

Rental Subsidies. That is why the Commonwealth Government has agreed to pay £500,000 in the first post-war year towards rentals. It is calculated that to cover all costs the income on rents for the £30,000,000 worth of homes should be  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. or about £2,300,000. But the low income earners for whom the houses are being built will not be able to afford more than about £1,500,000.

If Burt's figures on 4 per cent interest are correct, what will a man have to pay on  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. total cost? The Commonwealth Housing Commission says that the basic wage-earner should not pay more than from one-fifth to one-sixth of his weekly earnings in rent. The loss will be £800,000. The Commonwealth has offered to pay in £500,000 towards this if the States pay the odd £300,000 a year. So we find that the whole subject bristles with tremendous difficulties, and I sympathise with anybody who has to work it out. I would suggest that a complete discussion on the housing problem would not be amiss at this stage in the session. I think we would be doing justice to the people of Western Australia if we decided upon some definite standard, not of housing, but of homes, and I make a distinction between a home and a house. I make it quite clear that to me a home is a portion of the community, and that a house is just a structure.

I would like to know whether the Government has given thought to the question of community living. There must be individuals who are prepared to live in communities, and there are many communities that today are well built and well designed, providing features that cannot be given in single houses. Some of the blocks that have been built in Sweden and other countries furnish a means of living that cannot be achieved in single houses—without tremendous expense—a means of living that some Australians might like to adopt. I realise that an Englishman's home is his castle, but even the Englishman is learning to change his mode of living. I think there are various avenues that we could explore, in the housing problem, with great benefit to all concerned. Finally, I repeat that I do not believe that the health of the people can be controlled by the giving of free bottles of medicine; it starts at the other end. We propose, as a Commonwealth measure, to spend about £4,000,000 per year in making medicines available to people, and the medical profession has

spent the last 20 years in trying to educate people to understand that they do not get health out of bottles of medicines. We now propose to perpetuate the idea of the medicine bottle. Were we to get our share—£400,000 per annum—that the Commonwealth Government is prepared to give under the free medicine scheme, and devote it to additions to homes for men who have rendered service, and for those with large families, we would be starting at the right end of the problem that faces us in relation to the health of the community. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. G. B. Wood, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 19th September, 1945.*

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

## QUESTIONS.

### INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

*As to Employees, Government Assistance, Etc.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Works:

1, How many persons are employed in each of the following:—

(a) Flax processing industry at Boyup Brook;

(b) Broome Meat Works;

(c) Bunbury Woollen Mills;

- (d) Art woodwork manufacture in Bunbury;
- (e) Boat building at Busselton;
- (f) Implement handles manufacture at Bunbury;
- (g) Fruit dehydration at Bridgetown;
- (h) Potash production at Chandler;
- (i) Fish processing at Carnarvon;
- (j) Fruit and vegetable dehydration at Donnybrook;
- (k) Salt production at Esperance and Widgiemooltha;
- (l) Crayfish canning and tomato processing at Geraldton;
- (m) Salmon canning and smoking at Hopetoun;
- (n) Renovation of steel pipes, etc., at Kellerberrin;
- (o) Fish processing in a small way at Mandurah;
- (p) Fruit dehydration at Mt. Barker;
- (q) Implement handles and slipper manufacture at Northam;
- (r) Production of pyrites at Norseman;
- (s) Processing of hops at Pemberton;
- (t) Agricultural machinery at Tammin;
- (u) At Wundowie?

2, What was the value of the output in each case for the year ended the 30th June, 1945, or for any other yearly period for which information is available?

3, To which of the above industries was financial assistance given by the State Government during the war period?

4, What was the amount of such financial assistance in each case?

5, If financial assistance was not given in any case, what other form of assistance was given?

6, In how many cases, and what cases, was the proposal that the industry be started initiated by the Government?

7, How many proposals made to the Government for the establishment of other industries were initiated from non-Governmental sources and Government assistance not provided?

The MINISTER replied:—

1, The Acting Government Statistician has advised that he is prevented under Sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Statistics Act, 1907, from making available the information asked for in this question. As a result

of inquiries made in other directions, the following approximate figures have been obtained:—(a) 263, (b) 78, (c) 28, (d) 15, (e) 16, (f) 4, (g) 85, (h) 121, (i) 7, (j) 85, (k) 27, (l) 16, (m) 6, (n) 23, (o) 4, (p) 48, (q) 42, (r) 45, (s) 25, (t) 6, (u) 42; total, 986.

2, The same position applies in connection with this question as with question No. 1. The following approximate figures have been obtained from various other sources:—Value of output per annum (approximately)—(a) £213,103, (b) £70,000, (c) £23,000, (d) £5,000, (e) £25,000, (f) £2,500, (g) £90,000, (h) £23,000 (i) not yet in production, (j) £87,000, (k) £6,000, (l) £16,000, (m) £3,500, (n) £23,000, (o) not in production, (p) £50,000, (q) £17,500, (r) £65,000, (s) £2,400 (seasonal), (t) £3,500, (u) not yet in production; total £725,503.

3 and 4, Financial assistance to the extent of approximately £45,000 was granted to the following undertakings:—Broome Meat Works; South-West Woollen & Textile Mills, Bunbury; Busselton Shipbuilding, Engineering & Constructional Company; salt—Synnot Bros., Esperance, and O'Callaghan, Widgiemooltha; crayfish canning—Geraldton Canneries, Ltd.; tomato processing—Geraldton Tomato Products; implement handles—Oliver & Sons, Northam; production of pyrites—Norseman Gold Mines. It is not considered that figures should be given covering each individual undertaking. In addition, the Government itself has expended £375,000 on the potash industry at Chandler and the wood distillation and charcoal iron project at Wundowie, which makes a total of approximately £420,000 in all.

5, Technical advice, markets investigation, assistance regarding manpower and materials, sponsorship for permits for capital issues and building permits, assistance in regard to transport and other matters.

6, In all cases the industries were either directly or indirectly initiated by the Government.

7, No accurate information can be given as several proposals put forward to the Department of Industrial Development have not proceeded beyond the stage of verbal discussions, but if information is required covering any particular set of proposals it will be made available.

## SLEEPERS.

*As to Sawmill Permits Granted.*

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Forests:

1, Have any permits been issued under the recently announced special sleeper saw-milling plan that has been prepared to cover the operations of 25 sleeper mills?

2, If any, how many?

3, To whom has each such permit been issued and what is the locality of each?

4, Have any permits been issued to un-naturalised aliens?

5, If so, to whom have they been issued?

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

1, The working plan, in addition to providing for future operations, covers the operations of mills on existing permits. No new permits have been issued since the plan was approved on 14/3/1945.

2, and 3, Answered by No. 1.

4, No.

5, Answered by No. 4.

## METROPOLITAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

*As to Reversion to Pre-War Hours.*

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Education:

1, How many primary schools in the metropolitan area that had their starting times altered, when staggering of hours was introduced, still remain on the altered hours?

2, What are the names of such schools?

3, Is he aware that in the Bayswater district many parents desire that the Bayswater school revert to the pre-war school hours?

4, Will he have this matter thoroughly investigated to see if the wishes of the parents concerned can be met?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Eleven.

2, Perth Boys', Perth Central Girls', Perth Junior Technical, Rosalie, Bayswater, Cottesloe, Cottesloe Infants', Mosman Park, Applecross, North Fremantle, Morley Park.

3, Yes.

4, The matter is being inquired into.

## GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

*As to Positions Held.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Premier:

1, In addition to Under Treasurer, what other positions does Mr. A. J. Reid hold?

2, In addition to Under Secretary for Agriculture, what other positions does Mr. Baron Hay hold?

The PREMIER replied:

1 and 2, There are no other classified positions held by either officer, but there are many activities in which the Treasury on the one hand and the Department of Agriculture and North-West on the other are implicated, and to which these officers give attention involving in some instances serving on various boards. Where statutory requirements are involved, in many cases these officers at times delegate their authority.

## HAY CROP.

*As to Cutting and Cartage.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is he aware that prospects for good hay crops in districts where such crops are usually obtained are not favourable this year?

2, Have any arrangements been made to secure the cutting of a larger area for hay in other districts where good crops do exist?

3, Have any arrangements been made, or are they being made, to secure an adequate supply of labour for handling hay crops this year?

4, As lack of carting facilities was a deterrent to the cutting of hay crops last year, and in view of the numerous Military trucks that have been engaged carting wheat to Fremantle during the past few months will he endeavour to have such trucks made available for hay carting where they are needed this season?

5, If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes. Owing to abnormal rains in the usual commercial hay growing districts, hay yields below average are expected.

2, No.

3, Yes. Arrangements are being made by the Manpower Directorate through the District War Agricultural Committees to employ extra prisoners of war for this work.

4, I was not aware that lack of carting facilities was a deterrent to the cutting of hay crops last year when about double the usual quantity of commercial hay was cut. The major difficulty appeared to be a shortage of manpower.

5, Answered by 4.

### HOUSING OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.

*As to Replacing Sub-standard Dwellings.*

Mr. TELFER asked the Premier:

1, Is he aware that there are many very sub-standard houses, built 30 to 50 years ago, housing Government employees especially in the Water Supply pumping stations and Railway Department?

2, Will favourable consideration be given to having these dwellings replaced immediately it is physically possible to do so?

The PREMIER replied:

1, No.

2, The matter will be fully investigated.

### SPLIT PEAS.

*As to Local Production and Processing.*

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

1, What was the approximate average annual importation into Western Australia of split peas prior to the outbreak of the 1939 war?

2, Is he aware that during the last two or three years split peas have been practically unobtainable in Western Australia?

3, Is he aware that split peas have been successfully produced and processed by Mr. H. Sharman, a farmer at Booralaming, near Dowerin?

4, Is he aware that Mr. Sharman has used only machinery improvised by himself in the production and processing of these split peas?

5, Has he seen a sample of the split peas produced and processed by Mr. Sharman?

6, Is he aware that Mr. Sharman anticipates harvesting 500 to 600 bags of split peas this season?

7, Will he make inquiries as to the availability of suitable machinery necessary for the efficient processing of split peas, with a view to encouraging the expansion of this industry?

8, Will he give favourable consideration to the provision of financial assistance towards the acquisition of such suitable and necessary machinery?

9, If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 5,559 centials. Value £5,967.

2, Yes, for civilian use.

3, Yes.

4, Yes.

5, Yes.

6, Yes.

7, Yes.

8, If a request is made to the Department of Agriculture consideration would be given to a request for financial assistance towards the acquisition of such machinery.

9, Answered by 8.

Mr. LESLIE: Following the Minister's reply, I would like to mention for the benefit of members that I have a sample of the split peas here if they wish to see them.

### BASIC WAGE.

*As to Raising Standard for Computation.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Labour:

1, Is he aware that the existing regimen on which the basic wage is computed does not accurately measure the trend of price fluctuation?

2, That insufficient items are included in the regimen?

3, That many if not most of the items not included in the regimen relate to food vitally necessary for the preservation of health?

4, That non-inclusion of these vital foods in the regimen reacts detrimentally to the workers?

5, Will he through the Government of which he is a member, make representations to the Commonwealth Government recommending the appointment of a Royal Commission to lay down standards of living through which Courts of Arbitration may determine the worker's basic wage?

6, Would he also through the Government make representations to the Commonwealth Government to convene another statisticians' conference to consider new methods of recovering information in respect to commodity prices upon which quarterly adjustments of the basic wage are determined?

The MINISTER replied:

1 to 6, A close examination is being made of the whole question of arbitration from a State and Commonwealth point of view.

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

Introduced by Mr. McDonald and read a first time.

### **BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD).**

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### **MOTION—YAMPI SOUND IRON-ORE.**

*As to Koolan Leases Control and Local Smelting.*

**MR. CROSS** (Canning) [4.41]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take necessary action to—

- (1) Acquire for the benefit of the State, the seven iron-ore mineral leases on Koolan Island, now held by Braserets, Limited; and
- (2) After obtaining control of the leases make certain that the iron-ore is smelted in Western Australia, either by the State or by private enterprise.

The economically important iron-ores of Western Australia consist of three different types, the most important of which is haematite, which is associated with pre-cambrian greenstones. Then we have limonite, brown iron-ore, the lodes being usually associated with the weathered portions of large sulphide lodes. We have also laterite, which is mainly a mixture of limonite and bauxite. I said that haematite was the most important, and it is so in almost every country where iron-ore is found in commercial quantities. As a matter of fact, of the commercial deposits of iron-ore, two-thirds consist of haematite. The main difference between haematite and laterite is that the latter seems to have been formed on the sulphide rocks by some process of oxidation, and it is not often that there is more than a crust of 6ft. or 7ft. deep.

In this State the largest limonite deposit—and it is limonite and laterite—is in the Darling Range, and I am not aware that anybody knows its extent. It has been com-

puted by good judges that the deposit might cover an area of 700 sq. miles; but a good deal of the limonite and the laterite in the Darling Range comprises a fair amount of bauxite, and ranges in quality from 30 to 50 per cent. of metallic iron. Bauxite is a term covering various combinations of aluminium, and that has a range of aluminium of from 30 to 50 per cent. also. Members who have been in the hills have seen the rusty-coloured laterite and have noticed that some parts are yellower than others. The reddish stuff contains a higher percentage of iron-ore, the yellow material being mainly aluminium. Iron-ore deposits in Western Australia are plentiful. We have numerous deposits that will eventually become commercial propositions. I said that haematite was the most important, because it usually exists in lodes that go to a great depth, whereas that can rarely be said of limonite.

While we have plenty of iron-ore in Western Australia, it cannot be said that there are plenty of commercial iron-ore propositions here, or even in the world. There are certainly very few in the British Empire—fewer, indeed, than most people think. In fact, for years past Great Britain has ceased mining ore, not because she has no deposits—because she has. The best of the iron-ore deposits in Great Britain is that at Cleveland near Middleborough, Yorkshire, England. But mining has ceased because it does not pay to mine the ore, in the first place because the metallic content is less than 30 per cent. Further, it lies parallel with the surface of the ground, but under the ground, and exists only in lodes of from 18in. to 3ft. So Great Britain, for years past, has had to look oversea for iron-ore.

I propose to make a few comparisons in order to show the value of our iron-ore deposits, and particularly those at Yampi. For some time before the war Great Britain obtained iron-ore from Naeverhaugin in Norway, and the richest samples ever taken from the Norwegian supplies averaged 55 per cent. metallic iron. It was an expensive business to get that ore from Norway, because it had to be taken through some difficult country and then put on rail, taken to the sea-board and trans-shipped to an English port, whence it was again put on rail and carried to the smelters. That is really important because it involved expensive transport. When the war occurred, it was

no longer possible to get supplies from Norway, so they were obtained from the next nearest source of supply—namely, Spain—where it was taken from the banks of a river, railed to the port of Bilbao, transhipped to Great Britain, and then railed to the smelters.

Last year, Britain used 12,000,000 tons of iron-ore imported from Spain, and those supplies contained less than 50 per cent. of metallic iron-ore. That is a fact which is important to Great Britain and the British Empire. The best supply of iron-ore in the British Empire, outside Australia, is the deposit on the banks of Lake Superior in Canada; but so far as I know, Great Britain has never imported any iron-ore from Canada, because the Canadian deposits have always been worked by American companies who have had the sole rights; and, in addition, the cost of transport to Great Britain has been very great because the ore had to be placed in boats and taken over Lake Superior through the Sault Sainte Marie Canal, and then railed to the sea-board, shipped over a distance of from 2,000 to 3,000 miles, and then put on rail again in Great Britain.

The United States has not much iron-ore and the main source of that country's supply is obtained from Lake Superior. That haematite iron-ore contains from 50 to 55 per cent. pure iron. Last year the United States imported a record quantity of 100,000,000 tons of that ore from Canada. I point that out to the House because it is important. Australia is likely to become a competitor against oversea steel sellers because of the fact that we are more favourably situated for the cheap production of iron-ore than is any other country in the world. As I have already mentioned, America obtains her iron-ore from the Lake Superior district, and although she has the most up-to-date mechanical handling machinery it is possible to procure, it takes five hours to load a ship with 10,000 tons of ore and to discharge a ship of that quantity takes  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Of course, they have to place the iron in the ship. First of all they have to cart it over a distance of a few miles to the ship, transport the ore over Lake Superior, and for two miles through the Sault Sainte Marie Canal, load it on rail and then haul it to Minneapolis, Pittsburg or some other place.

That iron has to be hauled for thousands of miles by rail. It is because of that that we have seen in the Press, during the last year or two, statements that the Broken Hill Pty. Coy., of Australia could sell steel delivered from Australia to America at a price cheaper than the steel could be manufactured in the U.S.A. That is because the cost of handling the iron-ore from Canada to the United States of America is so great, and I do not know how the Americans can obviate that difficulty. Certainly that factor will place Australia in an enviable position with regard to supplying the requirements of Great Britain and the United States of America, both of which countries have to import their iron-ore supplies. I have mentioned the chief European suppliers of ore. It is remarkable to think that our chief enemy in the past war, Germany, did not possess a decent iron-ore deposit. Most of that country's supplies were obtained from Luxembourg and Lorraine where the Minette deposit of iron-ore contained only about 36 per cent. of pure iron. That percentage of metallic iron is most important when we are considering this subject.

