

should not be paid to her, she would have no difficulty in getting herself out of that trouble.

As a matter of fact, the abolition of the Legislative Council has, I think, ceased to be Labour Party policy in Western Australia. If the Western Australian Government is not behind the general policy of the Labour Party throughout Australia there is something wrong. In New South Wales, where the Labour Party has had a majority for quite a long time, the Legislative Council is regarded as being very efficient.

I will also remind the hon. member of this: On many occasions this House has refused to pass immature legislation that has been passed in another place even by parties other than the Labour Party. On one occasion I heard one of the best Labour Premiers Western Australia ever had say, "Thank God for the Legislative Council!" when it sent back to the Legislative Assembly a Bill with which it did not agree. That Premier appreciated what this House stands for. I want members to understand clearly that, frequently, especially after a general election, when a Government has introduced legislation which has been in accordance with one of the planks of its party, and which has been approved by the Assembly, this House has refused to pass it, irrespective of the political colour of the party in power.

I have opposed legislation myself that has been introduced by a member of my own party in another place because I did not consider that its passing would be in the best interests of the State. I think the hon. member who asked the question regarding the cost of this House did so merely for advertising purposes. This House will remain in existence for many years yet and will continue to show the sound judgment that it has shown in the past.

It is my intention to leave the rest of the Address-in-reply to the younger members of this House because, over the years, I think I have contributed much to the Hansard of this State. I hesitate to say "to the welfare of the State" because I am too modest for that. I will therefore conclude—

The Chief Secretary: Don't do that! We like to hear you!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I thank the Chief Secretary for that remark, but I know that I would have had many interjections from him by now had it not been for the fact that he is suffering from a relaxed throat. I do not intend to say anything further.

On motion by Hon. W. F. Willesee, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.18 p.m.

# Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 9th July, 1957.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### LONG-SERVICE LEAVE LEGISLATION.

(a) *Government Discussions with Employees and Employers.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) What number of discussions have taken place between the Government and representatives of employees on the Government's proposed long-service leave legislation?

(2) What number of discussions have taken place between the Government and representatives of private industry on the Government's proposed long-service leave legislation?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) A few.

(2) Some time ago I publicly invited representatives of private industry, who favoured the principle of long-service leave, to take the opportunity of making

any representations to me if they wished to do so. No one has yet accepted the offer, but it is still open.

*(b) Anticipated Cost of Government Proposal.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Is the report in last Thursday morning's newspaper substantially correct that the anticipated liability will be £10,000,000 within three years under the Government long-service leave proposal?

(2) If so, does this mean that the Government will abandon the proposal or introduce a modified scheme?

(3) Will he table Mr. Gawler's report?

The PREMIER replied:

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition gave me a copy of these questions previously. The answers are as follows:—

(1) The Government has been giving active consideration for a long time to the matter of developing a fair and satisfactory long-service leave scheme for employees of private industry. In the process, many suggested proposals have been put forward, and they have been investigated to a considerable extent. The likely cost of any scheme would naturally depend upon the principle of the scheme and also, to some extent, upon the details which were brought into operation to carry out the principle. For instance, to give one illustration, long-service leave could be limited to those who had had continuous service for a number of years with the one employer. On the other hand, it could be granted to all employees who had had, in the aggregate, the same number of years service but had had them with 10, 20 or 30 employers. Consequently, the question of working out an anticipated or estimated liability would vary considerably in relation to the scheme which would be decided upon finally.

(2) The Government intends to proceed with the work of developing what would, in the opinion of the Government, represent a fair and reasonable system of long-service leave for workers in private industry, and a Bill to do that will be introduced into this House later in this session.

(3) Consideration will be given to the tabling of this report following the introduction of the appropriate legislation into the House.

*(c) Accuracy of Estimated Cost of Scheme.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Premier:

Although I appreciate the information he gave regarding long service leave, I would point out that he did not tell us

whether the estimated cost of £10,000,000 for the Government's scheme was substantially correct or not.

The PREMIER replied:

The Government has not yet decided upon a scheme in this regard.

*(d) Cost of Scheme Investigated by Mr. Gawler.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Premier:

While I would concede that the Government probably has not made up its mind on the exact details of a long-service leave scheme, is the figure of £10,000,000 mentioned in last Thursday's newspaper substantially correct in respect of the scheme the Government asked Mr. Gawler to report on?

The PREMIER replied:

As I said in reply to the hon. member's earlier question, the Government has been giving consideration to a number of suggestions and proposals and has been having these schemes investigated to the fullest possible extent; but until the Government has finally agreed on a scheme, there does not seem to be much sense in trying to work out how much some possible scheme might cost, as that would only lead to speculation and the whipping up of all kinds of propaganda and fear with the object of prejudicing any proposal that the Government might bring forward here in the form of a Bill at a later stage in the session.

**W.A. TRANSPORT BOARD.**

*(a) Particulars Regarding Inspectors.*

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many transport inspectors were employed by the Transport Board prior to the 31st December, 1956, to police the State Transport Co-ordination Act?

(2) What is the number of transport inspectors now in the employ of the Transport Board for this purpose?

(3) What wages or salaries are paid to these inspectors?

(4) What amount is paid to these inspectors in allowances for car and running expenses?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Six on road patrol duties.

(2) Seven on road patrol duties.

(3) The total sum paid by way of salaries to these officers during 1956-57 was £7,442.

(4) An amount of £2,373 in motor mileage was paid during 1956-57.

(b) *Position Regarding Local Authorities' Inspectors.*

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

What is the policy of the Transport Board in regard to the employment of traffic inspectors employed by local authorities as inspectors for the Transport Board?

The Minister for Transport: I am not quite certain what information the member for Blackwood seeks.

Mr. HEARMAN: Are traffic inspectors who are employed by local authorities employed as traffic inspectors on behalf of the Transport Board?

The MINISTER replied:

In several localities the traffic inspectors employed by local authorities have what one might term a watching brief for the Transport Board. There are some persons in that category, but there are not many of them.

(c) *Subsidiary Inspectors, Number and Cost.*

Mr. ACKLAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

Will he, at the earliest opportunity, advise the House how many subsidiary, temporary or part-time inspectors are employed by the Transport Board other than those mentioned in my previous question, and at what cost to the Transport Board?

The MINISTER replied:

If the member for Moore or any other member cares to place that question on the notice paper, the information will be supplied tomorrow.

**COMMONWEALTH HOUSING AGREEMENT.**

*Allocation of £600,000 Grant.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the basis of allocation of the £600,000 made available under the Commonwealth Housing Agreement, to the various building societies?

(2) What are the details of allocation to the various societies?

(3) What proportion of such allocation goes to—

(a) metropolitan residents;

(b) country residents?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Allocations to permanent societies are based on amounts loaned by societies from other than the governmental funds during the preceding three years. Co-operative societies have been allocated

amounts considered to be sufficient to justify their formation and operation. All allocations are subject to approval of the Commonwealth Minister for National Development, Canberra.

	£
(2) Perth Benefit Building Investment and Loan Society	213,600
West Australian Starr-Bowkett Benefit Building Society	144,100
Mutual Investment Benefit Building Society	29,800
Bunbury Benefit Investment and Loan Society	20,000
Home Building Society	12,500
Southern Suburbs Building Society	40,000
Northern Suburbs Building Society	40,000
Reserve for new societies	40,000
Rural & Industries Bank	60,000
	<b>£600,000</b>

(3) The commission has no knowledge of allocations between metropolitan and country residents as these allocations are determined by the societies.

**ROADS AND BRIDGES.**

*Expenditure in Metropolitan Area and Country.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What was the total expenditure for the year ended the 30th June, 1957, on—

(a) metropolitan roads;

(b) metropolitan bridges;

(c) country roads;

(d) country bridges?

(2) What proportion of such totals were expended by—

(a) Main Roads Department;

(b) Local authorities?

The MINISTER replied:

	Commonwealth Funds.	State Funds.
1. (a) Metropolitan roads } (b) Metropolitan bridges } (c) Country roads ..... (d) Country bridges .....	£ 610,403 4,839,707	£ 259,994 —
2. (a) Main Roads Department— (i) Metropolitan roads and bridges* ..... (ii) Country roads and bridges ..... (b) Local Authorities— (i) Metropolitan roads and bridges ..... (ii) Country roads and bridges .....	£ 712,203 4,031,351 107,200 808,446	£ 243,532 — 16,462 —

\* Includes £408,681 expended on Narrows Bridge.

## HOUSING.

*(a) Flats in Mt. Pleasant Area.*

Mr. GAFFY (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Is the report appearing in today's issue of "The West Australian" correct to the effect that about 100 flats are to be erected by the State Housing Commission in the Mt. Pleasant area?

The MINISTER replied:

There is no truth or substance whatsoever in the report. The State Housing Commission has never considered or contemplated building flats in the Mt. Pleasant area nor is it its intention so to do.

*(b) Distorted and Untruthful Reports.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Further to the question of the member for Canning, if the newspaper report referred to was incorrect, can we take it that some other area is contemplated and, if so, which?

The MINISTER replied:

No; there is no proposal for the erection of flats or blocks of flats in any portion of the metropolitan area either adjacent to or remote from that which was the subject of the question of the member for Canning. I would have thought that the public generally—certainly members of this Chamber—by now would have been well aware of the fact that there is an element of mischief and, in many cases, of deliberate distortion and untruth in common with nearly all matters pertaining to the activities of departments under my administration so far as "The West Australian" newspaper is concerned. I would therefore suggest that before members allow themselves to be misled by what appears in that newspaper, the wisest course to follow would be for them to read other newspapers or listen to the ABC broadcast or seek information from me in this Chamber.

*(c) Debarring Week-end Work, etc.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Following the reply just given, was he correctly reported in last evening's "Daily News," where it was implied that week-end work is to be debarred in State Housing Commission contracts and that, following representations by the unions, no work is to be allowed outside award hours?

(2) If this is correct, does it mean that the State Housing Commission is going to take over, following the failure of the unions to discipline their own men?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The report in the "Daily News" of last evening is substantially correct. The prime purpose of the decision was to overcome the existing situation under which quite a number of people are working extraordinarily long hours, often at week-ends, while others are experiencing the greatest difficulty in finding employment.

(2) The matter of industrial organisations being unable to look after the interests of or discipline their members, does not enter into it as the chief factor responsible for these inordinately long hours being worked is the subcontract system and as a great number of the people engaged in these activities are self-employed, there is, of course, no master and servant relationship, and so the industrial organisations have no control whatever.

*(d) Freedom within Award Provisions.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Does this now mean that this will amount to a ban on overtime or is there to be freedom within the provisions of the awards permitted at the discretion of contractors?

The MINISTER replied:

There is no intention to depart from the provisions of industrial awards or agreements covering the workers, for which reason legitimate overtime will be permitted, but, of course, overtime rates will have to be paid.

## TAXATION.

*(a) Land Tax Assessments.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

Referring to my question without notice on Thursday regarding land tax assessment, will he give an assurance that administrative action will be taken to ensure that taxpayers are not called upon to pay two land tax assessments in the one financial year?

The TREASURER replied:

I will have this matter investigated and advise the House in due course.

*(b) Sources of Excess Tax Receipts.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

What are the amounts under each heading, such as probate duty and land tax, making up the £1,888,000 of taxation received for the year ended the 30th June, 1957, in excess of the Estimates?

The TREASURER replied:

The Leader of the Opposition was good enough to give me a copy of this question last Thursday; and in order that

members of the House and their friends should not be delayed in having afternoon tea that day, he finally decided not to ask the question on that occasion. The reply is as follows:—

The amount of £1,888,000 referred to in the question represents the increase in taxation collections for the year 1956-57 over the actual collections for 1955-56. Details are—

	£
Land tax .....	479,000
Commonwealth tax reim- bursement .....	1,392,000
Entertainment tax .....	16,000
Stamp duty .....	30,000
Licences .....	69,000
Turnover tax and book- makers' licences .....	5,000
Less reduced yield from—	
£	
Totalisator duty .....	7,000
Probate duty .....	96,000
	<hr/>
	103,000
	<hr/>
	£1,888,000

#### EDUCATION.

##### *Proposed Wheatbelt Agricultural High School.*

Hon. A. F. WATTS (without notice) asked the Minister for Education:

Will he lay on the Table of the House all papers since 1947 relative to the proposed agricultural high school in the wheatbelt, expected to be at Wyalkatchem?

The MINISTER replied:

With pleasure, tomorrow.

#### BUSH FIRES ACT.

##### *Proceedings Against H. Siebner.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Justice:

Will he lay on the Table the Crown Law file concerning proceedings against Mr. H. Siebner, of Armadale, in connection with a breach of the Bush Fires Act?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

#### DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES.

The SPEAKER: I desire to inform the House that I have appointed Mr. Hearman, Mr. Norton, Mr. Sewell and Mr. Heal to be Deputy Chairmen of Committees for the session.

#### SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 4.30 p.m., and on Thursdays at 2.15 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 onwards.

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

That on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

#### COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

*Library.*—The Speaker, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Crommelin.

*Standing Orders.*—The Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Hon. J. B. Sleeman, Mr. Nalder and Mr. Hearman.

*House.*—The Speaker, Mr. May, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Ackland.

*Printing.*—The Speaker, Mr. Lapham and Mr. Ross Hutchinson.

#### STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The PREMIER: I move, without notice—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable notice of motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, to be entered upon and dealt with before the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

#### MOTION—CENSURE.

##### *Government Railway Suspensions, etc.*

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [5.10]: Before moving the motion standing in my name, I would like to recall the fact that at the time when the House dealt with the subject matter of this motion, I was not present as I, unfortunately, had been taken ill. I wish to thank all those concerned for the kind messages they sent me and their visits and the interest that they took in my health at that time—

Mr. May: And is this your response to that kindness?

Hon. D. BRAND: Since leaving hospital, I have felt particularly well and I hope and trust my good health will continue and that, as Leader of the Opposition, I will be able to maintain the same high standard as my predecessor, Sir Ross McLarty. Although it is regrettable that at my first appearance in this Chamber as Leader of the Opposition I should have to pass a vote of censure on the Government—

The Minister for Housing: You can move it but not pass it.

Hon. D. BRAND: Although I regret that I must move this vote of censure on the Government, I nevertheless think it should be passed and I sincerely trust that I can prove that contention in the case that I will put forward. I move—

That this Government is deserving of censure because—

it has not honoured the undertakings it gave Parliament when the amended rail discontinuance motion was passed in 1956;

it has discontinued certain country rail services without conforming to the amendments accepted by the Government as conditions to such discontinuance;

it has failed to overhaul the whole of the railway administration and operation, including workshops, before discontinuing certain country rail services;

it has failed to honour an election promise that no railway lines are to cease operation or be pulled up without adequate on-the-spot discussions with local governing authorities and other people concerned;

it has discontinued certain country rail services without first ensuring adequate road systems and alternate transport acceptable to each district concerned and without increased costs to users;

it has failed to overhaul and reorganise the metropolitan Government passenger transport services to reduce their crippling losses before embarking on discontinuance of country line services.

In moving this motion I feel sure that I speak for the whole of this House when I say the problem of railway administration and finance, not only in this State but also throughout the Commonwealth, constitutes an immense headache for all Governments concerned. I imagine that it was with this in mind—although I was not present here at that time—that the Parliament of Western Australia gave support to a motion moved by the Minister for Railways in another place and introduced by the Minister for Transport into this House.

In my opinion, the Government had an opportunity, the approval of Parliament having been given, to go ahead and do something worth while in tackling the problem of our railways following the case that was so well outlined here by the Minister for Transport; but it must be

remembered—and this we are inclined to overlook—that when the member for Nedlands at a late hour moved a certain amendment to the motion, it was accepted by this House without opposition.

I think it must be said of the Government that, with its numbers in this House, had it felt that it could not honour the undertaking which was implicit in the amendment, the Minister, or someone representing the Government, should have got to his feet and opposed the acceptance of the conditions. It would appear to me that the Minister for Transport was reasonably anxious to have the Government accept the case which he put forward because he felt that, unless he was prepared to accept the conditions to which the motion was made subject, even though it might have been passed through this House, it might have met a different fate in another place.

It is fair to say, I think—and I say this as an outsider with respect to the debate, realising that the Government accepted the conditions which were put forward—that the Government was prepared to face up to its obligations—and no one can deny that they were not major obligations—in respect of the closing of the lines mentioned in the schedule.

The history of railway suspensions goes back quite a long way. There has been a consistent approach on the part of the Railway Department for a suspension of services, or the pulling up of certain uneconomic or unpayable lines, and Governments and Ministers from time to time, as a result of protestations made, have decided not to accept those recommendations. I refer to our own Government's activity when there was a recommendation from the commissioners that we close the Bonnie Rock line. The farmers of the district concerned protested and came forward with deputations. As a result of hearing their case, the Government of that day decided not to proceed with the closure of the line—although, so far as I can remember, the Government of that time imposed certain restrictions on speed and load, but that satisfied the people concerned.

When the change of Government took place, the ex-Minister for Railways in the Labour Government, Hon. H. H. Styants, made a statement that certain railway lines had to be closed. But in the case of the Bonnie Rock line, he was prepared to go and discuss the matter with the people on the spot, and see for himself the problems and potentialities of the district the railway served. As a result of his visit, Cabinet decided—it must have been Cabinet because there must be a majority or a unanimous decision in regard to such matters—and the Minister announced, that a sum of about £82,000—I would not like to be too sure of the exact amount—was to be spent on the resleepering of the

line, and from what I saw when I was in the district, the line is in as good a condition now as it has been for a long time. However, it would appear that the Railways Commission persisted with the present Minister. In view of the immense deficits and the obvious impact on loan funds which the railways must make, the Government decided once again to make an effort to obtain the support of Parliament in a case for the closure of certain lines. That was the basis of the case put forward by the Minister concerned.

I want to remind the House that early last session, the member for Blackwood moved a motion asking for the setting up of an experimental road transport service. Just what details he had in mind I am not sure; but he realised that our knowledge of road transport was not as great as we thought and it might have been better to have established some road transport service in lieu of a railway service in order to find out just what would happen and what impact it might have on the districts served.

The Minister for Railways introduced the motion dealing with the suspension of certain rail services into the Upper House where it was amended in two places and then forwarded it to this Chamber for further consideration. The amendments were to the effect that consideration of the motion in the Legislative Council be deferred until after it had been considered and a decision made by the Legislative Assembly, and until such time as the Government had brought forward definite alternative proposals in respect of road transport and roads in each of the districts affected. To me that appeared to be a very worth-while suggestion, because had it been adhered to, I am sure the difficulties in which the Government finds itself at present would not have had to be faced. However, as far as I can see, and from what I have read, the motion as it came from another place, was never discussed at all; rather in due course was it discharged from the notice paper, and the Minister here moved his own motion.

There is a lot that can be said about the closure of railways, but I think it is sufficient to say that right from the inception—and during the passing of the motion through both Houses of Parliament—the Minister and the Government set about a very early closure. In a matter of weeks, or months—perhaps it would be fairer to say “months”—the Yuna and the Northampton lines were closed, and so it continued throughout the schedule. It was the intention to close the Nornalup and Elleker lines at an early date. To indicate that so far there was no plan nor any consideration given to the problems arising out of those services being suspended, an appeal from the Leader of the Country

Party in connection with the problem resulted in a delay in the actual closure of this line.

The whole problem of railway closures in this State stems from the refusal of the Government to face up to the problems arising out of those closures. I am sure that when the member for Nedlands moved his amendment to the motion, he had in mind the fact that we did not wish to see a situation in this State, where 824 miles of line serving the country as far as Lake Grace, Yuna and Wiluna were closed without the basic problems of the railways being faced up to. It is quite evident—very evident, indeed—that the mere closure of this line is not any solution to the railway problem itself. There are basic and fundamental difficulties in the organisation and administration of the railways that must be faced up to, not only in this State but in every State.

