the double tram trucks ran along Hay-street and it was proposed to take one line away. There was a hue and cry as to how it would affect business. The opinion of commercial interests and professional men in the terrace was against the idea of the trams, or the traffic, being shifted to the terrace.

Today because of the modern development of motor vehicles there is much more traffic in St. George's-terrace than was dreamed of in those times, and there is as much noise, with the tooting of horns, as if the trams had been put into St. George's-terrace. We are faced with a difficult problem in deciding what is the right, proper and safe thing to do with the motor traffic of the city. As the member for Toodyay said, the irresponsible and reckless driver is difficult to deal with because he would be irresponsible no matter what happened. I had an experience myself the other evening. There were five persons in a Toodyay car and the driver was definitely under the influence of drink.

It is a miracle that I am representing Middle Swan tonight because I was just about cleaned up by him on the Great Eastern-highway. Those in that car were not satisfied with having knocked my vehicle but then wanted to engage in a fight. Many of these people are getting away while the police are catching other careless and drunken drivers.

I have been driving around the city for 16 years and, knowing at least the value of my own life—and we must all be afraid of the other driver—I have not had an accident in the city. Members might say that that is more by good luck than good management, but if a driver is careful and anticipates what the other fellow is likely to do, he stands a good chance of avoiding accidents. A driver should have his vehicle under control, as he is bound to have under the regulations. The maximum speed in the city is not more than 25 miles per hour, which is the speed allowed on the main highways, but that is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. What the Minister told us about the narrowing amount of space in which pedestrians could be knocked over is correct. Whilst we have not wide streets here, the narrow street does give some protection to pedestrians because there is not the same amount of space in which oncoming vehicles can knock them over.

The Minister has read the report and it indicates that those who have given special study to this problem—like the member for Narrogin I make my own observations and inform my own mind as to what is happening—are inclined to think that this experiment should be tried out a little longer. The people who made that special study are representatives of the Royal Automobile Club, the Traffic Department and the Tramway Department. The Minister pointed out that so far no one has been hurt. A number of vehicles has been grazed, and slightly damaged, but that is likely to happen with parallel parking. The long vehicles, standing out beyond the prescribed distance, are definitely dangerous. That is so, particularly where there are two lines of traffic. There is also the difficulty that in the terrace commercial goods vehicles have to park somewhere, at least for a short time, to enable delivery of the goods to be made. The

drivers cannot carry those goods from the Esplanade but must take them from the vehicle while parked opposite to where they have to be delivered.

There is no question but that this will be an important problem in the development of our city, because even though the war has just ended and people have not been able to buy new motor vehicles during the past five or six years, and many of the old vehicles are ready to be run off the road, when people are able to buy new motor vehicles the problem will be intensified. While, as the Minister says, the Government accepts no responsibility for parking areas, some further restrictions may have to be imposed, and vehicles may have to be stopped further out of the city. Many people already do that for their own convenience and peace of mind. They stop their vehicles somewhere removed from the city block, and return to them when they have transacted their business.

Further investigations may have to be made into the parking of vehicles, and information obtained not only from the Eastern States but from America and England. I understand that in those countries there are modern facilities for the parking of vehicles. The time will probably arrive when we have to give consideration to the installing of such facilities. I think the member for Williams-Narrogin has achieved his purpose in having the matter discussed here. If it is adjourned for a period of six weeks or two months I think a further report could then be obtained to see what the position is in the light of that further experience, and a vote could then be taken.

On motion by Mr. Read, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 22nd August, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

UNDER SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE.

As to Business Trips and Duties.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, On how many occasions during the last nine months has the Under Secretary for Agriculture travelled to the Eastern States—

(a) by air;

(b) by other means of transport?

2, On what business was he engaged on each of the trips, and at whose expense were the trips made?

3, Is the Government of the opinion that the Under Secretaryship for Agriculture is not a full-time job?

4, If not, and if the Under Secretary is indispensable to the Commonwealth Government, will this Government consider the question of an acting appointment while the present occupant is so engaged?

The MINISTER replied:

1, (a) Six.

(b) Nil.