One of the largest and richest deposits in Russia is at Magnitogorst, a place where 20 years ago there were no people at all but which has now a population of nearly 1,000,000 souls. It boasts of some of the world's biggest smelting works and steel-rolling mills. Russia is fortunate because it possesses great deposits of almost pure magnetic iron-ore, the assays of which show a return of just over 60 per cent. of pure metallic iron. In China there is also a vast deposit and the Japanese thought to secure supplies there. At Hangyang there is one of the largest deposits in the world and the ore when assayed has been shown to contain 50 per cent. of pure metallic iron. However, that deposit is far inland and involves a long haulage overland. In the circumstances little has been done there. The Japanese had to procure their iron-ore from Manchuria where they constructed smelting works and rolling mills at a centre about 50 miles from Mukden.

In the Eastern States of Australia at Iron Monarch and Iron Knob we have vast rich deposits that contain 60 per cent. of metallic iron. Thus when we analyse the position regarding the chief commercial deposits in the world we see that there are

not very many of them. Today there are more deposits in Australia than in any other country throughout the world. It is strange but true that while iron represents about 20 per cent. of the whole of the minerals available in the world, that mineral does not exist in many countries of so pure a quality as to make it commercially payable to smelt the ore. As compared with the figures I have quoted regarding the percentage of metallic iron in the ore available in other countries, I will now deal with one of the richest deposits that we have in Australia—the deposit on Koolan Island, to which the motion applies.

Many analyses of the iron-ore have been made and I shall deal with one average analysis announced. It is based on a conservative estimate, because I have been informed that more recent investigations have demonstrated that the deeper the iron-ore the richer it becomes compared with the samples taken near the surface. However, those samples show that Australian iron-ore, particularly that obtained from the islands in Yampi Sound, possesses qualities that iron-ore in other parts of the world has not got. In the first place our ore is richer. I may mention that the Koolan Island samples that were assayed were taken over a wide area and included some comparatively poor specimens. Over all, they were extremely rich and no ore obtained elsewhere in the world can compare favourably with them. The assays were carried out at the Government Chemical Laboratory and they showed the following results:—

Fe—that is pure iron—66.07 per cent.  
 $\text{SiO}_2$ —that represents silica—3.24 per cent.  
 P—that represents phosphorous—.026 per cent.

Members will realise that the phosphoric content is of importance because usually in limonite iron-ore there is a much greater percentage of phosphorous and that has a deleterious effect if the open hearth method of smelting is adopted. Here again is an important feature from the standpoint of smelters and makes the iron-ore more valuable. The iron-ore was found to contain .032 of sulphur, which is another good point about it. Then again the analyses showed an  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ —hydrogen and oxygen, or water—content of .07 per cent. While I could give members details of the whole of the analyses respecting each of the other

deposits I have mentioned, I can assure them that there is not one that can compare favourably with the results obtained from the rich deposits at Koolan and Cockatoo Islands.

On Cockatoo Island, now being worked by a subsidiary of the B.H.P., the ore is equally as rich as at Yampi. It is a big deposit, but the deposit on Koolan Island is the largest in Australia, and the richest in the world. Our iron-ore deposits, particularly the richest of them, become more valuable owing to the scarcity of this essential ore in the British Empire. That makes the Yampi iron-ore deposits extremely valuable. In addition to being richer than the iron-ore found anywhere else, the Yampi ore contains the key for its commercial success owing to its availability and the possibility of cheap handling and transport. Sea transport is always considerably cheaper than land transport. As an illustration of that I understand the B.H.P. intends to take iron-ore from Cockatoo Island rather than from Iron Monarch and Iron Knob, because at Cockatoo Island it can be put direct into the boats. With labour-saving machinery I think it will be able to be put into the boats for 4s. or 5s. per ton and it will then be sent round the North, by the sea route, and smelted in the Eastern States.

No nation that has not abundant supplies of iron has maintained its position as a first-class power. The key to success at Yampi is the availability of the ore and the possibility of cheap sea transport. Nowhere else in the world does this easy accessibility and the possibility of cheap handling and sea transport obtain, because elsewhere land transport has to be combined with sea transport, or else there is a long line of land transport. No competing company would have any chance of equalling the cost of obtaining ore at Yampi, where the ore is so rich in metal content, and where it could be transported so cheaply by sea. It is easy to understand why Japan coveted Koolan Island, and later on I will show that the Japanese made an attempt to get that ore, and that they did some work and paid out some money in order to get this metal that is so important to them. When the Koolan Island ore is exported I think it should be done in a big way, because starting on a small scale would lead to failure. Only by using the most modern machinery, to save as much labour as possible, and by the adoption of

continuous processes, can it be done successfully. The member for Boulder smiles, but it is only up-to-date machinery that has made the mines on the Golden Mile possible.

Mr. Watts: That is not fair to the member for Boulder. He is not here.

Mr. CROSS: We require the most up-to-date machinery, in order to keep the cost of production down and to compete successfully on overseas markets, notwithstanding the wonderful advantages of Yampi Sound. When the late Mr. Montgomery framed his report, he made some comments about Yampi. I will read only one brief extract from the report he completed some years ago. Mr. Montgomery was talking about the possibility of dealing with Yampi iron-ore, and his proposal at that stage was that it should be exported. He said—

When wharf facilities have been provided access to the mine will be particularly easy, as the largest vessel afloat can enter and leave Yampi Sound at any time of the tide. The Sound is a particularly fine well-sheltered, deep-water harbour, which will rank amongst the best in the world when the time comes for it to be made use of.

I think this ore should be treated in Western Australia, and that if the Government cannot do it, somebody else could. There might be coal in plenty in the Kimberleys. I do not know what inquiries have been made in that regard. It has been said that we have no smelting coal but in the last 12 months it has been demonstrated that Collie coal can be gasified, and iron-ore can be reduced by gas. Who knows but that the time might come when we shall be able to harness the tides which rush through Yampi Sound, and smelt the iron-ore on the mainland with electric power? Inquiries may disclose later that there is plenty of coal on the North, in the vicinity of Derby. If that were so, the ore could be smelted there.

If iron-ore is smelted in Western Australia and if we have steel rolling mills here, there will be other requirements. We will want manganese, and we have it. We will require limestone, and that is found all the way up the coast for 500 miles, to my knowledge. We will require magnesite, and the only magnesite that the B.H.P. gets now is from Western Australia. We have magnesite and dolomite and fluorspar. We have every mineral that goes to make up each one of at least 60 different varieties of steel. If the ore was smelted in Western Australia, a chain of subsidiary industries would spring

up. The establishment of heavy industry would bring better times and prosperity to the State. It would bring more population also. I believe that heavy industry is the foundation on which the economy of our State could be built. When we had to supply the various materials such as limestone, magnesite and manganese, there would be a crop of new trades that would provide work for hundreds of people, and in view of that I think we should retain the Yampi iron-ore and smelt it in this State. It should be smelted in this State either by the Government or by private enterprise. I do not know whether any attempt has been made to induce any of the smelting companies in Great Britain to smelt pig-iron here and take it to England to be manufactured. Post-war Great Britain will still import millions of tons of either iron-ore or pig-iron each year, as the deposits in Great Britain are not payable to work. Yampi is a birthday gift for us and we should never give it away.

Mr. Watts: We will not.

Mr. CROSS: In the past, nobody worried much about Yampi, until a few years ago, when the Japanese heard of it.

The Minister for Mines: Did not Great Britain know about it before that?

Mr. CROSS: Possibly, but Great Britain did not go very far into it, perhaps because it might have suited them to get their iron-ore from Norway, owing to the cheapness of labour in the northern hemisphere. That might have been a factor that counted with them. While the British companies could readily get supplies, I do not think they would build special ships to fetch iron-ore from Australia. I am not aware of how far any attempt has been made by this State to invite British companies to exploit our ore and smelt it here, but the Japanese made inquiries. The Mitsui Co. became interested—that was the company that bought scrap-iron from Australia, America and anywhere else that they could get it—and when they found they could not get it themselves, they went to Brasserts of London—Brasserts, a firm of brass—and the Japanese Government financed them through Mitsui and the Bank of Yokohama. They paid men in this State to take out leases on Koolan Island and, while the Minister apparently does not know of it, it is general



knowledge in the city that at least four men got £12,500 apiece for dummyming for Brasserts.

A contract was entered into with Japan, and all the money spent at Yampi was paid by Japan. The Japanese entered into a contract with Brasserts in order to get the ore. Members will remember what the Minister said in reply, when I asked what royalty was to be paid to the State. I had been under the impression that the royalty was to be 6d. per ton, but it was worse than that. We were to let them have the iron-ore for 3d. per ton for ten years, and after that for 6d. Later on the Commonwealth Government stepped in and placed an embargo on the export of Koolan Island ore. There the matter stands. We have since been at war, but so far as I know the contract is still in existence. When the embargo is lifted, what is to happen? Will the contract be renewed? I consider that steps should be taken to annul the contract if it is still in existence. We should never permit iron-ore to be exported to a country like Japan. It is no use saying one thing and meaning another—the Japanese are not fit to live.

Mr. Thorn: They are a nation of monkeys.

Mr. CROSS: Worse than monkeys.

The Minister for Lands: How long is it since that has been found out?

Mr. Thorn: Last week.

Mr. CROSS: No, it was found out a long time before then. Some of these leases still have a fair period to run, and I do not know whether they can be purchased. This ore ought to be retained for the benefit of Australia, particularly Western Australia. If the State had control, then, whether it smelted the ore or allowed someone else to do so, one of the conditions should be that the ore must be smelted in Western Australia. What happened at Cockatoo Island? We all know; but nevertheless I shall read an extract from the "Western Australian Mining and Commercial Review" for August. The article is headed, "Yampi Iron-Ore. Big Development plans, Treatment in Eastern States." So we have the Eastern States again! I suppose that poor Western Australia will not even get a royalty for the ore.

The Minister for Lands: Why?

Mr. CROSS: The article proceeds—

There is every indication that Australian Iron and Steel, Ltd., a subsidiary of the Broken Hill Pty., will carry out a big development programme on Cockatoo Island in Yampi Sound where the company holds some of the richest iron ore deposits in the world. Already there are 90 men working on the island and it is understood that the company plans big developments. Unfortunately, the ore will not be refined in this State, but will go to the Eastern States . . . The company intends at first to ship the ore to the Eastern States via the Northern Territory.

Members can judge for themselves just how much Western Australia will benefit out of the rich ore taken from Cockatoo Island, especially as we shall miss the coastal shipping that would come if the ore were brought south.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member should not discuss Cockatoo Island. He deals only with Koolan Island in his motion.

Mr. CROSS: I will connect up the reference, Sir. This subsidiary company has been angling to obtain the Koolan Island leases. It has been trying to get the company which is working the Cockatoo Island ore, to lease Yampi Island, and it does not intend to smelt the ore in this State. In my opinion, the seven leases on Koolan Island should be acquired at the earliest possible moment by the State, which should lay down conditions, the first of which should be that the ore should be smelted in Western Australia. Then I would impose another condition. I would say, "You have either to smelt the ore on a large scale or not at all," because it is no use starting operations in a small way and hoping to improve them as time goes on. Only a company financially strong could adopt such a policy. I am not worried about whether the proposed company is a British company or the Broken Hill Proprietary; what I am concerned about is that Western Australia should benefit by the smelting of the ore obtained from this island. I think the leases are worth buying in order that the State may get control of the ore. The State must ultimately benefit. In the event of another Pacific war—

The Minister for Lands: Oh!

Mr. CROSS: One never knows. Nobody expected this Pacific war.

The Minister for Lands: Do not be pessimistic.

Mr. CROSS: The 1914-18 war was a war to end war; so was this war, but the unexpected always happens. We should take every step to ensure that these valuable leases are acquired by the State, so that we, and not other people, derive the benefit from them. If we can establish heavy industries in the State the Government will be enabled to pay its past debts more easily. At the same time, we must proceed with the development of the North. We must have more people there and the only way to achieve that object is to exploit our industries, and this ore is one of our most valuable possessions. It is a treasure and we are lucky to have it. We should be lacking in our duty if we did not take steps to protect what is our birthright. If the motion is carried, I hope the Government will do something quickly to implement it, because it is a serious matter if we allow other people to exploit our raw materials and make no attempt to do the job ourselves. We shall always be a poverty-stricken State if we allow other people to exploit our raw materials.

On motion by the Minister for Mines, debate adjourned.

### MOTION—VERMIN ACT.

*As to Adopting Royal Commission's Recommendations.*

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.23]: I move—

That this House requests the Government to give Parliament an opportunity this session of deciding whether all, or how much of the recommendations for alterations to the Vermin Act made by the recent Honorary Royal Commission should be given legislative effect.

I do so in the belief that it would be reasonable for the Government to prepare legislation embodying the major recommendations of the Commission and submit it to Parliament for determination. At this stage I wish to indicate that the Honorary Royal Commission, first appointed as a Select Committee which was known to consist of members of both sides of the House, has presented a unanimous report. That report was not presented in the form in which it now is placed before the people of the State without very close consideration, over a lengthy period, of the evidence that has been given to the Commission and of the things that the Commission has seen in the course of its travels. In the course of those travels

and at Parliament House the Commission examined 198 witnesses. The actual time taken in their examination was spread over a period of 45 sittings, many of which commenced early in the morning and finished late at night. I remember very well that at one place we were examining witnesses until 10.30 p.m. and at another place until 11 p.m.

Many of the sessions of examination of witnesses covered a period of eight to nine hours. At the outset, the Commission met together and decided upon the issue of a questionnaire, which was prepared by all the members and then submitted to every local authority in the State, as well as to other organisations which might have been expected to take some interest in the matter. Subsequently, the questions which the members of the Commission deemed it advisable to ask were themselves put into individual questionnaires, copies of which were supplied to the respective members of the Commission. For example, the member for Mt. Magnet, who was a member of the Commission, undertook the examination of witnesses primarily and without restricting, of course, the rights of other members, into certain aspects of vermin control in respect of which he was deemed to have more considerable knowledge than other members of the Commission or which were of particular interest to him because of his association with certain districts of the State. In the net result I have been informed by more than one road board official and more than one individual witness who appeared outside of the local authorities before the Commission, that they had not been subjected on any previous occasion—and some of them had had previous experience—to an examination more searching than that on the subject involved in this inquiry.

In consequence, there are on the Table of the House four volumes of evidence containing 2,074 pages of foolscap which the Commission, subsequent to its inquiry, endeavoured to explore, and from which to make up its mind as to where the weight of evidence lay and what were the propositions that it ought to recommend because there had been either a sound background for them or sound judgment appeared to be used in putting the proposals forward. So, while the members of this Chamber and of another place might not see their way to agree to all the propositions that are put for-

ward by the Commission in its report, I venture to say that there will be found in those volumes at least some justification for all of them, and that they are of such a nature as to be worthy of consideration, even if they are rejected by Parliament. Those who criticise them most strongly should be prepared to come forward with some better propositions than those which they criticise before they are entitled to offer their opposition to the Commission's proposals.

I do not say that the proposals put forward by the Commission are, in every respect, the best that could be produced, although we could find none better, or the only ones that would solve or attempt to solve the problems involved. But I do say that they cannot lightly be dismissed. They must be given consideration by the Legislature in order that a determination may be arrived at as to their value and as to the desirability of putting them into operation. It is because I, and other members of the Commission, as I understand them, hold these views, that I am submitting this motion to-day. It is not my intention to cover the whole ground involved in this report, because to do so and to endeavour to explain to the House the various angles of the matter that could not be included in a report of any reasonable size, would take a very long time. What I propose to do is to say, as shortly as possible, just a few things in order that I may not take up unlimited time of this House, because I realise that if there are any questions with which I can deal, and which need to be dealt with after other speeches have been made, I shall have the right of reply. But I do say, at the outset, that practically the first witnesses called were departmental officers. From them we gathered that they were almost entirely dissatisfied with the operations of the local authorities in regard to the control of vermin under the existing laws. Their proposals have been shortly set out in paragraph 5 of the report. They amount, I think, fairly to this—

(a) That the powers of local vermin boards, except perhaps as to some measure of advisory power or delegated authority should be abolished.

(b) That control should be centralised in the Department of Agriculture.

(c) That the central control should appoint a fulltime vermin inspector in every district at an estimated cost of about £60,000 a year.

(d) That supervising inspectors should be appointed in addition.

(e) That none of these officers should actually concern themselves in the destruction of vermin, but only in regimentation and inspection of the activities of farmers and others.

