

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 28th August, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

WILLIAM ALBANY-RAYNER.

Search Warrant, Prosecution, Papers, etc.

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Health:

(1) On whose complaint or instruction was a search warrant executed against William Albany-Rayner of Warwick House, Perth, on the 29th July, 1957?

(2) What was the purpose of the search?

(3) Is it proposed to prosecute the said William Albany-Rayner as a consequence of such search?

(4) If so, for what offence?

(5) When is the prosecution to take place?

(6) Is he aware that the officer making the search removed all papers and records, both private and otherwise, and these have been held for five weeks, greatly inconveniencing the person concerned?

(7) When will these papers, etc., be returned?

(8) Is he aware that William Albany-Rayner has been practising for many years as a dietitian, and why therefore is he not covered by the proviso to Section 19 of the Medical Act?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Search warrant was executed upon instructions of the Police Department.

(2) To obtain evidence.

(3) Yes.

(4) A breach of Section 19 of the Medical Act.

(5) The 10th September, 1957.

(6) Documents and other material is being held upon the order of a magistrate.

(7) They will be held until trial and then dealt with presumably according to the instructions of the court.

(8) No. It is assumed that the trial will determine whether or not Rayner is covered by the proviso.

NARROGIN AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL.

Construction of new Dormitories.

Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Education:

What amount is provided this year for the construction of new dormitories at the agricultural wing of the Narrogin Agricultural High School?

The MINISTER replied:

No allocation has yet been made for the construction of new dormitories for the agricultural wing of the Narrogin Agricultural High School.

BRICKS.

Supply Position, Capacity of State Works, etc.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) What is the current supply position of bricks of each type?

(2) Has the State Brick Works been restored to full capacity?

(3) If not, is it proposed to do so?

(4) Is there any preference or special quota to the Public Works Department for "creams" from the State or other brick-works.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Regular customers are receiving supplies with very little delay. The State Building Supplies Department will not accept orders from new clients for delivery beyond three months and within the last few days orders from potential clients have been refused on this basis.

(2) No.

(3) The matter is under consideration.

(4) The State Building Supplies Department gives preference in manufacture and supply of cream and salmon bricks for Public Works Department contracts.

NORTH-WEST CATTLE.

Carcass Weight, Disease and Markets.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister representing the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Does he expect the experience of Wyndham Meat Works to be repeated in future seasons in respect of the lower carcass weight reported for Kimberley cattle for 1956-57?

(2) What is considered the main reason for the lower return for 1956-57?

(3) What action is proposed to remedy the position?

(4) (a) Is any long-term plan being worked out to defeat the incidence of pleuro-pneumonia?

(b) Is there consultation and co-operation with the Commonwealth Government in view of the problem in the Northern Territory, and the restriction of markets of both the Kimberleys and the Northern Territory?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied:

(1) No.

(2) A poor wet season. Sparse March rains and no finishing April rains in areas from which the greater portion of the cattle are drawn.

(3) The position is dependent on several factors, including seasonal conditions, better breeding and improved fencing and watering facilities.

(4) (a) Bovine pleuro-pneumonia is not amenable to control under the conditions which obtain in the Kimberleys. No action will be possible until holdings can be completely fenced and subdivided so as to enable the cattle to be kept under control and mustered as required for testing and inoculation.

(b) The Chief Veterinary Officer, Animal Division, Northern Territory has been consulted and the department is fully informed of the situation in that area.

SILVER CHAIN BUSH NURSING SERVICE.

Financial Assistance.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Has the Government made any financial contribution towards the setting up of the Silver Chain Bush Nursing Service in any districts?

(2) If so, in what districts has this assistance been given and what form did it take?

(3) If not, is he prepared to consider some form of financial assistance in newly settled districts where the financial responsibility would be considered too great for the settlers concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

The Government makes a substantial annual grant to the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association and the association has the responsibility of allocating funds in districts requiring assistance.

Should any district wish to establish a bush nursing service, an approach should be made to the association.

WOOL.

Freight Subsidy on Unsuitable Export Quality.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Premier:

(1) What are the terms of the proposed subsidy on railway freights referred to in the letter to the member for Albany published in the "Albany Advertiser" on the 13th August, 1957, in respect of wool found to be unsuitable at Albany for export?

(2) Is any actual contribution to be made by wool brokers and wool buyers towards this subsidy and, if so, what is that contribution to be?

(3) If the wool brokers and buyers are not to contribute towards the subsidy, what is the meaning of the phrase in the letter reading as follows—"It was agreed that the Government would join with the wool brokers and wool buyers concerned in subsidising railway freights"?

(4) Will he lay on the Table of the House all papers dealing with the activities of the Government in regard to wool sales at Albany as referred to in the last paragraph of the letter?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

(1) The cost of rail freight from Albany to Perth or Fremantle is to be borne in equal proportions by the brokers, the Government and the buyers for a period of two years.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) Yes, for one week.

RADIOACTIVITY.*Precautionary Measures.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Premier:

(1) What steps have been taken to appoint an advisory committee under the Radioactive Substances Act to protect the community from undue and unnecessary radiation?

(2) Who are the personnel to be appointed?

(3) Will he request the Commonwealth Government to make available the report of the National Radiation Advisory Committee, which have been investigating the excessive and indiscriminate use of x-rays and the dangers attributed thereto?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

(1) The appointment of the committee was notified in the "Government Gazette" on the 2nd August, 1957.

(2) The members are:—

The Commissioner of Public Health (Dr. L. Henzell).

Mr. F. M. Kenworthy (an engineer of the Metropolitan Water Supply Department).

Professor C. J. Clews (physicist).

Professor W. J. Simmonds (physiologist).

Mr. W. G. Norgard (x-ray engineer).

Dr. A. J. M. Nelson (radiologist).

(3) Yes.

INDECENT LITERATURE.*Charges Laid, etc.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

(1) How many charges have been laid against persons publishing, selling, distributing indecent literature or other types of obscene publications during the past five years?

(2) How many charges were sustained?

(3) Does the Indecent Publications Act No. 14 of 1902 adequately cover all matters relating to Question No. (1)?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

(1) Fourteen.

(2) Twelve.

(3) No.

TRAFFIC.*Overhead Bridge, Bunbury.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has the matter of an overhead traffic bridge at the Stirling-st. railway crossing in Bunbury been investigated?

(2) If so, what were the findings?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

SEWERAGE SCHEME, BUNBURY.*Allocation of Loan Funds.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Has an allocation of funds been set aside in the 1957-58 loan programme for the Bunbury Sewerage scheme?

(2) If so, how much?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) £12,000.

COAL SUPPLY CONTRACTS.*Tabling Departmental Papers.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) Will he table all departmental papers covering negotiations for revised coal supply contracts?

(2) Have the negotiations been completed?

(3) If so, on what basis?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

(1) Not at present.

(2) Negotiations are nearing completion.

(3) It is not thought advisable to make this information available at this stage of the negotiations.

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION.*Enforcement of Week-end Work Ban.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is the report in the issue of the "Daily News" of the 17th August, correct, in that State Housing Commission supervisors are being employed on Sundays to enforce his week-end work ban in the building trade?

(2) If so, are these Government officials paid overtime rates?

(3) If so, how much has been paid to date?

(4) Does he regard such costs, if any, as a legitimate charge on Government funds?

(5) Is not this activity more properly one for the trade unions concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Time off in lieu of overtime worked is granted.

(3) and (4) Answered by No. (2).

(5) As all building contracts are between the State Housing Commission and the contractors, it is necessary for the commission to ensure that the terms of the contracts are being adhered to.

MINERAL SAND DEPOSITS.

Cheyne Bay, Albany and Torbay Area.

Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Can he advise who have the leases of mineral sand deposits at Cheyne Bay, Albany, and in the Torbay area?

(2) What are the conditions of the leases?

(3) When is it contemplated that work will commence on these mineral deposits?

(4) Is it the intention of the company holding leases in Albany and Torbay areas, to separate sands on the site or in the townsite of Albany?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Deposits are registered at the department as being held or applied for by the following:—

(a) Hancock Prospecting Pty. Ltd.

(b) P. R. Jackson.

(c) Griffin Coal Mining Co. Ltd.

(2) Titles are dredging claims under Regulation No. 54 under the Mining Act which prescribes conditions. In addition, some special conditions have been applied. As the regulation is lengthy, it and other conditions could be perused at the department if desired.

(3) From reports received, some work of an exploratory nature has been done. Generally speaking, holders will have to obtain markets either in Australia or abroad, and they have reported that they are negotiating in this regard.

(4) One of the companies has indicated that it would prefer to erect a plant at Albany. None is yet advanced enough to make any decision, as markets and capital are primary factors.

COMMONWEALTH GRANT AND STATE INTEREST BILL.

Increases in Past Seven Years.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Treasurer:
In each of the past seven years—

(a) By how much has the Commonwealth Grant increased;

(b) by how much has the interest bill of the State increased;

(c) what is the difference between (a) and (b);

(d) what is the value of (c) expressed in £'s of constant value?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Treasurer) replied:

	£	
(a) 1950-51	221,000	
1951-52	751,000	decrease
1952-53	2,953,000	
1953-54	241,000	decrease
1954-55	350,000	decrease
1955-56	1,450,000	
1956-57	300,000	
(b) 1950-51	212,822	
1951-52	267,812	
1952-53	342,303	
1953-54	679,686	
1954-55	754,815	
1955-56	681,682	
1956-57	683,280	

(c) Excess of (a) over (b)—

	£
1950-51	8,178
1951-52	(—) 1,018,812
1952-53	2,610,697
1953-54	(—) 920,686
1954-55	(—) 1,104,815
1955-56	768,318
1956-57	(—) 383,280

(d) There is no satisfactory method of determining a suitable weighted index to express the information in (c) in £'s of constant value. However, for the information of the hon. member, the following figures show the effect of deflating by the "Five Towns" C series index:—

	£
1950-51	(—) 262,832
1951-52	(—) 1,088,693
1952-53	1,630,934
1953-54	(—) 698,638
1954-55	(—) 759,852
1955-56	409,513
1956-57	(—) 269,679

RAILWAYS.

Week-end Shunting Charges of Rail Trucks on Wharves.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

Further to questions I asked on the 13th and the 22nd August, concerning week-end shunting charges of rail trucks on wharves—

(1) Are the charges at Bunbury and Fremantle identical for Sunday shunting?

(2) Does the use of interlocking points at Fremantle mean the employment of additional staff? If so, who pays the extra charge?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," what is the difference in charges raised at Bunbury and Fremantle for Sunday shunting?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Yes, unless it is necessary to bring on a signalman outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 12 midnight at Fremantle.

(2) No, except as provided in No. (1).

(3) At Fremantle, an additional charge of 21s. 8d. per hour (double the normal rate of 10s. 10d. per hour) would apply for time worked by the signalman outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 12 midnight.

RICE.

Acreage Sown, Yield, etc., Liveringa.

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) How many acres of rice were sown at Liveringa last year?

(2) What was the total yield from the area planted?

(3) Was all the rice sold and what was the amount of the proceeds?

(4) How many acres of rice have been sown there this year?

(5) Has any of the crop been harvested? If so, how many acres and what was the yield?

(6) What are the expected proceeds of the area harvested?

(7) If there is a balance still to be harvested, what is the anticipated yield and proceeds?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately 80 acres.

(2) About 160 tons.

I regret not being able to answer the further questions on this list because the project is that of a private company and the information is simply not available to the department.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Replacement of Claremont Household Mains.

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Are new electric household meters being installed in Claremont?

(2) If so, for what reason are they being installed?

(3) Is it compulsory on the householder to accept a new meter?

(4) How many are intended to be replaced in the Municipality of Claremont?

(5) What is the price of each new meter and what is the installation price?

(6) What is the fate of the old meters that are replaced?

(7) Are new meters to be placed in other suburbs than Claremont?

(8) If so, where and what is the approximate number of new meters to be installed this year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2), (3), (4), (7) and (8) Prudent policy requires that all electricity meters be changed systematically for inspection,

overhaul and testing and, accordingly, it is intended to change approximately 5,000 meters this year.

(5) Each new single phase meter costs £4 9s. 9d. and three phase £12 5s. Installation costs 7s. 6d. each.

(6) They are overhauled and reissued if possible.

NATIVE WELFARE.

Official's Trip to Canning Desert Basin.

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) Did the native welfare officer stationed in Derby seek permission from the Native Welfare Department to go by vehicle to the area in the Canning Desert Basin where natives were reported to be starving?

(2) Was permission refused by the Native Welfare Department?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is "Yes," what was the reason for refusing permission?

The MINISTER replied:

Originally it was suggested that a vehicle could reach a point 120 miles from Well 40, which would be of no benefit to the natives concerned. Subsequently, the district officer, after interviewing the two evacuated natives, considered it advisable for him to visit Godfrey's Well in an endeavour to get first-hand information regarding the possibilities of contacting the natives. Authority to make this journey has been given.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1. Trustees Act Amendment.

2. Audit Act Amendment.

3. Bread Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

PAPERS—CANNING DESERT BASIN NATIVES.

Tabling File on Reported Starvation.

MR. GRAYDEN (South Perth) [4.46]: I move—

That the departmental file relating to the natives reported to be starving in the Canning Desert Basin be laid on the Table of the House.

Some time ago a party from the Bureau of Mineral Resources went to Well 48 on the Canning stock route. Their object was to survey the area for various minerals, but principally for oil. Some time after that they acquired the services of a helicopter, after which the pilot of the plane, which was on charter, flew down to Well 40, about 118 miles south of Godfrey's Well. Shortly afterwards he sent this telegram direct to his principals in Melbourne:—

Increasing number of desert natives encountered during operations Well 40 area stop 30 to 40 in one mob stop

all unclad and most starving especially very young and very old stop one woman suffering badly infected spear wound in thigh and one young boy suffering advanced stages of malnutrition brought in on routine return flight Well 40 to Well 48 stop fed at Well 48 then taken by special flight to Balgo Mission 85 miles east Well 48 stop both would have perished in short while stop effort now being made to reach Well 40 by Native Welfare Officer in Land-rover to succour remainder of tribe.

When that telegram was received by A.N.A., it was conveyed to the Press throughout Australia and was reported. Our own "Daily News" published under the heading, "Mercy Pilot Tells of Starving Natives," details of what was in the A.N.A. officer's report.

The same day that that report was received, the A.B.C. in its news broadcast, was able to quote the Commissioner of Native Welfare to the effect that the commissioner had said there were four missions in the area where the natives reported upon could obtain food and medical supplies. The following morning, "The West Australian" was able to publish a complete denial by the Commissioner of Native Welfare. This is the statement which appeared in "The West Australian" and it was headed: "Pilot's Report on Natives Contested." It reads—

Commenting on a report by an A.N.A. helicopter pilot of a tribe of 30 to 40 natives starving in the north-east of Western Australia, Native Welfare Commissioner S. G. Middleton said yesterday that they were not starved.

The physical appearance of the natives often shocked people who had not seen them before, but their physique was the best for their environment. They were very wiry people.

Food would be sent to the natives by helicopter on Thursday.

That statement appeared next morning, but it was actually received the same day as the report came from the A.N.A. helicopter pilot. It was obvious that the commissioner had no knowledge of what was taking place up there, and yet he saw fit immediately to deny the statement, just as he has denied other similar statements which have been made in the last few years. But in consequence of this one, I asked a series of questions in this House, and four things emerged. The first was that the commissioner denied that he had made the statement in the form in which it had appeared in the Press and was broadcast over the radio.

That is to say, there was a report of starving natives, which was published throughout Australia and was immediately denied by our own commissioner, and

public fears throughout the Commonwealth were allayed. If the commissioner felt that he had been misreported, he made no attempt to correct the impression which had been created. But when questions were asked in this House, he denied that he had made the statements in the form in which they appeared in the Press and were broadcast over the radio.

The second point that emerged was that the commissioner had no information at all on which to base the views which he apparently held. The third point was his refusal to admit that inland desert natives are affected in that way by seasonal conditions; and the fourth point was that he sought to give the impression that all was well on the Canning stock route; that the department had the incident reported upon well in hand.