I think it is fair to say that the railway organisation has been heavily overlaid with respect to employment, and I am sure that until this question is faced up to, the basic problems that confront the Premier in connection with the railways will never be solved or alleviated. One of the questions that is on the lips of most people who are concerned with railway closures, is that of an alternative road transport service or some other alternative service. I am satisfied that had the Government tackled this problem in a more leisurely manner, and had it not been so hasty in its suspension of the railways, and ensured that there was satisfactory alternative service—not to the Transport Board but to the people concerned, because they are the ones who are vitally interested—the problem would not exist today.

Mr. Bovell: An alternative transport system at a comparative cost is required.

Hon. D. BRAND: It is all very well to say that the solution to the problem is the suspension of railway services; but is it the answer? I do not think it is. It is all very well to say that the people who are affected should consider the cost of continuing the services. But is it not our responsibility to see that these people living so far from the metropolitan area, the markets and the ports, are provided with an alternative service satisfactory to them; one which makes them feel that at least they are in the minds of the people governing this country, and are not forgotten because of the suspension of the railway services.

Certainly, it cannot be denied that with railway freights at the present level and when the services cease and road transport services are introduced, costs will go up. Following on an announcement by the Minister for Transport that a subsidy would be paid this year, and would be reducible every seven years, I said on behalf of my party—and I feel sure on behalf of the entire Opposition—that we

could not expect people farming in these areas, and producing as they are, to carry this huge cost for seven years, particularly, when we consider the lesser costs of transport enjoyed by people living near the more developed areas. We should not expect this of them. When the closures took place, there was naturally an upsurge of public opinion, and protestations were made in the areas concerned; and protest meetings were also organised.

The Minister for Transport: Organised! That is the word.

Hon. D. BRAND: Just as the Minister for Transport has organised protest meetings in the past for political reasons.

The Minister for Transport: The point is that they were organised.

Hon. D. BRAND: The same type of organisation indulged in by the Minister.

The Minister for Transport: So long as we agree that they were organised.

Hon. D. BRAND: The protest meeting to which I was invited showed a very real concern among the people who attended. The Minister for Railways was invited to Cadoux, and it is to his credit that he visited the area and met some 200 or 300 people. I may say his visit was appreciated by the people of the district, even though they were not satisfied with the decision he made. There was some satisfaction, however, in the fact that he was prepared to visit the people concerned and view their problems at first hand.

Certain problems have arisen out of these closures. It is now months since the first lines were closed. Was it not reasonable to expect that there would develop certain problems out of such a major decision, and from experience should we not expect these problems to be solved by the authorities or the people responsible looking into them at a Government level?

Seeing that it was his duty, following on the closure of the lines, to do so, I believe that had the Minister for Transport gone among, and talked to, the people in the very forceable way in which we know he can speak, put his case as he has put it to us, listened to their complaints, met them on equal ground and perhaps met them half way on their requests, their protests against the Government's action would not have come forward. Even though he may say that these meetings were organised in an effort to obtain political advantage or to spread political propaganda, he has been in political life long enough to realise that there will always be some of that going on. Had he been able to attend the meetings and discuss the position with these people, the problem for the Minister for Railways, the Premier and others would have been relieved a great deal.

I read in the newspapers that, following the closure of the line at Katanning, the first road buses that went out became bogged. That could easily happen. It might have transpired that there was flooding sufficient to prevent even the trains themselves travelling along the line, but what I want to point out is this: There was no need, willy-nilly, to suspend the service over all these lines. It could have been spread over a number of years if that was preferable, but in the meantime, the Government should have ensured that in the place of the railways there were good roads.

This State boasts of receiving very substantial sums of money from the petrol tax funds. In spite of the Labour Government being in office in this State, we enjoy the use of very good roads. It is to the credit of those who originally thought of the formula, that we are now receiving substantial sums from the petrol tax funds and are able to improve our roads year by year. I am sure that had the Minister for Works been given the opportunity of improving the main roads which were to take the place of the suspended railway services, he would have taken it, and over a period provided a sealed surface for all-weather roads over which the goods from the districts where the railway services were no longer continued, could be carried. It must be recognised that the people in the country who lose a railway service naturally become very concerned at the absence of an all-weather road if their means of communication and transport on which they had relied for so long, was taken away.

The Minister for Works: There is a great number of people who are not served by a railway line and who have not an all-weather road.

Mr. Bovell: What you do not have, you do not miss!

Hon. D. BRAND: The Minister might say that, but we are now referring to the case put up by the Minister for Transport in this House for the closure of certain railway lines. It must be remembered that people settled in those districts realising there was a railway service upon which they depended. The least we can do is to give them a satisfactory alternative means of communication by way of road transport, if that is the only alternative. The Minister cannot deny them this.

Let us turn our attention to Yuna where, with the exception of some 12 to 13 miles, the road is sealed. The people along that line are not vitally concerned over the closure of the railway line because they can cart their produce directly into Geraldton. The people beyond that line at Dartmoor and Balla and surrounding districts are certainly concerned because for them the cost of transport will rise.



I understand that following the winter rains the road became almost untrafficable.

There are people in this House who can back up that statement. It did not become untrafficable as a result of the extra usage following the suspension of that railway line. Do not forget that the railway service had gone, and everybody relied on that road. I am sure that had the Government taken the trouble to ensure that that road was brought up to such a standard as would avoid any stoppage or hold-up of traffic, the people would not have felt so bad about the matter.

The Liberal Party has been accused by the Premier, in a motion on the notice paper, of backing and filling tactics. In it he has taken out the big hammer and big wedge, and has started to drive it between the two parties in Opposition for all he is worth. I would remind my colleagues over here of the time when the Premier was on this side driving wedges between the Government parties, with the emphasis on the other party. In that regard he has been a busy person. As far as the motion is concerned I do not think it amounts to very much. Our attitude was a responsible one.

It is all very well for members opposite to laugh, but let them not forget that the Government has gone around the State telling the people that it had the approval of Parliament. But Parliament approved conditionally. If it was fair enough for the Government to take the motion and go from one end of the State to the other using that as its authority, surely it must recognise that the conditions to which the case was made subject, were just as much binding. That is the position on which we cross swords with the Government at the present time. We do not say, "No, do nothing at all." That might have been a very good plan in any case. We gave the Government the opportunity, and the opening, to proceed with a plan, providing it carried out the obligation which we embodied in the motion, and which we mentioned.

I have already referred to the fact that if there was no alternative system of transport, the Transport Board would be charged with the responsibility of providing alternative plans, but when I went to Cadoux and travelled on the roads around Wialki, it was quite evident to me when talking to the people that they did not understand what was to be the alternative system of transport.

Mr. Cornell: There is no alternative.

Hon. D. BRAND: Hear, hear! Evidently there was not. Whilst passing through that district I discussed the position with certain key personnel and storekeepers about the provision of some sort of service. When they found that they were to be charged with that responsibility, they took two steps backwards because they had not

clearly understood the situation as it had been publicised. What would have been the position if we had given, say, 12 months to allow the Transport Board, if that is the authority charged with providing an alternative service, to clarify the whole situation and let the people of the district concerned know the alternative to the closing of the service? I think that would have been fair enough.

The Minister for Transport: I think you are a great procrastinator.

Hon. D. BRAND: What the Minister thinks does not interest me one bit.

The Minister for Transport: I was trying to help you, because up to date you have a very weak case.

Hon. D. BRAND: One of the conditions which the Government accepted without opposition was the undertaking to hold an inquiry in respect of the railways. True enough, that was in respect of administration and the workshops; and true enough, Mr. Smith, a stipendiary magistrate, was appointed to hold the inquiry. For a long time no one could get the full story of what was going on. That might be readily understood and it might be in the best interests that the inquiry be kept on a secret basis.

Finally, as a result of certain alleged accusations by one commissioner against another on the revelations of the inquiry so far, the Premier, in his wisdom, decided to appoint Mr. Smith as a Royal Commissioner to carry the inquiry further. The points of reference outlined by the Government were such as to be fairly broad. They even allowed for the Royal Commissioner to go to England, and that is an important mission. It is a major move, I would think, in the investigations, and we all wonder just what will be the outcome of his inquiries in England. However, this inquiry, full as it might appear, into the administration is not what we had in mind, nor is it what the people who have moved for inquiries had in mind.

As good as Mr. Smith might be, he is not competent to recommend on the reshuffling and reorganisation of the railways. Mr. Smith has made many recommendations in connection with potatoes, onions and, I think, the Transport Board, and I do not think any of them have got very far. Therefore, I hope on this occasion the inquiries which are being made and the report which will come forward, will result in some action by the Government.

At this stage, I would say that if we are going to make any impact on the transport of this country, we have to face up to doing very difficult things and making unpopular decisions. The Railway Department has, for many years, been a source of employment for thousands and thousands of people, but I think the fact will have to be faced up to by this State, that these people can no longer be employed by

the railways. That is quite evident, and it is also evident that if the railway system is to remain, we must tackle the problem of modernisation and provide lighter rollingstock and faster engines, eliminating grades and strengthening lines in order that heavy loads may be carried at higher speeds.

I would make reference to what is happening in America where private enterprise has so far been able to face up to the competition of the motor age, which has made such an impact on the railways. For the purpose of supporting my argument, I am going to read from "Reader's Digest" of June, 1957, an article condensed from "Time," under the heading of "The New Age of Railroads."

The Premier: New era.

Hon. D. BRAND: New age, if I might correct the Premier.

The Premier: Same thing.

Hon. D. BRAND: The article reads as follows:—

The President of the New York Central ushered in a new symbol of 20th-century railroad progress. Throwing a switch on a signal box, he formally opened a new 163-mile, electronically regulated stretch of double track between Cleveland, Ohio, and Buffalo, N.Y. With the new system two men seated before light-studded panels at Erie can automatically control all traffic between those cities.

Instead of the old four-track main line the Central's electronic system needs only two tracks, will shunt express trains around rumbling freights by crossover switches every seven miles, also step up the speed of freight trains from 30 to 60 m.p.h. The dispatchers can also send passenger trains hurtling east and west at 80 m.p.h. on the same track, switch one to the opposite track to pass.

By the time the system is extended along its entire New York-Chicago line it will have cost 50 million dollars. But the Central will be able to cut its number of tracks in half, save millions on taxes and maintenance.

The Premier: A man would be safer on a Malvern Star!

Hon. D. BRAND: As a matter of fact, that may be so, but so far as I can read, the American railway system does not have as many accidents as we read about on our Australian railroad system, and I imagine, if we could hear about them, that they would not have as many derailments as we do in Western Australia. To continue—

Since World War II, U.S. railroads have poured some 12,000 million dollars into new engines, new tracks and trains, a host of electronic gadgets.

As a result of their increased efficiency the main railroads have cut their road mileage from—

And this is interesting!

—249,000 miles in 1929 to about 220,000 miles today; the number of locomotives has been reduced from 61,300 to 34,000 and the number of employees from 1,600,000 to 1,000,000. Yet freight traffic was boosted 45 per cent. in 1956. And that is only the beginning: in the next ten years, the industry expects to spend 20,000 million dollars more for modernisation.

Gone are the old mossbacks whose railroads ran by steam and tobacco juice. Today's operations-man is younger and more flexible, an efficiency-minded innovator who spends his working hours figuring ways to apply 20th-century technology to his 19th-century railroad.

They go on to indicate just what is happening in respect to actual rollingstock—

U.S. railroads are also spending millions to woo more passengers. The Union Pacific, Santa Fe and Southern Pacific have bought new air-conditioned dome cars, while such Eastern roads, as the New Haven, New York Central and Pennsylvania are experimenting with lowslung lightweight trains that can zip along at speeds up to 100 m.p.h. Even the best passenger trains often lose money, but every railroader knows that good passenger service builds goodwill.

I am not suggesting we have the money for that, and it might be said I am putting up an argument for the Government's case in suspending certain rail services which make such a demand on our finances, both from general expenditure and from loan funds. What is necessary at the present time is huge sums of money to do what is requisite to enable the railroad to compete with road transport. But allowing for that, the Premier and the Minister for Railways must face up to the problem of reshuffling and reorganising the railways.

The Premier: How much would it cost?

Hon. D. BRAND: I could not say, but £20,000,000 has been spent since the Royal Commission was appointed by the McLarty-Watts Government in capital cost of the roads and not a great deal of progress has been made. However, rather than do nothing about the railways, somebody must face up to these difficulties. We must find the money. The Government must face up to these difficult problems and not do what appears to be the easiest part of tackling the railway problem.

There are members in the House, including the member for Murchison and the member for Geraldton, who have had the experience of losing a railway in their

area; or they are about to lose one because I understand the Meekatharra-Wiluna line is to close on the 5th August and the Laverton line has already been closed. But I say once again that until the Government provides a decent road and makes a clear-cut plan to provide alternative services, it should not close these railways.

In line with the motion that is being moved elsewhere in this building, I believe the Government should, on some limited basis if members like, restore the railway services on the lines until such time as knowledge about them is independently acquired, because it is admitted that in regard to some of these lines there would be a case for immediate closure. As a matter of fact, the Cue-Big Bell line was closed before the motion was brought to the House—at least the rail service was suspended.

There are varying degrees of priority in regard to this matter. I think the Government would be very wise, as a result of its experience so far, as a result of the case put up by the Farmers' Union and as a result of the protestations from members of Parliament of all political colours, if the truth be known, to accede to the claim that the whole position be reconsidered. I see no reason why on the Bonnie Rock line, if you, Mr. Speaker, like, or on the Yuna line, arrangements should not have been made whereby a train would be run occasionally with a diesel engine in order to carry the wheat and cope with the problems that have been high-lighted in the deputations that have been held and the publicity that has been put forward.

Mr. Bovell: Trains by requisition.

Hon. D. BRAND: I have not a great deal more to say in this regard, but I do believe that the Government's approach to the closures of railways and the trouble into which it has got itself, result from what I consider is the very bad handling of the whole issue. It is not an easy one; we understand that, but there seems to have been an undue haste and desire to get the lines closed before Parliament sat.

It was on that basis that, following a party meeting on the 20th May, I wrote on behalf of my party to the Premier asking him to suspend any further action in order that Parliament might reconsider the whole problem in the light of experience. He did not answer the first letter so I sent him another and his reply was along these lines—

In reply to your letters to me in this matter of May 20th last and the 26th instant, I would advise that the Government is proceeding with the suspension of traffic upon those railway lines for which closure approval was given by both Houses of Parliament during last session.

The only substantial postponement agreed to by the Government is in connection with the Denmark-Nornalup line.

In connection with the investigations now being carried out by Magistrate Smith, I would advise that his investigations cannot possibly have any effect upon the question of rail closures, as the main reason for such closures is to be found in the limited amount of loan money available to the Government.

I had intimated in my letter, and I think it was fair enough, that because of the obvious lack of co-operation, the obvious misunderstandings and the making of allegations by the commissioners against each other, there had not been at that high level sufficient down-to-earth thinking regarding the recommendations being made to the Minister; and he must rely on their recommendations with respect to closure.

Well might we, as an Opposition, ask that we should have another look at this question, not forgetting that the final committee—the chairman of the Transport Board; Mr. Leach of the Main Roads Department and the Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Hall—were sitting to see which railways would be closed next. So, they had no option, and there is no blame attachable to them. The decision was made and they made those recommendations. Mr. Hawke went on to say—

I raised the question of rail closures and their relationship to shortage of loan money at the recent Loan Council meeting held at Canberra. However, the matter did not seem to be of any interest to the Federal Treasurer or to any of the Federal Ministers who were present at the time.

That is in keeping with the Premier's line from time to time—

It may be of interest to you and your colleagues to know that the railway deficit for the financial year 1957-1958 has been estimated on a preliminary basis at £7.3m.

Mr. Bovell: Good heavens!

The Premier: I thought that would wake you up.

Hon. D. BRAND: I realise that that is a substantial sum over and above the deficit this year. But I am forced to ask myself what effect has the closure of 824 miles of the service had so far, if we can anticipate an increase in the deficit—forgetting loan funds—of some £2,000,000.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is £2,500,000.

Hon. D. BRAND: Well, £2,500,000. The people who supported the motion conditionally might well ask: Did we do the right thing in this House? I come back to the point I made originally that the closures are not solving the problem at

all but just scratching it, and we have to get at the fundamental difficulties of having men give a greater output for the wages they receive. There should be greater modernisation and mechanisation of the system and a realisation that the Railway Department can no longer be just a department for the purpose of employing people, but should be an efficient portion of the transport system of the State. As I have said once in the House and will say again, it should be a real transport system which can be continued and kept alive by modern road transport travelling over all-weather roads. But it is not something that we can do in a year or two years, but is a matter of years of hard work and planning.

I repeat that when Parliament gave approval to the Government to go on with the closure of the railways, subject to the amendments, it had just that in mind. On this side of the House there are members who realise that the action of the Government in carrying out the closure of the lines has caused a great deal of hardship and brought about many problems. I say again they have not been listened to as they should have been by the Government. It brings me to this point that when the Premier, as Leader of the Opposition, was in the Murchison area in 1952, he said in a pamphlet—

May I indicate very briefly a few lines of policy which would be attempted by the next Labour Government in this State, which might easily come into existence early next year:—

And that was the case. He said, and I shall read the lot—

Greater financial assistance to increase gold production.

Increased assistance to bona fide prospectors and leaseholders.

Financial assistance to producers in outback areas who prove that rail freights are hampering their efforts.

Better railway services.

No railway lines to cease operation or be pulled up without adequate on-the-spot discussions by Ministers with local governing authorities and other people concerned.

That is the part they did not do. The other part they did, and not even then, unless Cabinet and Parliament first approved. The vital part of this undertaking and this election promise in 1952, to the people most concerned, was not carried out. In short, their protestations and their appeals were set aside because I think it is the on-the-spot seeing for oneself that enables one reasonably and

fully to see the problems of the people concerned. In the pamphlet, the present Premier continued—

Rail freights and fares generally to be kept down.

I will close by touching on the matter of metropolitan road transport.

The Premier: Road or rail transport?

Hon. D. BRAND: The metropolitan transport services which we asked should be thoroughly overhauled before the suspension of rail services. I imagine that when the amendment was moved, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had in mind rail services. As I travel about the country I am often asked by country people, "Why should we lose our railway services even though they cost the country a great deal of money, while people in the metropolitan area enjoy a transport system on which there is a deficit of something over £1,000,000?"

The Minister for Works: Do you want these lines closed down?

Hon. D. BRAND: The Minister for Works is trying to be clever about it. That is his responsibility.

The Minister for Works: What are you advocating?

Hon. D. BRAND: If the Minister desires country people to lose their rail services because of the cost, I say that undoubtedly the people of the metropolitan area should share any sacrifice equally and it is on the heads of the Minister and his colleagues in Cabinet to arrange that the sacrifice is shared equally—

The Premier: Would you like us to bring the wheat to Midland Junction by rail and take it from there to Fremantle by road?

Hon. D. BRAND: That is the sort of thing the Government is doing by means of its rail closures. I never said anything about closing the metropolitan services but suggested that some attack on the problem of the deficit should have been made, and I had in mind the curtailment of services which run so regularly between Midland Junction and Fremantle. No matter how the problem is tackled, whether by cutting out some of those services or reducing costs in some other way, the question is: Why should the country people be expected to bear all the sacrifice while metropolitan residents enjoy all their present amenities together with a very worth-while road transport system? For the reasons that I have outlined—I will not give them again—I believe we are quite justified in censuring the Government for what it has done and its failure to live up to its undertaking to this Parliament when it accepted the motion last session, because the Government then had the numbers to reject the amendments moved, had it wished to do so.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [6.4]: It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition has told us, that he was not present here during that part of last session when the motion dealing with rail closures was debated and decided, the reason being that at that time he was sick and consequently could not attend the sittings of Parliament. However, this afternoon he has had opportunity to give us his views on the question of rail closures.