In fairness to everyone I am going to say quite plainly that the Commission gave the closest examination to these proposals and went to the definite trouble of giving every representative of a local authority, and most of the other witnesses who were likely to have an interest in that aspect, an outline of these proposals, and discussing them, at considerable length on many occasions, with the witnesses. I did not find, in more than a minority of cases, that the view was held that such a proposition was likely to be effectual. I endeavoured to submerge the view that I have always held, that inspection alone is not sufficient, but that proper activities should be indulged in so far as the destruction of vermin is concerned. Ultimately the Commission came to the conclusion that that was not likely to be the best way of arriving at a better state of affairs.

We did not under-estimate the difficulties facing those who endeavour to control vermin in Western Australia. We realised, as everyone else does, that a great number of creatures which come under the Vermin Act are not the products of this country in the first instance. They are the results of importations, in good faith, many years ago, and have inflicted on us, as citizens of the present generation, very considerable losses. It is, unfortunately, our duty to find means either to minimise these losses to the utmost, or to remove the causes of them. There are other types of vermin, declared under the Vermin Act, such as the emu, whose natural habitat is Australia. There are separate and several problems with which we have to concern ourselves in connection with these creatures. We have endeavoured, in the report, to set out some idea of the cost of the damage that has been caused by the rabbit and the fox—more particularly the rabbit—in Western Australia.

It will readily be realised—and we have so declared in the report—that to make any reliable estimate of the loss is extremely difficult, if not well-nigh impossible. But we were assured by knowledgeable witnesses—and given evidence to confirm it by such people as Mr. Lefroy of Walebing—that the losses would range to as high as 50 per cent. of the productivity of many properties. In addition there are also indirect losses which

are readily understandable. We therefore felt that we were justified in taking an overall loss, as set out in paragraph (8) of this report. We came to the conclusion that in one aspect of it alone we could say that the loss to Western Australia, per annum, is probably in the vicinity of £2,000,000. That is the loss to primary production on an estimate which we believe is a conservative one. When we consider what £2,000,000 more of ready money placed in circulation would do in the provision of employment and in assisting revenue, social amenities and other desirable things, we must realise that the destruction of vermin is not a matter that can be lightly dealt with, but one which must cause us to bring to bear all the energy and the resources which we are able reasonably to provide. It is on the basis of that estimate and that belief that the Commission has submitted a number of the recommendations in its report for the consideration of the Government and of Parliament.

We have, in this report, criticised the activity—or lack of it—of certain local authorities that came under our notice. But we have stated that, in all the difficult circumstances existing, we believe that the majority of local vermin boards have done their best. We all contend that that is a reasonable way of assessing the position in regard to the local authorities of Western Australia. A proposal which I propose to mention now—although it is a long way on in the report—is that there should be a greater measure of responsibility placed on the local vermin boards in regard to the actual destruction of vermin, rather than the mere inspection of the activities of other people in its destruction. That, undoubtedly, would be a radical change in our proceedings. It would not in any circumstances—and the report so states—prevent or obstruct the individual farmer in any way from carrying on the destruction of vermin on his own property. But it is of no use, as we see the position, for the willing, active and energetic farmer to carry on vermin destruction on his own property when there is vacant land next door, or a neighbouring farmer who is not active so that the vermin from the one place simply escapes to the property of the energetic person and reduces his activities to a nullity.

While we do not intend or recommend that a farmer should be prevented from destroying the vermin on his own property, but rather the reverse, we do say that upon those

properties where there is no activity, or where there is no one to do anything, the local authorities should go in and do the work in the interests of the whole district and of the State. There is, in our view, no other alternative, that can be arrived at. We have, therefore, suggested some means which will enable that to be put into effect. That has entailed the provision of more finance for the local authorities. It has entailed the proposal for a minimum rate to be struck by local authorities, and a charge to be levied—where work has to be done—of not more than 12s. 6d. per man per day, as against the cost to the farmer or the farm where the work has to be done, which is estimated at approximately half the daily cost per man involved. That gives rise to a question which is of the greatest importance, namely, the liability of the parties concerned in the land for the payment of rates.

Hitherto it has been practicable for the mortgagee to escape the payment of rates, although his security has been seriously affected by the depredations of vermin, and, although he might not know it, the security of other mortgagees has also been seriously affected by the depredations of vermin upon neighbouring properties. But the mortgagee has not been directly responsible for the payment of vermin rates if the owner, or the holder of the property failed or neglected to pay them. We say that both the rates and the charges that may have to be collected by the local authorities on the basis we have just discussed, for work done, should be passed as vermin rates, and that the responsibility for payment should lie equally upon the registered holder and upon the mortgagee so that there is a reasonable certainty that the amount involved, both in rates and the cost of work done, will be paid. The first obligation is put upon the owner, and if he does not pay within a reasonable time it should then be placed upon the mortgagee.

That brings us, of course, to the question of Government financial institutions as against private financial institutions. We say that as soon as practicable they should all come under the same heading; that there should be no escape. In all the circumstances that exist, and in the interests of the State as a whole, there should be no escape from the payment of annual rates by somebody interested in the land. Whether he be the owner or the mortgagee; whether he be a private mortgagee or a Government mort-

gatee, he should be compelled, within the 12-monthly period, to pay the rates and assessments that are made upon the property, if the law be amended, in order that finance to the fullest extent recommended may be available. Then the old position of a mortgagee having to be in possession before he becomes liable would, as we see it, come to an end and the responsibility would be clearly placed upon each and every one of the people concerned so that there would, as far as practicable, be no possibility of evasion.

We have also made provision so that the Railway Department and, to a lesser degree, the Midland Railway Company, shall subscribe to the eradication of vermin through the central fund which we suggest should be created. We have suggested that the Midland Railway Company's contribution should be a small one by comparison because that company has a very much lesser length of railway than has the Government. It is, moreover, liable as a landholder for rates struck the same as is any other landholder, which, of course, the Government Railway Department is not. It will be found from the extracts of evidence included in the report that we put this matter to the representative of the Railway Department and that there was, in his mind, a certain measure of agreement as to the course that should be adopted in this regard.

We have suggested or recommended that there should be a tax struck upon all the lands of the State, both metropolitan and urban as well as rural land. It will be found that the rate on the metropolitan and urban lands is a sum of 5/16th of a penny in the pound which, when taken in comparison with our other recommendation would be half the amount to be imposed on the rural land. That would be the minimum payable of 5/8th of a penny with discretionary power in the Minister to increase the minimum rate to be struck by any local authority to a figure of 1/8th of a penny above the figure recommended in our report. There may be some exception taken to the striking of a rate of that kind upon land values. Our position was rather unfortunate. The question of uniform tax prevented us from suggesting there should be a tax upon income. The general difficulties from the point of view of consolidated revenue prevented, in our opinion,

our recommending that it should all come out of the existing revenues of the State.

We felt that there should be, therefore, some sort of liability so far as possible imposed upon all those in the State who had any direct benefit to be gained by the eradication of vermin, and basing that opinion on the estimated loss to which I have referred on a very conservative estimate it appeared to us it would not be improper to suggest that those engaged in commerce and industry, who would be the chief gainers by the increased spending powers of the rural industries, should be the persons who should pay that uniform tax, and other reasons prevented us, in our opinion, from adopting any more general system. The urgency of the need and the difficulties of applying any other method constitute the justification for our recommendation in that regard. There has been a considerable and constant demand over a number of years from road board conferences and other sources that there should be some State-wide resources used in combating the vermin in Western Australia. We have endeavoured to make some small contribution to the carrying out of that point of view by the recommendation we have made.

Special attention was given to the position as affecting the outer areas of Western Australia, the North-Western and the pastoral districts. We were fortunate in not having to ask to be taken to those districts to obtain at least some idea of the position of the persons who are or have been settled there. We had volunteers from quite a number of the North-Western and outer areas who asked us if they could give evidence, and we welcomed them very gladly. We found it a privilege—I call it a privilege in this case—to have as a witness Mr. Hogarth of Mundrabilla Station, which is situated almost on the South Australian border, who spent two or three hours with us—in company with the secretary of the Pastoralists' Association who also gave us valuable evidence—and who impressed upon me—other members of the Royal Commission can speak for themselves—the extraordinary difficulties which a man in his position has been suffering as a result of the depredations of vermin, principally wild dogs, and his inability in recent years to cope with them, notwithstanding which he was paying substantial

sums to the Dundas Vermin Board in rates, because of the application of the rulings as to the relationship between the vermin rate on pastoral leases and other lands, and the ruling also governed by that section of the Road Districts Act which prescribes how the rate shall be struck.

To make a long story short we came to the conclusion that a special effort should be made in those areas and that Consolidated Revenue should contribute, and we named a figure not exceeding £12,000 which was to be expended as much as was practicable by the central authority we desired to create in the North-Western and outer areas, in addition to such part of the ordinary central vermin fund now collected which could be spent in bonuses as heretofore, although perhaps on a different scale from that appertaining at present. We concluded that special types of animals should be declared to be vermin. Evidence was given to us in regard to the destruction caused by kangaroos in the North-West, by wild goats in other areas and by wild pigs in one area.

The Premier: And even by camels.

Mr. WATTS: All these animals, as well as wild asses, were included. The witnesses concerned influenced us in the belief that there should be wider powers to declare these creatures vermin, and that we should have what we have referred to as mobile units well supplied and equipped, doing their best to destroy these creatures in the interests of retaining settlement in those areas and giving us a prospect of greater settlement of the pastoral areas so that those areas by reason of their not being attacked by these creatures as they have been in the past and so that the pastures may have a chance to return to productivity. Up to the present the presence of these animals has made the position of people in the North-West and the outer pastoral areas extremely difficult and precarious. That is an outline of the proposals which we have for those areas. We are inclined to the opinion that the expenditure of the money we recommend plus, if necessary, a contribution of £4,000 from the fund to be collected elsewhere would go a long way towards solving the problem. We do not suggest that the local authorities in the areas comprised in Schedule A., namely the pastoral and outer areas of the

State, should come under the amended proposals in regard to local authorities assuming greater responsibility for the destruction of vermin. The types of vermin to be dealt with are different, and the conditions under which they have to operate are dissimilar, but the need for the type of work that requires to be done on the scattered properties in these areas is great. We therefore give these people the right not to come into the scheme unless they so desire.

One of the proposals that considerably exercised our minds was in regard to rabbit trapping. We say definitely that on the weight of evidence before us the professional trapper, as soon as a convenient time is reached, should be prohibited. We say nothing against the trapping by the individual farmer of rabbits on his own property provided he follows that up with other satisfactory methods of destruction that will lead to the eradication of the pest. We say that from the evidence before us there has been some inclination in certain districts to trap rabbits in such a way as to keep them there for all time. If that is to be the policy in Western Australia we shall indeed have rabbits for all time. We are going to keep on losing an amount that we have estimated at possibly £2,000,000 a year because we allow the trapping of rabbits. The trapping system, as a means of destroying rabbits on individual farm properties by the farmer himself we are prepared to concede has its usefulness, but we think there should be regulations, to be prepared and put into effect by the central authority, which should govern the follow-up methods employed.

So far as the professional trapper is concerned, we desire to postpone any legislation for his prohibition until such time as the meat rationing position has come to an end. We realise that in recent months, in circumstances that are not at all usual in Australia, there has been difficulty in obtaining sufficient meat at a reasonable price. The rabbit, therefore, has been of some value. As we anticipated that meat rationing would come to an end six or 12 months after this report had been considered by Parliament, we felt there was no reason to demand the immediate extinction of the professional trapper. It is no use playing about with the position. The professional trapper naturally wants to continue his business. The way by which he can con-

tinue it is the way, as we see it, set out in the report. I will not weary the House with that now.

To control all this business we came to the conclusion that there should be a new system altogether. We recommend that the position of Chief Vermin Inspector should be abolished and that the present Advisory Committee that deals with the central vermin fund should be disbanded. We say there must be appointed a body in which the local authorities will have confidence, in which the pastoralists and the people of the outer areas will have confidence, and in which the Government will have confidence and on which it will have representation. We have submitted a proposal that there should be appointed a director of pest destruction, and we have in the report set out the qualifications which we consider he should possess in order that he may fairly carry out the duties of the office, and that he should be a member of the board we have called the agriculture protection board, but not its chairman. That board should also have upon it five representatives of the road boards of Western Australia, four of whom should be engaged in farming, and should be drawn as nearly as possible from each of the zones into which the Road Boards' Association is divided.

By that means it will be possible to get as nearly as possible knowledge of the various areas of the State involved. The pastoralists should be represented by two men, one of whom should be drawn from one area of the pastoral districts, and the other from another area, so that they may have a wide knowledge of the industries that are being carried on and of the difficulties that are confronting the people in those areas. These people must at the time of their appointment have been actively engaged in industry in those areas. Only people who are actively engaged in the areas will be likely to know the circumstances which exist in recent times.

Mr. Rodoreda: It will be difficult for them to attend meetings.

Mr. WATTS: I believe that can be overcome. I think there are men who are actively engaged in the pastoral industry who very frequently visit the metropolitan districts for a considerable time. If they are not here it should be possible to make arrangements so that they may be brought

here. We must have the benefit of their knowledge and experience in this matter. In these days of modern transport it ought to be a simple matter to overcome the difficulty that has been raised. I do not think that in all cases it would be necessary to provide transport to ensure that members of the board were enabled to be present and take part in its deliberations. Probably after a few months of the board's deliberations it would not require to meet more than quarterly, and this would minimise the difficulty of attendance at meetings to a very considerable extent.

We also felt that the grasshopper and the emu presented difficulties all their own. We took much evidence and saw many things, mostly in the areas represented by the member for Mt. Marshall. The evidence tendered by the witnesses there was of the greatest assistance to us because they went to considerable trouble beforehand to prepare answers to the questionnaire sent to them and to investigate problems in their own way and amongst their own people. The evidence produced by these witnesses showed they had given a tremendous amount of study to the problems affecting the emu and more particularly the grasshopper. In lighter vein I suggest to the Minister that he read the evidence of a gentleman named Potts, taken at Bencubbin, because he will extract, as we did, not only a measure of knowledge from it but also a measure of amusement, particularly so if he happens to know the man. I recommend him to peruse that witness's evidence.

We came to the conclusion that there should be some separate organisation which should be able to deal, at least in an advisory capacity, with the problems in those areas. We felt, too, that a determined attack should be made on the egg deposits of the grasshopper in the ground. We took evidence from Agricultural Bank inspectors and other knowledgeable officials, and were astounded at their statement of the area they had discovered in the course of their duties and investigations where they had found the egg deposits over a considerable period and where little or nothing had been done for their destruction. I am not attempting—nor did the Royal Commission attempt—to apportion any blame for that state of affairs. We realise that we have just passed through a war; in fact, we were in the middle of a very difficult part of the war when we were

taking evidence. We do not say that it was other than shortage of manpower and difficulties of the sort that prevented a better onslaught being made in those areas, but we do say that a period must be put to it now.

If possible—and we believe that at any rate it is 90 per cent. possible—these egg deposits should be eradicated. Consequently, we have suggested an advisory committee substantially under the control of the agriculture protection board to take charge of this phase and recommend the methods which should be adopted, as well as the extent of those methods. As the Crown hitherto has provided and, quite properly, been prepared to spend substantial sums for such activities, we suggest that over three years, which is the estimated time given by one witness, £15,000 should be made available from Consolidated Revenue for expenditure in those districts. We also suggest that the committee should take under its wing the matter of dealing with emus.

Many proposals were submitted to us, some of which we have recommended should be further investigated and one or two adopted. Speaking for myself, I am not too sure that the best way to destroy emus is not to go out and shoot them. Considerable destruction has been wrought amongst emus in this way, but shooting parties unquestionably need to be organised if they are to reap the full benefit that might be expected. In the past they have been hampered by lack of organisation, by lack of ammunition during the war period, and by a dearth of the type of men anxious to go out and undertake this shooting. All these difficulties, I would say, might be overcome in future—the organisation by the co-ordination of the activities of the committee, the shortage of manpower because our soldiers will be returning, and shortage of ammunition for the reason that the war is over. As there is undoubted evidence that emu eggs are being laid particularly upon unutilised and Crown lands in the areas affected, and that therefore we are going to have not only the emus that make periodical visits, but also those born and bred in the areas affected, we should take steps to collect and even pay a bonus on emu eggs collected.

Mr. J. Hegney: An Australian native.

Mr. WATTS: We had emu eggs brought to us from areas where the member for Mt. Magnet was loth to believe they had been laid. The hon. member prosecuted his in-

quiries on this point most diligently. He said, "There are no emus breeding in these areas; they come from the North," but he had the evidence of his own eyes to convince him—just as I was convinced—that the statements made by witnesses were correct and that a considerable number of emus existed in those areas and were breeding their young ones on the spot.

Mr. J. Hegney: And you ask us to believe it?

Mr. WATTS: The House appointed a committee to make investigations for it—a committee that was afterwards converted into an honorary Royal Commission—and members are entitled to believe it or not as they please. I again recommend the hon. member to read the evidence which covers 2074 pages, and doubtless the member for Mt. Magnet would be only too ready to point out the evidence on this aspect, because he knows where it is.