Those matters should be gone into in some detail to indicate clearly to members the way in which this House and the public have been misled, and in order that members will realise the importance of the tabling of the papers referred to in the motion. On Tuesday, the 13th August, I asked this question—

- (1) Is the statement attributed to the Commissioner of Native Welfare and published in "The West Australian" on the 7th August, 1957, in accord with that actually made by the commissioner?

That was to the effect that natives were not starving. The answer was—

- (1) No, not exactly. The commissioner stated that the report of starving natives attributed to the helicopter pilot was open to speculation. He then went on to say "the physical appearance of the natives often shocked people who had not seen them (the desert natives) before."

That is very different from the statement which appeared in the Press. In the same way, the report which was broadcast over the A.B.C. was denied. On the 21st August, I asked the following questions—

- (1) Has the Native Welfare Department been supplied with a copy of a report regarding the natives recently reported as starving in the Canning Desert Basin, which was given on the A.B.C. State news on the 6th August last?
- (2) Is a statement in the report which reads as follows:—"The Commissioner for Native Welfare, Mr. Middleton, said there were four missions in the area where natives could obtain food and medical supplies"—in accord with the actual statement made to the A.B.C. by the commissioner?

In reply to those two questions, I was informed—

- (1) No.

- (2) The A.B.C. report was not complete. The commissioner said the central desert area was ringed by four missions (and other relief centres), where natives could obtain food and medical supplies.

A little later on, I will have more to say on those missions and other centres where natives can obtain medical supplies. The point I want to make at the moment is that the commissioner denied the two statements that were made—the one in the Press and the other over the air.

The second point that emerged was that the commissioner had no information on which he based the views that he held. For instance, in response to a question on the 13th August in this House, I received the following reply:—

The commissioner did not base his statement on psychic power, but upon information provided by his district officer in Derby, his experience of the past with similar reports by inexperienced observers, and his knowledge that the Bureau of Mineral Resources party which had been in the area for some considerable time had not reported starving natives being contacted. The report published was made by the pilot of the helicopter chartered by the bureau's party and the commissioner assumed he was not familiar with the physical appearance of desert natives.

There are three points made. The commissioner based the views he held, first, on information provided by his own district officer. Subsequently, I asked further questions as follows:—

- (1) Has the native welfare officer who is stationed at Derby ever visited the present camp of the Canning Basin survey party from which recent reports regarding natives emanated?
- (2) If so, on what dates did he arrive, and depart from, the camp?

In reply to those questions, I was told that the native welfare officer had never been to the survey camp. On the 15th August I asked whether the native welfare officer from whom the commissioner had obtained the information ever visited the Balgo mission, which is possibly 86 miles from the survey camp. I also asked whether he had ever been south of the mission. The answer to the first question was that he had been to that mission twice, but the last time he visited it was from the 27th to the 29th May, 1955; and the answer to the question as to whether he had ever been south of the mission was, "No." So the native welfare officer has no local knowledge and certainly no knowledge which is in any way applicable to the present incident. He is not conversant with the latest position, and has no first-hand experience of it.

The second point on which the commissioner based his statement was his experience of the past with similar reports by inexperienced observers. I will not comment on that at the moment, because I will be giving many instances later which provide a complete answer to that statement. The third point on which he based his statement was his knowledge that the Bureau of Mineral Resources party which had been in the area for some considerable time had not reported starving natives being contacted. To elicit anything like a reply which would convey something which meant anything on the latter point, I had to ask a series of questions; and it is obvious from the replies to them that the Bureau of Mineral Resources party has never been south of the present camp to any extent—certainly not to Well 40, the only way to get to which would be by helicopter.

Thus, when the commissioner said he had based his statement upon information provided by his district officer in Derby; his past experience of similar reports by inexperienced observers; and the fact that the Bureau of Mineral Resources survey party had not reported any starving natives being contacted; when he based his statement on these points, he was—to say the least—misleading this House. The commissioner refused to admit—and refuses to admit even at this stage—that natives in these inland desert areas are affected by seasonal conditions.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I do not think he has been asked whether they are affected by seasonal conditions, and it is not correct to say he denies they are so affected.

Mr. GRAYDEN: The Minister may be quite right. That is the way I interpreted it. These are the actual questions I asked on the 7th August—

Has he seen the statement published in the "Daily News" on the 6th August, by an A.N.A. helicopter pilot engaged on a charter survey of the Canning Desert Basin, which reads "We encountered numerous groups of natives roaming the barren wastes unclad and starving, especially the very young and the very old"?

The reply to that was "Yes." The second question I asked was—

Is he aware that this position must exist throughout the inland desert area in poor seasons, as was emphasised by the select committee which recently inquired into conditions in the Laverton-Warburton area?

The reply to that question was "No." In other words, the commissioner is not aware that this position must exist throughout the inland desert area in poor seasons. As far as I am concerned that clearly indicates that at this stage the

commissioner is not prepared to admit that these things are happening. Lastly the commissioner did give the impression, or sought to give it, that all was well on the Canning Stock Route. He mentioned that foodstuffs were being despatched immediately by helicopter. They were to go on the 8th; and actually, I believe, some did go on the 7th.

On the 21st August, two weeks later, I asked a series of questions, and the commissioner was unable to say whether any supplies had been sent. He did not know what supplies had been sent, who distributed them, or whether they had been distributed. One would think that the commissioner would make it his business to find out whether the stores had been sent and whether the people concerned received them. But we find that he knows nothing about the matter, and he puts the entire responsibility on his officer stationed at Derby!

In addition, the commissioner attempted to give the impression that all was well. He mentioned in the A.B.C. report the four missions and other relief centres at which the natives could obtain supplies. I therefore asked how far away they were from the particular area where the natives were. I found that Balgo, one of the missions, is on the fringe of this desert, and it is 200 miles away. Another is 300 miles away and the one at Wiluna is 450 miles away. The one at Warburton Range is 270 miles distant.

In most cases these places would be across waterless country. The natives can travel only along established routes where there are small waterholes 20 or more miles apart. In many instances they would have to cross tribal boundaries which they are not prepared to do because they believe in the pre-existence of the souls of the living. If they cross a tribal boundary and are there killed or meet death in some way, then their souls will roam around constantly. They are not, therefore, prepared to cross tribal boundaries. The penalty for doing so is death at the hands of a neighbouring tribe. Yet the Commissioner of Native Welfare suggests that starving people should travel distances up to 450 miles!

In exactly the same way I asked about the stations which fringed the desert, and at which it was said they could obtain assistance, and I found that one was 270 miles away, another 300 and another 420 miles away. So it goes on. These are the facts which have emerged from a series of questions that I asked on this problem. It is obvious that one cannot obtain anything approaching a factual answer from the Commissioner of Native Welfare; and that, I think, is a serious state of affairs. One had to ask a series of questions to get an answer that one knew in the first place, but which one wanted the commissioner to admit.

As a consequence of what was disclosed in the replies to these questions, I asked the Minister if he would table the papers relating to this matter, and he replied that as the file was more or less in daily use he would prefer me to go down to the department and have a look at it there. As the file was in daily use, I asked the Minister whether he minded if I disclosed what was on it. He said "No." Actually there was very little, or nothing on it that I was not aware of before I saw it. But when I did see the file, it confirmed what I had been told.

The first thing is this: When the native welfare officer stationed at Derby heard about this matter he sent a wire to the commissioner asking permission to go down and find out what was happening. The commissioner wrote back and told him not to go; the evidence did not justify it. Further, he reprimanded the officer to some extent for wiring, and pointed out that it was much cheaper to write.

I did not take notes of the dates in connection with this, naturally, but I think my account of the request and reply is accurate. However, the Minister can enlarge on the point when he speaks. But this is what happened: The helicopter pilot took these natives into the Balgo mission and they were subsequently sent to Hall's Creek, and from there they went on to Derby where they are now in hospital. One of the children who, the commissioner said, is not starving—he said that none of the natives was starving—is 10 years old and weighs 42lb. This is because the child is suffering from malnutrition. It weighs less than an 18 months' old child that I have. I do not know what condition the woman is in.

Also from the files we find that an elderly native was left out there with one of the groups of starving natives. The elderly one was completely incapacitated so that the other natives had to carry this unfortunate creature. So we can imagine that while we are sitting back here in comparative comfort, out in those parts there are starving natives tramping from small waterhole to small waterhole, trying to carry one native who is completely unable to fend for himself.

Anyway, as a consequence of having had a discussion with the natives in the Derby hospital, permission, after all this time, has been given by the department for the officer stationed at Derby to go down to Balgo or to Well 48, to find out what is happening. But I suggest this is an amazing state of affairs. I can recall, not many years ago, being in the Port Hedland district when a chap going out to the mine had some trouble on the road. The driver walked on ahead, and for some reason unknown to himself left the track and went across country. He was reported lost. When we heard about it, we went into Port Hedland and tried to enlist

the aid of some of the natives there to go out and track him, but they refused to do it, which was unprecedented in the North.

I will not go into the details of why they refused; it was in consequence of some trouble that had arisen over someone who was organising them up there. However, they refused to go out and help this man who was lost. We really took exception to the fact that the natives of that district did this; but here we are, with all the facilities we have at our disposal, doing nothing about these natives who have been reported to be starving. A period of more than two weeks has elapsed, but what have we done?

It is true that on the 7th a helicopter did go out to the area, but those aboard could only stay a very short time. They contacted a party of six and gave them some rations. Apart from that, apparently, nothing has been done, as there is nothing on the files. Through Mr. Gordon Bryant in Victoria, I recently got in touch with the Bureau of Mineral Resources and the reply received reads—

The Bureau of Mineral Resources is working to a carefully prepared programme based on petrol supplied by air drop. This programme cannot be modified to any significant extent during current field season. The bureau has no fixed base camp but the director will do what he can to help you if you decide to visit the area.

Without an actual request from the State Government, I do not think they will go out of their way to locate these natives. What is occurring at present at Well 40 is in line with many similar instances that have occurred over the past few years and even in the past 12 months. I do not know whether members have read "People," but on the 3rd April last an article by a veteran drover of the Canning stock route named Wally Dowling appeared in "People." The article stated—

Since 1931, Dowling has made 'about 20' trips down the Canning—more than any other man. He says the trek gets harder every year, with the wells caving in and water, consequently, harder to get up. 'The jackies are getting fewer and fewer—I'll just about see those b—s out myself,' he says.

In poor seasons, the blacks hardly ever see a kangaroo, and they live on lizards and the flower of the cork tree. On the last trip down Dowling recalls the pathetic sight of a native soaking a piece of greenhide from a bullock, which had been killed three years earlier, to eat it. 'A lot of them are doing a perish,' he says.

His droving plant—15 camels and 55 horses—carries ample provisions for the long drive, but there is little

to spare for starving natives. When Dowling kills a bullock and stocks up his beef bags, he leaves the rest to the natives skulking in the sandhills around the well. 'Within five minutes of leaving the carcass, you can't see where you've killed it,' he says. 'They even scoff up the blood and make off with the bones.'

Every trip down or back, Dowling's mob come across dead natives. His native stockmen shudder when they see one and won't stay at a well where one has been found. For this reason, Dowling usually rides ahead to the well to make sure there are no bodies around by the time the stockmen arrive with the herd.

That is an astounding state of affairs. The position has become so bad on the Canning Stock Route that this man has now to ride ahead to get rid of the bodies before the native stockmen get there with the herd. It is not long since the select committee went out to the Warburton reserve and brought back a report which was submitted to this House and accepted unanimously. Later on certain people attempted to minimise the conditions on the reserve. I point out that the Warburton reserve is part of the great central reserve and just across the border there is a mission called Ernabella, which is in far better country.

After we left the Warburton mission and returned here, and while all the controversy was going on ridiculing the report of the select committee, at Ernabella children were dying from disease caused by malnutrition. Some weeks after the last journey to the Warburton mission by the ministerial and medical party, a leading South Australian surgeon who is a noted worker for the aborigines, went to Ernabella to investigate the conditions and when he got back to Adelaide he reported the state of affairs existing at Ernabella. The report of what he found came over the A.B.C. as follows:—

It was disclosed in Adelaide tonight that disease brought on by drought had caused the deaths of eighteen aboriginal babies and young children at the Ernabella mission station in Central Australia earlier this year. The president of the Aborigines Advancement League in South Australia, Dr. Charles Duguid, said that because of the long dry spell aborigines' bush food was much poorer in nutritional value. This had made the aborigines at Ernabella an easy target for epidemics of measles and gastro enteritis which had caused the eighteen deaths. Dr. Duguid recently inspected the Ernabella mission as a member of a delegation sent on an inspection tour by the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions. He said that in a distance of one thousand miles from Alice Springs to Western Australia

the party found no surface water. Authorities at Ernabella had now taken steps to supplement the regular diet of the aborigines.

Here is a mission long regarded as a model, on the great central reserve and with better country than the Warburton mission. Yet notwithstanding that, this investigator finds that the diet must be supplemented, because when he was there 18 aboriginal babies had died at that mission! In South Australia, about three weeks ago, he told me that about 20 had died and that it was not known how many had died closer to the Western Australian border, or on our side of the border.

When the select committee was at the Warburton mission, we saw natives who had come in not long before in a starving condition—43 of them. Three had died shortly after they got to the mission and we do not know how many died coming in. The matron of the hospital told us that those who came into the hospital were so dehydrated that they could not pass water for three days, and that when they did, it was black and they all had kidney trouble. That was the position at the Warburton mission, just prior to the visit of the select committee.

Recently Mr. John Barrett, of the Warburton mission, wrote an article referring to natives, in which he said—

The people whom this report thus quoted are entitled to our well-merited admiration for having achieved the art of living (or existing) in such an inhospitable barren rocky-sandy waste. The productivity of this terrain, thousands of square miles in extent, is dependent upon the rather variable rainfall. Some years reflect the scarcity of rain in the dry condition of the vegetation, and consequent absence of animal and bird life (having nothing to live on), whilst more favourable years may show the opposite. In dry years only the fittest survive. How these human beings live through a dry summer in these parts is a remarkable demonstration of their tenacity to life. Rock holes, from which drinking water is obtained, are often far apart. In fact, sometimes a whole day's march may lie between these uncertain tiny reservoirs.

In summer the mercury approximates the 116 deg. F. in the shade. During a hot drought year many of these rock holes dry out. Digging holes in the creek beds may sometimes lead to an underground flow, but as the dry seasons continue unrelieved by rain this supply recedes deeper below the land surface, until it is out of reach of the exhausted, thirsty people.

The nomadic character of these natives is dictated by their food and water economy. They move on to a

new area as the hunted game becomes thinned out, making regular circuits of their tribal land at intervals which allow game to breed unmolested and thereby replenish each locality between visits. But when drought intervenes the game either does not breed, or the young are left to die. When this happens there is malnutrition among the natives.

During the year 1952 there was a very dry period, when a party of native young men left Cosmo Newbery to trek to Warburton Range mission. After a long hot day's walk the party arrived at a rock hole, only to find it dry. Though weakened by their long march, there was no alternative but to start immediately for the next water, many miles distant. One of these young men succumbed in the bush, and the others of the party were too weak to bury him. When the party arrived at the Warburton mission and reported the incident, a party of native men went back and interred the remains.

And so it goes on. But I think the last paragraph is one of the most interesting. It reads—

I knew one little boy whose father and mother were dead; when he arrived at the Warburton Range mission he was little more than a live skeleton barely three feet high. He was taken in and his age estimated to be five years old. But subsequently an examination of his teeth revealed that he was 10. He and another little lad who also came into the mission about the same period were so undernourished their hair had ceased to grow, and had mostly thinned out.