I tried to follow closely what he said in order to ascertain what his views on that issue were and I finished up in some considerable doubt. As far as I could understand the hon. member, he favours the closure of all the lines which Parliament approved for closure last session, but attaches some qualifications and conditions to his attitude. Basically the issue involved is the closure of railway lines and basically I believe members of this House are either in favour of the closures—with or without conditions—or against the closures.

Hon. D. Brand: I do not agree. Of course not!

**The PREMIER**: Then what is the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. I. W. Manning: He objects to the way you have handled it.

**The PREMIER**: I am asking the Leader of the Opposition what his attitude is.

Hon. D. Brand: My attitude is that the Government, having accepted the amendment that was moved and the conditions, has made a hash of handling the closures, permission for which was given by this House.

**The PREMIER**: The Leader of the Opposition tries to dodge the question which I put to him.

Hon. D. Brand: I have never dodged your questions.

**The PREMIER**: I asked the Leader of the Opposition what was his attitude towards the basic issue of closing or not closing the lines which Parliament approved for closure last year?

Hon. D. Brand: His attitude is a motion of censure on the Government for not carrying out the conditions agreed to by this House.

**The PREMIER**: It now becomes clear that the Leader of the Opposition fails to face up to the basic issue of—Rail closures or no rail closures.

Hon. D. Brand: You cannot divorce the motion from the conditions of the amendment which your Government accepted and could have rescinded had it wished, and that is where I stand.

**The PREMIER**: We will debate that as time goes on. I am asking the Leader of the Opposition to define his attitude towards the basic issue of closing or not closing these lines—

Mr. Bovell: And by closing them losing another £2,500,000 next year.

**The PREMIER**: The Leader of the Opposition is significantly silent. Let me get down to brass tacks in this matter. When this motion was before the Legislative Assembly last year, one Liberal Party member voted against it, my charming and distinguished friend, the member for Vasse. In the Legislative Council, one member of the Liberal Party voted against the motion.

Hon. D. Brand: Two members.

**The PREMIER**: According to my official information, one; but I am quite prepared to accept an amendment to make it two Liberal Party members in the Legislative Council who voted against the motion.

Hon. D. Brand: Hon. C. H. Simpson and Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham.

**The PREMIER**: So on the basic issue of closing the lines, leaving aside the qualifications, conditions or embroidery—

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: But you cannot leave them aside.

**The PREMIER**—nearly every member of the Liberal Party in this House and nearly every member of the Liberal Party in another place voted for the closure of the lines.

Mr. Wild: Subject to certain conditions.

**The PREMIER**: Subject to certain conditions.

Mr. Wild: Which you have not carried out.

**The PREMIER**: But they did vote for the closing of the lines—subject to certain conditions.

Mr. Wild: Yes, but which you did not carry out.

Mr. Court: You cannot divorce conditions. It is like me trying to sell the Premier my motorcar for £100. If he does not give me the £100 he does not get the car.

**The PREMIER**: No one is trying to divorce the conditions.

Mr. Wild: You are!

**The PREMIER**: All I am saying is that nearly every member of the Liberal Party in this House, and nearly every member of the Liberal Party in another place voted to close the lines—subject to certain conditions.

Hon. D. Brand: You asked me a question.

**The PREMIER**: The Leader of the Opposition has been churning over in his mind for a half-an-hour since I asked

him the question, whether it would be safe for him to say one thing or to say something else.

Hon. D. Brand: I answered your question.

The PREMIER: It is only natural that people in any district where a railway line is condemned to closure will become very concerned and worried, and to some extent hostile about it. If I were in one of the districts concerned, I would be very worried myself. After all, these railway lines have been in operation in these districts for many years; they have become part of the districts; they have become of great sentimental value and, consequently, although most of the farmers in the districts concerned have not supported the railways as fully as they should have done, they become very worried when they realise that Parliament has approved of the closure of the lines, on certain conditions.

These farmers looked around to see who was responsible for the proposed closure of the railway lines and they found, on studying the division lists which were published, I presume, in the "Farmers' Weekly" and in other publications circulating in rural electorates, that members and supporters of the Government had voted for the motion in each House and that nearly every member of the Liberal Party in each House had also voted for the motion to close the lines.

Mr. Court: As amended.

The PREMIER: As amended.

Mr. Court: Yes, that is important.

Mr. Wild: With conditions.

The PREMIER: Well now! The farmers concerned naturally became disposed in a hostile way, more particularly towards the Liberal Party than towards the Government—

Hon. D. Brand: You hope.

The PREMIER: There is no hope about it.

Hon. D. Brand: You hope! Ask the member for Murchison!

The PREMIER: As a matter of fact, organisers and representatives of the Liberal Party in country electorates, have been very coldly received by farmers in those districts when they have called upon them; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that they have been very hotly received. These organisers have reported to Liberal Party headquarters in Perth that things in these districts are tough for the Liberal Party.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is not so.

Mr. Bovell: The Premier has a fertile imagination.

The PREMIER: The normal volume of finance which comes from farmers in these districts who preferred the Liberal

Party to the Country Party has slowed down almost to a trickle and, consequently, it is easy to understand why the Leader of the Opposition particularly, who represents what is in essence a Country Party electorate, should become worried or concerned, and to some extent panic stricken politically because of the feeling that has developed among farmers in his own electorate.

Mr. Court: Is this an interpretation of the dream you had last night?

Mr. Hearman: You go to Northam and see what the people there have to say about it.

The PREMIER: It is understandable that these members of the Liberal Party should now be tremendously anxious to wriggle out of the responsibility which they took upon their shoulders last November.

Hon. D. Brand: They will face up to their responsibilities.

The PREMIER: It is only natural to some extent that they should now try to do what is, in effect, a complete somersault—

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is not so.

The PREMIER: —to try to restore themselves in the good opinions of the people concerned.

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

The PREMIER: Before the tea suspension I was pointing out that members of the Liberal Party were trying to scramble on to the band wagon of dissatisfaction against railway closures in the districts concerned and in that respect, undoubtedly, they are trying to steal the Country Party's business. There could not possibly be any objection to a censure motion on this matter coming from the Country Party because members of that party, in both Houses of this Parliament, consistently opposed the motion for rail closures, with or without conditions, when the motion was being debated in this Parliament last year.

Mr. Court: That was not consistent with what your party said about them. You said they were politically dishonest.

The PREMIER: I know the Leader of the Opposition says that I am always trying to drive wedges between the Liberal Party and the Country Party. It may be that some years ago I did indulge in that practice to some extent, although I cannot remember any specific occasion when I did so.

Even if I were inclined to do that sort of thing, there is no need for me today to indulge in such a practice because the Liberal Party itself is driving deliberate wedges between the Country Party on the one side and the Liberal Party on the other. Mr. Johnston, the State President of the L.C.L., succeeded recently in having a motion carried unanimously—by, I

think, 60 members of the inner council of the Liberal Party—to run a full, Liberal Party Senate team at the next Senate election. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are members of that inner council, but if they are, and if they were present on the day in question they, of course, would have been compelled to support this motion.

Hon. D. Brand: You should not talk about compulsion by a ruling executive.

The PREMIER: There is no necessity whatsoever for me to try to drive wedges between the Liberal Party and the Country Party because the Liberal Party itself is doing that job far more effectively than I would have any chance of doing it.

I now come to discuss the wording in the motion. One of the points made is that the Government has failed to overhaul the whole railway system. Quite clearly, this job is one which will take a long, long time. As members know, the railway system has been under the administrative control of a railways commission, two of the members of which—two being a majority—were appointed by a Government of which the Leader of the Opposition was a member. From the speech of the Leader of the Opposition this evening I could not quite work out whether he had, in effect, and in his own mind, carried a vote of absolute no-confidence against the Railways Commission. Judging from the remarks he made, it was along those lines that his attitude tended to work.

This total problem of the railways is indeed a tremendous one. It is not a problem which can be solved overnight. It is not a problem which can be solved by taking one step; it is a problem which will be solved by taking many steps, some of which, of course, will be extremely unpopular—even more unpopular than the closing of 800 miles of railway lines.

Hon. D. Brand: For instance?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: The raising of freights, for instance.

The PREMIER: I was not going to mention specifically railway freights or fares, but they could be an issue. I think we ought to admit that the railways, as a system, have been operated by every Government in office to give great advantages and considerable concessions to many people within the State. In other words, it has never been the policy of any Government, so far as I know, to make the railways pay absolutely; that is to say, to make them pay the full working costs and, in addition, pay the total amount of interest and allow for the total amount of depreciation which accrues each year.

If, through the years, the railway system had been run on that basis, a great number of people in Western Australia would not be as well situated as they are today; they would not be as secure as

they are today and, indeed, many of them would not be remaining on the land as producers at all. Every Government has tried to control railway freights in order to give to people, in the country—particularly to those farthest removed from the metropolitan area—concessions in regard to freight charges.

Today, if we were to take all the steps which would be required to make the railways pay, I think we would strike a mortal blow against the mining industry, to quote one example. We would also strike a very heavy blow against other producers of primary products and possibly also against many of the industries which operate in country areas.

So this total problem of railway finance is not a problem which can be solved as easily as some people would appear to think. When members in this House talk about railway problems and railway finance, they talk usually in fairly general terms and that, I think, applies to the public generally. All of us want the other fellow to sacrifice something to make the railways pay. By and large, that appears to be the general attitude. If we are called upon to contribute something to make the railways pay, we are not in favour of that at all.

I quite agree that the position of the railways has deteriorated very badly in recent years, and it has deteriorated despite the fact that very large sums of loan money have been poured into the system. I was interested to hear the Leader of the Opposition say tonight that he thought that very large sums of additional capital should be poured into the railway system. I wonder whether it should. I think we ought to realise, and admit, that a great revolution has taken place in regard to transport over the last 30 or 40 years—and particularly over the last 20 years—in regard to the very heavy types of truck which can be put on the roads.

The total amount of capital invested in the railway system today is terrific. It produces an annual interest bill of very great proportions. Yet we have an advocacy here today suggesting that we ought to pour millions more capital into that system. I think that is a question which requires the closest possible examination.

Hon. D. Brand: If what remains of the railways is to become competitive with modern transport, then millions more money has to be put into it.

The PREMIER: Before any Government decides to put millions more capital into the railway system, that system would require the closest possible examination.

Hon. D. Brand: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: As a matter of fact, since the war we have been doing nothing but pour millions into the railway system. The more we spend the more we lose. The

more mileage the railways travel, the more they lose. I should hope that members on both sides of the House would give the most sober consideration possible to that situation. Although the railways have been supposedly rehabilitated since the war, the only result of this rehabilitation, from the financial point of view at any rate, has been greatly to increase the loss on the railways, and thereby greatly to increase the strain on the Treasury.

At the present time the Government is having an investigation carried out which will cover, I think, all the important angles of the railway system and all the more important aspects of administration. I have no doubt that when the final report is made to the Government by the Royal Commissioner, we will find that there are ways and means by which improvements could be made without investing huge sums of additional capital. Someone has said that we ought to bring over to Western Australia the American experts who are in New South Wales. Maybe we should, but I would be inclined to consider—without committing my view absolutely on the point—that one of the results of such an investigation would be for recommendations to be made to the Government for the expenditure of many, many millions of pounds to again bring the railway system up to date; to again rehabilitate and modernise it. We cannot go on pouring millions of additional capital into the railway system if the main result of doing so is to increase the annual losses, and thereby increase the burden upon the Treasury from the operation of that system.

Mr. Court: You are not foreshadowing a Government policy of further restriction of the railway system?

The PREMIER: I am basing my view on past experience in regard to inquiries by experts. Every inquiry I know about into any railway system, anywhere in Australia or the world, has meant recommendations being received for the expenditure of terrific sums of money in relation to the capital account of the Railway Department. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to say, as he did during his speech, that we must get money from somewhere. That might sound all right from the public platform; it might even sound all right in here to some extent, but it does not get anybody anywhere.

To say, "You must get money from somewhere," does not produce it. The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as I do that in these days the States are very restricted in relation to the amount of loan funds they can command; and the policy of the Federal Government in that direction is very severe—very severe indeed; and it is likely to continue in that strain for some considerable time to come.

In that situation we can only pour additional millions of loan money into the railway system by taking funds from other essential activities which have to be financed in this State from our loan resources. We would have to spend a lot less on water supplies, a lot less on schools and hospitals, and a lot less on the other essential works carried out in Western Australia by using loan moneys.

Accordingly, it is not enough to say that the money must be found somehow, or that the money must be obtained from somewhere, because that sort of talk gets us exactly nowhere. It does not obtain for us one extra shilling. So, if the Leader of the Opposition is going to give capital expenditure on railways absolutely top priority, then he should say so.

Hon. D. Brand: He is not saying so.

The PREMIER: I am very pleased that he is not saying so.

Hon. D. Brand: I did not indicate that at any stage of my speech.

The PREMIER: I hope the Leader of the Opposition will not continue to indulge in general talk on the subject. It produces no result at all and has the effect only of misleading some people into thinking that additional millions can be obtained without much trouble if only somebody will go after those additional millions.

At this juncture, I would like to refer to the election promise quoted by the Leader of the Opposition and point out to him that since that time, the policy of the Government in the matter of railway closures has altered, inasmuch as we have decided since then, as a matter of Government policy, to bring to this House for approval—and also for the approval of both Houses of Parliament—the question of any proposed rail closure.

On the point of metropolitan rail passenger services, I would say that the Government has given a lot of serious consideration to the problem. On the surface this might look easy but beneath the surface it is a very difficult problem indeed. I understand that losses on the running of rail passenger services in the metropolitan area are in the vicinity of £550,000 a year. It might be that this loss could be recovered by putting up the rail fares in the metropolitan area.

Hon. D. Brand: Did you not increase the number of services in the metropolitan area substantially after your going on the Treasury bench?

The PREMIER: I understand that diesel engines which the hon. member's Government had ordered became available. They had to be put into traffic or else put away in some shed to rust. The Railways Commission in its wisdom decided to put them into traffic. Whether it did right or wrong in that regard, I would not like to say, because I am not a railway expert; presumably having those diesel engines delivered



it was the duty of the commission to operate them and not to put them aside to rust.

In New South Wales last year the Government did increase fares very considerably under their railway system. For the financial year which ended on the 30th June, 1957, receipts from rail passengers fell by £2,000,000 of the total receipts for the previous financial year. We know that the railway passenger services in the metropolitan area are subject to fairly severe competition from road passenger buses.

At the present time railway fares are generally below road passenger fares. Presumably, therefore, many people in the metropolitan area using the railways today are doing so only because the railway fares are lower than the road bus fares, and it is a matter for considerable speculation as to whether by raising the rail fares in the metropolitan area, the Railway Department would at the end of the succeeding 12 months receive more revenue or less revenue.

Hon. D. Brand: Would you say that the metropolitan railway services are well patronised?

The PREMIER: I would say that the railway passenger services in the metropolitan area are carrying a great many more passengers today than they were carrying, say, one or two years ago.

This question of metropolitan passenger traffic is not as simple as it would appear. I imagine that the Leader of the Opposition, like myself, sees passenger trains in the metropolitan area running up and down the lines at times with very few people in them. I also see that in the country districts on occasions. I understand from the Railways Commission that the point of view in that respect is that the department has a set number of traffic staff—engine drivers, firemen and guards—and the commission members in their wisdom and with their knowledge of railway affairs, think that it is better to have those men operating the trains, as against laying the men off and perhaps doing nothing of any value during the slack periods of the day. The men have to be employed in any case to meet the peak traffic requirements.

We all know that in the transport business, particularly in the carriage of passengers, great difficulties are created by the fact that there exist peak periods and slack periods, especially in the metropolitan area. We know that everybody wants to be conveyed from his home to his work between 6.30 and 9 o'clock in the morning; they all want to be taken from their work back home between 5 and 6 p.m., with the result that there is a tremendous demand for accommodation during the peak hours, and not very much demand at all during some other parts of the day. Yet it is necessary to have

all the required rollingstock and the required employees. Under the industrial awards which operate, the railway employees concerned must be guaranteed a minimum working week of 40 hours.

Mr. Court: That is characteristic more of passenger transport services.

The PREMIER: I said that.

Mr. Court: Whether run by the Government or privately.

The PREMIER: I said that.

Mr. Court: I did not hear you say private transport. You spoke of Government transport specifically.

The PREMIER: No. I was speaking of the problem of transport generally. So this problem of passenger transport in the metropolitan area is a pretty sticky one. The Government is still considering whether it is wise in the circumstances to put up the railway fares in the metropolitan area and to give that a trial to see how it works in a period of six months. If it works badly, the Government might have to revert to lower fares; if it works satisfactorily, then everything would be gained and nothing would be lost.

In connection with this matter it must be remembered that the railway tracks upon which these passenger trains run are required in any case. They are required to carry the goods trains which come from the country centres to the metropolitan area, and to take the goods trains which go out from the metropolitan area to the country. So we must have the railway lines; we have to maintain them; we have to retain the station staffs. As I pointed out previously, we require to have the engine staffs and also the guards. So I would say that the Government has been giving a great deal of very serious consideration to this very difficult aspect of rail transport.

With regard to the alternative services to be provided in districts where railways are discontinued, I would think that no one in this House would agree with the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. He said, in effect, that the local people should be able to write their own tickets. Of course, that would be socialism run riot.

Mr. Court: I did not hear him say that, or anything like that.

Hon. D. Brand: I said satisfactory to themselves.

The PREMIER: The State already loses a tremendous sum of money by running this railway system on ultra socialistic lines—

Mr. Wild: The Leader of the Opposition said he thought the people should have been consulted.

The PREMIER: —by subsidising all those who are subsidised as a result of the freight concessions which the Railway

Department does give. The Leader of the Opposition said that the alternative services should be organised in such a way as to give satisfaction to the local people. That was what he said.

Mr. Court: That is fair enough.

The PREMIER: Is it fair enough?

Mr. Court: Surely you would agree to give satisfaction to them.

The PREMIER: I would not agree to that at all. I think the people who are providing the services are entitled to have some say in the type of services which shall be given. For instance, if the member for Nedlands were a director of a private bus company or a private road service, he would not set out to give to every customer and would-be customer a service on whatever conditions each individual customer wanted. He would organise a service which would generally meet the needs of a particular locality and he would try to operate the service for the purpose of giving a profitable return to the people whose investment of money had created the service which was being given.

Mr. Court: He would at least set out to satisfy the needs of those people.

The PREMIER: Within reason.

Mr. Court: I do not think the Leader of the Opposition for one minute suggested an unreasonable demand.

The PREMIER: He said quite clearly that a service should be provided to the satisfaction of the people concerned in the respective districts.

Hon. D. Brand: He did.

The PREMIER: Who would work things out? If that were to be the basis, the local people would decide, and if that happened, I suggest, quite seriously, that instead of the Government saving any money, it would lose a great deal more than it is losing today on these railway lines which have been closed or are due to be closed. The Leader of the Opposition told us that the problems of the Railway Department are urgent and great, and that steps should be taken as quickly as possible to deal with the problem. Yet, on the question of rail closures, he says closures should be delayed and, if necessary, further delayed and, if necessary, further delayed again and again, year after year!

This motion, although a censure motion, has not caused even the slightest ripple on the political waters of Western Australia. I think that is probably because, as most people in the State know, the Liberal Party supported the principle of rail closures and therefore they feel that the Liberal Party is at least, in some degree, inconsistent in moving a motion of this kind against the Government. Therefore,

I say that this motion has not caused even a ripple upon the smooth political waters of our State.

Mr. Court: Are you going to the Northam meeting?

Hon. D. Brand: Or are you going out to Floreat Park?

The PREMIER: I think the motion could be substantially improved.

Hon. D. Brand: We anticipated that.