There we have in broad outline the proposals that the honorary Royal Commission thinks ought to be discussed by Parliament in the form of legislation before the present session ends. There are, of course, many minor recommendations. Some of them are of considerable importance, but in my opinion it would ill-become me at this stage to deal with all of them. I can only recommend members to peruse the report of the Commission with care and build up their own views, as far as they can, on those minor recommendations so that they might possibly introduce them into the debate and give me the opportunity of saying anything I consider necessary on their suggestions, knowing as I will that the points raised are of interest to some members.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [6.8]: I second the motion. The outline of the position given by the chairman of the honorary Royal Commission has been very explicit and indeed has covered fairly fully most of the items in the report. As a member of the Royal Commission, I can inform members that extensive travelling was undertaken and extensive examinations were made. We were not at all satisfied simply to listen to evidence; we insisted upon viewing for ourselves anything that witnesses had to show that bore upon the inquiry.

One of these matters was the question of emus breeding below the rabbit-proof fence. My knowledge of emus—and my knowledge



of them is extensive, living in the North as I did for many years—is that they migrate south when drought seasons occur in the north, pass through the fence and infest the farming areas. When the drought in the north breaks, however, the emus desire to return to their own country and, if at all possible, they migrate back in large numbers.

During the last year, on the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence, I saw 972 emus pass a given point making south in the space of four hours. They were leaving the north on account of the bad season there and coming south where they could get good feed. When normal seasons returned in the north, they would try to make their way back. However, as a result of evidence submitted to the Commission at Wongan Hills, I was convinced that the emus are breeding in that district. Eggs were found and young chicks were seen. Those emus will remain in the district; they will not migrate.

The Commission travelled extensively, having traversed the State from Cue in the north to Albany in the south, and eastwards from the coast to Merredin. Most of the centres in that area were visited and evidence was taken from representatives of road boards and from various other people. In addition, we examined witnesses from the Kimberleys and the North-West districts, and one from the trans. line. This evidence, which was as good as it was possible to get, convinced us that the vermin pest in this State is serious. The Commission held 45 sittings and examined 198 witnesses. We did not deal with one class of witness only; we dealt with all classes—farmers, trappers, businessmen, pastoralists, members and employees of municipal councils and road boards, and so forth. Thus evidence was taken from people representing a wide range of interests in order that we might be able to get a true picture of the conditions existing in various parts of the State. Had we taken evidence from farmers only, there would have been evidence of one type only, but by including businessmen, trappers, road board members and men actually engaged in destroying vermin, we felt that we were getting a comprehensive view of the whole problem.

The Minister for Agriculture: Members of road boards were in a majority. were they not?

Mr. TRIAT: Quite a lot of road board members were called, but many people apart

from road boards were examined. I wish to show the advantage of having taken evidence representing such a wide range of interests. Amongst farmers, we found that a great difference of opinion existed regarding the fox. In my district, a dry area where sheep and wool are produced, the pastoralists view with alarm the increase in the number of foxes. We find that the fox will destroy grown sheep. In that area there is no ground game to provide the fox with food—no rabbits and very little bird life—and so all that the fox has to live on is the sheep. It is well known that foxes will kill lambs, but they will also kill full-grown sheep.

Mr. Leslie: Only when the sheep are in low condition.

Mr. TRIAT: Not at all; a big dog fox will kill a strong sheep. Some farmers regard the fox with favour as bringing salvation to their crops, because it destroys the rabbits. We had evidence to this effect, and we also received evidence from the opposite side. Viewing the evidence as a whole, however, we came to the conclusion that the fox is certainly a dangerous type of vermin in this State. We also received evidence from Government officials, men responsible for the various departmental activities associated with the destruction of vermin. Officers of the Department of Agriculture gave us striking evidence, to which we listened with the keenest interest and to which we gave the fullest consideration. Reference was made by the chairman to the loss of production through the ravages of vermin. When he mentioned the loss as being £2,000,000 a year, he was dealing with only one section of industry. He was referring to the loss in the production of wool.

Mr. Watts: That is so.

Mr. TRIAT: Had there been an opportunity to grow the full number of sheep, there would have been an additional £2,000,000 worth of wool produced in Western Australia. In the opinion of various witnesses, the loss caused by vermin ranges from 20 to 50 per cent. of the total production. If we strike an average of, say, 30 per cent., which should be a reasonable estimate, and apply it to the whole of our rural production, members will appreciate what a terrific impost is being levied by vermin on the production of the State.

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

Mr. TRIAT: I would like to quote one or two small extracts to substantiate my remarks on loss of production. Evidence was given as follows on the loss caused by emus:—

We have it on most reliable evidence that one emu will destroy at least £1 worth in wheat in one season. The evidence of an Agricultural Bank branch manager proved a loss, to his own knowledge, of 925 bags of wheat worth at least £550 on one farm in one season by 400 emus.

This is another loss which was not mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, who was chairman of the Commission. Apart from emus and rabbits, other vermin caused terrific losses, for instance, the wild dog or dingo. There is a pastoralist with a property on the trans. railway line who has suffered severe losses of stock during some three or four years owing to wild dogs. He made the following statement:—

It (the property) is 900,000 acres. We have approximately 400,000 acres dog-proof fenced. For 12 years I never had a dog inside of it. In the last 18 months, however, dogs have increased in spite of all I could do. Eighty per cent. of my work is trapping dogs outside of my area as far as I can get. Last year I had 30 dogs inside which killed 3,900 of my limited flock. I have never reared a lamb for two years on account of dogs.

For two years that pastoralist has not had an increase in his flock, notwithstanding that his property was surrounded by a dog-proof fence—not an ordinary rabbit-proof fence. The dogs got through the fence. He said that his flock was originally 9,000, but it is now down to 2,000, notwithstanding that the fence is dog-proof and that he patrols it every week to repair any damage done to it. I could quote many other instances. In my district—Sandstone or Black Range—the pastoralists are alarmed about the wild dogs. Within the boundaries of the Black Range district the pastoralists are today paying £12 for every dog killed.

Mr. W. Hegney: The hunters would not bring them in from outside?

Mr. TRIAT: No. The hunter must produce a certificate to show that he caught the dog on station property. The owner gives the certificate. Those pastoralists could not afford to pay for dogs killed and brought in from South Australia. However, they realise the damage done by the dogs and, although they are not wealthy, they are prepared to pay £12 for each dog killed within the road board district. Loss of stock and produce

through emus, rabbits and dogs can be very large, and the loss, whatever it may be, also means a loss to the revenue of the State. All of these matters were taken into account by the members of the Commission; and I feel sure that, as the result of their deliberations, this House will give consideration not only to the Commission's report but also to the evidence taken, because the report sets out only a brief summary of the evidence.

We inspected properties which were enclosed by wire-netting fences; yet we saw rabbit burrows and warrens all over those properties. It is therefore evident that the rabbit is not prevented from entering on such properties which are so fenced. We inspected other properties that were not fenced with rabbit-proof netting; and there were no rabbits on them because the owners had taken the precaution to destroy both the rabbits and their warrens. It seems to be more important to destroy the warrens, because by so doing rabbits are eliminated from the property. A few miles away from such properties are other properties well netted, but yet infested with rabbits. So the Commission decided to recommend in its report a method to deal with the rabbit which would be satisfactory.

It will avoid the present haphazard methods adopted by various road boards. Some road boards adopt efficient methods to eradicate vermin; on the other hand, other road boards adopt haphazard methods. A man on one property will decide to destroy rabbits this week, but the men on both sides of him have no desire to kill rabbits at the same time. The result is that the rabbit retreats to the boundaries of the property where he is being attacked, and as soon as the attack is over, immediately returns. Under the method recommended by the Commission, the eradication will take place simultaneously in the one district; every property-owner will be destroying vermin at the same time by a mobile unit, or by some other method. Such a method will not be nearly as costly as the haphazard methods to which I have referred. Under such methods the owners pay vermin rates, but get very little result.

The question of bonuses has interested many people. Some people say, "Why pay bonuses when you are going to eradicate the vermin by other means?" I favour the payment of bonuses, because there will then be an incentive to destroy the bigger animals,

such as foxes. As I said earlier, some farmers favour allowing a fox to remain on their property. They aver that the fox keeps down the rabbit to a great extent; but we found that when the rabbit disappeared the fox destroyed native fowl, turkeys and the ordinary domestic fowl, as well as sheep and lambs—lambs especially. So the Commission recommends that a bonus of 6s. per head should be paid for foxes, and a bonus of 1s. 6d. each for emus. I am of opinion that the bonus on emus will be very heavy for the first 12 months. They are exceedingly plentiful in some parts of the farming districts and can be trapped there in large numbers. Once the emu is destroyed, however, there is little risk of other emus coming into the district, provided the fences are attended to and gates are kept closed. Much evidence was given to the Commission as to gates on rabbit-proof fences being left open. We passed through rabbit-proof fences where the gates had been left open.

Mr. W. Hegney: That has been going on for over 30 years.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. We know that flocks of emus can pass through a gate in great numbers in a short space of time. We were also told that some people get rid of emus which are on one side of the fence by driving the emus through a gate to the other side. Such practices must be stopped.

Mr. Leslie: That was only done to bring the trouble to the notice of the authorities.

Mr. TRIAT: But people do it and the practice must be stopped. The penalty for leaving gates open should be severe. It is very heavy in the Eastern States. There the fine is £100; if not more. In Western Australia, however, a person offending is told that if he leaves the gate open again he will get into trouble, and he is probably fined £5. The gates must be kept closed and the penalty for deliberately leaving them open should be heavy. These gates are open and wired back to the fence, so there is no doubt about its having been done intentionally.

The Minister for Mines: That was deliberate.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. I come now to the question of wild goats. I thought I had a lot of knowledge of wild goats, but I find I have very little. I have much knowledge of wild oats, but not of wild goats! One gentleman gave information to the effect

that in one particular season something in the vicinity of 20,000 goats were destroyed on one property. That does not seem credible. Goats are a menace because a goat will eat as much valuable herbage as will any sheep. Kangaroos, of course, will eat as much as goats, but it is not as possible to poison goats as it is to get rid of kangaroos. One or two can be poisoned, but after that the rest will not touch the water but will go away. Goats are not the fools that some people seem to think! The Commission recommends that there shall be a bonus of £2 per hundred on wild goats and 25s. on kangaroos. Kangaroos are migratory. When seasons are good, they will appear in big numbers, eat out all the grass on a property, and leave immediately they have finished and go somewhere else. I cannot understand why kangaroos have increased to such an extent. For the last two or three years, they have been very valuable. The skin of a kangaroo of reasonable size is worth up to 10s., and any sort of skin is worth 5s. Yet we had evidence that 800 have been killed in one night on one station.

Mr. Rodoreda: People cannot get tyres or ammunition to go out after them.

Mr. TRIAT: I know; but when kangaroos are caught, why not take the skins off them? Skins worth 10s. each are being allowed to go to waste. If we pay a bonus of 25s., I think there should be some method of obtaining the valuable skins and of seeing that they are utilised. I subscribe to the payment of a bonus on kangaroos because it is essential to have these pests kept in check or eliminated. The Commission has suggested that new types of vermin should be declared. There are certain areas in the North-West and elsewhere where euros and kangaroos are numerous and should be declared vermin. As a matter of fact, euros are kangaroos. There are two types. One is the plain kangaroo and the other is the euro or hill kangaroo, whose fur and skin are not as valuable as those of the ordinary kangaroo. There are other areas where wild goats, wild pigs and wild asses are causing loss and these animals should be declared vermin also. The Commission is of the opinion that where any wild stock is causing damage it should be declared vermin. I have never seen asses or dingoes causing much damage, but probably in some parts of the north country they are doing so.

Mr. Willmott: Where are the wild pigs?

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Mr. TRIAT: I have seen none anywhere, but evidence has been given that in districts further north they are doing much damage. Down this way I do not think they are much trouble because there is not enough for them to live on. Regarding the bonus on dogs, I think there is a great danger involved and the Government should give consideration to the traffic in scalps. It came to the notice of the Commission that a good deal of traffic in scalps takes place, but it is hard to prove that a man is so trafficking. By trafficking I do not mean so much the bringing in of scalps from the Northern Territory as the actual trafficking in scalps in Western Australia. It has been brought to my notice that one particular institution in Western Australia breeds dogs for the purpose of selling the scalps. That should be investigated by those in authority—I mean by the Police Department—and, if it is true, action should be taken. If it can be proved that any particular institution breeds wild dogs or dogs of any description for the purpose of selling the scalps, stringent action should be taken against it. Further, where scalps are brought to any centre in great numbers and paid for by the local authority in that centre, the scalps should be mutilated to such an extent that they cannot be sold again. The ears could be removed from the scalp to prevent a resale. I believe a lot of traffic of that kind takes place; but if what I suggest were done, it would prevent extra money being paid on the one dog. In the Sandstone district when a man hands in a dog's scalp it is destroyed in the presence of the chairman and secretary of the road board and an authority of the town. Destruction is not left till the following day but is accomplished immediately and there is thus no chance of any trafficking.

Mr. Fox: I am afraid that is not always carried out.

Mr. TRIAT: I strongly recommend that that suggestion be given consideration. We cannot afford to pay good money by way of a bonus on a scalp if that scalp is going to be sold a second time. A considerable amount of money will be raised by the methods suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, who was Chairman of the Commission. The suggestion is that a rate of

five-sixteenths of a penny in the pound should be levied on land previously exempted. Schedule "C" of the report sets out the amount that will be collected and the method of expenditure. I presume that every member has read the report and, having done so, will realise that some real effort will be made to eradicate vermin if the suggestion is put into effect. The total amount of money raised would be £78,500 per year. The total expenditure would be the same. The schedule is quite clear for everybody to follow.

Under this scheme some service will be given to people in the agricultural and pastoral areas and the fruitgrowing districts in the eradication of vermin and pests, and if the proposal is carried out for five years, I feel sure that the State will benefit greatly by the activities of the board the Commission suggests should be appointed. I do not intend to weary the House on this matter. Other speakers will be able to explain other matters. The report is also available for everybody to read. In all honesty I would declare that this Commission went to a good deal of trouble. The inquiry extended over a long period and was costly to members of the Commission, who had to meet personal expenses out of their own pockets. When they travelled, they travelled at their own expense; they could not be paid for the job. Of course, their meals and beds were provided, but incidental expenses—which amounted to a considerable sum—had to be paid by the members themselves. I feel sure that the House will realise that the investigations were very thorough; and the recommendations have been made without fear or favour. They represent what the Commission thinks should be done; and if the suggestions were put into operation for a period of five years, this State, at the end of that time, would not be absolutely free from vermin, but vermin would be under control, and the activities of the State would be able to progress much more smoothly than is the case today.

The rabbit is a terrific pest to Western Australia, but it could be overcome very easily if the matter were taken in hand. The dog menace could be removed at any time it was desired. Dogs are well above ground. They do not go into burrows, but live on the surface and can be eradicated. Foxes also can be eliminated. But all this

cannot be done without money. We must have sufficient funds and the amount suggested by the Commission will meet requirements. In my opinion it is incumbent on everyone to contribute to the eradication of vermin from this State. I hope the House will give favourable consideration to the report. Before resuming my seat, I pay tribute to the members of the Commission, with whom I have been associated, for the diligent service they have given in this work. I hand the palm to the chairman for his excellent work and fair-mindedness.

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

### **MOTION—RAILWAYS.**

#### *As to Improving Metropolitan-Suburban Services.*

Debate resumed from the 5th September on the following motion by Mr. North:—

That this House recommends that the Government obtain a report in the near future upon the best means of improving the Metropolitan-Suburban railway services and suggests that experts be engaged (locally if possible) to advise upon—

- 1, Straight-out electrification;
- 2, Diesel electric traction;
- 3, The elimination of level crossings in favour of subways or bridges;
- 4, The erection of and best site for a modern central railway station and the substitution of island platforms in suburban stations where possible;
- 5, Any desirable changes in the present route, including the best site for a new railway bridge over the Swan at Fremantle.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS**  
(Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison) [7.52]: I congratulate the member who moved this motion on the score of being progressive and persistent in his desire to keep before the public the desirability, evidently, of the Government's keeping in step with up-to-date transport facilities. No doubt this keen desire on the part of the hon. member, and the enthusiasm which impels him to bring the motion before our notice, have caused him to overlook the fact that at the present juncture the Government is faced with so many acute anomalies that it would be of no value whatever to get an expert

opinion just now. That is so also because of the possibility of a complete change-over in our railway gauge. The motion asks the Government to solicit a report from experts. The matters that the experts are to deal with pertain to our railway system as it applies, particularly, to the metropolitan area. Such a report would be made by individuals who are specialists in railway transport. I point out that a report of that nature would not be of the value that the hon. member appears to think it would be.