That is a report from Mr. Barrett. There is another report on the departmental files. Not long ago a Government survey party went from Balfour Downs to Well 22 on the Canning Stock Route, and after that the party went east. At Well 22 they came across a group of natives who had come out of the desert for the water. The natives had picked up an old tin which had been thrown away by stockmen and they had patched up the holes with spinifex gum. They lowered the tin down the well and obtained their water in that way. Some of the natives were apparently diseased because when the survey party returned and submitted a report, mention was made that one native woman was so diseased with yaws that the flesh had rotted away from her nose and knees.

Well 22 is about 200 miles from Balfour Downs and quite easily accessible. There is a good track to it as a number of vehicles used by the party have passed over it. Yet there is not an organisation in this State which will send out a vehicle 200 miles to help a woman in the condition I have just mentioned—with the flesh

rotting away from her nose and knees. That is not my statement but the statement of a Government official, and it is set out in an official report. We have no organisation which will assist the natives when specific cases are reported.

Yet the Commonwealth Government could send a cruiser from Sydney to Heard Island to pick up a new Australian physician who was thought to have appendicitis and that operation cost the Government £40,000. We can send a cruiser to Heard Island at a cost of £40,000 and yet we cannot send a vehicle from Balfour Downs to Well 22 to pick up a woman in a badly diseased condition! That woman might be fending for her young children as well. I can quote many instances of this kind, but there is no point in doing so.

I merely mentioned that one instance to show what is happening at present in at least one place—Well 22. This is not the first time this sort of thing has occurred; it is happening constantly in the inland desert areas. This area is infinitely more arid than our pastoral areas. In the pastoral areas of the North-West water is assured because there are wells every 10 miles or so. But in times of drought the cattle in the pastoral areas die in their hundreds; and in the same way, when the seasons are bad, natives in the inland desert areas die of starvation. Quite apart from the question of thirst, the natives suffer from starvation in times of drought because, as there is no water, the game cannot survive.

There is also the question of disease. A recent medical inspection of the Warburton mission disclosed that 77 per cent. of the natives had trachoma. This is an eye disease which, in the secondary stages, leads to blindness. Also, 25 per cent. of the natives on the reserve have a disease known as yaws. In the country from the Warburton reserve to the southern fringe of the Kimberleys, the incidence of disease is much higher. For instance, the natives who go to Jigalong have a much higher percentage of yaws than 25 per cent. That naturally must be so because most of the natives in that area have no means of obtaining treatment and consequently there would be some extreme cases of both yaws and trachoma among them.

As a report has been made by a most responsible person, something should be done about it. Two of the natives were flown into civilisation; and in the Derby hospital there is a lad of 10 years of age who weighs only 42 lb. Because there are so many starving natives in this area, we should make strong representations to the Commonwealth Government to allow the Native Welfare Department to make use of the helicopter which is stationed only 118 miles from the point I have referred to.

If we did that, and the helicopter could be made available, it could be used to provide food for the natives in the area to which I have referred. We should do something about setting up a temporary base camp at Well 40 to ensure that the natives obtain sufficient food to tide them over the lean period. We can no longer avoid this issue. We must do something to alleviate permanently the plight of the natives in the inland desert areas.

The logical thing to do is to put down water holes—seven or eight of them—right across that area. They could be 40 miles apart and the work could be carried out quite simply. We were mining near Marble Bar and we built a dam in this way: We established that there was a water basin on the site and these water basins extend right across the inland areas. We established this fact by putting down a well. We put another down a few hundred yards away, one to the east, one to the west, one to the north and one to the south, and thus established that the basin was about a mile in diameter.

The site of the first well happened to be in the centre of the basin and so we bulldozed a hole 60 yards by 40 yards and about 30ft. deep, into the water. Bulldozers can operate in 3ft. of water. Then there was a bad year and the water level dropped. We followed the water down another few feet. The result was that at the completion of the work we had a well 60 yards by 40 yards, which always contained water.

This was a true well that we put down and the water it contained was replenished from the basin which was a mile in diameter. Eight, nine or ten wells, 40 miles apart, could be put down with a bulldozer in the area I am referring to. If this were done, it would provide the natives with an assured supply of good drinking water and this, in turn, would attract game.

There is no known surface drinking water in the area I have referred to. Natives can obtain water at odd places where there are soaks. They can follow the water down 30 or 40 feet, but unfortunately game cannot reach the water. By our putting down wells in the way I have described, kangaroos and other game would be able to remain in the area. At present, however, they can only remain until all the surface water left by recent rains has gone.

In addition to the provision of suitable water supplies, we should establish a permanent patrol of those areas, particularly during the months when the condition of the natives is likely to be bad. If two or three parties, appointed by the Native Welfare Department, were to go into those areas at least once or twice a year, they could ascertain whether the natives were in need of assistance; and if

they were, the parties could provide food supplies and render medical attention. Further, the time has come when we must establish two or three outposts in that area which will enable us to at least give the natives a greater measure of medical attention.

On motion by the Minister for Native Welfare, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RAIL CLOSURES.

Rescission of 1956 Resolution.

Debate resumed from the 14th August on the following motion by Hon. A. F. Watts:—

That the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly on the 13th December, 1956, reading as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House, having regard particularly to the considerations referred to in Appendix "A" to this motion, the services provided by the railways listed in Appendix "B" to this motion should, notwithstanding certain other considerations, be discontinued and that such railways should cease to be operated—

Subject to the Government—

- (a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (c) overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficits in such services.

Appendix "A."

(1) The annual cash deficits of the State railways.

(2) The condition of State railways generally and particularly of the railways listed in Appendix "B."

(3) The need for improvements in the economical operation of the State railways, and for the concentration of railway resources to permit of all-round improvements in the cost of operating the railways.

(4) The facts that the railways listed in Appendix "B" are unprofitable and that their rehabilitation and operation would involve heavy expenditure when compared with existing and anticipated future traffic on those railways.

(5) The rising costs of operating railways.

(6) The need to avoid, to every possible extent, any necessity to increase rail freights on the remaining railways, and to provide for the adequate rehabilitation and operation of the remaining railways.

(7) The recovery of materials for use on other railways.

(8) The availability and use of other means of transport.

(9) The most satisfactory and economical employment of staff.

Appendix "B."

	Length of Railways. Miles.
Meekatharra to Wiluna	111
Cue to Big Bell	19
Malcolm to Laverton	64
Geraldton to Ajana	67
Wokarina to Yuna	38
Burakin to Bonnie Rock	76
Mukinbudin to Lake Brown ..	8
Lake Brown to Bullfinch	50
Bullfinch to Southern Cross ..	22
Boddington to Narrogin	51
Busselton to Margaret River ..	38
Margaret River to Flinders Bay ..	29
Elleker to Nornalup	61
Brookton to Corrigin	56
Lake Grace to Hyden	58
Katanning to Pingrup	59
Gnowangerup to Ongerup	35

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be, and is hereby, rescinded.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [5.33]: I support the motion moved by the member for Stirling; and I draw attention to the fact that the Minister for Transport and the Premier have both, during the debate on the closure of railway lines, suggested that members of the Country Party have been acting purely in their own interests because of the effect this move is going to have in their own electorates. However, not one of the total 842 miles of railway line which the Government contemplates closing—a great proportion of which has already been closed—is in the electorate of Moore. That electorate has four parallel railway lines running through it, none of which are in danger of being closed by the Government's motion.

On the west there is the railway from Midland Junction to Walkaway. Next to that is the line from Toodyay to Milng. Further east we have the railway from Northam to Mullewa and on the eastern extremity there is the line from Amery which runs right through to Kulja. I am certain that the committee which was appointed to inquire into the closure of these lines did not have as its object the finding of facts on this matter, but instead, its object was to recommend that 2,000 miles of railway line be closed. However, it did not recommend that the Milng-Toodyay line or the Amery-Kulja line should be closed.

Many members of the Country Party, including myself, and members of the Farmers' Union, have been accused of misinforming the people in the country in regard to this subject. We have been accused of going out and spreading scare propaganda among the people. If we had not taken the action we did, the Government, I am quite certain, would have closed in due course all of the 2,000 miles which were referred to by the committee, because if we read the committee's report carefully, we find repeated over and over again the statement that unless the Government intended to close all of the 2,000 miles of railway line as recommended by the committee, no great saving would be effected and it would not be worth while to close only portion of the total mileage recommended. Being in possession of those facts, I consider that the action taken by the members of my party, including myself and the members of the Farmers' Union, in stirring up resentment among the people in the country, was quite justified.

In no way have we been guilty of taking any action that was not justified. If there is any talk of our supplying wrong information, we should look to the Government itself in connection with the information it has given ever since this motion by the the Government was first introduced to the House. There is nothing parochial in the action I have taken, for the reason I have already given, namely, that not one of my electors will be affected by the closure of these lines. I consider I have been more interested in this matter than the Minister for Labour, who now sneers when I speak on the subject.

I have been interested enough to inspect more than 700 miles of the railway lines that are to be closed. The only line I have not personally inspected is the one in the extreme north which runs from Meekatharra northwards. I had sufficient interest in other lines to go and inspect them myself before I took any action on this motion for the rescission of the 1956 resolution.

Mr. Rodoreda: What do you mean by personal inspection?

Mr. ACKLAND: I had a look at them myself.

Mr. Rodoreda: What do you mean by that?

Mr. ACKLAND: The member for Pilbara knows what I mean, and I will give further information on that aspect. Although not an engineer, I inspected those lines as a layman who claims to be practical as a result of having worked with a pick and a shovel and who has done similar work to that done on the railways. Therefore, I know that the information which was submitted by that committee to the Government is false. On the Midland railway line the locomotives travel at 40 miles an hour on a track, the condition of which is not as good, except for the mileage already rehabilitated, as those lines the Government says cannot operate any longer.

When moving the resolution which we seek to rescind, the Minister made the following statement with reference to the Kulja-Bonnie Rock line:—

The track is in very bad state and there are only 489 miles out of more than 4,000 miles of our railway system that have not some form of limitation imposed on them. The only tracks on which no limitation of that sort is imposed are those between Perth and Kalgoorlie and Perth and Busselton. Every other line in the State has some limitation imposed on it. The Burakin-Bonnie Rock line has a maximum speed limit of 15 miles an hour and it is only a matter of perhaps a few weeks or months before it will be impossible for any rail service to operate there because the line will have collapsed.

The member for Mt. Marshall asked the Minister for Transport if he would approach the Minister for Railways with the object of having the files relative to this line laid on the Table of the House. The reply the hon. member received was "No," because those files were in constant use.

The lines had been closed for weeks, and there was no further traffic on them, but some of us had information that an inspector had made a report at about the same time the Minister was speaking, and in that report he said that the line was in excellent order. He mentioned the rehabilitation that had been done, and said there was no need whatever for the speed limit to be reduced below 25 miles per hour. I have not seen that report but I know people who have. I also know people who have discussed this matter with the engineer and they have found that he stands by the report he made, which should appear on the file that the Minister was not prepared to lay on the Table of the House.

The Minister said it was only a matter of weeks before the line would collapse. There has, however, been nearly half a million bushels of wheat, oats and barley carted on that line since the Minister made that statement, and well over 25,000 tons of super have gone out the other way. This was the line that was going to collapse within six weeks; this was the line on which it was going to be impossible to run a goods train at a speed greater than 15 miles an hour. I have seen the trains travelling along that line and, where the road has run parallel with the railway line, I have chased them in a motorcar, and the speed at which those trains were travelling was more in the vicinity of 30 miles an hour than 15 miles an hour.

The report presented to the Government is false over and over again. There has been a good deal of levity displayed with reference to the trip to Laverton which Hon. A. R. Jones and I made a short while ago. We went up there to see conditions for ourselves. We picked up some very interesting information in the "Kalgoorlie Miner," and I would like to quote from the issue of the 27th June. It is as follows:—

One of the reasons that the line was closed was that it would be too costly to rehabilitate. In the 30 mile section west of Laverton there are 66,000 sleepers and 61,500 of them have been renewed during the last two years. The station house here was only recently improved and renovated. The repairs are believed to have cost £2,000.

Both Mr. Jones and I stopped four times along the road where it ran parallel to the line in order to inspect the sleepers.

We followed the line for more than half a mile and on each occasion we found one old sleeper in about every six. Some of them had been so recently relaid that the rust had not even formed on top of the spikes or dogs where the hammer had been used to drive them into the sleepers. That line is in an excellent condition. I am not an engineer, and I know somebody will sneer about that presently, but one can use one's eyes and commonsense, even if members on the other side of the House are not prepared to do so.

Mr. May: Did you meet the people up there?

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes, quite a number of them. I would now like to touch on this house that was renovated. I inspected it quite recently; and if that job was done for £760 as the Minister said, instead of costing £2,000, then all I can say is that the Railway Department has most remarkable contractors working for it. The place had been renovated through and through. Many yards of concrete work

were put in and around the house, including verandahs and footpaths. The information given by the Minister is false; as false as is so much of the information we receive from the Railway Department from time to time.

The closing of this railway is a very sad business. I was told by the secretary of the road board that 35 people had left the town as soon as the line was closed. Not being satisfied with that, I approached the police officer stationed at Laverton, and he told me that that figure was an under-estimate rather than an over-estimate of the number of people who had left.

Last week, when I thought this legislation might come before the House, I sent a telegram to Laverton asking what the position was in regard to the school in that town. Last December, when the motion was passed in this House, there were 42 children attending the Laverton school—a few more whites than coloured people. When I received the telegram in reply to the one I sent last week, there were 26 children attending the school, and at the moment there are 15 children in attendance. Members will get some idea of the position when they realise that previously there had been 42 children attending this school. I met a man who was there in a Government position and he told me he had resigned his job. His salary was £31 a week while in that area. He has now taken a position south of Fremantle at £21 a week and considers that he is much better off financially.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He knew a good place to go to.

Mr. ACKLAND: There is no doubt that it is Laverton and Bonnie Rock and other places that I have mentioned today that make it possible for the member for Fremantle to live where he does. It is not what is produced in Fremantle or the metropolitan area as a whole, but what is produced in the country areas that is keeping this State going at its present tempo.

So we find that the school numbers have been depleted from 42 to 15 in that short period, and a person working there has voluntarily accepted £10 less per week in his wages to work elsewhere owing to the increased cost of goods brought about by the closure of those lines. I arrived late in this House today, as I have just made a trip to the country. I have mislaid some figures which I wanted to mention, but I do have an authentic list showing the increasing freight for goods carried between Kalgoorlie and Laverton.

The road haulage from Leonora has meant that all freight has increased by no less than 45 per cent. Some freight has been increased to the extent of 75 per cent., and in one instance—although it is a little matter but very dear to the hearts of children—the freight increased to the extent of 150 per cent.,

that is, the freight on ice cream, because of the dual transport to that area. A request has been made to the Railway Department to station one of its officers at Malcolm so that the people of Laverton will be saved 40 miles of extra travel.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How are those 40 miles extra made up?

Mr. ACKLAND: Sixteen miles by rail from Malcolm to Leonora, and two trips of 12 miles each by road travelling from Laverton, and back past Malcolm into Leonora in order to get the goods. The member for Fremantle made an interjection; but those figures were mentioned in my presence at the road board office at Laverton.

It has been said that the Country Party has put up no constructive criticism and no alternative in this matter. I am not speaking on behalf of the Country Party, but I am going to put up a suggestion. The member for Stirling, the Leader of the Country Party, made a suggestion which would save a considerable amount of money, but it was most noticeable that "The West Australian," which has advocated the closing of these lines, made no mention of his suggestion. However, at the same time a leading article, which I hope to read later, was written on the same day accusing, and almost abusing, the Country Party for its action in this matter.

Mr. Evans: Does a certain storekeeper have to pay the railway freight for his goods from Kalgoorlie?

Mr. ACKLAND: The hon. member would know more about that than I because he has more details. On a previous occasion I compared the working of the Railway Department with that of the Midland Railway Co., and I was accused at a meeting at Cadoux by the Minister for Railways of making a most unjust and unfair comparison. So I looked to somewhere else. I told this House that while the Midland Railway Co. employed 1.5 persons per mile, the Railway Department at that time employed 3.5 men. Today 750 miles or thereabouts of railway line have been closed and the number of men employed per mile in the Railway Department has increased to 4.3, as against the Midland Railway Co. figure of 1.5. I do not want to carry that any further because it has been suggested by the member for West Perth and others at different times that that was not a fair comparison.