The PREMIER: So I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "this" in line 1 be struck out with a view to inserting other and more suitable words.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough—on amendment) [8.31: I have heard the Premier, on occasions, make much better speeches than he has made today in replying to the case we have put up, a case of censure on the Government for mismanagement in respect of the closures of lines. In the first place, the Premier set out in the usual manner to try to drive a wedge between the two parties in Opposition.

The Minister for Transport: It has been done for him.

Hon. D. BRAND: He endeavoured to state which way I would have voted had I been here, and I say to the House, as the Premier would say in the same position, that when I heard the case I would have made up my mind on the merits of the case put forward. My protest on behalf of my party is reflected in the censure motion; it is that the Government has let us down in accepting the conditions we imposed. I cannot get away from that point.

If the Premier thought that what we had to say was useless and innocuous, why did he not say so; why mislead this House and everybody else into accepting what we put forward to get the motion through the Upper House? That is the reason for the censure motion, and I oppose any amendment which follows the easy line of the Premier, when he sets out to delete certain words with a view to avoiding the obvious embarrassment of the members who would have to vote against their own Government if they voted according to their consciences if this motion went forward.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse—on amendment) [8.51: The practice has arisen in this House, over many years, that if one side or the other moves a motion, the opposite side invariably moves an amendment which takes away the full purpose of the motion. I would say that serious consideration should be given to amending Standing Orders so that a motion can be dealt with on its merits and not have an amendment moved which takes away the full meaning of the motion as submitted.

The Premier has now moved, in effect, to wipe the motion off the notice paper and include words which will meet his political purposes.

Hon. D. Brand: He has the numbers.

Mr. BOVELL: I was going to cite what a Government's brutal majority means.

The Minister for Transport: You have used it enough yourself.

Mr. BOVELL: I was a member of a Government which did not have a majority, but we were able to carry on in those rather troublesome times. As regards the brutal majority of the present Government, I would remind the House that five members of the Government refrained from voting on the original motion. If the reports which appeared in the daily Press were quite correct, these members, like Mr. Gair in Queensland, were brought before a tribunal outside the precincts of Parliament. In addition, the Premier had to go post-haste in support of two of his Ministers who also did not vote on the original motion. Therefore, it would appear that the Government, at that particular time, was at cross-purposes with its own members, and the organisation of the Labour Party brought those members to book for not acting in accordance with its dictates.

Included in the words which the Premier has moved to delete, are the words in the original motion as moved by the Leader of the Opposition. They are as follows:—

it has failed to honour an election promise that no railway lines are to cease operation or be pulled up without adequate on-the-spot discussions with local governing authorities and other people concerned.

Since November of last year, the Augusta-Margaret River Road Board approached me, firstly to have the Premier and Ministers controlling the departments concerned visit the district, and later to ask the Minister for Railways to come to the district. After he had refused, I asked him to receive a deputation, which he also refused. Then an approach was made to the Minister for Transport to go to the district and discuss those matters on the spot with the local authority and other people concerned as an election promise had been given by the Premier, then Leader of the Opposition. The Minister for Transport also declined the invitation to go to the district. After that I made a request to the Premier to receive a deputation.

The Minister for Works: When are you going to get out of low gear?

Mr. BOVELL: On the 11th April, 1957, the Premier wrote to me and he said—

Proposed Closure of Railway Lines.

I am finding too much of my time is being taken up in receiving deputations in connection with this matter.

You will realise that both Houses of the State Parliament approved of a motion for the closure of the lines concerned.

The people of your district, if they still require a deputation, should, I suggest, approach my colleague the Hon. Mr. Strickland, who, as you know, is Minister for Railways.

A further approach was made just before the proposed closure of the railway on the 1st July, this year, for the Premier to receive another deputation. He was consistent in his attitude by again refusing my request.

The chairman and the deputy chairman of the Augusta-Margaret River Road Board, and the president and a member of the Margaret River Chamber of Commerce, journeyed to Perth in the hope of seeing the Premier, but I read in the daily Press that the Premier again refused on the ground that it might be "humiliating" to the member for the district. I can say this, that the Premier has been in politics a very long time and I have been in politics—

The Premier: Too long.

Mr. BOVELL:—a much shorter time, but I think the Premier must agree with me, after his years of experience in political life, that "humiliation" is not a word found in the dictionary of members of Parliament. If by humiliating me the Premier had received this deputation and had then agreed to the line operating for a time until the alternative transport system had been clearly defined, I would have accepted that humiliation with the utmost relish.

Mr. Lawrence: You have run off the rail.

Mr. BOVELL: The whole concern of the people in the districts where rail closures have become an established fact is that no alternative transport has been organised.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: As promised.

Mr. BOVELL: As promised.

The Minister for Transport: That is untrue, of course.

Mr. BOVELL: It is not.

The Minister for Transport: It is definitely untrue.

Mr. BOVELL: After repeated requests to the Ministers concerned and the Premier himself, and their refusing either to go to the district or to receive deputations, the Transport Board or some members—

The Premier: The Premier received five deputations on rail closures.

Mr. BOVELL: None from my district.

The Premier: Yes, men from your district were on two of them.

Mr. BOVELL: You did not receive them through me.

The Premier: I received one through the Leader of the Country Party.

Mr. BOVELL: They did not represent the district.

The Premier: Yes, they did.

Mr. BOVELL: Furthermore they did not represent the local authorities of the district.

The Premier: They represented the farmers.

Mr. BOVELL: However, just prior to the closing of the railway, the Transport Board, or some members of it, visited the district, and I will say this: that they gave a patient hearing in the time allotted to them—or the time they allotted themselves—to discuss the transport problems of the district.

On Tuesday, the 11th June, the members, or some members, of the Transport Board left Perth and they came to Margaret River. At 9.15 on Wednesday, the 12th June, they met the Augusta-Margaret River Road Board at Margaret River and then went on to Augusta. From Augusta they went back to Busselton and from Busselton they went on to Bunbury. That was all in the one day. So the only opportunity the people in the district had to discuss their transport problems on the spot was within the space of one day with certain members of the Transport Board. Meetings were held in Margaret River, Augusta and Busselton.

The main reason, as outlined by the Premier when introducing the original motion to cease traffic on 842 miles of country railways, was to reduce the costs of the Railway Department. Had the position in this coming or present financial year resulted in a reduction of the railway deficit, I would say the Government might have had some legitimate reason for introducing the motion and for curtailing the services which have been suspended. But the Leader of the Opposition tonight stated that the Premier himself has advised him that the deficit for the Railway Department for the current year will, it is estimated, be increased by £2,500,000, which in itself proves that the shorter the distances over which the railways operate, the greater the losses.

In his reply to the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier said that railway services had been operating in the districts concerned for many years and had become an established part of the community life. He also said there was a sentimental attachment to the railway services. I would say that is so. After the operation of these railways for so many years, why the indecent haste to curtail the services? There was a hue and cry from one end of the country to the other when the first services were discontinued, and the Leader of the Opposition made representations to the Premier to cease any further curtailment

of railway services until Parliament had met. But it seemed to me that the Government was determined to carry out the part of the motion which dealt with the ceasing of the operations of the 842 miles of rail, and nothing else, and it hurried along to close the railways, as far as possible, before Parliament met.

Within a radius of 20 miles of the G.P.O. in Perth, over half the population of Western Australia resides. We should be doing our best to encourage people to go into country districts and produce those agricultural products on which rests the basis of our national prosperity. Figures were quoted last session in this House—I believe they were authentic as the member for Katanning referred to them, and I have repeated them—indicating that approximately 83 per cent. of Australia's national income arises from primary products in one way or another, and that does not include minerals or metals.

We must therefore encourage—especially in a State such as this, with an area of almost 1,000,000 square miles or one-third of the whole Commonwealth—people to go out into the country districts and develop the resources of those areas. But how can we expect them to go into the outback and deny themselves the amenities of city life, when the curtailment of the transport system as it now exists simply increases their costs of production, especially in dairying areas where most of the people work on a very small margin—if any—in their production costs?

The Minister for Works: They did not use the railways when they had them.

Mr. BOVELL: The position regarding several matters for which provision has not yet been made should be discussed here. One of the main concerns of the district I represent has reference to the transporting of potatoes and I know of no solution that is yet forthcoming in regard to that question. I believe an approach has been made to the Government by the Potato Growers' Association at Marybrook to see whether, on the lines where the services have been discontinued, trains could be made available by requisition for any specific large consignment, such as potatoes.

Another difficulty in regard to which no solution has yet been offered is the transport of timber. There are some 13 timber mills operating south of Busselton, which have used the Busselton-Flinders Bay railway line consistently and although endeavours are being made to solve the problem of transporting the timber produced at those mills, the railway service has been terminated before any solution has been found. The time has arrived—if our transport difficulties are to be overcome—when it is necessary to have a controlling executive authority comprised of representatives of the Transport Board, the Railways Commission and the Main Roads Department.

The railway from Busselton to Flinders Bay has ceased to operate and, in parts, the road from Busselton to Bunbury is in an almost impassable condition.

The Minister for Works: Whereabouts?

Mr. BOVELL: One mile from the Busselton township.

The Minister for Works: Is that the only portion from Bunbury to Busselton?

Mr. BOVELL: No, there is another portion near the Bunbury township and there was a railway bus stuck there the other day.

The Minister for Works: They are working on that section.

Mr. BOVELL: Yes, but why close the railway when the road is almost impassable because the Main Roads Department is working to improve it?

The Minister for Works: You know that is an exaggeration, because that road is in excellent condition. I was over it myself last week.

Mr. BOVELL: I have been over it and I am sure the Minister must have been sound asleep when he went over it.

Mr. Jamieson: That shows how good the road must have been.

Mr. BOVELL: He must have been asleep or unconscious during his journey over the road one mile from Busselton. Admittedly, that road is under reconstruction but it is almost impassable; so much so that I nearly had the sump of my car torn off owing to the depth of the ruts in the road.

Mr. Lawrence: I think the hon. member is still in low gear.

Mr. BOVELL: I would not mind if the railway between Busselton and Flinders Bay was still in low gear, but it is in no gear at all. I may have something further to say when we return to the motion—as I hope we will—of the Leader of the Opposition. In closing, I express the view that Standing Orders should be amended so that when a motion is submitted to the House for consideration, it might be allowed to be debated without being amended in such a way as to take away the whole of its meaning. I oppose the amendment moved by the Premier.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville—on amendment) [8.26]: I think members opposite have taken this opportunity to whip a dead horse to some extent in regard to this question and for that reason I intend to intervene in the debate and produce a few figures on the subject. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to circulate copies of these figures among members so that they may understand the basis of the argument that I will put forward. The tabulated matter is as follows.

*(Tabulated matter on page 38.)*

I regret that in copying the figures a few of the dates have been missed, but the figures are for the years from 1937 onwards. The sources of the figures are quoted. The first four years are from the Railways Commission's report tabled in this House last year. The matters relating to freight and passenger fares are from official correspondence from the Minister and those related to wheat are from the State Year Book. I notice a typographical error which makes the sheet refer to the "State Year Book." Of course, it is the State Year Book. The source of the other figures is the normal labour report. I have gone through the figures and have had them checked by an officer of the Statistical Department and so, apart from typographical errors, they can be guaranteed.

The basis of the figures is the year 1937 which was chosen, firstly, because it is one of the years prior to the war and could be regarded as a stable year and, secondly, because it was a year during which the department made a trading profit at the rate of 3½ per cent. If it had been a private enterprise it would have paid a dividend of 3½ per cent. at that time, which is quite a reasonable return for a public utility. A further reason for choosing 1937 was that it is 20 years ago and I do not think anyone would suggest that it is not far enough distant to be outside political bias. It is certainly a long time ago and there are not many in the House who were members at that time. I have translated most of these figures into graphs. I will explain them shortly and the argument will display itself therefrom.

These graphs are local products, made of threeply produced in Leederville by Cullity Timbers and made in my own garage. This graph shows the changes in freight rates and members will see, if they compare it with the figures before them, how the graph is drawn up. The white lines are approximately election times. I made a point of putting them in because, as I was speaking to politicians, I knew that they would realise just when the elections occurred. I now start from where the colour commences and I shall finish where the colour ceases at the end of the last report. There is also a little room for next year and the year after if I have to develop any future arguments on railways.

If members compare the graph with the schedule before them they will see that this graph deals only with freight rates. In 1940 the figure rose by 2½ per cent. and in 1949 to 123 per cent. of the 1937 rate. In 1950 it rose to 140 per cent. of the 1937 rate, in 1951 to 203 per cent. and in 1954 to 264 per cent. This second graph has a relative volume and shows the yield per ton mile from the freight rates. I will put the graphs side by side and members will see the relationship. The yield per



ton mile has been directly related to the freight rate, rising a little later than the rises and continuing to rise for some time. It becomes a little obvious, because there is a slight reduction in yield in the last year, that the time is ripe for a further rise.

Mr. Court: The Treasurer will not thank you for that one.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am putting up an argument based on the figures; it is not my argument but the argument of the figures. The third graph is the basis of the whole argument and indicates the "C" series index is an important point in our thinking. The graph shows 100 per cent. in 1937 and the rises are those based as a percentage on 1937. All the figures in the graphs are related to 1937 and I would remind members, in case they have forgotten, that there was a war at one stage and it did have an effect.

The green section shown in the graph represents the previous Labour Government, the true blue is the McLarty-Watts Government, and the other section is painted like that because it was the only other colour I had at home. It represents the current Government and is a good useful colour.

Mr. Nalder: It has a rather faded look.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is a working-man's colour—quite ordinary. The piece of timber I used was too short to enable me to get to the top of the next graph.

Mr. Hearman: Will they be available to the member for Moore later, because I am sure he will be interested in them?

Mr. JOHNSON: This graph shows the cost per ton mile. I have painted it in blue because the railway system got into the blue over it.

Mr. Bovell: That is not half as bad as the blue the Government will be in after the next election.

Mr. JOHNSON: That graph shows the way the cost per ton mile has risen and it is interesting to fit that graph on to the graph showing the "C" series index.

Hon. D. Brand: If you do that, you cannot see the other one.

Mr. JOHNSON: I will show the Leader of the Opposition. It also fits on the back so that members can see there is a relationship.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Where is the white rabbit?

Mr. JOHNSON: There is no white rabbit. These are substantiated figures. The hon. member might be able to understand it when he sees how the argument is progressing.

The Premier: The member for Cottesloe will not see the argument.

Mr. JOHNSON: Members will note that the income per ton mile is related to the freight rate and there is also some relation to the "C" series index. I will show members the relationship between the freight rates and the "C" series index because it is most interesting. They will notice that the percentage rise in freight rates has nearly always occurred in relationship to the "C" series index. The only time any Government had the courage to put up the freight rates to correspond in proportion to the "C" series index was when the Hawke Government put them up just after the election. It is interesting to note that nearly all freight rises took place just after and not before elections; and all Governments have done it. Perhaps there is a degree of lack of political courage for which all Governments have been responsible.

Mr. Ackland: Have you a graph dealing with the staffing position? That would be interesting.

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member can draw that.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Cullity's would not have enough timber for it.

Mr. Hearman: What has this to do with the censure motion?

Mr. JOHNSON: I ran out of wood and could not show the peak in this graph because that is the last year of the McLarty-Watts Government. The cost per ton mile went out of reach that year.

Mr. Hearman: Was that when they had the metal trades strike?

Mr. JOHNSON: I do believe they did something silly like that. But it was because of inefficiency. There was no need for the metal trades strike; there was no need to make it so bad.

Hon. D. Brand: Do not talk such utter rubbish!

Mr. JOHNSON: The hon. member can talk about utter rubbish as much as he likes; but it was because of small local conditions and the strike was deliberately extended by the McLarty-Watts Government and the Railways Commission. The hon. member knows that very well and so does everybody in the metal trades. Now to get back to the argument. It is interesting to note that the freight rates are closely related to the "C" series index and that the only time there has been a rise above the "C" series index was the last increase made by the present Government. It is obvious that the Government will need to do it again if the figures are to stay in proportion.

There is one point which requires a little more study and I refer to the income per ton mile, because it is the relationship between the income per ton mile and the cost per ton mile that is all-important. These graphs relate to the

figures of which members have a copy and they indicate where the income per ton mile ceases to be greater than the outgoing per ton mile. These are railway figures; they are not mine. It was during 1944, during the regime of the Willcock Government, that action should have been taken originally. It must be remembered, of course, that there was a war on during 1944 and perhaps there were sound reasons for not interfering.

The aftermath of the war was that the railway income per ton mile dropped considerably, but the cost per ton mile was rising and it rose in a pattern similar to the rise in the "C" series index, but a great deal faster. In fact, it rose by 250 per cent., whilst the income per ton mile rose by only 170 per cent. That occurred during 1950, just after the general election. There was some attempt made to rectify the position by raising freights; this was during the time the McLarty-Watts Government was in office. However, the figures reveal that that increase in freights was nowhere near enough. If there is anybody who deserved to be criticised, it was the Government in office at that time.

I have another graph here which shows the reason why. This graph will prove to be of great interest to the member for Moore because it relates to the price of wheat. The year 1937 proved to be a profitable one for the wheatgrower. In 1939 the price of wheat dropped by half but increased slowly during the war. During those years I think it would be fair to say the growing of wheat was not very profitable. However, along came the aftermath when the price of wheat rose by over 300 per cent. which resulted in the wheat cockies having a particularly good time. I have specifically mentioned wheat because wheat represents one-third of the total freight carried by the railways and the next major item of freight carried is super.

Mr. Ackland: Do those figures relate to the wheat that was sold to the people in the metropolitan area or to the wheat which was sold at the overseas price?

Mr. JOHNSON: Those are the figures that show the price which was paid to the wheat farmer. It will be remembered that round about this time the wheat farmer began to enjoy some recompense as a result of wheat agreements and so on. That is the time when a rise in freights could have been made and could have been afforded by the farmers. The price of wheat began to rise during the time when Hon. F. J. S. Wise was in office and continued during 1947 and 1948. In effect, the price of wheat was skyrocketing but the cost of transporting it did not move and that was the time when a censure motion should have been moved.

There was a freight increase made in 1950 but it was not in proportion to what the wheat farmer could have paid at that time. He was able to stand the freight in 1937 and he was far worse off in that year than in 1950. In 1957, the price of wheat had fallen until it was out of proportion with freight rates.

Mr. Oldfield: That means that no rise in the freight on wheat can be made now.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is not so, because the freight on wheat is a factor which enters into the cost of production which is guaranteed by the Commonwealth Government. If any increase were made in the freight on wheat or on super, it would be included in the cost of production upon which is based the price guaranteed for the wheat. So he will still be able to afford an increase in freight but nowhere near as well as he could have afforded such an increase in 1950. It was during this time that the freight rates went "phut"; that is, back in this period which is coloured blue on the graph.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What does "phut" mean?

Mr. JOHNSON: It is an old English word which is commonly used and it means that they really went flat.

Mr. Court: Are you advocating a proposition whereby the freight rates are tied to the price of primary products?

Mr. JOHNSON: I am not advocating anything. I am merely producing figures to show during which period a censure motion should have been brought forward. As a Parliament we are responsible for the finances of the State. Deficits have occurred consistently in the railway finances. Figures were available to those Ministers for Railways who were previously in office and if censure were to be moved, it should have been moved on the people who got us into the mess.

Mr. Court: I am trying to follow your proposal and take an interest in it. Am I to understand that you are saying that when the price of wheat was high, the freight rates should have been high and that now they should be brought back again?

Mr. JOHNSON: I am not saying that they should be brought back again. I am saying that now we are in a mess, it is much harder to bring about a remedy, but round about 1950 it would have been much easier. Yet the people who were in office at that time are now trying to move a censure motion against the Government when, in that year, they could have raised freights without much trouble. These figures do not lie. The graphs are as accurate as I could get a saw to cut, although I must admit that I am not a member of the carpenter's union. They are drawn to a scale of 1½



inches per year horizontally, and of one to 10 per cent. vertically. They might be 1 per cent. out, but what does that matter, when it rises to 500 per cent?