Only those who are blind are unaware of the fact that the development of the internal combustion engine has practically revolutionised transport. The Government is facing up to that position. This report would have to be made by experts who are peculiarly and particularly versed in railways. In consequence they would probably take no cognisance of other mediums of transport. Such a report at this moment, as I have already stated, would not be of the value that members might think without giving the matter a great deal of consideration. Those of us who have had the opportunity—and may I say the good fortune—to be members of this Chamber for a long period know that the matter of electrifying the suburban railway system has been constantly reviewed. That has been done to my knowledge, for a period of 25 years. I can remember that, in the first Parliament in which I had the honour to sit, the matter was discussed. I can inform the House that many reports have already been obtained on this matter and are in the possession of the Government. Even as late as October, 1944, a report on this question was drawn up. I venture to suggest that if these various reports were given consideration by members, they could come to no other conclusion than that they contain sufficient information for a decision to be arrived at.

Mr. Needham: Why not take action on the reports you have?

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** I point out that there is a school of thought that arrives at conclusions by way of comparison without going very deeply into the subject and ascertaining all the facts. These people consider it is a practical and physical possibility for us to run before we can walk. The Government is not unmindful of

the urgent necessity for a more up-to-date transport system within the metropolitan area. As a matter of fact, that question will play a very prominent part in our post-war reconstruction plans. Let us view the position as we see it today. Take the electrification of our metropolitan system! The first thing to be considered is the capital cost of the change-over. That cost must be in proportion to the population in order that we may, in some degree, have an assurance that the interest, sinking fund payments, maintenance and other costs on the capital investment would be met.

Mr. Watts: That is rank heresy, for you.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The density of population is an important factor in all matters of transport, and the electrification of the railway system of the metropolitan area is no different. It was considered to be a proposition that would be too heavy, financially, for the people in Western Australia to carry, in 1921, when this matter was first considered, and in view of the fact that in those days the railway system was practically the only mode of transport within the metropolitan area, and received practically 100 per cent. of patronage, particularly from those residing adjacent to the railways, the position would be worse today. Though the population of the metropolitan area has increased, so has the competition that the railway system has to meet. The danger of over-capitalisation, by virtue of the change-over, does not seem to be any less today, taking all the circumstances into consideration, than it was in 1921. Assuming that the railway system in the metropolitan area is to be electrified, what guarantee would there be that those who have transferred their patronage to other forms of transport will return to the railways?

Electric traction may appear to be more attractive than steam traction, but it would probably be an almost daily occurrence to observe, side by side with electrification of the railways in the metropolitan area, more speedy and luxurious forms of transport on the roads, in competition with the railways. We therefore reach a point where it is doubtful whether the community could carry the heavy financial responsibility involved in the transformation of our railway system. It is not a problem that stands alone, and I would remind

members that it will probably be necessary, in the near future, for this Government to face up to the question of the standard gauge. If that happened after the electrification of the metropolitan railway system, is it suggested that we should discard the whole of that capitalisation, which would be almost inevitable if we had to accept the present route as the correct one for the uniform gauge? That possibility is not remote, and therefore of what value would a report on that matter be at this juncture?

Mr. Seward: The Minister surely does not contemplate converting all the suburban railways to a standard gauge?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government has to face up to all these problems and is not unmindful of the fact that the existing service—

Mr. Withers: Is the worst in the world.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would not say that. You probably remember, Mr. Speaker, that you and I enjoyed each other's company—

The Minister for Lands: That is a different tale from what we generally hear.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: While on a visit to the Eastern States, where we visited Queensland. There I had the opportunity to observe the standard of service rendered to the people of Brisbane and I say frankly that, in comparison, we have very little to worry about in Western Australia.

Mr. Rodoreda: Then God help Queensland.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Members can be as jocular as they like about it.

Mr. J. Hegney: How long is it since the Minister was in Queensland?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: About four years ago. I saw that service because I was interested in the matter and wanted to make the comparison. I travelled round the suburbs to ascertain whether there was any distinct difference in the standards, and I venture to suggest that there was not. The Government does not believe that what prevails in other States should necessarily be good enough as the standard in Western Australia. I only made that statement to show that we speedily condemn what exists in Western Australia, not realising that by comparison it is not behind

other States that are using a similar form of utility. In some regards it might truthfully be stated that what we have in Western Australia is in advance of what exists in other States, but the Government is not satisfied with the standard of service at present being rendered.

The Government is confronted with several problems on which, at this juncture, due to the uncertainty of the position, it is hard to decide whether it is advisable to enter on extensive expenditure. Speaking personally, I do not think that people who have been accustomed to using the more modern form of road transport would change back to train travelling even though the railways were electrified. The points raised in favour of electrification are that electric trains are more speedy and that a more frequent service ought to be possible. I have my doubts about its being more speedy. When we realise that the stopping places are so close one to the other, the matter of time saved for the whole trip would be very little indeed.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are you dealing with the electrification of trains?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I could not understand the interjection and therefore cannot answer; besides, to do so would be disorderly.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are you dealing with the electrification of trains?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would like to see electrification applied to some members and then they might realise that speed might bring disaster. While members may be desirous of getting things accomplished quickly, if catastrophe befell us, they would be ready to step from under and leave the Government to shoulder the responsibility and condemnation for having failed to show any vision.

Mr. Thorn: As you have done in the past.

Mr. W. Hegney: Speak up!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would be delightful to hear the member for Toodyay speak up.

Mr. Thorn: You would not understand me if I did.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There would be some small saving, of time, but not to the extent members would lead us to believe. Dealing further with the mat-

ter of speed but apart from electrified railways, we constantly hear in the House and in the streets of the city the statement that, if we had railways of a wider gauge, the speed could be increased to a phenomenal extent, and that the narrow gauge is responsible for the slowness of our railway transport system. We are constantly being told what a slow journey it is on the Perth-Kalgoorlie section of the Perth-Sydney run. We are told that if we had a 4ft. 8½in. gauge line, a speed of 40, 50 or even 60 miles an hour would be possible.

Mr. Seward: That argument did not come from this side of the House.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That argument is frequently used, just as it is being used now. To satisfy myself whether the comparison was sound, I took the trouble to ascertain just what times are occupied on the trans. line. From Perth to Adelaide is a distance of 1,622 miles and the time occupied is 65 hours, an average speed of 24.95 miles per hour. Most of that is on the 4ft. 8½in. gauge.

Mr. Styants: On a wartime restricted speed. Deal with the speed in pre-war days and see how it compares!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Am I not just as entitled to say that the slowness of our trains is due to wartime conditions?

Mr. Styants: No, that is entirely wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That would not be altogether correct. I venture to suggest that, if I put in the old schedule, there would be no 50 or 60 miles an hour about it. I point out, too, that where the more speedy trains are operating, the average speed is lower. From Perth to Melbourne is a distance of 2,105 miles. The journey occupies 85 hours and the average per hour is only 24.76 miles. Part of this is on the 5ft. 3in. gauge.

Mr. Seward: Is that running time?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, that is the time occupied for the whole journey.

Mr. Triat: The Spirit of Progress would do over 40 miles an hour.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Let me give the figures for the run from Perth to Sydney, a distance of 2,695 miles. The time occupied is 109 hours, and the average speed is the lowest of all, namely, 24.72

miles per hour. The point I wish to make is that the complaints about the slowness of the trains in this State are a little overdone.

Mr. Styants: I will bet you did not take those figures out for yourself.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Kalgoorlie may speak for himself when the time comes.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wish to deal with the proneness of people to condemn our railways for slowness, and to show that when we investigate the facts, we find that all their talk about 40, 50, or 60 miles an hour is without foundation.

Mr. W. Hegney: Have you the figures for the Kalgoorlie-Port Pirie section separately?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Question time is not now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government realises that the railway system, particularly the portion in the metropolitan area, is not all that could be desired. Nor do we argue that the service cannot be speeded up. This is a problem with which the Government is confronted at present. There is another matter that must be considered in regard to the slowness of passenger trains operating in the metropolitan area, and this is that all goods traffic must be carried over the same lines. The schedule must be so arranged as to permit of goods traffic going to and from Fremantle as well as passenger trains. No doubt the difficulty could be overcome by hauling smaller loads, thus permitting goods trains to travel at a higher rate of speed. But, again, we would have to put on a greater number of goods trains in order to cope with the traffic. I venture to suggest that if the present form of steam transportation were brought right up to date, if all our rollingstock and tractive power were brought to the point of efficiency where one could say they were nearly 100 per cent., we could speed up our metropolitan transport materially. But the Government is confronted with a difficulty, and not with the modernising of the rollingstock. I would say in passing that if our rollingstock were brought up to modern ideas, if it were clean and luxurious, as we find it on some trains—

Mr. Watts: That would be wonderful.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would, and we are hoping the time is not far distant when it will be.

Mr. Watts: We are looking to you to do it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would remind the hon. member, who seems to be desirous of making my speech for me—

Mr. Thorn: Many a time you have done it for me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the member for Toodyay to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would remind the hon. member opposite that there is another school of thought which contends that, because the war is over, the whole of our difficulties can be overcome by the waving of a magic wand. The department is inundated with all sorts of requests, and the reason for them is that the war is finished. But the people making those requests do so without giving the Government any possible opportunity to do what is required; in fact, the Government is in accord with much that is requested. I would say that there are not at present 100 more men available to the department on account of the cessation of hostilities. Some 1,370 employees of the railways and tramways are still absent on service. Then it is also necessary to obtain requisites, such as parts, and much new rollingstock has to be built. In fairness to the Government, these matters should be given serious consideration by the critics of the system.

The Government should not be asked to perform miracles. It has numerous reports, which are available to members should they desire to peruse them, on all these different modes of transport, and I venture to say that if we went to further expense to obtain additional reports, they would not be of any greater value than those we now have. The obstacles which are now in the way of the Government are responsible for holding these matters up, but we hope that in the very near future we shall be able to surmount them and make a sincere and conscientious effort to do what is right by the people. We must realise the fact—it would be very foolish on the part of the Government not to do so—that no matter how we may modernise our railways they will be open to dangerous competition from modern scientific inventions. We now have transport by air, and do not forget that this invention has not yet been weaned.



Mr. Seward: You will not have that competition in suburban traffic, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But it will be competition further afield. I hope the hon. member is not unmindful of the fact that the Government has to face such competition. He will not deny that it is but right and just that the people whom he represents should benefit from the post-war reconstruction programme as well as the people in the metropolitan district. All the people throughout the length and breadth of the State should benefit. May I suggest most humbly to those who reside in the city that the people who live in the North-West portion of the State and in even more isolated centres, as well as those who live in rural areas, are entitled to some consideration? In order to secure greater speed and more frequency of service, our rollingstock must be brought up to date, and we should give the people good comfortable clean compartments to travel in, thus making the service more attractive, so that its earning capacity will be equivalent to that which we might expect to receive under a system of electrification.

The Minister for Works: Some members of the public should treat the compartments better than they do today, too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Go where one likes, one will find people constantly complaining about public utilities, yet they themselves do not consider their own conduct. To illustrate, I will quote a case in point which came under my notice only yesterday or the day before. God knows that the complaints about our tramway system are to an extent justified; I refer to the slowness of the trams and their irregularity, and no one can deny that the system is not 100 per cent.

Mr. Cross: It is time it was scrapped.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is quite true.

Mr. Watts: Other things ought to be scrapped, including the one behind the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That applies to politicians, too. As I say, I was watching people boarding and alighting from a tram. Those who came from the outer suburbs got off and had a look at the time by the Town Hall clock. Each passenger did so as he got off the tram. A lady with a baby boarded the tram and the

driver took her perambulator to the bottom end of the tram. Immediately he did so, the lady rushed out of the tram and said, "Hold on a moment until I get the pillows out of the pram." She ran down and got the pillows, and kept the tram full of people waiting.

Mr. Cross: What would you have done?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know what the hon. member would have done.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the member for Canning to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is an instance to show how some people are careless, indifferent and selfish when it comes to a question of the welfare of others. Yet these same people complain about the slowness of the trams. On numerous occasions people can be seen conversing in trams and trains, thus deliberately holding up the other passengers who are anxious to get to their destination.

As I say, however, much could be said in condemnation of the rollingstock and the schedules today. No one would deny that, but until we can get the material and the labour to overcome the difficulty, surely members will be just enough to admit that the Government can do but little to remedy the matter. One steps into an apartment on a railway train, and I agree that much of the rollingstock is deplorable. It is unclean. Again, the reply is that the labour is not available and we cannot attend to these matters. But, as the Deputy Premier rightly pointed out, let us look at the destruction of the rollingstock that is perpetrated by the travelling community, the vandalism by larrikins—and "larrikinesses," too—without any thought of the consequences of such damage to other travellers. So I am of opinion that, having regard to the circumstances of the position, and realising what can happen in the very near future in respect of a wider gauge, any report that might be submitted today, or soon, preceding any particular change-over which we anticipate, would be quite useless until we have something definite in regard to that proposed alteration.

I understand there is some possibility of a proposal—that is all it is; I definitely emphasise the word "proposal"—of the wider gauge taking some route other than the existing one. If that were done, it

would be a far cheaper proposition for the State Government to have its gauge put alongside the other at the same time. Then all the transport of goods to and from the port could take that route, thus freeing the present lines for passenger traffic and speeding up transport materially compared with what it is today when we are hauling our goods along the same line. The hon. gentleman mentioned Diesel electric trains. The cost of suitable types of Diesel trains is particularly heavy, but I understand that there are some on tender and they may ultimately reach this State. We are hoping that they will; and when the time arrives for them to be put into active service, they may lend a helping hand in speeding up metropolitan traffic.

Mr. Withers: What about the back blocks?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have already mentioned that they are not going to be overlooked. Whatever may have been the sufferings of folk in the metropolitan area, they have no cognisance, they have not the slightest knowledge, of the sufferings and inconvenience endured by people travelling long distances. Country people have always had to put up with those disadvantages, not just temporarily during the war period.

Mr. SPEAKER: I point out to the Minister that the motion deals only with the metropolitan area.

Mr. Thorn: He ought to know that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: So I put to the House what could be and may be, depending on what the Government thinks fit and proper, and having regard to the number of vehicles that may be obtained and the best purpose for which they could be used; in short, having regard to all factors. The next point the motion deals with is the elimination of level crossings and the substitution of subways or bridges. No-one can deny the ugliness of level crossings. They are ugly from more points than one. They are ugly from the point of view of loss of human life, and they lend no beauty to their surroundings. That is mainly due to the fact that every endeavour is made for level crossings to give all traffic—both railway and vehicular—an opportunity to see what is approaching. No matter whether it be a train or a vehicle,

the driver is watching, the one for a vehicle and the other for a train; and any obstruction to a clear view would be dangerous.

I am doubtful whether the Government would hesitate in regard to replacing level crossings by subways or bridges, but this is a matter that must wait until we can get labour and materials. Strange to relate, both subways and bridges absorb exactly the same material that is so urgently required for better housing facilities. So the problem does not require any report. The Government is well aware of the difficulties and the objectionable features in regard to level crossings and will no doubt give consideration as early as possible to a change-over, something more slightly, in the first place, and something a lot less dangerous, in the second place—or members can place those points in reverse order if they like. The Government is not unmindful of the need; but of what value would a report be? All that could be said about level crossings is already known. The Government is well aware of it and will take necessary action when practicable and humanly possible.

The next point dealt with was the site for a central railway station. The question with which we are confronted in this respect is: Where can we find a more central site for a railway station in the metropolitan area than the present? I venture to say no member would suggest that there is another site available to the Government that could be more central than the existing site. Very well, then! Suppose we change to some other site. What happens? Immediately we did that, the chances are that we would lose the patronage we now receive, because people would say, "I am not going to North Perth or South Perth or somewhere else to the central railway station; I am going to catch a bus." There is no other site of which I am aware that is more appropriately central than the existing one. Here again, I suggest that a modern building, something that would lend architectural beauty to the city in the first place and make conditions more amenable and agreeable to employees so that they would render effective service, in the second place, is necessary; but to change the site would be dangerous; because, although the traffic the railways handle is slight, the patronage they enjoy would be lessened if the station were removed, so I do not think a report on that point would be particularly serviceable.

The last point raised by the hon. member is in regard to any desirable changes in the present route, including the best site for a new railway bridge over the Swan at Fremantle. We also have reports on this matter. The present railway bridge serves the purpose, and I think that the proposals in regard to the uniform gauge—which are only proposals, may I emphasise—contemplate the line terminating at the North Wharf. That is for the present, anyhow. Even when the proposal is given effect to it will be some time before the uniform gauge line will run across the Swan River. One factor that has to be considered in this question is the extension of Fremantle Harbour. We have a very good report by Sir George Buchanan on this subject. These are problems with which the Government is confronted all the time. If we were now to get a report saying that the railway bridge should be 50 or 100 yards further up the river, and we gave effect to that report, the bridge might, when we built the additions to Fremantle Harbour, or extended the wider gauge to Fremantle, be in such a position as to be entirely uneconomical.