I would refer to the Commonwealth railway system which operates four separate lines and two different gauges. We find that for every £1 value of revenue it collects, it spends 8s. 8d. on salaries, wages and allowances. I feel justified in comparing that figure with the figure for the State railways. According to the commissioner's own report, last year the railways earned £13,274,166, of which

£12,025,979 went towards payment of wages, salaries and allowances. Those are not my figures.

They are the figures given by Commissioner Hall as appearing in his own annual report. It takes only a simple mathematical calculation to ascertain that the Railway Department is spending 18s. 4d. on salaries, wages, and allowances, for every £1 it receives by way of revenue, leaving 1s. 8d. of every £1 to meet all other expenses. I am of the opinion that there is no justification to operate a system which has an overhead expenditure of that proportion—no justification whatsoever for such a position to occur. If the Commonwealth Government can achieve results twice as cheaply as the State Railway Department, I consider that the costs here can be reduced.

It has been said over and over again that Chamberlain Industries Limited is not a Government instrumentality, but we all know that there is a sum approaching £4,000,000—at least well in excess of £3,000,000—of Government funds invested in that enterprise. We also know that some time ago before the committee met, and before the management committee was appointed to conduct the affairs of that company, there were 1,000 men on its payroll. I do not want to go as far back as that, but in "The West Australian" of the 13th July, 1957, this was reported—

W.A. Tractor Output Rises by 50 per cent.

Chamberlain Industries Limited manufactured 900 tractors during the 1956-57 financial year—a production increase of 50 per cent. compared with previous years.

This gain was made despite a 15 to 20 per cent. reduction in the labour force.

Comparing it with the figures since it first started it was a 30 per cent. reduction. But let us use the figures that appear in this article. It goes on—

A loss for the year of about £50,000 after meeting interest of £120,000.

The company said that if the increased operating efficiency, particularly noticeable since last January, had been applied earlier, the company would have broken even.

Then the article goes on to something which I have advocated over and over again in this House and which I support, in my own small way of business in farming, and that is incentive payment. The article says—

Incentive pay began in January in most production departments and this largely influenced the rise of about 25 per cent. in workers' efficiency.

I should like to say that if a 20 per cent. reduction in staff were applied to the Railway Department here, we would find a

saving to the State of £3,000,000 in one year. There were 14,000 odd employees in this department, and if the number were reduced to 11,200, there would be a saving of approximately £3,000,000 a year.

I do not want to put anybody out of work; it is the last thing I would want to do. There is enough productive work in this country for every man in it. But I strongly object to this Government, or any other Government, keeping men in employment when it complains bitterly about a deficit, and when £3,000,000 can be saved. Somewhere here I have information given by the Premier in answer to a question asked by the member for Mt. Lawley regarding the deficit, and the reduction in wages and in personnel.

Mr. Potter: Why did the previous Government step up personnel?

Mr. ACKLAND: The member for Cottesloe has made many unfortunate comments.

Mr. May: We all agree with that.

Mr. ACKLAND: Mr. Speaker, I mean that the member for Subiaco has made many ill-formed interjections since he has been in this House, and he did so last night and again tonight.

Mr. Potter: Why did you step up the personnel?

Mr. ACKLAND: The personnel has been stepped up by a very considerable number since the Hawke Government took office.

The Premier: Thank you!

Mr. ACKLAND: I should like to mention the deficit for last year which, according to the reply given by the Premier, was £4,647,864. This figure included operational losses and depreciation of £2,531,145 and interest of £2,166,719.

The Premier: Under your policy, Wongan Hills would get about one train per week.

Mr. ACKLAND: I will give some information about that in a moment, as no doubt the Premier would be glad to have it. I should like to read something which appeared in "The Federated Chambers of Commerce," July, 1957. These people are not particularly the friends of the farmers; I do not think they are any more the friends of the farmers than is the trade union movement. This is what the article has to say about Western Australia—

With nine-tenths of her population concentrated in one corner, the remainder spread sparsely over the farming and mining land, she is—and will be for many decades—predominantly rural in emphasis. Even her manufacturing industry (which now has a net value of recorded production of about £75 million annually) is largely concerned with pressing her primary products.

Because of her large area she has a wide variation in climate, soils—

and so it goes on. We have here an organisation which is in no way associated with the farmers and, I have good reason to believe it has, on many occasions, worked to the detriment of the rural industry. In a State like this, the responsibility for passing legislation in both Houses of Parliament for a contraction of primary production in Western Australia is not entirely that of the Government, by any means.

Mr. Potter: Nothing of the sort!

Mr. May: Don't be silly!

Mr. ACKLAND: The members who have just interjected know it is a fact and should read the speeches of other members.

Hon. A. F. Watts: And that of the member for Murchison.

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes—the members for Murchison, Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and one or two others. These men could not give vent to their feelings when they spoke. Had they voted as they spoke, we all know how they would have been treated; they would have been thrown out of their party had they not voted for the motion.

Mr. Bovell: I am not so sure that the member for Collie was not among them.

Mr. ACKLAND: I will not mention him, as he has been sick.

Mr. May: Don't worry about me.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Premier has made some reference to the labour force in the Railway Department. I attended a function at Ballidu recently and a railway driver got into my car and was very eulogistic about the Country Party attitude—

The Premier: He was game!

Mr. ACKLAND: —with reference to the railway closures. He said he had been doing the run from Northam to Caron—sometimes from Northam to Wongan Hills; and at others from Wongan Hills to Caron—over the last three months and repeatedly had had an empty load of trucks; and he said that at times empty trains had passed him going south. He said that there were 16 train crews in Northam falling over themselves, because nobody knew what to do with them.

Some time ago I made a trip to Kalgoorlie and Laverton. There I came in contact with the man in charge of one of the running sheds on the railway to Kalgoorlie. He was asked how he was getting on; and he said, "It's a hell of a job. I have so many men, I do not know what to do with them; and another two are being sent to this depot from Northam, because they are falling over themselves there."

Mr. May: He was pulling your leg.

Mr. ACKLAND: He may have been. But I would like to read a letter from a member of the engineering branch of the department. I promised that I would not divulge his name. He wrote—

You are on the right track. Keep on with the good work. You have quite a number of railway employees behind you. I would like to point out a few facts about my own department in the railway, the C.C.E. Branch, where quite a few thousand pounds could be saved. As you understand, if it is known I wrote to you as a member I may be sacked, but here we go. In 1920 when I first joined the railways we had one inspector of permanent way in Perth, one in Bunbury, one North and so on. Now we have one head inspector, Perth, three assistants and I don't know how many relief Is.P.W.—

I do not know what that means—

three in Bunbury, three Northam, and I think the same in other districts if not more. Three or more men doing what one used to do with less mileage of railway and all on big money. First-class gangers used to relieve the I.P.Ws. when they were on holidays. We had one Commissioner, one Chief Civil Engineer. Now as you know there are three Commissioners—

I do not lay that at the Government's feet.

The Premier: At whose feet do you lay it?

Mr. ACKLAND: The letter continues—
and God knows how many more in head office.

Mr. Bovell: What was the recommendation of the Royal Commission?

The Premier: Whose?

Mr. Oldfield: "I.P.W." may mean "Idle Public Workers."

The Premier: Would the hon. member take me into his confidence in this respect: If drivers and firemen are put off during quiet periods, what does one do about manning trains in the busy seasons? Don't answer that!

Mr. ACKLAND: As the Premier has asked me not to answer it, I will not do so. This letter continues—

I have to put up with some men that are useless and I have no power to put such men off. There is quite a lot I could point out.

I have other letters which I have taken from quite a big file. Here is one in which the writer suggests I should ask questions in the House which have not been asked with regard to reckless railway spending.

This man is in the Traffic Branch. One of the questions he suggests should be asked is—

Why was £37,000 spent on an elaborate station at Byford and though it was completed over six months ago is not yet in use?

This letter was written on the 31st December last. The next question is—

Why was the terrific amount of money spent on the electric signalling at Narrogin and Armadale stations (reputed to be £160,000 in each case), while the only noticeable result has been the slowing down of railway traffic?

The Premier: Anything about Bunbury?

Mr. ACKLAND: I do not know anything about that. None of these men are in my electorate, and members are not going to be told where they come from.

Mr. Oldfield: Has Mr. Lee given this information to Mr. Smith or only to you?

Mr. ACKLAND: One expects something like that from the member for Mt. Lawley, so we will take it whence it came.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think you are doing too good.

The Premier: Not since that last interjection. What was that interjection again?

Mr. Bovell: You can read it in Hansard.

The Premier: Not this week.

The Minister for Education: Is the member for Moore still speaking?

Mr. ACKLAND: I want to make some other remarks, but I cannot find the notes.

Mr. Oldfield: If we adjourn for tea, you will be able to find them then.

Mr. ACKLAND: I want to make certain references, and will do so if I have the opportunity to carry on after tea. I desire to speak about the attitude of "The West Australian" towards the Country Party during the whole of this controversy. It will be recalled that some years ago a certain Mr. Downing set out to annihilate the Country Party, and he received the full support of "The West Australian." From that day to this, the Country Party has never been given a good word by "The West Australian," which has repeatedly accused us of being impracticable in this matter and with not having submitted alternative suggestions.

Mr. Potter: I think it is right there.

Mr. ACKLAND: When introducing this motion, the member for Stirling made two suggestions. One was to get rid of the clerical staff which is giving no benefit to the people of Western Australia in the compilation of ridiculous information, such as where produce comes from and is consigned to, on which money is being lost.

The Premier: We need a clerical staff to obtain the information to answer all the questions you ask.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. ACKLAND: Earlier in my address in support of the motion, I made reference to the number of children attending the Laverton school. I am inclined to think I did not give the numbers quite correctly; and with your permission, Sir, I would like to read the contents of this telegram, which is dated the 13th August, and was sent from Laverton in reply to a question I asked about the number of children attending the school last year. It states—

In December 22 white, 20 coloured, total 42. Today nine whites, 11 coloured, total 20. Two whites, three coloured, total five, leaving in a fortnight's time.

So we can see that although I was not quite factual, there are at the present time 15 children attending the Laverton school whereas there were 42 in December last. I am advised that this position has been brought about almost entirely because of the closing of the railway between Malcolm and Laverton.

I now have the figures dealing with the increase in freights in connection with which I have not given any detailed information. On Wednesday, the 17th July, the following question was asked in another House—

Would the following figures of increased freights be factual as between Laverton and Kalgoorlie—

Item	Rail to Laverton prior to rail closures. per ton	New rail and road costs. per ton.
	s. d.	s. d.
Chaff and bran	95 8	157 10
Fencing and building materials	161 11	215 4
Mining and agricul- tural machinery	129 4	191 6
Groceries and stores	161 11	217 4
Petrol	161 11	215 4
Beer	215 3	264 2
Spirits	268 3	310 8
Soft drinks	161 11	215 3
Furniture	215 5	296 2
Explosives	215 5	266 2
Mining stores	161 11	215 4
Ice cream	12 0	32 0
	per 10-gal. can.	per 10-gal. can.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's time has expired.

On motion by Mr. W. A. Manning, time extended.

Mr. ACKLAND: Members will find that the lowest of these increases is 45 per cent. and they go up to 75 per cent. with the exception of the children's ice cream which is greatly in excess of that.

Is it any wonder that 35 people left the district when the railway closed down; or that the attendance at the school dropped from 42 to 15?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Would they be children of railway employees?

Mr. ACKLAND: Some, but by no means all. They were all living there. Some lived in a house which had recently been renovated at tremendous cost. On the 23rd July last this question was addressed to the Minister representing the Minister for Railways—

What is the ton mile return on the carriage of iron ore by rail?

The answer was—

2.68 pence per ton mile.

The next question asked was—

What is the ton mile return over similar distances for the carriage of bulk wheat?

The answer was—

2.68 pence per ton mile.

The Premier had previously, in the Press I think it was, stated that iron ore was a profitable commodity for the railways to carry. In the answer to this question, we were told that iron ore was much more difficult to transport than was grain.

I have had a look at the rate book and I find the position is that wheat costs 2.9d. per ton; other grain 3.19d. and fertiliser 2.96d. The rate book shows that the figure for miscellaneous, including ores and minerals, is 2.02d. How often have we read in the Press and heard it stated in the House by members of Cabinet, particularly since the closure motion was first introduced, that the cartage of superphosphate, wheat and other cereals was performed at a loss?

We know that no handling is done by the Railway Department in connection with any of these commodities. We know this, because the Minister has advised us that it is much more difficult to cart ore. We find that 35 per cent. of the whole of the freight carted by the Government railways is represented in wheat, fertiliser and other grains. We cannot have it both ways. The Government cannot stand up and say that these commodities are carted at a loss; and then, because it suits the Government and because it wants to establish an iron ore industry somewhere and wishes to send iron ore to Japan through Fremantle, say that it is a profitable freight.

It is only one of the mis-statements that we have been subjected to throughout this debate and the Press controversy which has gone on for months past. I have here the leading article in "The West Australian" of Monday, the 5th August. I have no intention of reading it all but wish

to make reference to portions of it. It states under the heading "A New Political Deal in Queensland"—

The Gair party deserved better in view of its courageous stand for the supremacy of Parliament over dictation from outside irresponsible bodies.

I cannot quarrel with that statement. Then—

The significant test of the split is in the division of loyalties in the total Labour vote. By that standard the progress of the count shows the Gair party in a stronger light than its parliamentary ranking.

The SPEAKER: Does the hon. member propose to connect this up with the motion?

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes, I am speaking with reference to the attack which "The West Australian" has made on the Country Party over a long period. The leading article continues—

On the other side the Liberal and Country Parties worked as a team with a joint policy—

Why cannot "The West Australian" be factual? It is not the Liberal and the Country Parties in Queensland at all. It continues—

—and the non-Labour parties have evidently been brought nearer to possible amalgamation.

The Queensland example has a bearing on present moves for closer Liberal-Country Party relations in this State.

"The West Australian" has almost unlimited power in this State but it has no responsibility. It can come out with any policy it likes or stifle the views of other people, and there is no redress, because it is the only daily paper of any magnitude in this State.

Mr. Andrew: We fully agree with you on that.

Mr. ACKLAND: It stifles any views that it does not support and its attitude of hostility towards the Country Party over a long period is something that I think should be ventilated in this House. I admit I am only a back bencher and may not have very much influence in my own party, but I am not prepared to stand for what "The West Australian" does. I say that neither the Johnsons nor the Downings nor the inner circle of the Liberal Party is going to destroy the Country Party. In fact, I think this attitude of "The West Australian," like an elephant in a china shop, does much to keep the Liberal and Country Parties apart. I believe we could get together on fundamentals, but there will be no amalgamation.

There will always be a Country Party, just as there will always be an England, and this attitude of "The West Australian" must make men like Sir Winthrop Hackett turn in their graves. Up to 20 years ago "The West Australian" was fair to everybody in the State and it expressed all the views put forward, irrespective of its own policy. Of course, it might print a leading article in criticism, but that was part of its job. Throughout the whole of this controversy, "The West Australian" has been most unjust to the Country Party.

I have tried to find the leading article which it published at the same time as my leader made a speech about this question. He made a very worth-while contribution to the debate and suggested that the small section of the Government railway from Walkaway to Geraldton should be placed under the control of the Midland Railway Co., which could run it without any further changing of teams, and so on. He also mentioned the tremendous waste of clerical labour that is taking place. But did "The West Australian" publish that? No, of course not!

That journal has consistently spoken of contracting the railway lines of Western Australia. Sir Winthrop Hackett or even Mr. deBurgh would have watched the interests of the State. But this journal has aligned itself with the Labour Party on this question and has said that we cannot go on losing money as the railways have been losing it, although it knows that with a reorganisation a loss on the operation and expenses of something over £2,000,000 would be wiped out in something like 12 months, and the people displaced could be found new jobs which would be productive.