Although the metal trades strike may have been partly responsible for the increase in freights between 1952 and 1953, it is of interest to note that in the year before the metal trades strike the rise was to 60 per cent. and therefore not all of that was due to the metal trades strike. It is also of interest to note that since the McLarty-Watts regime the cost of running per ton mile was reduced. Although there has been an increase of 6 per cent. over the 1956 figure, it has not been a great deal. I do not intend to go any further with the argument at this stage except to say that I feel, with the figures available, and particularly with this visual demonstration thereof, that if anybody considers that a censure motion should be moved, they should know on whom such a censure should be moved. It is on the people who missed the golden opportunity when the money was in the farmers' pockets; when the costs were rising and the farmer could have afforded to pay, because he is the man who produces the wheat and uses the super, and his costs are covered in the costs of production.

The farmer is protected both by us and by himself as a taxpayer. We are all in it. The subsidy to the wheat farmers was completely unjustified at that stage and the Government of that time are the people who should have been censured. It would ill become any of us to suggest that people who did not take action when times were easier should now, for miserable political advantage, try to make things more difficult for those who are trying to recover the situation which the people I first mentioned have caused. I strongly support the move of the Premier to delete all words after the word "this."

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Court: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not incumbent on the Premier to disclose to the House the words he proposes to insert if he is successful in getting these words struck out? At the moment we have not the faintest idea of what the Premier proposes to put in; it might be completely irrelevant to the matter under discussion. I think it is fair that we should know.

The Speaker: Any member is in order at any time in moving to have certain words struck out of a motion. I know that the Premier has not indicated what he proposes to put in, but I have no doubt that he will do so when the words he has moved to strike out are struck out. It is perfectly in order to move to strike out words with a view to inserting other words. This has been done time and time again.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood—on amendment) [8.53]: The point the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just taken is one I also intended to take. At the moment the proposition before the House is that the censure motion should be amended by the substitution of some other words, but so far the House has had no indication whatever as to what the other words are. The member for Leederville, who has just resumed his seat, does not know either. He made no prediction as to what they were likely to be.

I hardly think the House can reasonably be expected to support blindly an amendment to strike out words, when it has no idea what it is intended to substitute in lieu of the words struck out. In that respect at any rate the Premier should be a little more courteous to the House and give the members some indication of what he has in mind. His attitude may seem all right to his own party, who may wish to follow him blindly, but to members on this side of the House who wish to participate intelligently in the debate, some indication should be given as to what the Premier has in mind. In any case I presume that the Premier is endeavouring to avoid censure.

For my part, I listened fairly carefully to the remarks of the Premier, and all he did was to discuss the railway problem in general terms without adding anything very new to it; he also made some sort of apology for doing very little about the metropolitan suburban passenger service. There is one point, however—and a most important one—which the Premier has skimmed over. I refer to the question of an adequate service in the country. Of all the points on which the Government could be censured, and should be censured, I think this is probably the most important.

For some time I have felt that it may have been necessary, and I believe it was necessary, to do something in connection with our railway system to endeavour to secure a greater degree of efficiency and to reduce the tremendous financial burden. But I did not suggest at any stage that it should be done at the expense of the people in the country; those who are at present served by the railways. I am referring to my speech on the Address-in-reply at page 198 of last year's Hansard. On the 15th August, I had this to say—

I fully recognise the obligations and responsibilities of a Government to supply a satisfactory transport service at the cheapest possible cost to the people who have taken up land in an area that is at present served by a railway line. I am not suggesting, in any shape or form, that those people should necessarily be either inconvenienced or placed at a disadvantage by the action of the Government.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You supported the motion.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is quite true.

Mr. Heal: And you supported the amendment.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is true that I supported the motion and the amendment. I do not know whether the interjections I have just received indicate disagreement with the view I have just quoted, and which I expressed last year. I do not know whether those two supporters of the Government intend to imply that the people who are served by railway lines should be placed at a disadvantage or not as a result of the discontinuance of those services. It would not have worked out in that manner.

On the 29th August I went on to show some awareness and appreciation of some of the difficulties that would confront us in providing substitute services, and when speaking on the motion for the establishment of a test road I said, at page 445—

One of the problems at the moment for which I do not think anybody has the answer, is to say, with any degree of certainty, what benefits, if any, would accrue from the closing of any particular section of railway lines. I think we must have further information on that question before we try to answer it. It is an important point in regard to this subject because we should know, before we close any line at all, exactly what kind of service we intend to use as a substitute; what the costs of it will be and the effect of it on people living in the area concerned. In short, we should know all the pros and cons of the question. At the moment I do not think we have sufficient data available to us to be able to say with any degree of certainty what, if any, particular line should be discontinued. To say, at this stage, that this line, or that line should be closed, is premature because as yet we do not know the position in regard to a particular line.

That does indicate, I think, an awareness on my part that there were difficulties to be faced up to.

Last year I quoted the case of a line some 50 miles long, over which was carted about 4,100 tons of goods which earned £838, and it cost considerably more than that to operate that line. I believe there could be some better way of handling these goods than by rail at such terrific costs. It seemed to me that the view my own party took of this matter subsequently in supporting this motion was not irresponsible. We were prepared to measure up to the problems that confronted the Government and the State generally, but we did fully appreciate the difficulties that would confront the Government which was attempting to close

some of these lines. We were well aware of the fact that if it were not done properly, and the matter was not thoroughly investigated, there would be some disability suffered by the residents in those areas.

I believe, as I then said, that in this State we have not made the fullest use of road transport. At the time I endeavoured to give some further data on that matter, but, of course, the motion was defeated. The Government voted against it because Ministers told us they had the answers. I was not behind the Government in my thinking, but I was not far ahead. It seemed they knew the answers and they could tell what were the costs and so on. The motion was opposed by the Country Party for reasons which were not clearly stated. Had that motion been agreed to by the Government, we would have been in a much better position to handle this very problem. Be that as it may, I still feel that the manner in which the Government has handled this questions calls for censure.

After all, in agreeing to the motion, showing awareness of the problems which existed and of the need for caution, and endeavouring to make such provisions as were possible to protect the interests of those affected, there was no time-table to be applied. There was no need for the Government to rush in in a precipitate fashion to close all or any of the lines before they had solved the problem of alternative services. Knowing the complexity of the problem and having it pointed out, I would have thought that the Government would have proceeded cautiously and would have ensured that the first closure attempted would be completely successful.

If my memory serves me correctly, the first closure attempted was the Nornalup-Elleker line. The date announced was the end of April; subsequently it was put back to May or June, and finally back to September. The fact was that the first service attempted to be suspended had to be deferred, and the date had to be altered. That is a clear indication that insufficient thought was given to the question of overcoming the problem that would arise in the districts affected. It is quite obvious that the Government set out to close this line, then discovered there were problems of which it was not aware and which it could not handle adequately with the time at its disposal. It subsequently put off the suspension for a month or so in the hope of solving the problem. Having a second look at it, the problem assumed greater proportions and it is to be September before that line is closed.

The Minister for Transport: That was not a matter of problems at all. It was because of the deferment while waiting for the deputations calling on the Premier, that the contractor who submitted an astonishingly favourable price committed himself

elsewhere in the meantime. The suspension was deferred to give the people down there the very favourable rate.

Mr. HEARMAN: I pointed out, and the Minister will have to agree, that if an announcement is made to close a line on a certain date, particularly the first line to be suspended, it is reasonable that the Government should have considered all the contingencies that could arise so that it would be able to go ahead with the closure as planned and make a success of it.

The Minister for Works: Did your Government do all these things when it closed the Marble Bar line? It did not. You yourself said they were not necessary.

Mr. HEARMAN: Completely adequate arrangements were made at the time. The first advice to the Government was to leave out the Transport Board and allow private contractors to meet the needs.

The Minister for Works: In other words, the Government did nothing at the time?

Mr. HEARMAN: The arrangement was regarded as satisfactory.

Hon. D. Brand: In that case we provided a very satisfactory road.

The Minister for Works: You did not.

Hon. D. Brand: Of course we did!

The Minister for Works: No more than we are doing.

Mr. HEARMAN: The Minister is fighting a losing battle for the reason that the people in the area are satisfied with the alternative service and do not want a railway line.

The Minister for Works: Of course! And so will the people in these other areas, if you leave them alone.

Mr. Bovell: We cannot do anything else. Your Government went ahead willy-nilly.

Hon. D. Brand: What about the Minister for Works going out and chatting with these people?

Mr. HEARMAN: The alternative was fairly obvious to anybody giving thought to the matter. I indicated in the remarks I made when I moved the motion that very considerable problems did exist. I do not think the Government was fully aware of those problems. It has blundered into this thing in a precipitate manner. It was not called on to do that at all because there was no time-table. As a result of that action and not being fully informed, the Government has created difficulties.

The Minister for Works: You ought to read your speech of the 6th December again.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have read it. I believe that a great many of these services could adequately be served by road transport with advantage to the Government, and without disadvantage to the people concerned. I do not think it can be done—and I stress this point almost to tiresome repetition—within the limitation

of our present licensing regulations. That was the point I made and that was what I wanted to be demonstrated in a test road.

Personally, I realised that the efficiency of the service, the cost of the service and the general economics of the proposition were bound up with making the fullest use of the most modern type of road vehicles available. I do not think the Government has realised that. I believe that in order to give adequate services in those areas, it will be necessary to take the fullest advantage of modern designs in vehicles, as has been done in parts of this State by private companies which are operating their own vehicles over their own roads, and who have cut their haulage costs down very substantially below the cost of operating some of these railway lines.

The mere fact that we have accepted a principle does not mean that we have no right to criticise the manner in which the problem has been tackled. That is where I feel the Government is due for censure. It seems to me that the Government, and perhaps myself as well, might have placed too much weight on the report of the inter-departmental committee, consisting of a railway commissioner, the Commissioner of Main Roads and the chairman of the Transport Board. We know that the Railways Commission would want to close many of these lines. We know that the tonnages concerned in these lines were not so great as to cause any difficulty to the Commissioner of Main Roads. I understand that he considers that 40,000 tons are reasonable to put over any roads.

The Minister for Works: You thought a total of 840 miles of line was not enough to be closed?

Mr. HEARMAN: That might well be the case—

The Minister for Works: You are not arguing that way now.

Mr. HEARMAN: —with the full use of the most modern vehicles. I did ask for a proper test to be carried out before the Government did anything. I think the Minister will have to agree with me in that respect.

The Minister for Works: I do not agree.

Mr. HEARMAN: Does the Minister not agree that I moved the motion?

The Minister for Works: It is no good arguing the exact opposite of what you put forward in December last.

Mr. HEARMAN: I did not in any way frustrate the Government in its endeavours, but I was conscious of the problems involved. I do not think that an adequate effort has been made to meet the problems. In fact, I wonder whether the Government is fully appreciative of them.

The Minister for Transport: Will you give us one or two examples where the right thing was not done by the Government?

Mr. HEARMAN: For a start, in order to have the lowest possible rate per ton mile, we will have to increase the permissible axle load.

The Minister for Transport: No road in Western Australia will take traffic in excess of the permissible axle load.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is rubbish because I have quoted instances where that was being done over the years. They are operating much more cheaply than an equivalent railway.

The Minister for Works: Your colleagues want sealed roads.

Mr. HEARMAN: Not necessarily. I do not think the road I quoted is sealed and I do not think the private road over which Bell Bros. carry 1,200 tons a week from Peak Hill to Meekatharra is sealed.

The Minister for Transport: You are out of step with your Leader and Deputy Leader.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think so. They supported my motion and accepted the principle and, although the matter has not gone far, there is nothing to ensure we are getting the most efficient type of road transport at less cost per ton mile.

The Minister for Works: I do not think you remember what you said last December.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is what I think on the matter and it is consistent with the thinking which my motion involved.

The Minister for Transport: I think you are more afraid of Country Party opposition to your seat.

Mr. HEARMAN: I think I will get it, but I am not worried about that.

The Minister for Transport: You are trying to save your face.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have expected it for years and knew it would come sooner or later; probably the next election. The Minister for Transport had better be careful about the position in his own seat.

The Minister for Transport: You can leave that seat to me.

The SPEAKER: I do not think this is relevant to the motion.

Mr. May: It might be later on.

Mr. HEARMAN: It seems to me that the Government is carried away too much by the views of civil servants, and I think in one case the Railways Commission wanted to close lines. We know the Commissioner of Main Roads was not concerned about the tonnages to go over the roads.

The Minister for Works: Who told you that fiction?

Mr. HEARMAN: The Minister for Transport when moving the motion. He said he had been assured by the Commissioner of Main Roads that these roads would stand up to 40,000 tons.

The Minister for Works: Not in one vehicle.

Mr. HEARMAN: If Mr. Le Tourneau develops his ideas, it might. I do not remember suggesting that that tonnage should go on the one vehicle.

The Minister for Works: It is the tenor of your argument; overload, overload, when the roads won't stand it. That is the position anywhere in the world.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think that is right.

The Minister for Works: It is right, because they build roads to a certain standard and we conform to that standard.

Mr. HEARMAN: The bigger vehicles should not be damaging roads simply because they are designed to take bigger loads than the permissible axle loads.

The Minister for Works: Manufacturers will design vehicles to take any load if the load is allowed on the road.

Mr. HEARMAN: There are instances where they are being used with considerable economic advantage to the users, and it is just that point I want investigated. I will try a third time to make my point. It seems to me that the chairman of the Transport Board was an odd man out when this inter-departmental committee was sitting. I feel that in a State which has had some restrictions on road transport, it is the function of the Transport Board to see those restrictions are observed.

It is hardly likely that the board would be experienced in the possibilities and application of modern road transport. I say that without any criticism of the personnel of the board, because I would not expect people of that background to be aware of the advantages that would flow from the use of the most modern transport. The aspect I am most fearful of is that we will find we have discontinued the railway services and substituted a poor form of road transport. It seems that that is what is going to happen.

The Minister for Transport: Have you thought of one case where arrangements have fallen down?

Mr. HEARMAN: I can think of some cases where arrangements will not be adequate and, I think, the member for Vasse mentioned one.

The Minister for Transport: Your side is censuring the Government and not one case has been put forward where arrangements are inadequate. You should quote specific cases as you are making the complaints.

Mr. HEARMAN: One is that the Government has made no effort to go into the country and explain the position to the people concerned.

The Minister for Transport: That is not part of the motion.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is a complaint.

Mr. Court: It is part of the motion.

The Minister for Transport: You are out of step with your leader.

Mr. HEARMAN: Surely the Government should have been prepared to go out and tell the people in the country of the position! A lot of opposition has been whipped up and a lot of wrong information has been disseminated. If the Government had confidence in its case, it should have gone into the country and endeavoured to get as much goodwill as possible for the alternative arrangements.

The Minister for Works: Where do you get the idea that that has not been done?

Mr. HEARMAN: What meetings have been attended?

The Minister for Works: The Minister for Railways has attended a lot of meetings.

The Minister for Transport: Meetings at Northam, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HEARMAN: If the Government wants to act in the manner it has, which I feel has been unnecessarily hasty, it should make every effort to get out into the country and state its case and not merely go to a few meetings. If the Government had set about the matter in the way I suggested and first demonstrated the methods of alternative transport, I think there would not have been such opposition to the present proposals. The Government has created, by its own action and manner of handling this business, unnecessary consternation and difficulties for itself and for people who are resident in the country. I do not think that there is any reason why the Government could not have taken one line to start with and made a complete success of its discontinuance before going on to another. If it were necessary for the Government to act in this precipitate manner, I think it should say what is the need for this speed. We were given no indication it would take place as quickly as this, and we are entitled to be told just why it is necessary to do it all at once. There are other considerations which lead us to suspect that the Government may have reasons which it has not disclosed for going at the matter in the way it has. The question of finance is one that naturally poses itself.

The Minister for Transport: Would you answer one question? Do you know the particulars of any case where the alternative arrangements have not proved satisfactory; where they have broken down?

Mr. HEARMAN: I know that in no case does anybody know what the costs of these alternatives are going to be. That is a pretty serious thing.

The Minister for Transport: Of course they do!

Mr. HEARMAN: The user does not know where he stands.

The Minister for Transport: In other words, you haven't a complaint yet but there may be some later on.

Mr. HEARMAN: Before a service is discontinued, the people who are going to be most affected should at least know what the alternatives are, including the cost to them. That is a fairly vital factor.

The Minister for Transport: I have asked you six times and you cannot tell me one instance of where the arrangements have broken down.

Mr. HEARMAN: They have not broken down because—

The Minister for Transport: The hon. member does not know of one case.

Mr. HEARMAN: We do not know the cost. Apparently the Government will not tell us.

Mr. Bovell: The Government does not know.

Mr. HEARMAN: Can the Government tell us what the costs are, and will it tell us?

The Minister for Transport: You are making the accusations.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am asking the Government whether it will answer that question. The Premier talked all around the subject, but did not get on to the question of satisfactory alternative services and their costs, which are points that I think should be completely clarified before any rail service is taken away. People who are in areas that have been served by railways which are being discontinued should know where they stand and should not be prejudiced. I believe there is no need to prejudice them either, particularly when one takes into account some of the excessive costs per ton mile on some of those lines, such as 22s. 2d. per ton mile, and costs like that. I consider that it should be possible to substitute road transport there which will place no disadvantage on the users. If the Government could give that assurance, it would be a different matter. But so far that has not been done, and that is what is required. Seeing that the Government has not given a satisfactory assurance, which it should have done, I think that is one reason for

censuring the Government, and it is a reason why the amendment moved by the Premier—and we do not know what his subsequent proposal is to be—should be rejected by this House.

**MR. COURT** (Nedlands—on amendment) [9.24]: I oppose the amendment, which is to delete practically the whole of the motion and to insert words the nature of which we are yet to find out. If the Premier is going to delete all the words after the word "that" or "this"—I am not sure which it is—

**Mr. May:** Make it "this."

**Mr. COURT:** —he will be introducing a new motion; and, knowing his form in the past, that motion will be one of condemnation of us or congratulation to his Government, or something of that nature. In other words, the purpose of this motion, and the six points making up the motion, will be completely lost. In my opinion the object of this motion—namely, the censure of the Government—is one that we must not lose sight of; and therefore the amendment must be opposed for the reason that it would depart completely from the object—namely, the censuring of the Government for its mishandling of this matter. I consider that the Government's mishandling of railway discontinuance has delivered a damaging blow to the parliamentary system of government we have been used to in this State.

**Mr. May:** You did that when you appointed three commissioners.

**Mr. COURT:** If the member for Collie will just bear with me for a moment, I will demonstrate why I consider this damaging blow to our system has been delivered by the Government's mishandling of railway discontinuance. If we are to accept what the Government has done in connection with this discontinuance, it means that no longer can an Opposition take a responsible attitude to any matter that comes before this House. It means that an Opposition is being forced to play politics every inch of the way, and I know that the Government plays it the hard way.

**The Minister for Transport:** What do you think you are doing tonight?

**Mr. COURT:** If the Minister will bear with me like the member for Collie, he will find out that we are not playing politics.

**Mr. Cornell:** Much!

**The Premier:** The Country Party echoes "much."

**Mr. COURT:** Of course, the member for Mt. Marshall is a born humourist.

**The Premier:** And a pretty shrewd head, too.

**Mr. COURT:** That does not dismay me in the least. When the motion for discontinuance was before the House, we could

very easily have played politics. We could have said "No, let us embarrass the Government. We know that the Government is sitting on the grille over this railway situation. Let us oppose the closures. Let us say 'No' all the time and leave them to fight it out with their unions and the people in the country and the people of the State generally."

**The Minister for Mines:** You could not have justified that with your conscience.

**Mr. COURT:** The Minister is crediting me with a conscience! We did come with a conscience, and adopted a reasonable attitude—so responsible an attitude that I think the Minister for Transport was amazed.