No member will argue that the possibility of speedy development in Western Australia will not eventuate. As development goes on so our railways and our transport system—a part of which is the Fremantle Harbour—must be enlarged. We must make haste slowly in this regard in case we involve ourselves in the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds on a bridge which ultimately will be found to be completely and economically impossible because of its geographical position. The Government is not asleep to the problems confronting it, nor are its members apathetic or indifferent to the wishes of members who speak for the public and whose utterances are respected on that ground. But the Government has to be mighty careful to see that it does not involve itself, at the moment, in huge expenditure on improvements, only to find that, within a very short time, they have become practically useless. Money, no doubt, will play a prominent part in the development of this country. While it may be possible for a Government to find £1,500,000 per day for war, it will be found that all sorts of restrictions will be imposed on expenditure for the welfare of humanity—and that will apply the world over and not to

Western Australia alone! Those are the views that are held by the Government.

There is not the slightest intention to flout any desire that the people, or the representatives of the people may have. My point about this motion is that at this time any report would be useless because of the uncertainty of the very near future. That is all that is in it. We do not wish to go to the expense of obtaining another report when we realise that, be it ever such a good report, it would be quite useless in view of what may happen in the days to come. As I said before, I admire the member for Claremont who moved the motion. He is constantly in step with progress and is always advocating progressive reforms. To that extent he has my congratulations. But he should realise, and so should other members, that the problems ahead of the Government are many, and it would be unwise to be stampeded into doing something that may at great expense, alleviate the position for the time being, only to find, within a short period, that the expenditure was not warranted. Any number of reports are available to the hon. member if he wants them. He, or anyone else, can peruse them if he feels inclined and is sufficiently interested to do so. He would then be well satisfied with the many proposals and suggestions that have been made. I have no more to say on the matter. The Government will not be lacking in its duty in watching carefully all that might happen in the future, with a view to seeing that the public's money is spent wisely, so that it will be of the greatest service to the people.

**MR. RODOREDA** (Roebourne) [8.48]: My contribution to this debate will be fairly brief. Before going further we should look closely into what the motion says. It states that the Government should obtain a report in the near future upon the best means of providing the metropolitan suburban railway services and suggests that experts be engaged to advise upon electrification, Diesel electric traction, the elimination of level crossings in favour of subways or bridges, the erection of and best site for a modern central railway station, etc. I am disappointed indeed in the Minister's speech. He said that money and manpower are involved and made the point in regard to lack of materials with which to carry out the improvements suggested by the motion. As far

as I can see the motion does not call for any expenditure of money, but merely asks for a report to be submitted on all the sub-headings mentioned.

I listened attentively to what the Minister had to say, which has led me to the conclusion that we should carry this motion. He gave no indication of any policy that the Government has in regard to railways. There was not one suggestion. If we want a report on anything in this State, we want it upon our railways. The average time taken from here to Sydney has very little bearing on the time taken from Midland Junction to Fremantle, or on the late running of trains, and while the Railway Department may have some justification for saying that war conditions have been responsible for many of these things, all these points were the subject of debate in this House long before the war. The late running of trains has been chronic in this State for as long as I can remember, though it is not tolerated in the railway system of any other State. Our railway gauge, whatever it might be, is quite beside the point, and once a timetable is laid down surely we can expect the railway authorities to keep somewhere near it. I admit that the war has caused difficulties in keeping the engines up to the mark, and has been responsible for the lack of experienced men, but it cannot be said to be responsible for all these troubles. I think the reports, submitted years ago, that the Minister says are available, were mostly submitted from the Railway Department itself.

The Minister said that the time was not ripe and that the population was not big enough to support straight out electrification or Diesel-electric traction. That may be the point of view of the Commissioner of Railways or of the Minister, but I have no facts on which to base an opinion, and I think a report is necessary now. If we get a report, that does not mean that we have to implement its recommendations tomorrow. Parliament and the Government have a say after the report is published. We all know the attitude of the Railway Department on the elimination of level crossings. The department fought against any improvement in that regard for as long as I can remember. It has always been the argument that someone other than the Railway Department should stand the cost of eliminating level crossings, but at the present day we are

crazy to stand for level crossings in the metropolitan area, yet there is no suggestion from the Minister that the position will be rectified as soon as men and materials are available.

This House has nothing to go on regarding Government policy in the matter of the elimination of level crossings, which I think we all consider should be proceeded with as early as possible. It is absurd to say that most of the materials used in the construction of a subway or bridge are also used in house construction, because subways and bridges are mostly steel work. The selection of a central railway station is dependent upon information and knowledge that I do not possess, and which I think most of the Cabinet Ministers do not possess, and the need for a report there is obvious, more particularly now that the uniform gauge is under discussion. Possibly the central station could be on the lines of the Victorian system, a mile or so out in the suburbs, at least as regards the terminus for country trains. I do not agree with the Minister's contention that there is only one place for the central railway station, though I have no data on which to base my opinion, and I think the request for a report is justified. Briefly, those are my reasons for supporting this motion. I am not going into any detail regarding the running of the railways, but I have given my views and I support the motion.

**MR. SEWARD** (Pingelly) [8.55]: I am pleased with one aspect of the Minister's reply to this motion, in that he admits there are defects in the railways, and there is therefore some hope for the future. In the early part of his remarks the Minister expressed doubt as to whether the population could stand the cost of electrification of the railways.

Mr. Cross: I doubt whether they can stand going without it.

Mr. SEWARD: I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that nothing has been done to keep the capital cost of the railways at anything like the figure at which it should be. Each year, as capital expenditure has been incurred, it has simply been added to the previous amounts of capital expenditure, but in those years—some time ago now of course—when profits were made from the railways, those profits were not written off capital. There has been no revaluation of

the assets and so, as is frequently pointed out, in that capital expenditure are assets that have long since disappeared from the railways. Consequently the people of this State—both country and suburban railway users—are being charged fares based on capital which is non-existent. Other States have taken measures to write off dead capital, and consequently the fares there are based on more reasonable figures than is the case in this State. Until something is done to deal with dead capital our railway system will be grossly over-capitalised.

The Minister stated that lack of patronage of the suburban railways was due to active competition outside the railways—more particularly in recent years—but I ask the Minister what he thinks has brought about that competition. Admittedly some of our suburban areas are located far from the railways and in those cases it is obvious that there must be competition, but I venture to say that people will not stand in a queue in St. George's-terrace, in the rain, in the winter months, waiting for buses, if they can get rapid transport from the central station to their suburban stations, and obviously a train can cater for more people than can quite a lot of buses. Until the Government faces up to some of the problems, with which the Minister admits it is faced, the railways will continue to lose the patronage of the public. It is no use the Minister telling us that there are reports and that the Government is faced with these problems in relation to suburban traffic and other problems relating to primary and secondary industries; the problems must be dealt with.

In recent years we have seen put into service buses twice the size of those formerly used. The road transport people are increasing their facilities, but I do not think the Minister can point to any increased facilities or better speeds in the Railway Department. Until those aspects are dealt with the Railway Department will continue to lose the patronage of the public. One part of the Minister's speech that filled me, with serious misgivings was when he referred to the possibility of the standardisation of our railways.

That is one report that is not being pigeon-holed and put into the background—I refer to the plan for the standardisation of railways. I fear that will be rammed down our throats, whether we want it or not, as

I said a few nights ago, in bringing the matter before the public. I would be astounded if the Government were to contemplate converting the suburban railway system to the standard gauge of 4ft. 8½in. What is there to be gained by it? The Minister implied that we could convert our lines to the standard gauge in order to increase the speed. We have read in the reports of the Railways Commissioners in South Africa and Japan for years past of trains running from 40 to 60 miles an hour on lines of 3ft. 6in. gauge.

The Premier: That might be clap-trap, too.

Mr. SEWARD: But in this State we do not expect to find clap-trap in the report of the Commissioner of Railways, and I do not think it appears in similar reports in other countries. In my opinion it is not clap-trap.

The Premier: Perhaps Sir Harold Clapp.

Mr. SEWARD: The reports on the South African and Japanese railways have been quoted by me and by the member for Albany.

Mr. Watts: And the member for Kalgourlie.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. Those reports show the times occupied by their trains for certain journeys. They have lines of 3ft. 6in. gauge, and so I am satisfied there is no need to increase the gauge here merely to obtain an increase in speed.

The Minister for Lands: You could not get that speed with so many stoppages between Perth and Fremantle.

Mr. SEWARD: The point I am making is that there is no need to alter the gauge in order to increase the speed.

The Minister for Railways: I myself implied that.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister indicated the possibility of altering the gauge on suburban lines in order to secure increased speed. To do that, in my opinion, would be calamitous. I hope that the other reports, which the Minister says are in possession of the department, will receive equal prominence with that of Sir Harold Clapp. The Minister advanced the war as a reason for not doing much to bring our railways up to date. We are all aware of that. He also told us that manpower had proved a difficulty. We know that also. However, I turned up the report of the

Commissioner of Railways which was recently tabled, and found that the staff employed by the Railway Department last year totalled 8,362, while in 1941, only four years ago, the total was 7,887. Consequently, there are 500 more men employed in the railways today than there were in 1941. Thus the staff is not depleted. I would not say that the present employees are as competent as those who were in the service before the war. Obviously, if we allow skilled men to go away and have to employ other men in their place, those men will not be so skilled in the work. Still, the total number and more are there. I would also draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that the railways have not been losing much patronage. Separate figures are not given for suburban and country traffic in this report, but the total number of passengers carried in 1941 was 11,518,000, compared with 18,000,000 last year.

The Minister for Railways: That is accounted for by Service personnel.

Mr. SEWARD: I admit that Service personnel has created a fair amount of traffic, but not so much in the last 12 months as in previous years. I do not profess to be conversant with suburban traffic because I seldom use suburban trains. If I have occasion to go to Fremantle, I take a bus because to go to Fremantle and back by railway would occupy a full day when one has any business to transact at the port. Consequently, I patronise a bus in order to get through the job in half a day.

Mr. J. Hegney: I do not think you are alone in that, either.

Mr. SEWARD: I am certain I am not. I was interested in the statement by the Minister for Railways about the travelling public being unsympathetic and not assisting tram conductors, for the sake of argument, in speeding up the service. Here is something that ought to interest the Minister. On the 6th January last, I was in Perth and had an appointment with the Under Secretary for Agriculture at 4 p.m. I suddenly became aware that the time was seven minutes to four, so I caught a tram at Harvest-terrace and travelled to Barrack-street. When we got there the driver beckoned to another tramway employee, who left the footpath and walked over to the platform of the car. The driver dis-

appeared and the tram stood in Barrack-street for five minutes. Then the driver returned with some parcels under his arm and drove off. That tram was full of people and yet was held up for five minutes while the driver went away to do some business. Consequently, an unsympathetic attitude also exists on the side of the tramway employees.

I hope that the new Minister will not entirely take the side of the Railway Department, as he did to a considerable extent tonight. He knows as well as do many members that the railways have to be speeded up and modernised to meet the conditions demanded by the travelling public. It is not sufficient to tell us that reports are available in the department. We should certainly get other reports to help us to solve this problem. It certainly is a problem. We cannot afford to have Budget deficits created each year by the railways.

The Minister for Railways: If you read the motion, you will find that the mover is satisfied with the report from the department.

Mr. SEWARD: He is asking for a report on the best means of speeding up and improving the suburban services, and in that respect I support him. If the Minister has a lot of reports in the department, he should extract the best from them. I want to see something done. The Minister spoke about the travelling public coming from the country. I travel frequently on the Albany train, and that train is often stopped at suburban stations all the way from Midland Junction to Perth to cater for suburban traffic. That is not right. People who have done a journey of 300 miles—

The Minister for Railways: What about a journey of 715 miles from Wiluna, and we have a similar experience.

Mr. SEWARD: I am surprised that the Minister has not got that altered. At any rate, I should be able to enlist his sympathy. Only in recent years have long-distance trains stopped at suburban stations. I will not name the gentleman who introduced that change, but it was wrong that such a change should have been made. The only reason for pulling up country trains in that way is that there is no suburban train from Midland Junction at about the same time. I hope the Minister will alter that arrangement so that the travelling pub-

lie will be encouraged to patronise the trains and thus help us to balance the Budget. We cannot continue year after year incurring deficits. Of course those people who cannot conveniently be served by trains would continue to use other means of transport, but other people for whom the trains would be convenient would use them if they were brought up to standard and made to meet present-day requirements. On those grounds I support the motion.

**MR. CROSS** (Canning) [9.8]: In my opinion only good would result from the presentation of a report as sought by the motion, because the time is long overdue when some improvement should have been made in the metropolitan transport services. I wonder how many members realise that 50 years ago a passenger train occupied 45 minutes to complete the journey from Fremantle to Perth, a distance of about 12 1/3rd miles, and that the time occupied on the journey today is the same.

**Mr. J. Hegney**: We have the same engines today.

**Mr. CROSS**: Some of them are still running. The member for Pingelly told us that when he has occasion to go to Fremantle, he travels by bus in order to save time. Has the hon. member noticed the scheduled time for the bus journey? The bus takes within five minutes of the time occupied by the train and sometimes longer. They run just as late on occasions as do the trains.

**The Minister for Railways**: They are left on the roadside in the daytime.

**Mr. CROSS**: Yes, for seven or eight trips. If members doubt that statement, let them go to South Perth and try to get on a Metro bus coming to town. On occasions, a person would miss five or six buses. I agree that it is time some inquiry was made into the possibility of electrifying the passenger transport service in the metropolitan area. A start could be made on the electrification of the section from Perth to Fremantle, a distance of 12 miles. I do not think it will cost such an immense sum of money as some people think. Some 15 to 20 coaches would be required and the cost would be only £2,000 per mile for the overhead equipment. If the department did that and diverted the country goods traffic along a line outside the city, either north or south, it would meet the case. At present, all

country goods traffic has to come through the bottle-neck of Perth. It would be interesting to know how much overtime the Railway Department has to pay in order to run these trains at night. They must come through the city now and that affects the running of passenger transport. Those goods trains cannot be run in the daytime, because the line must be kept clear of traffic not only for the country passenger trains but for the metropolitan passenger trains as well. The electrification of the system from Perth to Fremantle would be an improvement.

**The Premier**: If you electrify that portion, you will surely give the department a shock.

**Mr. CROSS**: It would give someone a shock. Instead of having a train per hour in the slack time of the day, people would get what they wanted. Trains could be run more frequently. A train could be run every ten minutes; a guard would not be required, but only the driver. The tickets could be collected at the station as they are collected now. Probably more stations could be put on the route. There is this about electrically-driven traffic, as everyone knows: Most members have been to Sydney and seen the electric trains there. They will have noted that these electrically-driven vehicles speed up quicker than does any other vehicle on the face of the earth. Steam trains have to gather speed. Usually, on suburban services, the engine pulls a train of eight or nine coaches and has to contend with one or two grades, so that by the time the train reaches the next station it has not got full speed up. That is not so with an electrically-driven vehicle. We could have a report on the electrification of the system and upon the advisability of diverting goods traffic around the city, as is done in Sydney.

**The Minister for Railways**: What would it cost to divert the goods traffic round the city?

**Mr. CROSS**: I do not know, but sooner or later it will have to be done. This motion deals with metropolitan passenger transport, but I wish to touch on a point not mentioned by it. Goods traffic does not run through any modern city. That is the case in Melbourne and Sydney, and the time will come when goods traffic will not pass through Perth. We shall then be up to date. It is because we are behind the times that we

hear complaints. The bus services have robbed the railways of their passengers; we all know that to be the case. People can get on a trolley-bus or a Metro bus at Bay View-terrace in Claremont and travel to Perth. They do so because they thus avoid having to walk to the Claremont station and wait perhaps an hour for a train. There is a bus every five minutes and at certain times a trolley-bus every three minutes, and the trip takes five minutes less than the rail journey. People will not wait for the trains. In Sydney, as members know, where there are level crossings the trains go underground: in fact, many of the electric stations in Sydney are built underground, as they are in London and all other up-to-date cities.

The Minister for Lands: Many other things are underground in Sydney, too.

Mr. CROSS: It seems to me that there must be some drastic changes. I am of opinion that the motion does not go far enough and I intend to move an amendment. I hope I shall be in order, but generally speaking I think that any report on our passenger traffic should be considered in conjunction with passenger transport facilities in the metropolitan area, as the two matters are very closely related. The scope of this motion should be extended to embrace all passenger transport facilities, because the way in which things are developing, instead of there being co-ordination between the various services, dislocation between them is increasing. Now the war is over our traffic should be co-ordinated.

We have heard talk about our trams being slow, but I point out that any person can walk along Hay-street to Milligan-street any day of the week, at any time between 9 and 5 o'clock, and find cars parked on both sides of the street, as well as trucks. He will find seven or eight vehicles parked two in from the kerb and very often on the tram line itself. If one were to make a note of the time they were parked, it would be found that they were standing there for several minutes hanging up the traffic. Thus the tram service is delayed. However, the tram service is entirely out of date; it is too slow. As a matter of fact, the railways, the trolley-buses and the trams have never been run in order to get a profit from them. Our country railways have not been run in order to make a profit. If they were, the fares would have been raised a long time

ago. Since the war, fares have been increased by 100 per cent. in Great Britain. There the railways are run by private companies, which must make them pay. It is all very well for people to say that the railways ought to pay, but they are not likely to do so when one considers that the cost of the service has doubled in the last 15 or 20 years. The basic wage in 1938 was £3 8s.; today it is £5 odd. The price of coal has gone up at least 10s. a ton. All other expenses have increased, but the fares are still the same.