But while we have a deficit of over £4,000,000, the only alternative that "The West Australian" can see to that deficit—the Labour Party and a great many of the Liberals think so—is to stop development in this State and make it impossible for people in the outback areas to produce. I am anxious to hear the member for Avon Valley speak to the debate on the Bill to amend the Transport Co-ordination Act. He has not cared a continental in regard to the closure of railways, because his electorate is not concerned, but I know that when those people who cart their stock to Midland Junction are no longer able on the return trip to carry the goods they want on their farms it will be a horse of another colour.

I thank the House for giving me the opportunity of speaking beyond my allotted time. I whole-heartedly support the motion moved by the member for Stirling. I want to see an inquiry into all those lines which he mentioned and I want to see the service reinstated on all lines where there is a potential and where it is justified. That is the object of the motion, and I support it.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [7.49]: I have listened attentively to the member for Moore, who made a statement charging one of the Ministers with wilfully giving wrong information to the House, after which he himself gave wrong information, deliberately and definitely. I gave him a chance—by interjection—to get out of it, but he did not have the brains to do so. He told us that the distance from Malcolm to Leonora would be 40 miles, but it could not be that, and when I questioned him he said it was 16 miles between those centres, and that is not right, either.

What use is it the member for Moore saying the Minister gives wrong information and then deliberately setting out to give us wrong information? He was unfortunate when he told that to a man who had ridden over it plenty of times on a bicycle. He said it was 16 miles but I say it is not and so he deliberately misled the House in saying it was 16 miles. He said a railway officer told him that, but he should go back to his railway officer and inform that gentleman that the information given was wrong.

Mr. Ackland: Did you go over it by road or rail?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: By road. It is two miles less by road than it is by rail; and it is not 16 miles by rail. There is a fair difference between the figure of 16 miles and the real distance. So the next time the hon. member tells the story, he should make sure that someone who knows the place he is talking about is not present. I feel sure that the hon. member could not ride that far on a bicycle.

He went on and grizzled about the freight rates on wheat and superphosphate. But he did not tell us that the Liberal Party was good to him and his friends; he was going crook about the Liberal Party. But they were good to him, and his friends, because the Liberal-Country Party Government provided a subsidy for the road cartage of superphosphate in order to try to knock the railways out. They said, "We will subsidise the road transport of superphosphate and let the railways look for something else to cart."

Mr. Nalder: Be careful; you are getting off the track!

Mr. Ackland: The railways could not carry it.

Mr. Nalder: The railways could not do it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I do not know if I am off the track or not; but I do know that the position was so serious that I had an interview with His Excellency the Governor and I asked him to make the Government of the day obey the law. He said, "Go back and report it to Parliament," because the Government was sitting behind a handsome majority. I was unlucky because if he had been like one of the Governors of New South Wales, he

would have said to the Premier, "You alter this by 11 o'clock tomorrow or else." That is what the Governor of New South Wales said to Jack Lang and Jack Lang said, "You go jump in the lake," and out he went. I have spoken only because I wanted to put the member for Moore right; he accuses other people of giving wrong information and tries to put something over us at the same time.

Mr. Bovell: Before you sit down, what is the difference?

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [7.52]: I wish to support this motion which calls for the rescission of a motion passed last year in regard to the closure of railway lines. I do this for a number of reasons. I believe that the policy of hurriedly proceeding to jettison the railways is something which reveals a weakness in policy and is a way of getting over the difficulty that is not acceptable. To me it appears to be an easy way out, whereas the Government should tackle the difficult problem of trying to reorganise and rejuvenate the system.

Mr. Lawrence: It is a tightening up policy.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The hon. member can call it that if he likes, but it is a means of rejuvenating the railways. Firstly, I would like to ask this question: "Has the Government lost faith in the railways?" and, secondly, "Has the Government lost faith in the State?" The answer to one of those questions must be "Yes."

At this stage I would like to refer to a letter which I received from the secretary of the Narrogin branch of the Western Australian Locomotive Engine Drivers, Fireman and Cleaners' Union, written on the 8th October, 1956, in which a number of matters are discussed and included in the letter was the following:—

The renewal of sleepers and re-ballasting has also lagged behind the figure necessary to maintain the perway in a reasonable condition. Derailments due to this are also retarding the efficient working of the system. During 1953-54, 354 vehicles were damaged, 14 being written off; in 1954-55 the figure was 266; in 1955-56 it was 450.

He finished up the letter with these words:

we are confident that the railways will prove that they are capable of providing a transport service equal, if not superior, to that operating in other parts of the world and on a more economical basis than can be provided by road transport.

If the Government has no confidence in its own railway service at least the members of that union have some faith in it, and that is a fairly good starting point.

The Government has said that it cannot afford to rehabilitate the track. I would say that the number of vehicles written off by derailments is one feature of the problem that confronts the Government, and I ask whether the Government can afford not to rehabilitate the track because it is losing such a tremendous sum of money through the damage or total loss of 450 vehicles in one year. Surely the money spent on those vehicles would go a long way towards rehabilitating some of our tracks! While the Government says that it cannot afford to carry out this rehabilitation work, we are losing money because of derailments caused through the bad track.

Hon. A. F. Watts: About seven-eighths of the derailments were on lines that are not to be closed.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is correct. In addition, we are told that 70 per cent. of the costs involved in running the railways are costs which cannot be reduced; they are overhead costs which will still have to be met whether certain lines are closed or not. So only 30 per cent. of the costs have to be covered and it seems to me that by a policy of closing certain of our railway lines, we are trying to find the easy way out instead of facing up to the problem.

As regards the other question, "Has the Government lost faith in our State?", I would say that at present we have only just touched the fringe of possible production in this State. Our agricultural lands are producing pastures, sheep and cereals in quantities that were unknown and unthought of less than 20 years ago. I would like to quote some figures in connection with the pasture improvement group—the Wickepin Pasture Improvement Group. This body has submitted a report and in 1948-49, 701 tons of superphosphate were used for top dressing, while in 1955-56, a total of 2,721 tons were used. Between the years 1948-49 and 1955-56 the area of pasture top-dressed increased by 932 per cent., while the superphosphate used increased by 923 per cent. The number of sheep carried increased by 51 per cent. and the weight of wool per fleece increased by 51 per cent.

As regards cropping, the total area sown to crops in this district in 1948-49 comprised 77,494 acres. In 1955-56 this had increased to 97,737 acres and the superphosphate used totalled 3,141 and 4,478 tons respectively. This indicates the growth in agricultural production over those years and when one starts talking about an increase of 900 per cent., one can realise what a tremendous increase it is. I submit that if the railways have not secured extra business through those increases, there is something wrong with the railways.

Mr. Rodoreda: Something wrong with the farmers.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: There is nothing wrong with the farmers because they will naturally use the most economical method; in any case, most of the freight I mentioned has to be transported by rail. If the railways took advantage of the increased business offering, they would be a more payable proposition. The first essential is that they should meet the needs of their prospective clients. But what efforts have been made by the railways to find out the needs of their clients? I have asked innumerable people whether they have been approached by the railways for suggestions regarding the transport system and I have not yet found one person who has been asked for a suggestion.

If one is running a transport system and one is not getting business, surely the first thing to do is to find out why! But that has not been done—or at least it was not done in the past. I now find that in the last few weeks, an officer has been appointed and he has been travelling around the country inquiring into the needs of various districts. He is a very capable man and some of the little jobs that have been waiting to be done for many years—waiting for the red tape to be disposed of—are now being done straight away. He submits his report and these things, which should have been done years ago, are attended to.

Mr. Lawrence: What do you mean by 900 per cent.?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Nine times.

Mr. Lawrence: That is better. There is no such thing as 900 per cent.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Is there not? There is according to my mathematics, at any rate. I suggest that there has been too much of the practice of running trains to suit the department instead of ascertaining the needs of the people who are its existing and prospective clients. That, largely, has been the cause of the failure of the railways to operate with financial success.

It has been submitted that one of the reasons for closing the lines in question, is the tremendous drop in passenger traffic. I wonder if the Minister for Transport has ever travelled on one of our branch passenger lines when they operated in the manner they have done in the past. If he has, he should not wonder why people were not anxious to travel on them. The uncomfortable coaches which are called dog boxes are hauled along at about 10 miles per hour so could anyone expect people to continue travelling in them? One could not.

The improvement in bus and motor transport has been rapid in recent years but the railways have not kept abreast of it to compete successfully with this mode of transport. If the railways are anxious to retain the traffic

and even to increase it, I suggest that the department should go all out to effect an improvement so that it can compete with road transport.

Mr. Andrew: How do you expect the railways to do that?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: By effecting necessary improvements to the system in general.

Mr. Hall: They have the rock-n-roll, at any rate.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is about all they have got. I have found that no one ever seems to know when goods will arrive at their destination. One cannot find out from railway officers when goods are expected to arrive and what train they are on. No official seems to know where the consignment note for the goods can be found.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Whom do you blame for that?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The system as a whole is to blame. No one who patronises the railways ever seems to be able to obtain this information. If I use a transport system, I expect the officers employed by it to be able to tell me that if an article is consigned on a particular day it should reach its destination on such-and-such a day.

Mr. Lawrence: Who handles the consignment note?

Mr. W. A. MANNING. Nobody ever seems to know. Then there is the problem of the classification of goods. All these various items result in delay and cause harassing and difficult problems. I have before me a small volume which is the goods rate book. This book does not even list the charges for goods consigned. It merely sets out the classifications of the goods. After the officer obtains the information required from this book, he has to look up another list to obtain the charges for the goods consigned. During the whole of the time spent by an officer or officers in obtaining this information, the client is urgently waiting to receive the goods consigned.

In my opinion there are too many classifications, and I think that they should be reduced and simplified. The position in this regard reminds me of a book I read which had for its title, "Pigs is Pigs." Its theme is based on an argument whether guinea pigs consigned were pigs or domestic pets. In the book the departmental officer claimed that they were pigs. He said, "Pigs is Pigs!" However, the consignee claimed they were domestic pets, and so the argument went on.

Of course, if members know the prolific breeding nature of guinea pigs, they will realise that the department soon found that there were too many guinea pigs to hold. So the officer in charge referred

the matter to head office and it sent back the reply, "Send the guinea pigs to head office." The officer then proceeded to load train after train with guinea pigs consigned to head office until a further communication was received from the head office stating, "Stop! Send no more pigs." That little story is similar, I think, to the way our State railway system is conducted. It may be slightly exaggerated, but nevertheless it bears out my point.

In regard to the railway staff, I consider that the method of promotion is not to the best advantage of the railways themselves. Admittedly officers have the right of appeal, but there is too much bias displayed in favour of seniority instead of efficiency. For the information of members, I quote the following extract taken from an article published in "The Farmers Weekly" dated the 1st August, 1957, which sets out the reply of the Minister for Railways to a letter forwarded to him by the general secretary of the Farmers' Union:—

It is necessary for the department to conform to the Act when making promotions otherwise an appeal by an unsuccessful applicant may upset the promotion made. In practice an endeavour is made to select the most suitable applicant for the vacant position. In finally deciding upon the appointee, regard must be taken of any senior applicant whose efficiency is such as would enable him to appeal with success to the Promotions Appeal Board.

Another paragraph of that article reads as follows:—

It will be seen from the foregoing information that efficiency and capability are not overlooked when appointments are made.

They may not be overlooked, but the seniority clause holds too much weight. There are railway officers who are capable and willing to accept higher positions in the railways, but they consider that there is very little chance of their being promoted. There is no encouragement for those who are willing and able to rehabilitate our railways, because they have been in their position for a number of years and have been passed over for promotion time and again.

Mr. Lawrence: Are you suggesting that you should be promoted to the leadership of the Country Party?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I am not talking about the Country Party; I am talking about the Railway Department. I know that there are officers in that department who are extremely capable; and who if given the opportunity, would be only too willing to promote the welfare of their organisation. However, they become frustrated when their chances for promotion become less and less.

Another reason for their frustration is that many of them cannot get their ideas past their immediate superior officer because he is entirely disinterested. How then can they get their ideas through to those who are in charge, and who may be interested in schemes which could promote the efficiency of the Railway Department? Perhaps the Minister will be able to answer that question, because these are employees who are anxious to do a capable job.

I suggest that the resolution for the closure of various railway lines throughout the State should be rescinded until we have an opportunity to deal with each of them on its merits. If we do this and thoroughly examine the pros and cons that apply to each railway line; and if the Railways Commission can provide suitable alternative transport at reasonable cost, there will be no doubt about the support the railways will receive, and it will be found that they will be rehabilitated automatically. I support the motion.

MR. CORNELL (Mt. Marshall) [8.8]: I listened with a good deal of interest to the Minister for Transport when he spoke on this motion moved by the Leader of the Country Party to rescind the 1956 resolution for the closure of certain railway lines. In doing so, I could not help but feel—as I am sure some other members on this side of the House did—that he was lecturing the members on his side of the Chamber to the same degree as he was addressing us, particularly having in mind, no doubt, the member for Murchison; the member for Geraldton; my friend, the member for Collie; the member for Albany; and, most particularly, the member for Kalgoorlie, because at divers moments that hon. member had a good deal to say on the Government's attitude in connection with these railway lines. In fact, at one time, I think he accused the Government of out-Goebbeling Goebbels. But as time progressed, the member for Kalgoorlie out-Chamberlained Chamberlain—that is Neville, not Joe—and he settled for a policy of appeasement and looked for a soft place to land.

The Minister for Education: Hit someone your own size!

Mr. CORNELL: I do not propose, however, to extend my discussion this evening beyond those particular railways that have been closed in my own electorate, because I do not wish to take upon myself the assumption that I have any intimate knowledge of the railways in the other parts of the State. In defending the proposal to close railways, however, the Minister particularly when speaking on the criticism from this side of the House as to the state of the roads that would have to take this additional transport as a result of these closures, said quite emphatically that there were no road problems whatever

associated with this matter, and quoted an assurance he had received from the Main Roads Department engineers to that effect.

There appears to be some confusion in my mind—if not in the minds of other members—on this score; and I would like to quote from a minute which the then Minister for Railways, Mr. Styants, submitted to Cabinet on the proposed closure of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line. An extract from that minute reads as follows:—

The Main Roads Department estimates that it would cost £70,000 to construct suitable roads, over a period of five years, plus maintenance, which would be heavy, due to the nature of the traffic.

That was in October, 1953, when the proposal to close the line was then actively before us. Notwithstanding the Minister's statement on that occasion, there is no doubt it was fortified by recommendations he had received from the Main Roads Department engineers, because they did, in fact, in company with the Minister, travel through that area. On the 3rd May, 1957, in reply to a letter I wrote to the Commissioner of Main Roads on the same subject, inquiring as to what expenditure was proposed by his Department to bring these roads up to the standard stated, I received the following:—

Earlier this year our District Engineer made an inspection of the roads in the Mukinbudin road district and adjoining local authorities and it would appear that both the Mukinbudin-Wialki and the branch road to Bonnie Rock are quite capable of handling any additional traffic which may be reasonably expected to use the roads as a result of the closures of the railway line.

In the intervening period, the Main Roads Department also apparently had a change of heart, because in 1953 it would have cost £70,000 to construct these roads, and the maintenance after that would have been heavy, whereas, in 1957, no expenditure on the same roads is said to be necessary.

The Minister also said that no case had been brought to his knowledge where a suitable system of alternative transport had not been substituted. As I have pointed out on previous occasions—and I feel constrained to do so again—that position did not obtain in respect of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line; or, for that matter, in respect of the Mukinbudin-Bullfinch railway, most of which, incidentally, passes through the electorate of the Minister for Mines.

In neither of those areas was any form of road transport proposed to be substituted. The farmers were told it would be necessary for them to cart their requirements to and from the nearest continuing

railway. But the Minister would still have us believe that there has been no case in his experience where a suitable road transport system has not been substituted for the closure of the railways.