**The Minister for Transport:** No, he wasn't. He knew what was going on behind the scenes. Perhaps I should tell of it in order to show how sincere you people are.

**Mr. COURT:** We would like you to tell us.

**The Minister for Transport:** You would?

**Mr. COURT:** I am speaking for myself.

**The Minister for Transport:** Oh!

**Mr. COURT:** We were taken for a first-class ride by the Government when it accepted the amendments to the motion, these vital conditions. The Government made all sorts of promises in this House and in another place as to how it would handle the situation, and the moment Parliament rose, walked out and broke the lot.

**The Minister for Transport:** Tell us what promise we walked out on.

**Mr. COURT:** The whole three.

**The Minister for Transport:** You are not proving anything by merely saying it.

**Mr. COURT:** I will come to each of them in turn and deal with each one in turn. First, I have yet to see any public utterance by the Government, when it has been sufficiently fair about the matter, to the effect that this motion was passed by both Houses of Parliament subject to certain vital conditions. I have been to country meetings, some of them very hostile; and unfortunately the Minister for Transport, who was badly needed at those meetings by the people concerned, was not there. There have been letters read from the Government.

**Mr. Ackland:** He showed mighty good judgment by keeping away!

**The Minister for Transport:** I am not going to attend every political meeting that you organise.

**Mr. COURT:** They were not political meetings.

**The Minister for Transport:** Not much!

**Mr. COURT:** If the Minister had attended, he would have got a shock. He can deal with people in Forrest Place and

at street corners, but he would find that a new technique was needed if he had to deal with irate farmers—men with a mission, who consider they have not been given a fair deal.

The Minister for Transport: You are inciting me to deal with you before the night is out.

Mr. COURT: We are ready and waiting.

The Minister for Transport: You might not be disappointed.

Mr. COURT: Not once has the Government said in its letters that the motion was passed by both Houses subject to certain conditions. It could have gone that far and could have added that the Government was taking action to try to comply with those conditions; but I have yet to hear an official Government statement that this motion was passed subject to certain very vital conditions. Briefly, the three conditions moved as an amendment to the motions in this House, and accepted by this House and another place, were that there would be an overhaul of the whole of the railway administration including the workshops.

The Minister for Transport: That is taking place.

Mr. COURT: I will come to that in a minute. The second was that there would be adequate alternative transport and that there would be an overhaul of metropolitan passenger transport.

Mr. Gaffy: These things are all taking place.

Mr. COURT: That may be. But why have these lines been closed before there has been reasonable progress towards the completion of those tasks? There was no great need for haste. We could understand when the motion was before the House that the Government would have to go to the Grants Commission and explain what steps it was taking to reduce the railway deficit, and we tried to adopt a fair and reasonable attitude. I am sure that if the Government had been prepared to go to the Grants Commission and say that it proposed to take certain action but that it first had to conform to a motion passed by Parliament, that explanation would have been acceptable to the Grants Commission.

It may be that steps are being taken to implement the conditions I have referred to. But why did the Government have to rush the closure of these lines? Was there some vital reason why they should be closed before Parliament met—with the exception of one or two lines? As far as I am concerned, the logic of the position is that the closures were agreed to subject to certain things and in simple language that means that until the Government conforms to the conditions, it cannot have the benefit of the other part of the motion.

If I offer to sell something at a price, a would-be purchaser cannot have that article until he pays the price—it is as simple as that. The Government may advance the argument on the first score—that of overhauling the whole of the railway system—that there is an inquiry being held by Magistrate Smith, who is now a Royal Commissioner, and that that is the inquiry which is necessary into the administration of our railways.

Let us examine that contention. While I have a very high regard for Magistrate Smith who has undoubtedly legal ability and an inquiring mind, this is a major administrative and technical problem and the background of Magistrate Smith's inquiry, as I understand it, is that he was appointed to examine certain irregularities—a very good man for the job also, provided he is confined to that particular type of work—and as he proceeded no doubt he made progress reports to the Government. Accusations and allegations were made by one senior officer of the railways against another and so Magistrate Smith's inquiry was extended until it ultimately became a Royal Commission sufficiently broad in its approach as to allow him to go overseas to gather further evidence in connection with the allegations.

Do not let us imagine that Magistrate Smith would himself accept the task of examining the efficiency, both administratively and operationally, of the Western Australian Government Railways. I have more respect for his ability than to believe he would accept such an assignment and so we, on this side of the House, cannot for one moment accept that his inquiry is the be-all and end-all of the necessary inquiry into the railway system of this State.

The Minister for Transport: It is a jolly good starting point.

Mr. COURT: It is only a starting point. Why did the Minister have to rush this matter—because he has been sufficiently dismayed by what has been found out to want to make Magistrate Smith a Royal Commissioner? Does not that raise a doubt in the Minister's mind as to whether the information available was sufficient? It raised the doubt in my mind when I heard that Magistrate Smith was being made a Royal Commissioner.

The Minister for Works: When goods are costing 4s. 5d. per ton mile, it does not need an investigation to prove that there is something wrong. It is ridiculous.

Mr. COURT: I know that there are many things that are ridiculous in the Western Australian Government railway system and it does not require much brains to find out what is wrong, but it takes a lot of knowledge, experience and ability to correct the things that are wrong. Many people can generalise but when it comes down to correcting these

discrepancies, that is when somebody gets hurt and it needs a man of ability, practical experience and technical experience in railway operation to implement these things.

The Minister for Transport: When your party was in the Government it appointed two highly qualified technical men as a Royal Commission and the upshot of that was this treble-headed administration which we now have.

Mr. COURT: That was recommended by the Royal Commission and the recommendation was implemented and apparently it has proved a failure; but I do not think the system of having three commissioners has proved a failure so much as the personnel concerned.

The Minister for Transport: It is the system.

Mr. COURT: If there was only one commissioner he could be more trouble to the Government of the day than the three commissioners because the question of personalities could arise. Many able men have not the personality to get along with other people.

The Minister for Transport: The professional investigators did not produce much of value.

Mr. COURT: That does not say than another investigation could not produce something of value, and who else is to do it apart from experienced men?

The Minister for Transport: Just leave it to us.

Mr. COURT: The Minister's attitude is that he and his Government can do no wrong.

The Minister for Transport: Very little wrong.

Hon. D. Brand: Have not the Victorian railways a three-man commission?

The Minister for Transport: I do not know.

Hon. D. Brand: They have a single commissioner in New South Wales and they have a big deficit.

The Minister for Transport: That may be. The Victorian Railways Commission wants to know the particulars of the closing of lines in this State.

Mr. COURT: If I might be allowed to proceed, Mr. Speaker, on this question of the overhaul of the railway system generally, it has been established both by the Government and other people that there is a lot of scope for increased efficiency in the system.

The Minister for Transport: And you say that if that takes years to effect, it means that for years there are to be no rail closures.

Mr. COURT: I would not suggest that it has to be done to the nth degree but there must be reasonable progress which can be demonstrated to the people. I

have here a report from the "Daily News" dated the 17th April under the heading of "Rail Burden Too Great." It was the result of a deputation to the Premier from six members of the Farmers' Union, for reconsideration of the rail service discontinuance decision. There the Premier is reported as having said—

It is a frightening problem and as Treasurer I have to try and handle this. We are not burning our boats. We are suspending traffic. It is not a gamble. We had no choice. We may be compelled to do more.

The president of the Farmers' Union said—  
I think there should be a clean-up in the railway system.

And the Premier replied—  
I think so, too.

The Minister for Works: He still thinks so.

Mr. COURT: He then said to the deputation that the discontinuance of services was only one proposal and that there were several others that would have to be examined in connection with the railway system. I instance that as one case where there is ample evidence that there is scope for increased efficiency within the system, both administratively and operationally.

We then come to "The West Australian" of the 29th March under the heading "Railway Unions May Quit A.L.P.," where we read—

Western Australia's biggest railway union, the Western Australian Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees is strongly opposed to the Government's proposed discontinuance of 800 miles of railway line.

Among other things reported, it says that a far greater saving could be effected than the closing of the 842 miles of line under discussion by investigating the mushroom growth of railway administration. It says further that the State Transport Co-ordination Act should be policed more to prevent illicit road cartage of quantities of goods and particularly wool and timber.

When speaking at Cadoux, the Minister for Railways is reported as having said that the Railway Department was over-staffed because too many men were doing too little. He said it; I did not. I know it is often said, and sometimes unfairly, because I am inclined to blame fellows at the top if the fellows down below are not doing their job. But that was his observation, and I have not yet seen it corrected by him.

On the question of alternative transport I have before me a letter from the chairman of the W.A. Transport Board addressed to the Leader of the Opposition under date the 17th April. This one refers in particular to the Burakin-Bonnie Rock railway discontinuance and I do not propose to read all of it. It is the type of letter that was sent out in each of the



different cases. However, it is fairly typical and it sets out the proposition proposed by the Transport Board on behalf of the Government in order to meet the situation on the discontinuance of the railway service from Burakin to Bonnie Rock.

When the Leader of the Opposition and I were in that district we were taken around by many of the settlers, and then we attended a public meeting of some 200 to 300 farmers; it was made very clear to us that this proposition had not been officially and properly arranged. Forgetting altogether the fact that the roads obviously would not take the traffic, the proposition had not been properly tied up with the people who were to be the contractors.

The Minister for Works: How would you know that the road would not take the traffic? Did you know the volume of traffic which the road would have to carry?

Mr. COURT: No, but we were taken along the roads that the Government proposed to use. The Minister knows the system that was proposed—that the traffic from that line was to go south in some cases and west in others.

The Minister for Works: Would it surprise you to know that an analysis has shown that this extra traffic very often does not amount to more than three additional vehicles per hour?

Hon. D. Brand: Per hour?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Hon. D. Brand: That would be three vehicles per hour on some of these roads because it would be the first time that they had any worth-while traffic over them.

The Minister for Works: What building-up of the roads has to be carried out?

Hon. D. Brand: It was clear to me, and to any person who travelled over them, that they were not all-weather roads and were not fit to carry heavy traffic.

Mr. Ackland: They will be called upon to carry—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nedlands has the floor.

Mr. COURT: One needs a certain amount of commonsense when discussing these things. If there was a guarantee that the traffic on these roads would be at certain times of the year only, I would agree with the Minister; there would be no trouble at all. But we cannot always dictate when certain types of rural traffic will move. Surely it was a prerequisite of the proposition accepted by the Government that suitable road systems would be available to each and every one of these districts before the lines were closed.

The Minister for Works: There is a very strong argument against that. In the Lakes district, which has never had a railway, they have been asking for black roads for

many years and still have not been given them. Yet they have been able to get their services by road transport year in and year out.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is trying to switch me from my argument. I was talking of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock railway and, in my opinion, the proposition that was put forward in that case will not work. I may be wrong; the Minister might have some other knowledge on the matter that is not available to me. However, as far as I can see, a commonsense appreciation of the situation was that it would not work. It was a prerequisite when the motion was accepted that satisfactory conditions would exist before the closures took place—not afterwards, or progressively afterwards, but before the closures took place; and I think that was a fair proposition.

I now come to the information for tenderers released by the W.A. Transport Board in respect to the Meekatharra-Wiluna road transport service. I was particularly interested in these conditions because the matter was specifically referred to when I was speaking before I moved the amendment to the railways discontinuance motion. One of the things I stressed, and upon which the Minister gave me an assurance, was that there would be a satisfactory freight and passenger transport service; that people in this area would not be left to fend for themselves on any old truck but that there would be a satisfactory and acceptable service provided for them. If members read the conditions that were published, and which I presume are to be the conditions upon which the tenders will be let, they will see that these conditions are very general.

There is very little specific direction to the transport agencies as to what accommodation there must be for passengers; what provision there will be for perishables, or how long the service will take to go from point A to point B. There is no provision for dust-proofing of vehicles for the carriage of perishables and other commodities which need such attention; there is no provision for dust-proofing of vehicles for the sake of the passengers.

It is not a fair thing for a set of conditions to be drawn up like that and with no specific directions on the points I have outlined, especially in view of the assurances we were given that these people would not be worse off under the new system than they were under the old. I think the question of road conditions, which the Minister for Works is inclined to brush off, is a very serious one.

The Minister for Works: I am not brushing it off. I know that we have made adequate arrangements to see that the roads will take the traffic. I can give you an assurance on that and you need not worry about that aspect.

**Mr. COURT:** The Minister is giving us an assurance and I do not doubt his sincerity in the matter. But the fact is that some of these services have not got off to a very good start, have they?

**The Minister for Works:** Yes, but we have had abnormal conditions. Even the trains have not been able to run sometimes because of the floods.

**Mr. COURT:** These conditions are not really abnormal.

**The Minister for Works:** The conditions have been abnormal.

**Mr. COURT:** They have not been as bad as all that.

**The Minister for Works:** When have we had 26 wet days in one month?

**Mr. COURT:** I do not think it is the first time in our history that that has happened.

**The Minister for Works:** It is pretty close to it.

**Mr. COURT:** Then the Minister cannot be very happy about it; he must be very worried about some of the roads and the troubles that have been reported with them.

**The Minister for Works:** Not more than usual.

**Mr. COURT:** That at least is an admission by the Minister that he is not a worrier; but the fact remains that some of these services, at the very start of their operations, have broken down.

**The Minister for Works:** Are they still broken down?

**Mr. COURT:** That is not the point.

**The Minister for Works:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. COURT:** It is not the point.

**The Premier:** It is a point.

**Mr. COURT:** It might be a point but it is not the point. What of the future? Am I to take it that this announcement of the 13th June, whereby there apparently has been some stiffening up of the servicing of these roads, is an acknowledgment by the Government that these roads were not ready for the traffic?

**The Minister for Works:** No, it is not such an acknowledgment at all. It is an indication that the Government will keep pace with the requirements and that the maintenance gangs referred to there will be increased as circumstances warrant.

**Mr. COURT:** I think that it was an afterthought. The announcement of the 13th June was that road maintenance gangs would patrol the principal roads carrying substantial tonnages diverted from suspended railway services

and that the gangs would provide all-weather maintenance on the roads equivalent to the service on gazetted main roads.

**The Minister for Works:** Are you complaining about that?

**Mr. COURT:** No, but this should have been done before these railway routes were closed. What I am trying to say is that it was all bungled and rushed. The matter was done in too hasty a fashion and there was no need for such great haste. The big thing was to satisfy the people in the districts concerned, although the Premier says that that is not necessary and dismissed the matter rather lightly. On this occasion I think the Government had a particular duty to go out of its way to handle the matter in the most sympathetic and patient manner possible in order to demonstrate to these people that the new system would work and would not be disadvantageous to them but would probably be an advantage to the areas concerned.

The Minister must admit that the people in the Elleker-Nornalup district must have been in a state of confusion before the final announcement was made. No one knew whether the road was to follow the old railway line or whether it was to be a farm-to-farm service or any other details—and they are all vital questions. The initial announcement was for closure on the 18th March and the next one I heard was on the 30th April. The last date, and the current one that I know of—as a result of the representations by the Leader of the Country Party—was the 30th September.

The explanation given to me was not the one that the Minister for Transport has given. It was that that particular section of road between Denmark and Nornalup was in the process of being brought up to a certain standard and would not be finished to take full traffic before the 30th September. However, that may not be the right explanation. I admit it was not an explanation given to me by the Minister for Works or his officers, but by the prominent citizens of Denmark.

**Hon. A. F. Watts:** In fact, there has never been an explanation given by the department until tonight. The date of the 30th September just dawned on the atmosphere.

**Mr. COURT:** A further point in connection with the roads is that the local authorities in those areas affected had no chance of taking over those roads overnight, bringing them up to a certain standard and keeping them to that standard. All these road boards are flat out to their last penny to run their administrations at present, without any extra demand such as this being thrown on them. Do

I take it that their responsibility has now ended, following the announcement of the 13th September and that the Main Roads Department has moved to take them over? Does this mean that the local authorities have been relieved of their responsibilities in regard to the roads over which the road transport will have to move in lieu of rail transport?

The most annoying feature, so far as I have been able to ascertain whilst in the country, is the further step the Government proposes to take in connection with alternative services. Under pressure from the A.L.P., the Government has had to agree to an amendment to the State Transport Co-ordination Act. It has had to agree to a tighter vigilance in respect of the policing of road transport. That will be an untenable position so far as we on this side of the House are concerned, because most of these people will say, "If you are going to take away our railway from us, for goodness' sake give us a chance to organise a road transport system of our own! Let us have a degree of freedom in the transport of goods even if the basic transport operations are to be arranged by the Transport Board. You must not leave us with a system that is inadequate and more restricted than the previous arrangement." Again, I think that is a breach of the decision reached because there was never any suggestion, when this motion was before Parliament, that there would be any change in the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

The Minister for Works: That is for the purpose of protecting the railways.

Mr. COURT: That is the trouble with the railways; they are protected too much.

The Minister for Works: You do not want the railways closed and you do not want them protected in order to keep them open.

Mr. COURT: If the railways cannot exist on their merits and on their appropriate freights, well, what of it? Is it not time that somebody made them efficient? If they cannot lick the hide off the road transport hauliers with certain types of freight over long distances, they are not a railway system worth worrying about.

The Premier: You are forgetting that the Railways Commission is subject to Government policy in respect of freights and fares.

Mr. COURT: That is so.

The Premier: That is very important.

Mr. COURT: Railway freights and fares represent part of the Government policy and the Premier cannot divorce the two.

The Premier: It is an important consideration in regard to what you have just said.

Mr. COURT: I still say that the more the railways are protected, the less efficient they will become.

The Premier: If you do not allow the Railways Commission freedom to decide what the freights and fares will be, surely it is entitled to some protection in regard to both.

Mr. COURT: If the Premier followed that argument to its logical conclusion, it would completely prevent farmers from carting their own produce and that would be a tragedy.

The Premier: Will you grant the Railways Commission freedom on the fixing of fares and freights?

Mr. COURT: I admit that the Premier cannot divorce fares and freights from Government policy. Governments of all colours have adjusted freights to suit a particular situation; to suit a particular industry which has been a vital part of our economy. I do not think we will get away from that. It would be very nice to say that all freights shall be fixed on an economic basis.

The Premier: I think the hon. member will admit that the level of freights plays a big part in the final results of railway operations.

Mr. COURT: That is true because that is the source of their revenue. If the railways carry "x" tons at "fy" they will earn a certain amount of revenue, but if those figures are changed, the final result must be different. There again we are getting back to the fact that we cannot divorce fares and freights from Government policy.

In announcing the revised or alternative transport arrangement, the Government said that the initial costs would not be greater than the existing service. However, it immediately gave notice that over a seven-year period there would be a systematic and automatic reduction of the subsidy. That, to my mind, was not playing the game by those people. Those people did not say, "We want the railway removed." This alternative transport arrangement was forced on to them and immediately the Government said, "Well, initially it will not cost you any more, but progressively, over seven years, it is going to cost you more and more."

The same thing was done to some people who had, in settled areas, a well-understood arrangement, honoured by all Governments, that their transport costs would be kept back to a certain level. Those people have agreed to forgo railway extensions on the assumption that the road transport costs would be kept at a certain parity, with equivalent railway distances, by the Government of the day. To give notice now that such an assurance has to be withdrawn—even over a seven-year period—is not a fair proposition.

Another matter discussed was the question of costs. The Minister for Transport did make this observation which appears in the Parliamentary Debates of 1956, Vol. 145, p. 3369—

The figures given to me indicate that the average increased cost to the farmers in respect of road transport over all of these routes as against the present railway charge is insignificant and if there is an adjustment of rail freights—as well there might be in the near future—they would be found to be in favour of road transport on the score of pounds, shillings and pence alone.

To my mind that was an assurance—and I accepted it—by the Minister that these people would not be subject to any increase in transportation costs, and it has yet to be proved to me that when this matter is brought down to detail in the case of specific farmers, they have been protected from increased costs.