Mr. Thorn: Does the Midland Railway line pay?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: The Midland line has nothing to do with the motion. There are other reasons why that line pays. Its traffic does not pay.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: All these things should be taken into consideration at the one time. I agree that level crossings should be eliminated, but I would point out that the matter requires much consideration. I think there are more level crossings in the district I represent than in any other part of the metropolitan area, and if they are removed then facilities will have to be found for the people to get from one side of the railway to the other. If some of the level crossings in my electorate were removed, it would cost thousands of pounds to make a road for the people to get over the line. Those people have been settled in the district for 20 or 30 years and are certainly entitled to access to those roads which hitherto they have been using. So the matter of the elimination of level crossings is not a simple problem. It would be scarcely possible in the outer suburbs to put the line underground. The time is ripe for an inquiry; nothing but good would come out of it. I am quite satisfied that if there is no improvement when the war conditions are finally over, we shall see railway trains running to Fremantle with ten coaches and about ten passengers in them. Undoubtedly, our people are entitled to improved transport facilities. The trams should be scrapped and trolley-buses installed in their place. Even today the trolley-buses from Claremont run to Perth—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the hon. member that trolley-buses are not mentioned in the motion.



Mr. CROSS: Then I will say this: The train from the Claremont station, with a mile less to run than the trolley-bus from Claremont, occupies five minutes longer in running time to Perth. That is the truth, and members can test it for themselves by making a trip and timing it. That means that we have to make some alterations; and the trains must, too. The member for Claremont moved a good motion; everybody in the city area will agree with him. But he should have included road transport services, too. I therefore move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added as follows:—

(6) The possibility of a general co-ordination and improvement in metropolitan passenger transport facilities.

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Speaker: I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the motion deals only with the Railway Department, which has nothing to do with metropolitan transport facilities generally. I understood him to say that he intended to move to insert something about trams.

Mr. Cross: You can include trams, too, if you like.

Mr. Speaker: Order! I cannot accept the amendment as moved.

Mr. Cross: On a point of information, am I permitted to include reference to the tramway service?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that will be quite in order.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

Mr. CROSS: Then I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added as follows:—

(6) The general improvement of tramways and trolleybus passenger facilities in the metropolitan area.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

[*The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*]

### **MOTION—WOOL.**

#### *As to Investigating Mather Plan.*

Debate resumed from the 5th September on the following motion by Mr. Mann—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should investigate and present a report to Parliament on the practicability of carrying into effect in Western Australia the plan known as the Mather Wool Plan.

### **THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**

(Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle)

[9.24]: The member for Beverley requires an investigation by the State into the practicability of the plan known as the Mather Wool Plan for operation in this State. A little consideration will show that, having regard to the magnitude of the wool clip of Australia, any plan for implementation in Western Australia alone would offer very little chance of success. What is the hon. member's reason for moving this motion? Has he any real belief in the efficacy of the plan? I do not think he has. As a matter of fact, he was good enough to supply his reason when he moved the motion. He said—

I am moving this motion for the benefit of some people in this State who are interested in obtaining the actual facts.

In other words, he was regarding Parliament, not as a deliberative assembly, but as an information bureau. The Mather Wool Plan is contained in "Wool," a publication by W. H. Mather, which is published in the "Battle for Australia" series, and I suggest that if the hon. member wants to obtain the actual facts about this plan for his inquirers he should advise them of the name of this publication, and where it can be obtained, and that would save a lot of time; because, as he has already stated, his reason for moving the motion is to obtain the actual facts for those inquirers. This publication to which I have referred contains numerous examples of confused ideas about international trade, a number of unsupported generalisations, and a large number of romantic speculations. Let me quote from page 95 of this publication. The writer says—

Unprecedented prosperity will reign in Australia when all her wool is appraised in country towns, as well as her livestock, wheat, fruit, vegetables, poultry and many other primary products.

A little later he says that he looks forward to an inland sea covering 40,000 square miles and supplying irrigation water for 5,000,000 farms to enable fodder to be produced for 60,000,000 head of cattle and 360,000,000 sheep. Now it seems to me that this book is designed to appeal to the emotions of readers rather than to convey a reasoned argument in support of the central proposal of the Mather Wool Plan. What is this proposal? The hon. member

was not very explicit when introducing the subject. It is a proposal to clean and partly process the Australian wool clip at numerous centres throughout Australia, before this wool is shipped overseas. As members know, most of our wool clip is shipped in the raw state, for the very obvious reason that that is the condition in which our customers require to have it. The Mather Plan asks that we shall not sell our wool in the raw state, but that we shall say to our customers overseas, "You cannot have raw wool; you must have partly processed wool. We will do the processing here, and you can have a partly finished product afterwards." That would be all very well if our customers were prepared to take the wool in that condition; but they have demonstrated very clearly that they are not.

I would say that the disposal of our wool clip is of prime importance to the Australian economy, and it is a question that is receiving a great deal of attention at present. The prosperity of the whole country is related to our ability to obtain profitable prices abroad for this commodity, and anything which affects the industry is a matter for general concern. The Commonwealth and State Governments are very much alive to the necessity for assisting the wool industry, and for maintaining its position in the face of increasing competition from synthetic fibre. The war has been a godsend to those engaged in the synthetic fibre industry. As a result of their researches they have developed a technique which makes it possible for them to put upon the market a product which compares more than favourably with wool as to price, and which very nearly approaches it with regard to reliability and durability. Much more money has been spent on research into synthetic fibres than has been spent on research in connection with the wool industry.

The Government is fully alive to the necessity for attempting to catch up, because any plan which might result in a loss of prestige, in wool, would be a bad one for Australia. For us, at this stage, to say that we will refuse to sell our wool in the raw state, but only in the processed state, would inevitably result in a diminution of the quantity that we can successfully dispose of, and might ultimately result in wool being relegated to a very secondary position. If wool were to lose its prestige then that loss

would inevitably exclude all possibility of our increasing wool manufacture in Australia. The Secondary Industries Commission, which has given a lot of thought to this matter, has recommended the setting up of a wool textile research institute for the purpose of assisting the wool industry to improve production methods and to enlarge the market for its product. Because of the peculiar set of circumstances obtaining during the war Australia was able, very substantially, to increase the amount of its processing activities. We processed half as much wool again as ever before.

It is estimated by the Secondary Industries Commission that each five per cent. of the wool clip that is processed in Australia means employment for an additional 9,500 men, so that it is well worth going after. And, apart from the fact that these additional men are employed, if we can process the wool in Australia we enhance the value of the product that we have to sell. But we cannot take up a stand-and-deliver attitude and say, "Henceforth we refuse to sell our wool in any state other than a processed state." By far the better method is to continue to dispose of our wool to our customers and, as opportunity offers, to increase the amount of processing that we can do in this country.

Mr. Watts: Would they not accept it clean scoured?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, because they prefer to do the scouring themselves.

Mr. Watts: We are sending overseas a lot of weight, in grease and dirt, that has no value.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is admitted, and those who purchase our wool realise that they are paying the freight on that extra weight if it is sent in that state.

Mr. Leslie: No. We pay the freight. That is allowed for.

Mr. Watts: We are docked for it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but the freight is taken into consideration in the price that is fixed. It is, therefore, as broad as it is long.

Mr. Watts: We pay for it in the end.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I suppose if we got down to the final analysis, and if the price were a fixed one and

subject to no variation, we would be paying. But the price is fixed and has regard for the fact that the wool is transported in that condition. I suppose it is a question of the point of view. The Commonwealth has already recognised that a step to be taken immediately is to prepare the way for maintaining the wartime progress, post-war. A second step is to organise matters so that increased quantities of virgin wool can be processed in Australia. The Commonwealth Government has already demonstrated that it is fully alive to these two requirements. It is also well aware of the fact that to achieve them will not be easy. The wool textile industry has been established overseas for a very long time—for generations—and experience has developed there an enviable technique in manufacturing processes.

In addition, the overseas manufacturers have established markets that will enable them to maintain the business against competition from Australia. If we were to say, "Henceforth we are going to sell our finished product against your product" it would, in my opinion, lead to disaster. By far the better method is gradually to build up our manufacturing and processing side so that we can extend our markets, not in open competition with overseas manufacturers, but in conjunction with the business they do. Then as we improve our processes by efficiency and as the result of experience, we should be able to go on extending this additional activity. The Secondary Industries Commission has recommended to the Commonwealth Government that the C.S.I.R. should determine the possibilities of extending, as soon as practicable, the processing and manufacture of wool in Australia, for export. That shows quite clearly that the subject is well to the fore and is at present under investigation and receiving consideration. The Commonwealth Government has announced a comprehensive scheme for assisting the industry and has already brought down legislation to give effect to that scheme. Under it money is made available for research into wool production, wool processing, and the marketing of wool. This is to be done on a scale not previously contemplated.

So I think that the member for Beverley, who moved this motion, can rest assured that any plans brought forward for the betterment of the industry must, under

that set-up, receive the closest consideration. I go further and say that it is certain that any practicable scheme which provides a reasonable possibility for increased employment within Australia will receive the most careful consideration. In these circumstances any inquiry by the State would be redundant. In addition, we could not undertake an inquiry on anything like the scale provided under the Commonwealth set-up. I submit that it is not necessary to pass this motion. When the member for Beverley was introducing the matter he made some remarks, that appear to call for comment, about meat export. He inferred that sucker lambs, being transported from the Midlands and from York and Beverley, were detrimentally affected because of the transportation, and through not being slaughtered in those places. That is an extraordinary statement for the member for Beverley to make.

Mr. Watts: Nine out of every ten people would make it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The member for Beverley is closely associated with the industry. Several years ago the results of controlled experiments in this State were published, and showed that sucker lambs could be carried in railway trucks for periods of up to three days with very little effect on either the carcase, weight or quality. What makes the matter all the more surprising is that the lambs for the purpose of this experiment, were drawn from Beverley. Investigations were also carried out in South Australia and similar conclusions were arrived at as the result of those experiments.

Mr. Watts: Those experiments must have been well controlled.

Mr. Seward: It is the handling that counts.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member's charge was that the Mather plan suggests that the killing should be done inland. He supported that and said that the sucker lambs would be adversely affected if they were transported. I informed the House that several years ago controlled experiments were carried out for the purpose of ascertaining this very fact, and it was proved beyond doubt that the lambs could be carried in railway trucks for periods of up to three days without being adversely affected as to carcase, weight and quality.

Mr. Watts: That was in controlled experiments.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** An uncontrolled experiment would not be worth anything.

Mr. Leslie: We are concerned with practical working conditions.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** The word "controlled" in this instance indicates that the experiments were carried out under proper supervision so that the results would be reliable.

Mr. Seward: Careful handling is the main thing.

Mr. McLarty: Lambs lose weight very rapidly.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** The experiments proved that for periods up to three days they did not, and that is all we could go on. The section of the Mather plan dealing with the establishment of country abattoirs suggests that the author, Mr. Mather, had very little factual knowledge of the subject and, if the hon. member agrees with me, I suggest that he should read that section of the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission that deals with inland killing works, and also the report of the Geraldton Meat Works Investigation Committee, which was published in February of this year. If he does that, I am satisfied he will have an opinion altogether different from that which he now holds. In view of the information that I have made available to the House on this matter, I submit there is no necessity to pass the motion that has been moved by the member for Beverley. I repeat that, as he gave as his reason for moving the motion that he was anxious to get the facts for some people who wanted them, this is not the way to get them. I therefore intend to oppose the motion.

**MR. WATTS** (Katanning) [9.45]: The Minister for Agriculture started his observations by saying something to the effect that the member for Beverley had apparently not read the Mather plan, and recommended that he should read Mr. Mather's book entitled "Wool." Subsequently he indicated that it was quite obvious that Mr. Mather did not know the facts and had very little factual information at his disposal, or in his head, or some such phraseology as that. The two statements hardly run together. In

heaping coals of fire on the head of the member for Beverley, for venturing to seek the facts, the Minister certainly gave me the impression that they could be obtained nowhere else, because Mr. Mather had not got them. I know that the member for Beverley has read the book and I am satisfied, from my perusal of it, that the information the Minister gave is certainly not disclosed therein. I think this is the right place to get that information—I know of no better—from all I have heard this evening, if one wants information of that character. To turn back to the motion, I view it with mixed feelings. To an extent I subscribe to the viewpoint expressed by the Minister for Agriculture. I know it will be extremely difficult to persuade our oversea buyers to take wool or any other product in the form in which we desire to give it to them. If they want jam in bottles it is no use offering it to them in tins. We cannot get them accustomed to using it in tins if they want some other form of container.

The Premier: The fact that the agreement has been reached, since this motion was launched, gives it a different aspect.

*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*

**MR. WATTS:** If they want wool in the greasy state, they will have it that way, irrespective of what we want to do about it, unless we are in a position to tell them we do not want their trade, and we are certainly not in that position. I think this affords an opportunity to develop a type of secondary industry in this country which arises naturally out of its primary production, and which should be developed. Supposing we get to work and develop this secondary industry and say we do not mind and will take a risk as to whether they buy our product—we develop our secondary industry and clean scour the wool, and perhaps go on to top making. In any event, and whatever process we develop, can we hope to do the processing at a figure that will enable us to compete with our oversea competitors in the processed article? I very much question whether we can.

I think we can be assured that our whole fiscal and economic policy has led us to a position where our costs of production are abnormally high for processed articles of that character. I believe we would be unlikely to be able to compete on the oversea market, even supposing oversea buyers were

prepared to take the wool in the form in which we wished to give it to them, having processed it ourselves. We are somewhat in a cleft stick, in my opinion, in this regard. We should not lightly turn down the idea of processing our primary products in our own country, but we have no guarantee that, if we do process them, we are going to do better than we are doing at present, and we might do some damage. Supposing they are prepared to accept it, we have certainly to change some of our ideas and to endeavour, either by mass production or some other suitable means, to reduce our costs, or otherwise we will never get oversea people to accept our finished products.

We did not succeed very well with regard to the export of secondary industry production in pre-war years and I do not know that we are likely to succeed in post-war years, unless we can go further than we have so far, and I do not know whether that is practicable. I understand that the United States of America put an extremely heavy duty on scoured wool, which it did not want because the authorities there saw an opportunity to provide additional employment for their own citizens, as I understand the position, by doing the job themselves. Therefore, the Americans were prepared to take our unscoured wool—when ever they did take it; and before the war they did not take very much of it—which meant that they were to take our wool in a form that carried with it useless matter, which inevitably must be in the wool when handled in that form.

Mr. Rodoreda: But the wool contained a lot of useful matter as well.

Mr. WATTS: Granted. I understand that in Great Britain the position was much the same. The people there desired to provide employment for their own citizens by means of the processing work—and they are indeed proficient in that respect. It would take us a long time, quite apart from the question of production costs, to reach the standard attained in Great Britain; in fact, it might be for us a bitter experience. In these circumstances, I am prepared to state frankly that there is much justification for the point of view expressed by the Minister for Agriculture with reference to this matter. On the other hand, I feel that his strictures, such as they were, upon the member for Beverley for moving the motion, were some-

what unjustified because, whether the Minister knows it or not, a great deal of interest has been attracted to this proposition.

Many local authorities and other responsible bodies have exchanged correspondence amongst themselves and with members of this House and of the Commonwealth Parliament regarding this question. Without a knowledge of the facts that have been referred to by the Minister this evening, they have undoubtedly formed the opinion that there is little or nothing in the way of carrying out this proposed plan in Western Australia. I myself have advanced to at least two of them views similar to those I have expressed this evening, because I confess to somewhat grave doubts as to the possibilities of the proposal, although I did not go so far as the Minister went tonight, apparently upon advice. And so the member for Beverley came to the House with a motion to secure an investigation of the facts in order that a report might be made to Parliament to satisfy what I believe to be a demand not from a few irresponsible individuals but from a number of responsible local authorities and organisations, correspondence from a few of whom I could show the Minister if the necessity arose.

If the member for Beverley were here—unfortunately he is not able to be here this evening—I feel that he would have received the information from the Minister for Agriculture with pleasure. He might even have gone so far as to say that he was satisfied. I am not in a position to judge what his opinion would have been, but at least it is perfectly clear to me and, I think, upon reflection it will be clear to the Minister as well, that there was certainly nothing wrong, improper or in the slightest degree unjustified—

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not mean that, nor did I suggest it.