As a result, however, of representations made to the Transport Board, a once-weekly road transport system was instituted to serve the Beacon-Bonnie Rock area, but owing to the rather derelict nature of the road vehicle put on that run the system had a fairly chequered career in its early stages, and took a considerable time to complete the course.

Another point in rebuttal of the Minister's statement that these areas would be well catered for after the railways were closed, is evidenced by the refusal of the Railway Department, after the closing of the line, to accept any goods whatever consigned to sidings along that railway. In fact, to my certain knowledge, a garage in Kellerberrin endeavoured to consign a tractor part to a farmer at Beacon, and the station master told him to take it to the post office because the railways were no longer accepting such consignments. In an endeavour to offset the disadvantages of that particular area, caused by the closure of the railway, I submitted a letter to the secretary of the Transport Board, which I will read to the House. It is as follows:—

No organised road transport for the cartage of livestock, wool, agricultural machinery and similar heavy loading has been arranged for the area previously served by the Burakin-Bonnie Rock railway. Farmers are now required to cart, at their own cost, to sidings on the Koorda-Bencubbin-Mukinbudin line.

The farmers in this area loyally supported the railway now closed. This is evidenced by the fact that during the year ended 30th June, 1956, the gross earnings for the 76 miles of line were £63,000, equal to approximately £370 per farmer.

The deprivation of rail facilities with no adequate road service in substitution, therefore, is most unjust. To partly redress this inequitable treatment, the board, surely, would liberalise its policy for those areas now without rail services. I submit that farmers in these areas be permitted to cart their produce through to the metropolitan area should they desire to do.

A continuing increase in the cost of production is the concomitant to the cessation of rail facilities. I have no doubt of the board's awareness of this inescapable fact, and appreciate that its desire will be to level out this cost increase. Permitting farmers in these districts to so cart their produce is

but a minor palliative, but would help, and I feel sure that the board will view it favourably.

The reply was as follows:—

On the 27th June last you wrote on behalf of farmers in the Burakin-Bonnie Rock area requesting that they be permitted to cart their produce to the metropolitan area should they desire to do so.

The Government's decision in the matter of cessation of rail services contained a provision that where services are suspended transport would in future be to the nearest practicable railway point. In view of this the board is not in a position to grant any general approval for "through" transport to the metropolitan area.

However, this naturally is subject to the exemptions contained in the Act which provide, *inter alia*, that a farmer may transport his own livestock, perishables, wheat, oats, barley or rye from his farm to any other place and, having done so, may back-load requirements for his own farm.

The last paragraph will, to all practical purposes, be cancelled should the proposed amendment to the State Transport Co-ordination Act be carried.

I find that on the question of rail closures, the railway estimates and figures which are submitted from time to time are most puzzling. I refer members, for example, to the question asked last week by the member for Moore, who submitted it to the Minister representing the Minister for Railways, as follows:—

How much is it anticipated that the railway finances will benefit during the present financial year, if the amendment to the State Transport Co-ordination Act, introduced by him last Thursday, is accepted by Parliament in its present form?

The reply of the Minister was—

The actual quantity of goods transported by road is not known, therefore it is not possible to reasonably anticipate the financial benefit.

The second part of that question was—

What extra expenditure is it anticipated will be incurred by the Railway Department if the extra transport is diverted to the railways?

The answer to that is interesting. It is as follows:—

As overheads remain fixed, the extra expenditure would be comparatively small.

On that very same subject in 1952, however, the Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Hall, in submitting a report to the then Minister for Railways, Mr. Simpson, on the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, and in

particular when commenting on the assertion that production along that line would increase considerably in the years to follow, said—

Even if earnings were doubled by additional production, as suggested by the board, revenue would fall far short of outgoing as obviously the handling of additional business would add to operating expenditure.

We can take that particular question on its merits, as well as the one regarding the change of heart in respect of the Main Roads Department's opinion on the main roads for that particular district.

The Minister also said the cost of rehabilitating that particular railway line was far in excess of the advantages to be gained by the traffic to be anticipated. Mr. Styants, the Minister for Railways in 1953, in his report to Cabinet, on which he recommended the continuation of that service, said that the Railway Department estimated that with the expenditure of £27,000 per annum for a period of five years the line would be put in fairly good order from a period of from 12 to 15 years. The Railway Department more or less expended that amount per year; and for the three years ended the 30th June, 1956, it spent £75,000 on that line in resleepering alone. There would no doubt be other items of expenditure of a capital nature which would increase that figure. The fact remains that it spent £75,000 in three years on resleepering the line, which obviously must have put it into a reasonable trafficable condition.

Notwithstanding that considerable expenditure, it can be reasonably anticipated—and I hope to find out the position in this regard next week—that during the year ended the 30th June, 1957, some expenditure of a similar nature was incurred; so that we can assume that at least £85,000 has been spent on that railway line in four years. Despite that expenditure, which obviously must have put the rail bed into a fairly good condition, the Railway Department closed the rail service because of the inability of that line to meet future capital expenditure; so that the best part of £100,000 of loan money would appear to have gone down the drain because of a refusal to keep that line open.

Whilst on this particular subject, I feel it incumbent on me to refer to an article written by the member for Blackwood which appeared in the "Blackwood Times" late in June. It is one affecting this particular position; and some reference ought to be made to it, if only to correct the position as regards myself and other members for areas affected by closures.

The article leads off—

Last week I got fed to the wolves when I went to Merredin to represent Mr. Brand, the Leader of the Opposition, at a meeting of the Eastern Road Board Association.

The member for Blackwood does not say whether in the process of being fed to the wolves he was palatable to the people of that area. The fact that he is alive proves that he was not.

There are several points in this article worthy of comment. He also says that he was well received. I think the member for Roe would go with me in saying that if those at the conference had read Hansard, he would not have been so well received. He made several assertions, on one of which I must join issue with him, when he wrote as follows:—

I came away from this meeting with two points uppermost in my mind. One was that the Government had bungled badly in this rail closure, and secondly, that the members of Parliament representing those areas had to some extent let their electorates down.

The Premier: He was completely wrong on both points.

Mr. CORNELL: I agree with the Premier on the second point. In support of the contention in the second point—I shall not read out what he said of the contention in the first point—he said—

Although these railway problems had beset successive Governments for many years, none of the members concerned seemed to have tried a solution of any sort.

The members concerned obviously referred to myself, my colleague in front of me, the member for Katanning, and maybe the member for Stirling.

The Premier: And the member for Moore.

Mr. CORNELL: The member for Moore has no line in his electorate which has actually been closed, although he has a few on the lists of suspects. The article went on to say:—

It was known that the Railways Commission wanted to close many lines and spend no more money than hitherto on maintenance, but this is the one that I must emphatically protest against. It was also known that the Government in 1954 had set up an interdepartmental committee to study and report on the problems of some uneconomic railway lines.

Now we know that was the case—that in 1954 the Government did, in fact, set up the interdepartmental committee—but we did not know about it until about September or October, 1956. I doubt—and I say it quite emphatically—that the member for Blackwood did know that in 1954. If he knew it, he must have been the recipient of a very close Government secret, because no one knew it until the report had been virtually made available to members of this House in September or October, 1956. Therefore, to say it

was known that in 1954 an interdepartmental committee had been set up to consider the railways and the effect of closing uneconomic lines, is not true.

The inference to be drawn is that members of that area had two years' warning to get cracking on the subject of educating their constituents to face up to the closure of these railways and the fact that they were going to lose them, and that as a consequence they must adapt themselves to some other form of transport. It was not possible to keep electors advised of the trend of Government thinking. The trend of Government thinking, as far as I am aware—and I base my observation on this report which I have in front of me, and which was submitted to Cabinet in 1953 by the then Minister for Railways—was that the Burakin-Bonnie Rock railway would be kept open, and it was until comparatively recently.

Therefore, the allegation that members in that area should have informed their electors of the trend of Government thinking is unfair and unjustified; and I think the member for Blackwood, in a spate of enthusiasm, really overstepped the mark. He would be amazed if I went into the Blackwood electorate and attempted to put his house in order. For the edification of the member for Blackwood—and, for that matter, of any other member who feels he can attend to the affairs of an electorate better than the member who represents it—might I be permitted to tell him the story of a young man with an impediment in his speech.

I will not go through all the motions of this young man, who had a particular eye for feminine beauty and in particular for the statistics that go with it. On one occasion he was on the beach at Cottesloe and kept nudging his companion, and said, "Do you see that beautiful blonde and that curvacious brunette?" His companion said, "I am not interested." He said, "Do you see that one over there; that most magnificent redhead?" His companion said, "I am still not interested." His friend then said, "Did you see that?" His companion, fully fed up, said, "Of course I saw it!" He then said, "Well what in the blazes did you want to put your foot into it for?" On that note I support the motion.

MR. EVANS (Kalgoorlie) [8.33]: I want to speak briefly on this motion and voice my opposition to it. I would like to address a few remarks to the member for Mt. Marshall who reminded me of the devil quoting from the Scriptures, inasmuch as, in the last railway motion perhaps some of us had indulged in emotional psalm singing. It is obvious some of that emotional psalm singing is still continuing from a certain side of this House and from the member for Mt. Marshall in particular. I suggest he indulged in several half-truths and he got hold of the wrong

halves. He was much too late in putting the picture in the right perspective and, just as he was too late in that respect, he is too late in speaking to this motion tonight and decrying the railways and the Government for what has been done. If the Railway Department is to pay, everybody concerned must play his part—not only the railwaymen; not only the Government; but also those people who use the railways.

In the discussion on the last railway motion we heard a great deal—and I must confess I also joined issue on this point—about the railways being put down to open up the country; and in that respect, the Country Party members in this House have emphasised that point in this recent debate. I say, "Have the farmers been using the railways?"; and the answer is "No." Tonight the member for Moore mentioned—I will not keep the House very long—people in Laverton. I know that there is a certain businessman in Laverton who has been decrying the Government for what it has done. He is also interested in the Country Party. He has become interested for some reason or other, and has been patronising road road transport for years from Kalgoorlie to Laverton.

Mr. Roberts: What is his name?

Mr. EVANS: Rip van Winkle. From the Country Party tonight, and from the Liberal Party, we have heard a great deal about backing and filling, and, if I may be excused for anticipating something which is on the notice paper, the Premier has a notice of motion in which he compliments the Country Party for its consistent opposition, but expresses disappointment and disgust at the backing and filling tactics of some members of the Liberal Party. I cannot compliment the Country Party; I condemn them both. They have both ceased to be consistent completely.

Mr. Court: Have you changed your views from when you spoke on the motion in 1956?

Mr. EVANS: One is entitled to review his opinion, and I am putting it forward now as I see it. I am just as sincere now as I was then.

Mr. Court: You have had your tail twitched harder than I thought.

Mr. EVANS: I was disappointed in the member for Mt. Marshall tonight, as I believe he adopted a jocular attitude. In the past I have admired his wit, because it has been most spontaneous, like little peals of laughter. But tonight he impressed me that he relied on his memory for jests, and on his imagination for facts.

Mr. Bovell: Like a confession:

Mr. EVANS: Referring to the attempts to condemn the Government for what it has tried to do, it seems to me that those

making such attempts do not stand up to their responsibilities nor do the people they represent. I would like to mention a quotation from Henry Lawson—

Ah well the case seems hopeless,
And the pen might write in vain,
For the people gobble the old things
Over and over again.

No matter what is done for people, there will always be some who will moan and will not stand up to responsibility. Therefore, in full sincerity, I oppose the motion.

Mr. Bovell: Quote from Joe Chamberlain.

MR. OLDFIELD (Mt. Lawley) [8.38]: It amazes me how, from time to time, the basic issue is forgotten and overlooked.

Mr. May: Just as well you are here to keep them in order!

MR. OLDFIELD: No doubt any person reasonably capable of taking part in a debate, by bringing in side issues and irrelevancies can make out a good case. But sometimes we should stick to the fundamental issue; and, in regard to this motion, the situation is no different from what it was last year.

Last year when I spoke on this matter, I said that the reason I supported the motion to discontinue railway services was that there were not sufficient loan funds available to keep them in order and to rehabilitate those which needed rehabilitation so as to keep the services operating. There has been no improvement in the financial position, and no further loan funds have been forthcoming. Therefore, it will be impossible to find sufficient money to put those lines in order so that the services may continue.

It is true that funds could be made available from the loan allocation, but only at the expense of other urgent works. As I said last year, our choice is not as to whether we should discontinue services or keep them in operation, but whether we should allocate our limited funds to one purpose or another. Admitting that a lot of our public works are urgent, we have to decide in which direction we will channel our funds to the best advantage of the State.

I feel that it is possibly a retrograde step to close lines. I do not think anybody wants to see services suspended. I do not believe that even the Government which has taken this step is happy about the decision forced upon it.

Hon. A. F. Watts: The Minister for Transport is perfectly happy.

MR. OLDFIELD: I do not think he is really happy in his heart. No doubt, if the Government had sufficient funds to rehabilitate the lines, it would continue the policy pursued in the immediate postwar era and try to get the railways working.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I am satisfied about one member of the Government. I cannot answer for any of the others.

MR. OLDFIELD: When we consider the amount of money we had to spend to rehabilitate a service which was run down at the end of the war, we realise what would be required to make 4,000-odd miles efficient; and it is obvious that that could be done only at the expense of urgent works, such as the building of schools and hospitals, and the provision of water supplies, and attention to other forms of progressive development.

Within the metropolitan area many urgent works are necessary. Apart from the need for schools, hospitals, and water supplies, it is essential that drainage and sewerage should be provided in certain low-lying areas. For every £1,000 that is poured into trying to jack up a bankrupt railway service, the metropolitan area will suffer by lack of services essential to the health and general well-being of the community.

I can understand the concern of the Country Party, and of country members of the Liberal Party and the Labour Party regarding the closure of railway lines as it affects their constituents. If I were a country member and a railway line in my electorate were being closed, no doubt I would be most concerned. Indeed, I am concerned now, because it is a retrograde step. But it is one that has been forced on Parliament.

Naturally any member in whose electorate a railway line was being closed would be worried as to how the harvest would be shifted and how people outback would be able to transport goods to and from their farms. But I do not think that anybody can say that the harvest would not be shifted. No doubt none of those lines on which services have been suspended are in such a bad state that they could not carry some of that traffic; and if the roads could not carry the harvest, or sufficient road transport were not available for the purpose, undoubtedly arrangements would be made to open the railway lines temporarily in order to move the heavy freights that were offering, by means of special trains, even if they were only small ones pulled by light engines. Whatever happened, the harvest would have to be shifted, as it was during the war when trucks were not available.

It is true that the roads may be cut about quite a lot. But the fact remains that the roads that were concerned during the war did not have repairs done to them then and have not had anything done to them since, which shows that our road engineering at that stage must have been equal to anything else in the world, because the roads really took a hammering.

For the reasons I have outlined, I cannot bring myself to alter my decision of last year. People in the country areas

who are anxious that their main roads and their subsidiary roads should be put in order; that the comprehensive water scheme should be pushed on with; that additional schools should be built within their electorates, together with high schools and hospitals; such people should realise that they cannot have it all ways, and that if the money goes into the railways it will be to the detriment of other essential services. I therefore oppose the motion.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [8.48]: I propose briefly to say where I stand on this matter. Firstly, in discussing any motion at all, one has to ask oneself what would be the position if it were carried; and, of course, there is also the question of whether it will be carried or not. I think the Premier has made it quite clear that even if this motion were carried, it would make no difference to the overall position or affect Government policy. So I cannot see any purpose in even discussing it.

If the Leader of the Country Party had really wanted to take drastic action on this matter, I feel that the opportunity was provided in another place on the Supply Bill; but action was not taken. I do not think that the position has materially altered since last year from the viewpoint of the fundamental soundness of the motion that was carried on that occasion. I still believe it was a perfectly sound motion.

It would appear that the member for Mt. Marshall thinks I have some inside knowledge of this matter. I do not think I have had any at all. I have certainly been aware of the difficulties of maintaining the whole service efficiently, and I have been telling people in my electorate that something of this kind was likely to happen. I have been telling them that for three years or more, and I have been publicly on record in that respect.