I was staggered when I attended a public meeting at Corrigin. The member for Moore was present and there was an apology from the Government. The local Farmers' Union secretary read out a letter from the Secretary for Railways and, I learned to my amazement, that before the railway line from Brookton to Corrigin had been closed, the local district, through the secretary of the Farmers' Union, received a notice that freight rates were going to be increased. This was in spite of the undertaking given in this Parliament last year that there would be no increase in rail freights. Under pressure, the Premier said, for at least 12 months. The figures that the Secretary for Railways gave this Farmers' Union secretary in his letter were related to the theoretical change in distance of Corrigin from the port of destination because of this closure.

Trains have gone over a shorter distance in the past but now theoretically there was a change in the distance of Corrigin from Fremantle which seemed rather like rubbing salt into the wound. It transpires that these are the commodity charges, and for the convenience of the House, and in order to save time I will read the percentage increases only. They are as follows:—

Commodity.	Approximate Percentage Increase.
Motor spirit ex North Fremantle .....	14.8
Diesel fuel .....	11.3
Distillate .....	11.3
Kero .....	11.3
Wool to Fremantle .....	11.3
Grain to silo or bulkhead, North Fremantle .....	14.5
Two ton agricultural machinery ex Perth .....	16.6
Super ex Bassendean .....	14.6
One small van of sheep to Midland .....	22.5

To my mind, it is like rubbing salt into the wound. Before the railways actually closed—I think it was several days before they were closed—they received this official notice from the Railway Department that henceforth Corrigin was a different distance from Fremantle and Perth and that it would have to pay a new freight rate! Whether or not this has been implemented, I do not know. The letter to the local people was dated the 10th May, 1957.

We come to this question of consultation which somebody said was not part of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is and it is also one of the points that the Premier is seeking to remove from the motion. His attitude to this matter is unusual. The Premier says the Government has now changed its policy. I suppose it is entitled to do so, but did he tell that to the people of the Murchison electorate, where these words were given in writing and no doubt verbally by the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition. There has not been the degree of consultation that, in my opinion, was necessary to ensure a smooth change-over.

In most cases the people in these districts would be reasonable if the Minister went into the matter in detail and explained at their meetings what was proposed; and possibly he might have granted some concessions to them as far as the question of time was concerned, until the proper systems were available to operate smoothly. Had that been done there would not have been all this uproar. Let there be no doubt that there is an uproar. But because it happens to be in the country and not in the metropolitan area some people tend to put a deaf ear to it. It is a serious matter and it runs throughout the length and breadth of the State.

The attitude of the Government to the unions was entirely different. In a report written in April the railway unions asked to be consulted. It is to the credit of the Leader of the Opposition that he did not say that this should not be done because it had not been done in the case of the people in the country. He said that there should be consultation with the workers as there should be with the local authorities. Notice had come to us of people who were being unfairly shifted from their homes. I understand that steps have since been taken by the Government to alleviate the situation so that a man is given some alternative accommodation before he is shifted with his family.

The Minister for Transport: I do not think you have your facts right: that this person like a mad man came down to the metropolitan area without inquiring about a house and went to the Leader of the Opposition. He did not try to get a house.

Mr. COURT: I will not argue on that point. The person was very distressed when he came to me and it was to the credit of the Minister for Railways that he did not waste any time in the matter.

The Minister for Transport: We never do when the case justifies it.

Mr. COURT: The State Secretary of the A.L.P. approached the Government specifically on this point. He did not do it for fun. He did it because of some reason.

The Minister for Transport: He was taken in in the same manner as the member for Nedlands.

Mr. COURT: I do not think he would like to hear the Minister saying that because he is a pretty hard-headed customer. This Press report was not based on a particular case. It was based on the whole problem.

The Minister for Transport: There were three cases only; the other two were similar to the one you have in mind.

Mr. COURT: The Premier has accused us of wavering or woofing—I do not quite remember the word he used. We have done nothing of the kind. We have stuck religiously to the line we adopted in this House, because we are censuring the Government for mishandling of the situation, not for the original motion. We have been very consistent and we are entitled to feel aggrieved over this matter, because I do not think we had a fair go.

The Premier: You still favour the closures provided the conditions are carried out to your satisfaction.

Mr. COURT: Had those conditions been honoured in the spirit as well as in the letter there would not be any cause for serious disagreement in the country. I do not ever expect to reach the stage of pleasing everybody.

The Premier: The hon. member still favours closures provided the conditions attached are to his satisfaction.

Mr. COURT: It is not my satisfaction that matters, but the satisfaction of Parliament. It was Parliament that had to be satisfied.

The Premier: The hon. member's answer is acceptable to me.

Mr. COURT: To show our consistency in the matter the member for Blackwood did bring in his test-road motion which was treated very frivolously in this House. That motion was sincerely and earnestly put forward by the hon. member after he had given the matter serious consideration. He has studied the transportation problem in great detail and I venture to say that had that motion been adopted by this House, and had it been implemented, all the fuss and bother over the rail closures would have been avoided and the people would have had the position demonstrated

to them before having these closures forced on them. There would not have been the reasons for dissatisfaction that exist at present.

In conclusion, I want to say that this is not the only blow that some of these primary producers are suffering. Some of them are about to receive, or have received, their land tax assessment for the first time for 25 years on improved agricultural land. Some of them, though not many, are starting to feel the effects of the probate legislation. Added to that, not only are they suffering inconvenience in some cases over the new transport system but they are also going to suffer increases in their transportation costs. Ultimately it will be their family that suffers in connection with probate.

The Premier: Do they pay any Federal taxes?

Mr. COURT: They pay their Federal income tax, of which we get our share back.

The Premier: What about payroll tax?

Mr. COURT: They would not pay payroll tax because it is necessary to employ a reasonable amount of labour before one qualifies. Some may qualify.

The Premier: They are paying plenty of Federal taxation.

Mr. COURT: I sincerely hope they will not pay payroll tax for much longer because the Premier knows my views on the payroll tax. In the light of experience, it is very clear that we were ill-advised to trust this situation in the Government's hands without tying the thing up in legal and other knots, if that were possible, so that there was no possible doubt of what was to be done by the Government. We were entitled at the time to accept from the Government certain assurances. It has been customary in this Chamber to accept the word of the Government on matters on both sides. On this particular occasion, I feel that in spite of the fact that the Government accepted these conditions they walked out of this Chamber and have completely repudiated the conditions they have accepted from both Houses of Parliament. For that reason I consider the Government is deserving of the censure moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Peith—on amendment) [10.11]: First of all, it is perhaps necessary for us to recall in our minds the resolution that was agreed to by Parliament last December.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is not pertinent.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** It is exceedingly pertinent because those who have spoken up to date have conveniently

forgotten the terms of the resolution to which they subscribed. The relevant portion is as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House the railways listed should be discontinued notwithstanding certain other considerations.

I emphasise the words "notwithstanding certain other considerations."

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: But referred to in Appendix A.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Exactly. Those are the only lines which are either closed or likely to be closed without further reference to Parliament.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That has nothing to do with Appendix A. You are not reading the motion properly.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Personally, I have sufficient experience of the member for Cottesloe to know that I could waste approximately half of my time endeavouring to get him to see what is, or should be, obvious to every other member. I would suggest for the sake of the convenience of the House that he retires from the Chamber for the next 30 minutes so that he can read carefully the motion agreed to by Parliament. I hope that 30 minutes will be sufficient for him. Then he can understand it and he can come back and become a new man.

I would like to say that, perhaps impetuously, I asked the chairman of the Transport Board to come to Parliament House this afternoon and this evening for the purpose of supplying details, because no Minister could be expected to remember all of them if there were to be particular and specific complaints. But up to date there has been nothing of the sort. A whole lot of generalities have been spoken, coincidentally, I think, by members of the Liberal Party, and members of that party only.

That to me is most significant and conforms to what the Premier has said, that the Liberal Party feels the necessity politically to do a little squaring-off with electors in country districts because some of our esteemed friends opposite are feeling a little uncomfortable in their seats. They are speaking in airy-fairy generalities, indicating that they know practically nothing about the matter, because the member for Blackwood was challenged by me, most disorderly, on more than half-a-dozen occasions to cite one case where the alternative arrangements have not been provided in accordance with his, or anybody else's, interpretation of what the Government should have done. He was unable to do so.

We may hear from the Country Party in due course. It is perhaps indicative of the general situation that they are so excited about the matter that, notwithstanding this debate commenced more than five hours ago, we have not heard from one of them. I am aware that several of their

members have been exceedingly active in the country districts, and perhaps they are a little fatigued and will recover later in the evening.

I am aware that in the course of their journeys in the country, aided and abetted by a journal known as "The Farmers' Weekly", they did their utmost to confuse the people. Amongst other things, that publication had a map setting out the railways to be closed in accordance with Plan 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. I might mention without any modesty that I received training and experience in the preparation and reading of plans. I venture to say this: That plan was deliberately drawn by the sponsors so that the symbols and cyphers indicating the lines, the subject of the motion carried last December, and other lines which have nothing to do with the Government's or Parliament's decision, were shown with the object of creating the impression amongst country people over as wide an area as possible that there was a prospect of their being denied rail service to which they were accustomed.

Mr. Ackland: Was not that the recommendation you received from your committee?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is so.

Mr. Ackland: Did not that committee say it was no good closing them unless the lot were closed?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: If I were in the witness box and under examination, I would say that was perfectly true. But the hon. member and the editor of "The Farmers' Weekly" knew positively well that the only questions which were the subject of discussion were those lines contained in the schedule to the resolution, and that a statement had been made that, so far as this Government was concerned, the only lines on which services would be discontinued were those which had been approved by Parliament.

Mr. Bovell: That is because this Government will not last much longer.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The wish being the father to the thought. Let us get down to fundamentals. There would not have been one single railway line closed or service discontinued if it had not been for the Liberal Party, because this Government could not pass a resolution through Parliament including the Legislative Council in which the Government has a minority of members.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Need you have a motion passed to take this action?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I have already informed the others but it is necessary for me to repeat—I hope not ad infinitum—to the member for Cottesloe that this Government will close no railway line without previously receiving

the sanction of Parliament. That was exactly what was done. As has already been explained by the Premier, instead of consulting local groups up and down the railway lines, the Government decided that as there are parliamentary representatives of all the districts, and more than one for each district because there is the Legislative Council, the most effective and expeditious manner would be to bring the matter before Parliament. That was precisely what the Government did. It received the approval of Parliament because of the attitude of Liberal members of whom there were few exceptions.

I know there has been some talk regarding the proposition that we should dispense perhaps with Hansard and have limited reports or summaries of what transpires in Parliament. Fortunately, we still have a system of Hansard reporting. The member for Nedlands has talked about indecent haste and the rest of it. He high-lighted his speech with five points.

The Premier: He became Deputy Leader of the Opposition in very quick time.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The first point was:

(1) Is the proposal bold enough?

He went on to say—

To deal with each of the points in turn, one might say, in regard to the first, that is, whether the move was bold enough, why need one question the boldness of the proposal?

The member for South Fremantle interjected and said—

I take it you are still presuming?

The member for Nedlands went on to say—

If there were piecemeal closures of the lines, I consider that the object would be completely defeated. To fiddle with the proposition would produce a hopeless mess. But through bold closures it is possible to properly relate the incidence of the fixed charges as against the variable charges.

Mr. Bovell: Since when have you governed on the views of the member for Nedlands?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I will have a few words to say with regard to the member for Vasse later on, but at present will keep to the member for Nedlands. I am indicating that the member for Nedlands, in a parsonical voice this evening, was trying to impress upon us how sincere was the Liberal Party, including himself.

Mr. Court: I do not detract a word from that speech.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: His first critical point was that there should be a bold policy.

Mr. Court: I asked it as a question; it was not a statement of fact. Read the speech again and it will be found that it is not bad. I read the speech again and was very pleased.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It is not up to the standard of the member for Nedlands. Since then, the member for Nedlands has had his tail twisted by the Country Party, but at that time he said this—

It requires a great deal of courage on the part of any Government to achieve these things. I sense from the Minister's remarks—

referring to the Minister for Transport—when he said that not one man would be dismissed—or words to that effect—that he is already running away from this problem.

In other words, indirectly, the member for Nedlands was regretting the fact that the Government was not indulging in a policy of sacking employees.

Mr. Court: That is not so; you read on because I dealt with it very carefully.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I was being baited by the member for Nedlands, now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because there were no sackings contemplated. I would suggest to the member for Nedlands that he read his speech again and read it very carefully.

Mr. Court: I said there was no need for mass unemployment simply because you reduce the staff in the railways.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The member for Moore wants thousands, and the member for Nedlands wants hundreds; it is a matter of degree.

Mr. Court: You are right out there.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The member for Nedlands regretted the fact that there would be no dismissals. There is no other interpretation to his remarks which could be made from what appears in this copy of Hansard.

Mr. Court: You subsequently admitted there would be a reduction in staff.

Mr. Bovell: There will be dismissals on the Government side next election.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The member for Vasse said something along those lines two or three years ago.

The Premier: Before the last election.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The Government, which had 25 members, came back with 29. I hope the Government has many more defeats of that nature.

The Premier: I would not be surprised if the Country Party defeats the member for Vasse.

Mr. Bovell: You would not be surprised at anything. If you went down to a few towns, you would learn something in regard to this motion.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am wondering whether the reluctance to speak on the part of some members and the absence of specific cases, stems from the fact that the Government has announced that it intends to introduce legislation for the purpose of effecting amendments to the State Transport Co-ordination Act. I hazard a guess that in a few weeks' time when the measure is before us, we will have members of the Opposition putting forth all the arguments imaginable, and unimaginable, as to why it is necessary for farmers to use road transport, and what a hardship it would be to compel them, with other sections of the community, to use existing railway services.

Mr. Perkins: Does Wundowie use the railways for the carting of pig iron?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I do not know.

Mr. Ackland: We will tell you it does not.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The great majority of farmers move stock to the Midland Junction abattoirs by road and not by rail.

Mr. Nalder: Does the Minister for Housing use the railways to transport material to the country in order to build homes?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The Minister for Housing does not carry materials to the country for housing. I suggest that the member for Katanning is very much out of date in this matter as in many other things.

Mr. Court: Are not prefabricated houses carted by road?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The only pre-cut houses are those which go to the North-West of Western Australia where there are no railways. That has happened in the past. The trouble with the Opposition is that too many live in the past; this is 1957! It has been suggested that the Government erred because Ministers were not going hither and yon to attend political meetings organised by people on the other side in certain sectors. I suggest that Ministers have something more to do with their time.

There seems to be an attempt to place me in the firing line in connection with this matter, but I have had requests for two deputations only. One request was from the Farmers' Union a long time back putting forward the same views as we have heard ad infinitum from some of the members opposite. The other happened to come from the Margaret River Zone Council of the Farmers' Union, and I would particularly draw the attention of members to

this. The spokesman told me that the Government should pay no heed to the Farmers' Union or Country Party in connection with the closure of railways; that they, the members of this deputation, were practical farmers and had been operating—

Mr. Bovell: Why did you receive them without the member for the district?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The member for the district is obviously out of touch.

The Minister for Works: He does not get humiliated; he said so.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: They said that contrary to the law, they had been transporting superphosphate and other commodities and wanted it to continue that way.

Mr. Bovell: That was the Margaret River Zone Council; an official deputation.

The SPEAKER: Order! Would the Minister resume his seat. I would ask the member for Vasse not to interject and ask him to keep order. All members have had a fair go, and the Minister should be allowed to proceed.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: A deputation waited on the Minister for Agriculture to make a complaint that whereas they had quite knowingly breached the law for years and had been transporting super by road, just recently some of them had been apprehended by Transport Board inspectors. They felt that they should be entitled to use the roads. The Minister for Agriculture, who had these gentlemen in his office, telephoned me stating that the matter was urgent and asking me if I would receive them before they returned to the country. I said "Yes." He mentioned the question of the transport of super.

These people came from Cowaramup and Margaret River parts of that line, and they indicated to me that they saved upwards of 12s. 6d. per ton of super by transporting it by road. One of them told me his experience. He said, "On Monday I sent my man into the super works at Picton Junction. He was there at approximately 8 o'clock in the morning. That same afternoon the super had been placed in the appropriate paddocks and a great proportion of it had been distributed in the paddocks by milking time the same day."

Perhaps the member for Vasse knows what time, according to the clock, milking time is. That is apparently how they timetable in that part of the world. They indicated that there could be and would be holdups and delays in getting trucks and orders filled, calling at the siding, and perhaps the super would not be there; and that because of certain trace elements super can solidify very quickly, for which reason



it was desirable to take it by road, which was the quickest and cheapest and most convenient form of transport.

I have, as honestly and as faithfully as I can recall, indicated the tenor of the approaches that were made to me in my office several months ago. I am wondering, therefore, where the member for Vasse gets all his imaginary ammunition from, because these men were from the Margaret River zone council of the Farmers' Union. It does not take in Margaret River only, but I understand, all or practically all of the district or the area which is served by the Busselton railway; and they are the people—and not the St. George's Terrace representatives; not the member of Parliament who is in Busselton busying himself with this, that and the other—they are the actual farmers who would be affected; and that is what they told me. If I mentioned their names—which I do not intend to do—I am certain that the member for Vasse would easily identify them.

Mr. Bovell: I have no doubt about that.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I would be interested to know what the response has been to that petition form which was published in "The Farmers' Weekly." I notice that there were a lot of oft-repeated appeals to farmers and people generally to fill in the form and send it in and so on, which seemed to indicate that there was some lagging in connection with it. I noticed particularly that the form was either on the same page as, or handily placed in connection with, this most misleading map.

The Minister for Railways will know, as will the member for Moore and no doubt others, that people in country districts were utterly amazed and relieved when they learned through the lips of the Minister for Railways, in contradistinction to the poison and untruths they had been given by other people, that the lines which were the subject of their concern had never been considered in the matter of closures by the Government or by Parliament. Personally I had an approach from somebody at Koorda as to what sort of mail service he would or would not have when his line closed. Of course, Koorda is not affected by rail services in connection with the closure of lines.

Perhaps I should repeat what I stated on an earlier occasion—that there is a member on the other side of the Chamber—and I cannot mention his name, though he can call it out if he wants to—who uttered words to me to this effect—and I am putting it almost as bluntly as he did—that he agreed the Government was doing the right thing but felt that in order to placate his people he had to put on a bit of a show; that he had the previous week-end been on a tour of inspection along his railway line with the local road board; and that members of the board agreed that

the right thing was being done but they, too, felt there was a necessity to put on a bit of a show for the people in the district.

Mr. Cornell: What a man!

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: In connection with that railway line, the position is that weekly, of regular line traffic there is something less than four tons of goods transported throughout the whole length of line. I do not know whether it is suggested by those who talk about adequate alternative transport that there should be a daily transport service to haul such a small amount. On another line the sum total is 10 cwt. per week, equivalent to a carload of people. Do they expect a whole rake of trucks behind engines every day of the week to haul that small amount of traffic offered?

Mr. Court: We have never suggested anything of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The hon. member has not suggested anything except in general terms! The only member who suggested anything—and it was completely off the beam—was the member for Vasse. He said no arrangements had been made. This is the position. There were, counting road trucks, diesels, buses and trains, a total of 12 regular services per week along that line. The Transport Board has now arranged for 15 regular services per week, in addition to which, of course, there will be far more than that, because that is not including the haulage of heavier goods such as timber.

The chairman of the Transport Board pointed out to me—not that I required much pointing out to be done in connection with this, because as Minister for Forests I have had experience of it—but there it was solemnly printed in "The West Australian," with a picture of the engine driver of the last train, who made a statement to the effect that he had a heavy load because the sawmillers were taking advantage of the last train to bring their timber towards the city. In other words, they would be in a dire plight if the railway system ceased to operate.