Mr. WATTS: I think the Minister did. I think the Minister will agree that there was nothing in the slightest degree improper in the member for Beverley's action in moving the motion. So long as I satisfy the Minister that it was no irresponsible view to which the member for Beverley referred but to reasonable inquiries which called for a considered answer, which it has received, then so long am I satisfied. I do not think the House should dispose of the motion in the

absence of the member for Beverley, but that is not a matter within my jurisdiction. I have expressed my views on the point to the Minister and I shall leave it in his hands.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

## MOTION—HARBOURS, DEVELOPMENT AND CONTROL.

### *To Inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 5th September on the following motion by Mr. Styants:—

That, in view of the congestion and delays to shipping at Fremantle and having in mind the desirability of utilising and developing the port of Esperance in the interests of Goldfields areas, and other outports in the interests of their respective localities, a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon—

- (a) The extent to which it is possible to make fuller use of the outports of this State at the present time;
- (b) the steps necessary to ensure that all outports may be fully used in the post-war period;
- (c) the effect any such steps would have on the trading community in the towns from and to which traffic may be diverted;
- (d) the capacity of the transport system, both rail and road, to cope with any steps recommended, and the effect of any such steps upon the transport system, especially if zoning is involved, in connection with freight rates and other matters affected;
- (e) whether the administration of harbours throughout the State should be concentrated under one harbour authority and to what extent existing legislation would need to be amended for this purpose.

**MR. HILL** (Albany) [9.55]: I heartily support the motion because I am convinced that a thorough investigation regarding the position of the outports and the reasons why they are not more fully used, with recommendations for the greater use of those ports, will be of great advantage to the State as a whole. The member for Kalgoorlie, when moving the motion, referred to the fact that there will be opposition to the proposal. Admittedly, there will be opposition. No economic reforms are ever brought about without someone being called upon to make sacrifices, but it is essential that we consider what is best for the State as a whole and not what will favour the pet parochialism of any particular locality or interests. Ports are of extreme importance to Western Australia and to any State which depends very

largely upon transportation and export trade for their prosperity, and ports represent the clearing houses for goods between the sea and the land. On the ports, their efficiency and location, the whole system of transportation largely depends.

One of the greatest authorities on transport and ports of the world—Sir David J. Owen, formerly the general manager of the Port of London Authority—very truly said that Empire trade could be encouraged or vitiated by the degree of efficiency of its ports. Unfortunately, very great ignorance is displayed on the port question. Some people seem to think that if we just put out a jetty into the sea, we have a port. That is not so. Others again make most ridiculous statements about ports. When I spoke on a previous occasion on this subject, I referred to the need for developing the port of Albany. I believe that a few days subsequently the member for East Perth stated in a broadcast that the Albany harbour was so fine that it did not need the expenditure of any money to improve it. I wonder what the hon. member would think if someone were made a present of a very fine house, and the person who had the home adopted the attitude that he was not going to spend any money on furnishing it but was going to build a shanty and furnish that instead. I think he would realise that such an attitude was quite ridiculous.

Another erroneous idea is held by some people who imagine that we run the State for the benefit of the ports. That idea is entirely wrong. We need the ports for the benefit of the State as a whole. Our primary aim must be to provide the State with the most economic and efficient transport system possible. Sir David J. Owen also said that a port in order to be effective must adapt itself to changing means of transport. I do not think any other member of this House has had opportunities such as I have enjoyed to see the changes in the means of sea transport. I have worked inside of the mast of a sailing ship; I have been on the bridge of a 7,000-ton mothership of the U.S.A. Navy, a ship which was driven with submarine engines coupled to electric generators; I have worked at the bottom of a coal-hulk; I have been on the bridge of the battleship H.M.S. "Hood."

I have a picture here, which I would like to pass on to you, Mr. Speaker, indicative of the revolution in the means of transport.

It shows the development that has taken place, starting with the sailing ship and, in the background, we see a modern steamer. On land we have seen the bullock wagon replaced by the motortruck and the railway train. On sea we have seen the sailing ship replaced by very modern and expensive vessels. Sir David Owen says that a port, to be effective, must adapt itself to the changing means of transport. If it does not do so, the trade will leave it, or if that is not possible, the result will be a handicapping of trade by increased cost and delay. Forty years ago the port of London was on the down grade because it had not been kept up-to-date. The Port of London Authority was established and, by its sound administration, the Port of London was kept ahead of requirements. The result was that, before the war, the Port of London trade broke all records.

This State has been divided into four zones in an attempt to prevent the big port gobbling up the trade of its small neighbours. The fact of this motion being before the House is evidence that such a policy is a failure. In the days of the bullock wagon and sailing ship, as I have pointed out, we needed a large number of ports, whereas today we need only a limited number of large properly equipped ports.

Mr. Cross: Then you might as well wipe out Albany.

Mr. HILL: Such ports are very costly to provide and maintain. Efficient equipment at the port means that a ship is required to spend less time in the port. It increases the capacity of the port and the capacity of the labour available; it facilitates the carrying capacity of the railways, because it means that railway trucks, instead of mucking about at the port, can be unloaded quickly and sent back to their main job of hauling produce to the port. Our trade is seasonal, and this fact makes efficient ports in Western Australia more necessary than they are in some other countries. All round proper equipment makes for sound economy. It is also desirable to utilise a natural harbour wherever possible, because a port, under the best of conditions, costs a lot of money to construct. When we have to fight against Nature to provide a port, we never know where we are going to stop spending money or what we shall find ourselves confronted with. For in-

stance, in Melbourne, we have a man-made port and the annual dredging maintenance costs £100,000, whereas in Sydney, which is a natural harbour, the annual dredging maintenance bill is only £3,000.

Each of the States has an entirely different problem. Some people who advocate a series of small ports hold up Queensland as an example. The position in Queensland has been described as seven starved ports and one ravenous railway. The Minister mentioned Sir George Buchanan. He recommended the closing down of five ports in Queensland and the concentrating of trade on the other two. New South Wales has a very fine natural harbour at Sydney with two industrial ports, Newcastle and Port Kembla, and something like 30 other small ports. If New South Wales had two other outports, one between Brisbane and Sydney and the other between Melbourne and Sydney, the position in New South Wales would be much better.

In Victoria, we have a small State with the port of Melbourne almost in the centre. In South Australia we have a different proposition. Conditions there lent themselves to coastal shipping. When I was in South Australia nine years ago, the general manager of the South Australian Harbours Board referred to the fact that there were 86 ports in that State. I thought at the time that it would be very interesting to see how coastal shipping in South Australia stood up against motor traffic. When I met the same gentleman five years ago, he said, "Motor transport is playing up with our coastal shipping. I wish we could close down at least 60 of our ports, but the trouble is that if we suggest cutting out an old jetty, the politicians ask why it should be cut away when they have had it for 50 years." Of course the answer is obvious; 50 years ago we did not have motor transport. He indicated Wallaroo, and the centre of Yorke's Peninsula, and said that a motor truck could convey superphosphate from Wallaroo to the centre of Yorke's Peninsula for 10s. per ton. "What form of transport can compete with that?" he asked.

In Western Australia, for our overseas port, we need the best in Australia—the deepest and best equipped—and I am proud to say that Fremantle has those qualifications. This is necessary because, when the large overseas vessels call here, they gener-

ally do so in order to top up. At pre-war values, a vessel might be worth anything over £600,000, and the cargo another £1,000,000, and every hour of delay to that ship and its cargo means a heavy loss. Consequently, we want ports able to accommodate such ships and so well equipped that they can receive expeditions despatch.

We have two distinct problems, the problem of the North-West, which I shall not touch upon tonight, and the problem of the South-West. By the South-West I mean the territory from 100 miles north of Geraldton to 100 miles east of Esperance. That is the area in which we can look for closer settlement to take place. We have four equally spaced ports—Esperance, Albany, Fremantle, and Geraldton. As regards Esperance, the member for Kalgoorlie moved the motion with the object of trying to get greater use made of that port. I first had Esperance brought to my notice some 50 years ago. My father used to buy cattle for an Esperance firm which took them overland from Esperance to Norseman, and many a time as a young boy I saw the cattle loaded on the boat at Port Adelaide before being sent to Esperance. Had a railway been constructed from Esperance to Kalgoorlie forty or fifty years ago, there would have been a different tale to tell of that end of the State.

I am strongly in favour of seeing what can be done to encourage much greater use being made of the port of Esperance. I am confident that, in the vicinity of Esperance, we have land capable of profitable production, but the development of that land depends upon the ability of the settlers to ship their produce from the port of Esperance. In reply to a question asked by me a year or so ago, I was informed that the revenue for the Esperance Jetty was £9,563. The expenditure was £7, operating expenses £375, interest £2,530, a total of £2,912, leaving a profit of £6,651. That very fine financial result was due to the fact that the main trade of Esperance was in the oil received for the goldfields. The oil is charged a wharfage rate of 6s. per ton. The tanker goes alongside the jetty and the pumps are coupled up, and the Railway Department collects 6s. per ton simply because the oil is run through pipes on the jetty.

I cannot see why some of the profits of the port should not be employed to encourage greater use being made of the port. The member for Kalgoorlie quoted figures and pointed out the savings that could be made in railage by using Esperance as the port for the Goldfields instead of Fremantle; but I can assure him there are many difficulties to be overcome and I sincerely hope the committee will be appointed so that we can see a way to do so. As far as Albany is concerned, I fancy members have heard me deal with it on previous occasions, so I will not deal with it now.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. HILL: Geraldton is the port for the northern end of the State. Here, again, I think efforts should be made to encourage a far greater use of that port. At present I understand there is a harbour rate of 9d. per ton. The committee, if appointed, might well go into the question of ascertaining whether that rate can be cut out. Instead of penalising the trade that goes to Geraldton, we should encourage far greater use of that port. There are other ports in the State and I suggest that the committee should visit them and ascertain what can be done to encourage their greater use for the benefit of the State as a whole. When introducing the motion, the member for Kalgoorlie referred to the expenditure at various ports, but the figures given by the Commonwealth Government are entirely misleading. Roughly speaking, they show the expenditure for the last 20 years on the ports of Geraldton, Fremantle, Bunbury and Esperance, but for the past 95 years on the port of Albany. Here are the actual figures as far as I can ascertain them from the returns:—

	Expenditure on Ports.		Loan. Expenditure since 1924.
	Given by Commonwealth Government.	Loan Liability.	
	£	£	£
Geraldton ..	849,000	1,029,709	794,000
Fremantle ..	1,604,551	3,458,790*	1,236,009
Bunbury ..	325,071	760,385	318,166
Albany ..	214,142	272,369	131
Esperance ..	76,409	79,076	70,113

\*Not including bulk-handling.

The loan liability for Bunbury, £760,385, includes the sum of £71,208 for bulk-handling. The expenditure given by the Commonwealth Government on Albany, £214,142, includes every penny spent on the port since 1858. It includes some thousands of pounds spent on Albany jetty road about 1858, and £3,000



which was wasted by the Public Works Department in front of my home at the Kagan River, 16 miles from Albany. I have quoted these figures in order to correct those mentioned by the hon. member. There is another matter I wish to refer to.

The Minister for Lands: I think you have got us convinced.

Mr. HILL: I was caught on the hop to-night. A few months ago, a professor of our University, Dr. G. Gentili, an economic geographer, wrote an article entitled "Regional Planning." In this article he suggested no fewer than 10 ports for Western Australia. Now, there is another economic geographer whom I have met, Dr. G. L. Wood, who is a member of the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Dr. Gentili recommended 10 ports in Western Australia. Now listen to what the Commonwealth Grants Commission has to say in its Eighth Report (1941), paragraph 178—

Harbours.—The expenditure out of loan funds on outer harbours in Western Australia is large and it does not appear to us that a sufficient attempt is made to get an adequate return from the users in the districts served. If the traffic will not stand the cost, there is no reason for expenditure on harbours unless it is essential for the industry of the district, in which case the industry should be charged through a special rate. This policy has been tried in other parts of Australia, and insistence upon it has on occasions led the people of a district to decide that the expenditure on a harbour was not really necessary for their interests. A multiplication of harbours is uneconomic. It is true that in Western Australia the port of Fremantle returns a large profit, but this does not make up for the losses on the other ports. In any case the profit of Fremantle is no excuse for an unscientific and unco-ordinated policy of harbour development. A large expenditure has been made on the Bunbury Harbour, which is only about 100 miles from Perth, and it is doubtful whether it has succeeded in overcoming the disadvantages of the port.

There we have the opinions of two economic geographers. It will be seen that the committee, if appointed, will have a very interesting job to find out which expert is correct. Personally, I am of the opinion that, in order to make Dr. Gentili's proposal an accomplished fact, it would be necessary to arrange for another San Francisco conference and to prohibit the construction of ships over perhaps 3,000 tons. The mover also referred to the need for an investigation into harbour administration. Last year I brought forward a motion for a State harbours board. It was carried. I

understand that since then the Government has had a committee investigating the question. The committee, I believe, consisted of Mr. Keith Forsyth, of the Harbour and Lights Department, as chairman, and Mr. Hood and Mr. Dumas. I knew Mr. Forsyth as a boy and I also knew his father very well. I have no doubt he is a very fine man.

As for Mr. Dumas and Mr. Hood, we are fortunate in having two such able men in our Civil Service, but none of those gentlemen in my opinion is competent to go fully into the question of the harbour administration which we need in this State. I am strongly opposed, from what I have seen at Albany, to the railways administering a port. My mind goes back 40 years, when the deep-water jetty at Albany was known as the death trap. In fact, the White Star liners referred to Albany as a cemetery. There was hardly a White Star liner that called at Albany without leaving somebody behind. On several occasions my father was on the jury in connection with some drowning case or killing accident on the jetty, and he said to me, "If I am on another jury I will not be satisfied with anything less than a verdict of manslaughter against the Commissioner of Railways."

At the present time, the Railway Department has allowed the town jetty at Albany simply to fall to pieces. Just now two submarines are tied up alongside it. The lighting of the jetty is dangerous and I would not be surprised if another accident occurred there. I was talking to one of the railway men, who told me that the department's records for years past showed that the existing accommodation at the jetty was sufficient for all the trade. That is a wrong attitude to adopt. What we have to do is to provide for our ports for the future, and not concern ourselves with the past. I sincerely hope that the Government will agree to the motion and that the committee will be appointed. The committee should proceed on its duties in a free and unbiased way. I have studied port questions. In one way I suppose I am unique, because I have had my own port attached to my fruit shed. When I closed down that port it was handling more produce than some of the South Australian outports. My troubles never start until I get my produce at the port. We have a wonderful State. I am very proud of Western Australia, and I want to see it

come into its own. I do not want to see it grow with half the population within ten miles of the Perth G.P.O. I hope that the committee, when appointed, will be able to get on with the job and that the result will be the laying down of a sound port policy for the State, a policy on which we can build up a very sound future.

**MR. WILLMOTT** (Sussex) [10.22]: I intend to support the motion. A number of the harbours of this State have been referred to very clearly by the member for Kalgoorlie and the member for Albany, but some of the harbours in which I am interested have not been mentioned to any great extent. The harbours that chiefly suit the Sussex electorate are Busselton, Bunbury and Flinders Bay. Flinders Bay is a harbour that will compare favourably with any other harbour. Members may recall that some years ago I showed photographs in this House to the then Minister for Works, the member for Mt. Hawthorn, indicating the position in years gone by when the mills were in full swing in the Karri-dale area. At that time there were seven trading vessels at Flinders Bay, five loading at the jetty and two standing off in the harbour. There is 45ft. of water at a very short distance from the shore, a matter of a couple of chains. It is perfectly safe. Sailing boats used to load cargoes all the year round, and there was never any loss or damage occasioned in respect of any boat throughout the years. I hope that the Select Committee, if appointed, will give consideration to the harbours of the South-West, and particularly to those I have mentioned.

Details were given by the member for Kalgoorlie of the money that had been spent on the principal harbours; but in Busselton only a very small amount of money was so expended. I think the harbour was dredged in 1911, and the fishermen who travel over that part where the dredging took place tell me that they can still see where it was done. It has silted up to a certain extent; but the dredging was carried out 34 years ago, and the marks of the dredges can still be seen. Only a few thousand pounds was spent on the harbour and nothing has been spent since, except for slight improvements occasionally by way of renewal of a pile or two or something of that sort. If the Government agrees to the

appointment of a Select Committee, which I hope it will, the committee will be able to investigate not only the harbours mentioned by the member for Kalgoorlie and the member for Albany, but also other harbours which I feel sure could prove very beneficial to that part of the State in which I am interested. A good deal of the timber which will be produced in the lower South-West area could be shipped from Flinders Bay with a very short railgauge. That timber otherwise would have to be hauled into Busselton or Bunbury. Neither of those ports can fill any large ship; the vessel would have to go to Fremantle to top up. I feel sure that if Flinders Bay were improved, even the larger ships could be fully loaded and a good deal of extra handling and travelling by the ships concerned could be avoided. I hope the Government will agree to the motion.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

#### *Select Committee appointed.*

On motion by Mr. Styants, a Select Committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Hill, Triat, Hoar, Willmott and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report on the 31st October.

*House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.*

## **Legislative Council.**

*Thursday, 20th September, 1945.*

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