The realisation that the position was getting out of hand probably arose from the fact that I was concerned about the railway services in my electorate. Like most other country members, I think, I have had considerable trouble concerning railway matters; and I have made efforts to bring about an improvement in the services. It is in connection with the work generally that I have had to do in an endeavour to get those services improved that I have come to realise the difficulties that make up this railway problem.

I was well aware some time ago—I just cannot say the exact date—that consideration was being given to the matter; and I took the precaution of advising the people in my electorate of the position, because I felt it was fair enough that they should know of the possibilities. I think that the improved services have resulted partially because those people were aware of what could happen, and so they

tended to support the railways to a greater extent than they otherwise might have done.

I still think the services could be improved considerably; and from my comings and goings and investigations into the matter, I am satisfied that in many cases improved services have meant a considerable advantage to the railway system by way of reduction in costs and that sort of thing. The turn-around of trucks—which on the average was about 10 days—has been reduced in my electorate, and partly in the electorate of the member for Katanning, to twice a week. These things assist the department.

I feel the position has been getting out of hand. When the basic wage was relatively small, it was possible to provide railway services in the country areas and accept the loss as being part of the developmental expense; but with the basic wage having gone the way it has, we have to ask ourselves whether there is not a cheaper way of providing this service. I believe that in some cases there are cheaper ways.

During last session, I endeavoured to direct some thought towards the question of studying possible alternatives before anything drastic happened. I moved for the appointment of a select committee; and I think it is clearly recorded that I got very little support from certain people in this Chamber, even for the idea of setting up a select committee just to investigate the position—without doing anything about the matter at all—and look for a possible alternative.

It seems to me that if we continue to do nothing about a problem, eventually the lid must blow off somewhere; and I feel that this, to a great extent, is what had happened in the railways. I do not think the Government cheerfully undertook a course of action which meant inevitably coming into conflict with the railway unions, the miners' union at Collie, and so on. I do not consider that the Government did this lightly. I think it was a question of necessity which forced it into taking action. Nevertheless, I think that any Government would have been forced into taking some fairly drastic action.

I believe the motion as worded and amended last year was fundamentally sound, and I am not prepared to vote for its rescission.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [8.54]: A great deal has been said on a number of motions that have been passed in this connection. It is true, as the member for Blackwood has pointed out, that following the discussion with respect to the proposal for a select committee to set up experimental road transport the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for

Railways, introduced into the House a motion which proposed the closure of 840 miles of our railways.

However, his was not the first effort on behalf of the Government. The Minister for Railways in the Upper House introduced a similar motion; and there, by virtue of a majority, the motion was referred to this House for discussion; and it was also suggested, when the motion was referred to this Chamber, that a separate inquiry in respect to each closure should take place, and that the Government should be asked to bring forward a plan for alternative transport—in fact, a plan respecting the problem resulting from the closure of any line—before Parliament agreed to the proposition.

However, as I understand the position, that motion did not see the light of day; and the Minister for Transport, on behalf of the Government, introduced here a new motion, which was debated at great length—into the early hours of the morning during what was one of the heaviest sessions of this Parliament in recent years—at least since I have been here.

After the member for Blackwood had spoken, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved certain amendments, in the form of additions to the motion. Although it has been claimed that they did not have any great force, the fact is that members on this side felt that if the motion for the wholesale closure of 840 miles of line was to go through without safeguards, it would, indeed, be a retrograde step.

Let us accept for the moment that it was the right thing to do. It did not achieve a great deal in the solution of the problem as the Minister here, representing the Minister for Railways, suggested it would. He suggested that it would solve some of the financial problems, but the basic difficulties of the railways still remain to be attacked.

I think that in adding the amendments from this side, the member for Nedlands imposed upon the Government a certain responsibility—namely, the responsibility to conduct an inquiry into the railway administration; and this, in fact, as a result of the inquiry now being made into the commission, has been proved to be a well-worth-while suggestion.

The other two amendments referred to the fact that the railways in the metropolitan area showed a deficit of £1,250,000; and it was suggested that before the country rail services were suspended, and the people living in the country were expected to bear the sacrifice and inconvenience resulting from the closure of the railways, the metropolitan people should bear some of that inconvenience and sacrifice. Finally, of course, the amendment imposed upon the Government the obligation to put forward alternative proposals by

way of road transport which, by and large, would be the alternative means of transport.

Up to the point of the sitting of this House, we on this side felt that the Government had fallen short of carrying out its obligations. In fact, there appeared to be undue haste in respect of the closing of the 840-odd miles of line. I am sure that those who, from time to time—I am one of them—have expressed their faith in the ability of road transport to play its part as an integral portion of the overall transport system, did not believe that the solution of the difficulties of the railways would be the closing, within three or four months, of 840-odd miles of the service, and then expecting that the next day road transport—the roads being in the condition they are—should take over the burden.

The Government, it appears to me, missed a golden opportunity in not using the authority which Parliament had given it, by honouring the conditions which it so readily accepted and, over a number of years, proceeding, where it was found convenient, to pass over the load to road transport. Had that been done I am sure that the protest meetings which have been held, and the hue and cry which was raised by the people, would not have eventuated.

However, in the meantime two motions were passed in another place: That of the Country Party, rescinding the original motion; and that moved by Hon. C. H. Simpson, calling upon the Government to restore the railways until after a searching and expert inquiry had been made into each line, and reports and recommendations from such inquiries had been submitted to and accepted by Parliament, and until the Government had honoured the undertaking and brought forward to Parliament acceptable proposals in accordance with the motion of this House which was agreed to on the 8th November, 1956, but which was ignored by the Government.

That, in fact, still adhered to the principle of the motion passed in this House, except that it called on the Government to review the position, as we urged it to; and I am sure the Premier realised that there was some undue haste in what was done, because, from time to time, when meeting deputations, he implied that there could be some delay, and that conditions could arise under which the people concerned—and, indeed, the employees of the railways—would be justified in asking for some alteration or amendment of the scheme. I think it was as a result of a deputation led by the Leader of the Country Party that the Premier made such a suggestion.

Having experienced the closure of the railways, I believe the Government could very well re-examine the whole situation; and I feel that there are certain districts which could lay claim, bearing in mind

their potential development, to some further servicing by their railways. On the other hand—here I refer to certain mining towns which in the meantime have ceased to exist, and which therefore have no claim to further rail services—there are some services that possibly need not be continued.

In this regard, if we are to make a highly political problem of this question, we will not achieve any great progress. After all that has been said in this House, and what has been written in respect of how we could solve the problem of the railways, surely the time has arrived when we must recognise that the Railway Department is only one part—though perhaps a major part—of the overall transport system. In this I speak on behalf of the country people—people as far out as Hyden and Yuna. Of course, in my own electorate the people are not so severely affected, owing to their proximity to a port; and provided that the measure to amend the Transport Co-ordination Act does not affect them, they could very well feel no great impact from the rail closures.

I think the time has come when there should be a Minister for Transport—not a Minister for Railways—charged with the responsibility of ensuring that by the co-operation of the railways and the full use of road transport we would have an economic and efficient transport system. A lot has been said about the farmers not using the railways and using the roads instead.

Mr. May: Now you are coming to the root of the matter.

Hon. D. BRAND: They use road transport because it is more efficient and more convenient to them. When speaking on the censure motion, I said money would have to be found to improve and make efficient our railway system; and the Premier said, "The Leader of the Opposition says money must be found." It is a fact that money must be found from year to year to improve the system which remains, and which must become more competitive against road transport. All members realise that at the present stage the railway system is not an efficient means of transport—

The Premier: A terrific amount of money has been sunk into the railway system in recent years.

Hon. D. BRAND: I agree; and I realise the problem that faces the Treasurer in respect of the demands on him for more money. But we have got ourselves into that position where we must face up to making our railways more modern, efficient and competitive; and it cannot be done by passing in this House legislation to force the carriage of goods on to the railways, while ignoring the place of road transport in the overall transport system.

I support a rescission of the motion because I believe we should go back on our tracks and examine the position from the point of view of what has happened since the Government's decision—since the decision of the Government and Parliament was carried out. I would say that in the 12 months since then, great changes have taken place in certain districts; and there may be three or four lines that have been closed, but on which a certain service could be maintained.

Of course, I know the Government had a problem in the demand on loan funds year by year for the maintenance of rollingstock and railway tracks; but, as the member for Mt. Marshall has said, on some of these lines—an instance is the Bonnie Rock line, where £80,000 was spent on resleepering—surely if the Minister for Railways and the Minister for Transport had agreed to co-operate and listen to the arguments put forward, some services could have been continued for a while in order to obviate the transport problems which those districts have been faced with, and which have been aired through their local members, through letters to the Press, and through arguments put to us directly or indirectly by the Farmers' Union.

The Minister for Transport challenged us to cite a single case where there was dissatisfaction about the alternative means of transport; but he must have received many letters, just as I have, from people who are dissatisfied with the alternative means of transport following the complete closure of their railways.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Some of them do not know what the alternatives are.

Hon. D. BRAND: That is a fact. Through visiting certain districts I have discovered that many of the residents did not know what the alternative means of transport were to be; and as a result, I sought from the Minister for Transport a plan which he laid on the Table of the House after quite a long delay, showing the proposals for providing transport in districts where the railways had been closed down.

It is interesting to hear the Leader of the Country Party say, at this stage, that they still do not know just what are the alternative means to be provided. I believe the Government merits censure because it has forced the closure of 840 miles of line in such a short time, without allowing the Transport Board, or any other authority charged with the responsibility of providing alternative transport, time in which to build up an organisation under which the railways would carry one set of goods and road transport the other.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think there is any truth in that at all.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [9.9]: I feel it is important to speak briefly on this motion before a vote is taken, so as to explain one's attitude towards it. It is not sufficient just to vote either for or against the motion if one is to vote in a manner which might be interpreted as a change of attitude towards this problem.

I moved the amendments inserted in the motion of 1956, and it has been implied that they had no real effect and that they were an afterthought. But I say here and now that they were no afterthought as far as I was concerned. They were moved in all sincerity; and I accepted the belief that the Government was sincere in its approach to the problem when, without reservation, it allowed the amendments to become part of the motion although, with its numbers, it could easily have defeated them at that time. However, there was no reservation or qualification made by the Government at that stage.

I wish to make it clear that my support for the proposition before the House at that time was based on a desire to co-operate and give the Government an opportunity to see the effect of the closures, on the assurance and understanding that it would honour the amendments not only in the letter, but also in the spirit.

When a motion is before the House and it is passed, it does not have the effect of law; but if a Bill is passed by both Houses, it becomes the law of the land and it is interpreted according to the strict wording of that particular piece of legislation. A motion is not in that category, as the member for Fremantle knows very well. One can move motions here, and even get a majority voting in favour of them, and the Government of the day can treat them with indifference. I well remember the work he did in marshalling support to get a motion passed regarding the Fremantle harbour. I was one who voted with him.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You showed good judgment when you did that. I hope you will do it again.

Mr. COURT: But I was very upset a few weeks afterwards when the hon. member asked the Minister for Works what he intended to do about the motion which had been passed, and the Minister's answer was one word—"Nothing."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: No move has been made as yet.

Mr. COURT: As a fairly new member in this House, I realised what could be the fate of a motion; in other words, it has not got the force of law. It is just an expression of opinion by the House. If the Government sponsors a motion, and accepts it in an amended form, one expects the implementation of that motion to be based on the spirit of the debate that took place.

Members will recall that the Minister for Transport painted a picture for us and said that this closure of railway lines would not bring about an upheaval in our transport system. He said that the people concerned would receive an even better service and that there would be no upsurge of cost to the users of that system. We accepted that in good faith at the time; but what has happened? We had hardly got away from the House before the panic started.

For some reason or other, there seemed to be an indecent haste to try to get the lines closed down. I misinterpreted completely what I thought would be the approach of the Minister for Transport. We know him as a fairly rugged member of this Chamber; one who has achieved a reputation for getting things done, and one who is prepared to take on a few tough propositions. Whatever we might think about his views in certain directions, some of us have quietly admired his attitude towards certain rather difficult measures which could be called, from the political viewpoint, hot potatoes.

I fully expected him to lead the move for the closure of these railway lines in a manner which would demonstrate, area by area, the desirability and effectiveness of a revised system of transport. I thought that each area would have been sold on the idea and not that there would be a mass closure of 842 miles of line. I am firmly convinced that had the matter been handled in an entirely different way, and had each area been systematically and painstakingly handled, we would not have had the situation that confronts us today.

The Premier: I am satisfied that the hon. member does not understand the farmer's outlook.

Mr. COURT: The Premier can have that viewpoint if he wishes, but I think I have a fair idea of the farmer's outlook.

The Premier: Not on this issue.

Mr. COURT: I have been dealing with them for a mighty long time, and I have satisfied a large number of them in another field where they are generally regarded as being difficult to satisfy. So I think I understand their approach fairly well. It seemed to me, from my visits to the country, that the aspect they resented more than anything else was the fact that they could not get to grips with the Minister for Transport.

The Premier: Physical grips?

Mr. COURT: No, not physical grips.

Hon. D. Brand: The Premier must admit, following his own appearance at a road board conference, that the motion passed included a provision for an inquiry. It would indicate that the people in the country were prepared to abide by the findings of such an inquiry.

The Premier: You would never get the farmers to vote in favour of closing their local railways.

Mr. COURT: I would concede that we would never get them to vote publicly in favour of closing railway lines. But they were not handled in the proper manner; they were not given a painstaking explanation, on the spot, of what was intended. Had the alternative facilities been installed before the railway system was taken away, their resistance would have been broken down by at least a third.

The Premier: Is the hon. member prepared to accept a commission from the Government to undertake that job in the Denmark district?

Mr. COURT: Which one is that?

The Premier: The one you are talking about.

Mr. COURT: I cannot follow what the Premier means.

The Premier: The hon. member asserts that if the problem is faced in a certain way, the local people will accept it.

Mr. COURT: I think they will.

The Premier: So I am asking the hon. member whether he will accept a commission from the Government to undertake that job in the Denmark district.

Mr. COURT: That is the Government's job. If the Government is not prepared to do it, it should make way for someone else who will. The Premier talks of the Denmark area.

The Premier: That is one of the few districts left.

Mr. COURT: The chairman of the road board there, as the Premier well knows, is a very good supporter of the Premier's side of politics.

The Premier: He tells a good story, too.

Mr. COURT: He is a very forceful speaker, and he is very cross with the Premier and the Minister for Transport. I am not telling any tales out of school; but at a public meeting he spoke in the strongest terms about the Minister's refusing to go down and discuss the matter with him. He said he had done his best to get the Premier and the Minister for Transport down there. The Leader of the Country Party as well as the chairman of the Road Board tried. It would be a very interesting public meeting.

The Premier: I do not remember anybody trying to get me to go down there.

Hon. A. F. Watts: We tried them one at a time.

Mr. COURT: The chairman of the Denmark Road Board was most emphatic.

The Premier: Not with me. I meet him fairly often; in fact, the last time I met him I gave him a cup of tea.

Mr. COURT: He must have quietened down a bit. When he spoke at a public meeting in Albany, he did not mince words at all, and the Premier knows that. If we could get the Premier and the Minister for Transport down there, with the chairman of the Denmark Road Board—who, as I said, is a very forceful speaker—and probably the Leader of the Country Party, who is the local member, as the referee, it would be a most interesting meeting.

The Premier: But the hon. member is getting away from the offer I made.

Mr. COURT: I am not getting away from it. I am telling the Premier that this is a very suitable place for him to demonstrate to the people of the area.

The Premier: You say that it can be done; and we do not think it can be done. I am offering you the opportunity of proving or disproving your theory. Will you accept the offer?

Mr. COURT: I am watching with considerable interest what the Government intends to do in that area. It has made three bites at the cherry so far, and those moves interested us greatly.

The Premier: Will you accept our offer?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: You resign and he will.

Hon. D. Brand: I would remind the Premier of his suggestion on the Murchison line. During the by-election for Murchison, he said that an on-the-spot discussion should take place.

The Premier: That has been altered by the decision of Parliament. Parliament, and not the Government, decided on the railway closures.

Mr. COURT: The Premier might be able to convince himself but he cannot convince me on the Murchison issue.

The Premier: Will you accept the offer I made?

Mr. COURT: If we were the Government, I would say "Yes." The Government has had its chance in regard to the 842 miles of line, and it has closed these lines with indecent haste.

The Premier: Are you prepared to try out your theory? Answer "Yes" or "No."

Mr. COURT: The Government has a 100 per cent. opportunity in this instance. This is the only line left, and we will see what happens. Why did the Government delay its decision in this instance? Because the Government knew that the roads were in an impossible condition and could not possibly carry the freight.

The Premier: That is absolutely wrong.

Mr. COURT: An announcement was made that the road would not be in a suitable condition to take the traffic until after September.

The Premier: The main reason was that the contractor had submitted a reasonable price; but in the meantime, because of some delay, he had taken other contracts which prevented him from taking the Denmark one.

Mr. COURT: That may have been mentioned subsequently, but the information given to the public was that the road in that district would not be in a suitable condition until after September. That was the reason given to the public at the time. Subsequently the Minister told us that there was difficulty in obtaining contractors; and—if I remember rightly—the Leader of the Country Party said, by way of interjection, that that was the first time that he had the matter properly explained to him; that is, when the Minister for Transport gave that explanation in the House.

A further point that was under discussion in 1956 was the question of cost. The Minister for Transport made it clear to us that costs to the primary producers would not be increased. He went so far as to say that increases in rail freights could be imminent; and if and when that took place, the cost of the alternative system of transport would be less than the normal rail freights. That is recorded clearly in Hansard.

Mr. Bovell: I expect the transport costs in those areas where lines have been closed to increase considerably.

The Premier: You are a great champion of private enterprise.

Mr. Bovell: I am referring to the railway road service in the areas south of Bunbury.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member's time has expired! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Mr. COURT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker! I would like to intervene in this argument occasionally.

The Minister for Lands: Do you really think that you could get the co-operation of the Farmers' Union in this scheme of yours if it were explained to them?

Mr. COURT: Yes, I think you could if it is a reasonable scheme.

The Minister for Lands: You do?

Mr. COURT: Yes, I do.

The Minister for Lands: You would never, under any circumstances, get the leader of the wheat section of the Farmers' Union to agree to it. He has declared himself most emphatically against it.

Mr. COURT: He is only one man. It took us days and days to ascertain what were to be the official alternative transport systems. Is it not logical to suppose that if the Government was to put a plan

into effect details would be available automatically? The Minister for Transport could have tabled that information at a moment's notice.

The Premier: Is the hon. member prepared to try out his theory on a small scale?

Mr. COURT: Could the Premier give us the facts of the case?

The Premier: Try it out on the member for Moore!

Mr. COURT: I do not think that is analogous.

The Premier: To me it is.

Mr. COURT: He has not the power to close railways.

The Premier: He is an opponent of closures, and you say that the opponents of closures can be conditioned by the diplomatic approach.

Mr. COURT: The Premier is trying to sidetrack me.

The Premier: I am trying to hold you up to your proposition.

Mr. COURT: If the Premier could come here and say, "Here are the alternative facilities. They are efficient and clearly defined. They will cost no more money than the transport costs which were charged previously," we would not have a leg to stand on.

The Premier: Is the hon. member prepared to try out his theory on the member for Moore?

Mr. COURT: I am prepared to try it out on anybody.

The Premier: Very well. Let me know the result in a week's time.

Mr. COURT: The Premier is putting up a farcical proposition. We cannot hope to put up an alternative transport system, because he cannot do it himself.

The Premier: You try it.

Mr. COURT: I am afraid we would have to change the Government—and the Premier, too—before we could do that. We cannot deal with a hypothetical case. We asked for alternative methods of transport. The information was eventually placed on the Table of the House; and if members have studied it, they will realise that the alternative transport system in many cases exists in name only, and that the increased costs are more than we ever anticipated. The figures tabled by the Minister for Transport are staggering. They are there recorded, not by anybody on this side of the House, but by the Government—the actual facts of the alternative transport system.

Having had experience of my first railway closure motion in this House, I am certain that I will never get caught again by supporting a motion for a mass closure

of railway lines by any Government regardless of whether I am part of that Government or in opposition to it. If ever a railway closure motion is put forward in this House again, the only way I will have a bar of it is if I can deal with all the particulars of the specific case, and have all the evidence produced of the other facilities that are to take the place of the railway which Parliament has before it at that particular time and not in prospect.

Some of us tried to co-operate with the Government in an endeavour to give it confidence to go forward to contract the system and attack the overall problem of the railways. But what do we find? That part of the motion dealing with country lines has been implemented and has raced ahead like nobody's business, but action on the other part has proceeded in a leisurely fashion. We have yet to hear of a solution to curb the losses incurred on the metropolitan section of the system, and of any action that was to be taken to investigate the overall efficiency of the railways. Also alternative transport services that are not yet operating efficiently.

The Premier: They cannot close the metropolitan section of the railways.

Mr. COURT: It is not a question of "can't." There are methods of providing alternative transport systems to take the place of lines that have been closed.

The Premier: The lines have not been taken up.

Mr. COURT: The Government has no need to take the lines up. I am referring in particular to the passenger services in the metropolitan area.

The Premier: That is not the most important issue.

Mr. COURT: Alternative passenger services for the metropolitan area can be found at far less cost than that of the existing service.

The Premier: We are bringing down a trust Bill for that purpose.

Mr. COURT: That does not overcome the problem of operating the metropolitan rail passenger services at a loss.

The Premier: It could have a big bearing on it.

Mr. COURT: We will wait to see that legislation. However, I do not think it is part and parcel of the motion that we accepted. In view of the fact that we have only one way at the moment by which we can protest against the Government's implementation of the motion, I propose to support the motion for its rescission.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling—in reply) [9.27]: I do not propose to take up a great deal of time in saying what I wish to say in reply to the debate on this matter. I would like to make a reference or two on

the observations of the Minister for Transport, and I regret that he is not here. Most noticeable in the remarks made by that hon. gentleman in reply to the motion moved by me was the fact that he made little or no attempt to answer any of the propositions which I placed before him for his consideration. In the main his reply consisted of a reiteration of the statements that he made here—

The SPEAKER: Order, please! I cannot hear the hon. member who is addressing the Chair.

HON. A. F. WATTS: —last December and, more particularly, a reiteration of those points that have little or no bearing on the matter before the House at present; and in many cases they were, I think, somewhat removed from the truth.

For example, he stated that there were some railway lines on which literally only ounces per week were being carried. If there are any such lines among the 842 miles that are listed for closure or for cessation of operation, I am not aware of them. If there were any such lines I do not think anybody in this House would suggest that they should continue to operate if they carried literally only ounces per week.

The Minister, however, very skilfully ignored those railway lines which are carrying thousands of tons per annum and which, in recent times, have been carrying over them a steadily increasing quantity of goods. And he very skilfully ignored all reference to those lines. He reiterated the statement—or, in effect, the statement—that he made last December when speaking in regard to the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, when he said it was in such a state that it would collapse in a few weeks. That was, if nothing else, at least a very great exaggeration—

Mr. Ackland: It never collapsed.

HON. A. F. WATTS: —because that line has for some six months after that time been carrying many thousands of tons of wheat and other produce and goods, and shows no signs of collapsing at the present time. Dealing with the addendum that was placed on the motion by the member for Nedlands last December, he went on to say—

All that is before us now is some pettifogging criticism that the Government has not moved far enough in this direction; that it has not dotted every one of the i's in connection with another proposition. It can honestly be said that every one of the requirements that were laid down by both Houses of Parliament have been tackled energetically, vigorously and sincerely by the Government.

I will make no inquiry into the sincerity. We will let that pass. But I will say that the matters referred to had not been

tackled energetically and vigorously up to the time the hon. gentleman made his speech approximately three weeks ago. It is true that the addendum to the motion was of such a nature that it prompted the Government to justify carrying on with the closure of the railways; but I do agree that it did not justify the Government in carrying on with the closure of the railways without at least paying some attention to the principles involved.

I had better make myself plain. It was not to be a condition precedent to the closure of the railways. If it had been, then the position in regard to it in my mind would have been different. It did leave the Government the right to close the railways first and do these things afterwards. My accusation against the Minister is that he told us that these things were being done coincidentally with the closure of the railway lines that have so far been closed. That is not the position. As was pointed out in that regard by the member for Nedlands a few moments ago, there has been no attempt as yet to reduce substantially the deficits on the metropolitan rail transport passenger service; and there has certainly been, in some cases particularly, no successful adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport.

Indeed, there is one of the lines which I suppose is among the busiest—and if left alone it would be the busiest in the course of the next year or two: I refer to the Gnowangerup-Ongerup line—on which nobody has the faintest information today as to what actually they are going to have by way of transport services and what they are going to pay for them, if they do get them. That line was to be closed, but was not closed, on the 1st July, presumably because of unexpected difficulties.

I say, presumably, because I have not been advised of anything other than that the arrangement to close the line on the 1st July has not been confirmed—that was the statement from the Transport Board—and the line at the moment is still operating. It has carried, in the intervening period, something in the vicinity of 40,000 tons of freight; and, I understand, no vehicle has been derailed upon it.

It has carried the whole of the wheat and barley and other grain that was stored at the sidings along the route; as much as three and four full train-loads a week. It has carried all the inward traffic; and there has been, I am informed, no derailment upon it in the whole of the eight months—

Mr. Lawrence: What was the total inward traffic?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The whole total was 40,000 tons for the year, and it is increasing.

The Premier: Not inwards.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I said the whole inwards and outwards. It was expected that if the service were allowed to run the whole of this year, it would have been in the vicinity of 50,000 tons.

Mr. Lawrence: I asked for the inward traffic.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I cannot give the figure for the inward traffic separately. We were told by the hon. gentleman, last December, that the state of that line was such that it would be impossible to continue it. These things can be proved by reference either to the Minister's speeches, or to the reports of interdepartmental committees, or by reference to what has taken place on these lines since; and they certainly do bear out to some degree—and to a very substantial degree I think—the statement of the member for Moore this evening when he charged the hon. gentleman with misleading the members of this House, because there is no possible doubt in my opinion that either he was misled himself and then in turn misled us; or, alternatively, he was careless with his language, and did not bother to give us correct information, even supposing he had it.

The Minister also ignored—as he has ignored before—the reference that I made to the Denmark-Nornalup railway, based not on my imagination, not on any statement made by any member of this House, or by any irresponsible or responsible individual outside it, and not in the railway department, but based on the file of the department which I asked the hon. gentleman to table last December, and which he did table, and which said in a memorandum addressed to the Commissioner of Railways by the responsible officer that the Elleker-Nornalup line would carry on successfully with a minimum of maintenance for from 2½ to 7 years, depending on the various sections of it. Yet it would have had to be closed if things had gone as the Minister for Transport indicated within 2½ months of the legislation being carried.

As it turned out, presumably for the reasons given by the Premier a moment ago, because of the inconvenient circumstances of the transport contractor, it is still running. It is supposed to terminate at the end of the coming month. As I said, there is ample evidence, not of mine or of any person who is not connected with the Railway Department, but from the file which I had tabled in this House, that that railway line was capable from last October of running up to seven years with only minimum maintenance.

My suggestion is that it is not the primary producers of this community who have been responsible for the diminution

of traffic, if there has been any diminution in recent years. The figures do not bear out that there has been any actual reduction. In the total, there has been an increase in the traffic to the extent of about 600,000 tons in all. What has happened, of course, is that there has been a substantial reduction in certain types of traffic; but they are not the types which the primary producers—if one confines the meaning of that term to those engaged in agricultural and pastoral industries—are responsible for. But I will confine it to the farmers and pastoralists for the purpose of these figures.

The major reductions were in chaff, straw, and hay, from 80,000 tons to 12,000 tons. That, of course, is a matter which is outside our control because of the considerable use of mechanical vehicles. The department was 340,000 tons down on firewood. Most of that was allowed to be transported by road. Who is responsible for that? The farmers? Certainly not. If anybody is responsible that there is a reduction of 340,000 tons, it is the Transport Board. Then there is another reduction, and that applies to timber, which is down by 245,000 tons. Are the farmers and pastoralists responsible for that? Of course they are not!

Then we find miscellaneous ores and minerals down between the same periods by 522,000 tons. Are the farmers and pastoralists responsible for that? The answer is again in the negative. Then we find that for agricultural products carried by the railways over the same period there has been a very substantial increase, amounting in all, I understand, to no less than 806,000 tons during the same period. So we find that the transport of the articles I mentioned is down by over 1,100,000 tons; but there has been an increase of no less than 806,000 tons from agricultural production.

We have been told that the farmers and pastoralists were responsible for the alleged diminution of traffic in connection with their particular items. Of course that is not so at all. They have been responsible for a very great increase; and they would be responsible for a greater increase still if they were given the opportunity, particularly in some of the areas concerned.

The Premier: There was, of course, a very abnormal transport of wheat by rail last year.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Admittedly. The figures I am using apply up to the 30th June, 1956, and a lot of the wheat was carried afterwards. It could be taken as a reasonably normal year up to that time, because a lot of the wheat was carried after the 30th June. I feel there is ample justification for some further reconsideration of this matter. It may be said—and in fact it has been said by the

Minister for Transport in the course of this debate—that there was nothing to be gained by rescinding this motion because there was no suggestion that anything should be done after it was rescinded.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask you as a student of Standing Orders and the management of meetings, what an extraordinary situation I would be placing myself in if I sought to move a motion to leave the railways open while there was still on the records of this House a motion directing them to be closed! Of course the first thing to do was to move that the existing motion be rescinded; and if successful in that, and if the Government wanted further directions, it would be quite simple to move for steps to be reopened or for the position to be re-examined. So for the Minister for Transport to take up that attitude is, in my opinion, the height of stupidity.

I would like to conclude by saying two things. Firstly, I cannot compliment the member for Kalgoorlie on his consistency. I think most members of this House will agree—and I hope the hon. member himself will agree—that he would have been in a great deal better position had he said nothing this evening, rather than make the somewhat weak and evasive address with which he favoured us an hour or so ago. It would have been better if he had left himself where he was in 1956 rather than given vent to that somewhat extraordinary outburst.

Lastly, I would appeal to members to give this matter a chance to be further discussed. I can assure them there is every need for it in the interests of Western Australia; that there is a great deal more to be done in regard to the railway system which would have a greater effect on the finances of the railways than simply closing down some 800 miles of railway line; that there is ample scope for a great deal—I am certain—of savings to be made if the matter were to be properly investigated.

I am not prepared to come here and say how many persons should be dispensed with, or what type of activity should be indulged in to ensure that those who are there, even if the whole lot are required to do a greater degree of work in less time, or whatever it may be. Even the Minister for Railways admitted at a meeting at Cadoux that there is need for some action of that kind. I do repeat, and I shall continue to say, that it was most unfair to place the whole of this attempt at economy upon a very limited number of people in the outer areas of the State before anything else was done to remedy the position in the railways, which undoubtedly could have been done by successful persons after due investigation. I hope the House will carry the motion.

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

Ayes	14
Noes	26
Majority against	12

Ayes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Court	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. I. Manning

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Brady	Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Evans	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Molr
Mr. Hall	Mr. Norton
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Heal	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Heatman	Mr. Potter
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Toms
Mr. Kelly	Mr. May

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.

Noes.

Mr. Graham	Mr. Owen
Mr. Tonkin	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Rhatigan	Mr. Mann
Mr. O'Brien	Mr. Crommelin

Question thus negatived.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): To enable the member for Nedlands to make an early start on the member for Moore, I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 29th August, 1957.

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1. Interpretation Act Amendment (No. 1).
2. Justices Act Amendment.
3. Local Courts Act Amendment.
4. Legal Practitioners Act Amendment (No. 1).