But I was told by the chairman of the Transport Board—and I have had many approaches made to me on the matter—that there were hundreds—not a few, but hundreds—of applications made by sawmillers for permits to transport their timber by road as against rail. So we find that, in the area that concerns the member for Vasse, representatives of the farmers have said certain things not unfavourable to the action of the Government.

Mr. Bovell: Not official representatives.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We find sawmillers, who produce goods great in weight and volume, with the same view; and we find that there is a greater

frequency of service under the new arrangements than was previously the case.

I think the member for Vasse had some sort of a complaint about potato growers at Marybrook. I was surprised, on looking at the map, to find that it is ten miles—on a bitumen road—from Busselton. What a great hardship for anyone to have to cart potatoes ten miles over a bitumen road to the nearest centre! This is the sort of thing that we, as members of Parliament, are compelled to listen to in an effort by the Opposition to lead us to believe that the Government is on trial. I should say it is a trial to the Government to have to listen to this sort of thing.

Mr. Bovell: You are ignorant of the problems of the country.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** An example was given of a motor transport having encountered some difficulty on the road to Pingrup or thereabouts. That kind of thing is not uncommon in road transport. Do members think that railway trains always arrive at the appointed place at the appointed time? In many places and cases, people are lucky if the trains get through on the scheduled day, let alone the scheduled hour, but, of course, it becomes headline news and something on which to attempt to defeat the Government if there is a seizure of brakes or a broken axle or something of that kind in regard to road transport. Vehicles get bogged in all sorts of places and I have had a vehicle bogged in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Court: Where?

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** The Leader of the Opposition, who appeared most uncomfortable this evening, had a job to do, but did not know how to do it and certainly did not do it effectively because without doubt he failed to make out a case. What seemed to occur to him as the strongest point from his angle was that the Government had shown unseemly haste in closing the railways in order to get the dirty work done before Parliament met, but, of course, that is given the lie direct because Parliament is meeting a full month earlier than is usually the case.

Hon. D. Brand: The Government made both decisions.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Yes, but if the Government was seeking to have all these railway lines closed before Parliament met, surely it would have had Parliament meet later instead of earlier than usual!

Hon. D. Brand: Let us wait and see what was the reason for the earlier meeting.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** The Government made that decision in the proper place, without any regard to the question of rail closures. I do not know where we would finish up if there was to be one line closed this month and another next month. Would anyone suggest that the Meekatharra line and the Margaret River line have any relationship to one another or that there is any reason why there should not be simultaneous closing of those lines if it were found necessary? Instead of the sword hanging over the heads of these people, the decision of Parliament was made, and that was that; and I repeat that, after five hours of debate, we have not been given one concrete case of where proper arrangements have not been made or of where the Government has fallen down on the job.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition tried to point the finger of scorn at the steps the Government has taken in connection with the administration and general management of our railway system. It is history, of course, that the present unsatisfactory administrative set-up was introduced by a Government of the political complexion that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition supports and that the present Government has spent many long hours of thought and consideration in regard to the matter and finally feels that it is on the right track, starting at the beginning and the proper place, and getting down to fundamentals in connection with the structure of our railway administration—something that it inherited from a Liberal-Country Party Government. I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, as this whole cleaning-up process would no doubt take years, does he expect it to be completed before any railway line is closed?

Mr. Court: I answered that point.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Would he allow one or two or five or six or what number of lines to be closed? I think that the Government, which has to accept the responsibility, is the proper authority to decide the timing of the rail closures and as long as it gives an honest indication to the Opposition that it is tackling the problem earnestly, surely that is sufficient. The present attitude of members of the Liberal Party is merely humbug and playing up to the Country Party. In regard to adequate transport, I have read the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and all he was concerned with in moving his amendment last session, was passenger transport.

Mr. Court: No, it referred to passengers and freight.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Passenger transport. I am speaking of the remarks of and the address made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when the matter was before this Parliament on the 6th December last.

Mr. Court: Read it out.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It occupies about three-quarters of a page. I have read it and re-read it.

The Minister for Education: It must have been interesting.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It was not, and it was not amusing because it smacks of hypocrisy that members opposite could adopt the attitude they did a few months ago and yet here they are tonight turning a complete somersault for political considerations. I know that any Opposition moves resolutions for political reasons but this is a matter of trying to make up to the Country Party and win back what they consider to be lost ground.

I desire now to refer to the member for Blackwood and I do not wish to, and shall not unless he invites me to, recount some of the conversations and, if I may use the term, negotiations that took place between him and me, commencing from his resolution in connection with his famous test road proposition. When he spoke to the motion which was introduced into this Chamber by the Government, there was no amendment on the notice paper. It had not been thought of, and he gave birth to some famous words and said, "I support the motion."

There were no trimmings. He said, "I realise that there must be criticism of it but I also realise that unless we do make a very substantial closure of the railway lines in this State, we are going to achieve no gainful or useful purpose whatever so far as effecting economies is concerned. We have to close perhaps more than 842 miles of line. At least that is the opinion of the departmental committee. I support the motion as it stands." And the motion as it then stood was without any of these trimmings of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and no notice of them had been given.

Mr. Court: They were not trimmings but were meant to be very serious conditions. I think the Premier referred to them as embroidery, but they were meant to be very serious amendments.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: If members of the Opposition had been able to show that the Government had completely flouted the decision of Parliament, or, in other words, that it had made no move at all in connection with the administration of the railways and so on—if it had been able to show that a mess had been made in connection with alternative road transport and that there had been no investigations and no attempt on the part of the Government to deal with the question of metropolitan passenger services, there might have been something legitimate in the Opposition's approach. But this is purely political, and I must

repeat that notwithstanding frequent interjections on my part, not one single crystallised example of where the Government had fallen down—not one word or case—could be given.

Mr. Court: I think you were out of the Chamber when I raised the question of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line. Are you satisfied that that proposition is thoroughly in hand?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I was not out of the Chamber; I was in another portion of it.

Mr. Court: I referred to the letter from the chairman of the Transport Board dated the 17th April, and I made certain remarks thereon. I gave that as a specific case and I mentioned why I did not give the other cases.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am glad that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has raised this point. There is in existence at the present time, or there was, a form of transport or a multiple form of transport, and it has been proved that it is unfinancial and uneconomic to the nth degree and that something has to be done in connection with it. And so other steps have been taken. After surveying the situation the Transport Board determines that a certain procedure shall be followed and then the matter is closely watched.

If it is found that an additional service is required because of a change in the habits of the people from their normal operations, steps will be taken with a minimum of delay, in order to provide that additional service. In some cases it will be necessary no doubt to cancel certain services; there is no sense in running trucks backwards and forwards if there is no freight offering.

Mr. Court: Are you thoroughly satisfied that the proposition put forward to the people, under date the 17th April and to come into effect on the 17th June—

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I have never been to the city of Bonnie Rock in my life.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: They would like to see you there.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I think the people in that part of the world could more easily find my office than I could find the salubrious suburb of Bonnie Rock. They have made no attempt to come and see me and neither has the member for the district, or adjacent districts. In these matters, as every member of the Opposition realises, a Minister does not go out and say, "We will have three trucks and two buses per day on this route." That is left to the officers whose responsibility it is and if, in the initial weeks, there are complaints, a case is made out and the Minister is satisfied, and if the department

does not correct the position, it is the duty of the Minister to instruct the department to see that certain steps are taken.

There are certain members in this Chamber, notwithstanding political differences, for whom I have a profound respect; but I feel they have done themselves less than justice because of the attitude they have adopted in connection with this matter. They have been hard put to it to submit anything resembling a case; they have spoken vaguely and in generalities.

A few moments ago my friend, the Minister for Railways, who has been listening to this debate, reminded me that for a period of several months in 1952—they were the final months of the term of office of the McLarty-Watts Government—no trains were running. At short notice and without any proper consideration being given or knowing what was going to happen next, hundreds of thousands of tons of goods were transported back and forth, near and far, and there was considerable agitation and opposition in many places when those people were subsequently denied the free use of road transport to which they had become accustomed for a short period and which they liked and wanted continued.

I will concede that there was a difference in the matter of subsidies. But if the Government is to subsidise forever and a day every type of commodity, then I venture to suggest that the burden on the State Treasury will be even greater than the burden imposed by the railway system at present, because of certain circumstances. One of those circumstances, without any shadow of doubt, is that farmers are using loopholes in the State Transport Co-ordination Act to bring down to Perth a bag of potatoes or a prime chicken for a friend, or someone of that nature and then load their vehicles on the return journey with many tons of fuel or the like.

The farmers have a concession or concessions that no other section of the community enjoys and these farmers, because of having that advantage, have sabotaged their railways and have made the railways unpayable. They have made it unprofitable for any Government with a sense of responsibility to contemplate spending many millions of pounds to rehabilitate railways that carry a few hundredweights per day or per week. Yes; those people will use the railways for certain commodities so long as the railways are carrying them for about 50 per cent. of the actual cost. I know it is said, and I have heard it before, particularly from the member for Moore, that there is inefficiency in the Railway Department.

Mr. Ackland: Do you deny it?

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** I am not denying it. I do not make any untruthful statements in this or any other

place in the Chamber. But do we want the Railways Commission to act as a business concern in the same way as private enterprise? If that is the position and it is entrusted with that responsibility, it will cease altogether operating a service unless that particular service pays. The commission will then have the right to run a service as infrequently as it likes. The commission will then, without benign Governments with an eye on the political scene having any say, be in a position if it costs 7d. a ton mile to transport goods, to charge 7d. per ton mile plus a margin for profit.

But no! I know these country people because I came from the country myself, although at that time road transport was comparatively insignificant. The country people want their railways for the half-price freights; they want the railways as a convenience and they want to use the loopholes and the weaknesses in the State Transport Co-ordination Act which we hope to overcome and, if there is any sincerity anywhere in this Parliament, they will be overcome for the purpose of tightening up the Act so that they will be required to support a transport system into which many tens of millions of pounds of public money have been poured.

We still talk about the development of the country and about the railways being in the interests of the farmers. We still talk of them as settlers; yet they have been there for 25, 30 and up to 50 years or more. But it is a very accommodating term and it is nice to think of them as pioneers pitching a tent under a tree, or to think of them with an axe and spade setting about clearing their blocks. That is the mental picture conjured up of some of these old established citizens who are taking advantage of every point.

Because of that circumstance, and because of the political implications, Governments throughout the years have not had sufficient courage to face up to the position and I felt rather pleased that, irrespective of any party political considerations—and I expressed this thought to the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition—in a matter of this kind, which was of such magnitude and which had such an impact upon the State and its finances, and upon the general well-being, the Liberal Party was forgetting party politics and was considering the welfare of the department and of the State generally.

Yet because of some campaigning in the few short months since we met last December, we find those members of the Liberal Party turning this pitiful and, shall I say, despicable somersault, to such an extent that members of the Country Party have, up to this stage, been so ashamed of them that there has not been one spokesman from the cross benches.

Mr. Court: We have not turned any somersault. You talk about our not having put any specific case to you! You

have not told us one thing about the Midland Junction workshops or the overhaul of the railways generally to bring about a review of the administration.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Tonight was to be the night of all nights—the night a motion of censure was to be moved against the Government! Tonight was the night that we were to be on trial! There were to be a whole series of charges that we had made such a mess of things because of the haste alleged; that it would be impossible to answer them and even if success were not achieved in this House that, through the columns of the Press, the public would be convinced the Government had fallen down on the job. I repeat the assertion that it has not been possible, in one single instance, for any member of the Liberal Party to show where these weaknesses exist, and because I thought that these charges would be levelled in the House tonight, I asked the chairman of the Transport Board to be in the precincts of Parliament House this evening.

Mr. Court: I repeat my question: What have you done—

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am afraid, because of the close association, that the member for Nedlands is becoming afflicted with the complaint from which the member for Cottesloe suffers. I went through the points about 15 minutes ago and I scored them out as I dealt with them. As there is no case to answer, all I want to say in conclusion is that last year I submitted the case for the cessation of operations on many railway lines—which was not a particularly tasteful sort of a job either, but it is my responsibility, as Minister for Transport in this Chamber and as the representative for the Minister for Railways in another place to speak on these things—based on my own studies and from advice I had received from officers, together with a study of reports which were the results of activity and investigation by two expert Government committees for a period of almost two years.

After the proceedings had concluded and I crossed to the other side of the Chamber on my way out—I hope the member for Murray does not mind my saying this—the then Leader of the Opposition congratulated me on the case that had been submitted. He indicated to me that this was a problem that had to be tackled and that he was pleased the Government had decided to do it. He realised that there would be sticky situations; that there would be protests and the rest of it. How true! How prophetic! I say this because the ex-Leader of the Opposition was exceedingly fair and to receive tribute—although not in the records—from a member on the other side of the Chamber is rather uncommon and it was the first time that it had happened to me since I have been a member of this Parliament, which is almost 14 years.

The present Government, with the greatest earnestness in the world, and conscious of the fact that there are people in many places who are expressing concern and becoming agitated over this situation, has proceeded with the task in accordance with the decision of Parliament. Not the decision of the Government, but the decision of Parliament! A decision which could have been made only with the support of the members of the Liberal Party. That was the decision at that time.

Mr. Court: This gives us the right to say that the decision should be honoured. You have not answered the questions I put to you. All you have done is to associate me with the member for Cottesloe.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I think that would be the invariable fate of the hon. member. I am satisfied that the Transport Board has taken all reasonable steps and precautions to ensure that these people get a reasonable form of transport. If there is an average of two passengers travelling per week, what sort of service does one expect? A semi-trailer passenger bus or what? If there are insufficient people or goods to warrant the running of an efficient service—because no one will operate it—what is to be done about it? There are people around the metropolitan area screaming out for bus services, for water supplies and for other public utilities, but because those people are in districts that are so far-flung, and because their numbers are so few, it is uneconomic to give them those services and so they are not provided.

Of course, one can say, "The railways are there and what are you going to do about it?" In the early days the railways were the only form of transport, but today there is road transport and the operators are using it to such effect that the Premier has said that there will be a loss of £7,000,000 in the railways finances in the coming year. I know that the clever people will say, "There you are, a greater loss after you have closed a certain number of railways."

The answer to that is, briefly, that two seasons of wheat have been transported in the one year. Let not the member for Vasse think that if the railways are carting wheat they are making a profit out of it. That is the reason why there is a lesser deficit than that for the year just dawning. The point is that there are so many fixed overhead costs that even if goods were carted for 1d. a mile, it would make very little difference because there is an annual revenue coming in to offset these fixed charges even if there were no railways whatsoever.

Tonight I have found myself in the position of having very little to talk about. Perhaps the facetious members will say, "This is not the first time," but I can say, in summarising the criticism of myself, that there has not been a case to answer. The reason is that no case has been

raised in opposition to the action taken by the Government at the behest of the Parliament of Western Australia.

**HON. A. F. WATTS** (Stirling—on amendment) [11.31: I understand that, for the moment, we are discussing an amendment moved by the Premier to strike out all the words in this motion except the first two, and it is certainly not my intention to subscribe to those words being struck out. I am prepared, on this subject of the cessation of operations on railway lines, to censure the Government at any opportunity that offers because, as I have said right from the beginning, I believe that the proposal is one which is simply seeking to place the onus of attempts at economy upon a small section of the people in country districts, leaving the rest of the State untouched.

So far as I am concerned, I will not subscribe to anything of that nature, and because I hold those views I do not propose to agree to the striking out of these words in the motion. I will say, however, that I would far sooner be debating a resolution to rescind the motion that was carried by this House on the 13th December last year because I would suggest to you, Sir, that that would have been a resolution—if carried—for the rescission of that motion, which would have had some effect on the decision that was ruled by this House on the 13th December last. However, the opportunity has not been, and cannot yet be, afforded to me to discuss that motion, of which I have given notice. Therefore there are many things that I could say in regard to this matter which would be far better kept until the opportunity comes to discuss that motion which I say I regard as of far greater importance than the one before us.

I do not believe it is possible at any time to make railways pay in Western Australia. I believe that it is possible to minimise the losses and to reduce the present-day losses that are made on those railways. I suggest to you, Sir, that the population of this State and the circumstances of this State at present—its area and so forth—make it virtually impracticable to run a railway system—especially such a one as we have, which I believe was not very well designed in the early days and therefore has probably added to the operational costs—other than at a loss. Let us look at the returns of the Australian States for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1956, in regard to this matter.

We find that Western Australia with a population per mile of railway line of 162 persons, had a net deficit of £4,600,000. New South Wales, however, with a population of 570 persons per mile of line, or very nearly four times the Western Australian figure, succeeded in making a deficit of £8,000,000, or nearly twice the Western Australian figure; while Victoria

with 567 persons to the mile of line—once again nearly four times that of Western Australia—had a net deficit of £4,300,000 in that same year. Queensland, with 212 persons to the mile of line—a matter of 50 more than Western Australia to each mile—had a deficit of £5,500,000; and South Australia with 319 persons to the mile of line—or approximately twice the number in Western Australia—made a deficit of £4,200,000.

So, when one takes into consideration the sparseness of population to the mile of railway—and as I have already said I think that some early errors were made in the design of our railway system in this State—and has regard to the very considerable distances particularly, even by comparison with the other States I have mentioned, over which diversified traffic has to be handled, then I suggest there is nothing astonishing in the fact that Western Australia is making a loss, because a loss is being made in some degree comparable to, and in other States less than, the loss of Western Australia. But a loss is being made in every State of the Commonwealth.

So I refuse to accept the fact that because there is a loss we should say that we are going to inconvenience and embarrass a great number of people in the rural districts. That is the line I took in December, and it is the line I am taking now. As far as I am concerned—I said it then and I repeat now—Parliament should not have passed the resolution which was carried in this House on the 13th December until the people concerned had been acquainted with the alternative proposals and been given an opportunity to say whether they were satisfactory to them; and an opportunity to discuss with their representatives what the effect would be on them. So that if they were content—as might have been possible in those circumstances; I do not know—with the alternative proposals, then in some cases the resolution might have been accepted. But no such thing was done.

As the Minister for Transport has pointed out, the first speaker from the benches on my right, my hon. friend the member for Blackwood, supported the motion without the slightest question as to any paragraph being added to it making it subject to anything. So far as the hon. gentleman was concerned, it was carried as it stood because there was no suggestion at that time that there was going to be any restriction or limitation on it. The only other hon. member who spoke on that debate from among my friends on my right was the member for Nedlands, and it was he who moved the amendment. Up to a point the amendment was excellent in its terms but it did not cure what was fundamental in the motion that was carried; to wit, that the railway lines were to cease operation.

The Premier: That is the point.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: It simply said that it was subject to the Government ensuring increased efficiency in the overhauling and reorganising of the metropolitan system. Those two points would not have helped people whose lines were to be closed; it would not have helped them at all. As I saw the position, it did not have the slightest effect on the 842 miles of line, so far as these people were concerned in regard to these miles of line. The only one that could have helped was one that said it should not discontinue certain country rail services without first ensuring a satisfactory system of road transport. I have already said that I was not going to accept, and I will not accept now, a system which merely says to these people "You are going to have an alternative transport system but heaven knows what it will be."

That is the position in some cases even at the present moment. On the 13th December it was even worse than it is at present because nobody knew at all what the propositions were going to be. As I said, the motion should never have been carried in this Parliament unless there had first of all been given to the people concerned a complete statement of the alternative road transport with which they would be supplied if their railway lines were to be closed.

It is true that when the motion was first debated in the Legislative Council it came to this House undetermined so far as the Legislative Council was concerned. It carried a paragraph that the Legislative Council would defer it until it had been dealt with by this House and until the Government had produced, in respect of each separate line of railway, a definite plan of road construction and road transport.

Had that motion been insisted upon subsequently in the Legislative Council, I venture to say that none of the lines would have been closed up to this stage because Parliament would not have carried the motion; it would have deferred it. In the meantime we might have got information and might have been in a position to acquaint our constituents in the areas concerned with the situation and obtain from them their considered opinion, because it was a well-known fact that it was the policy of the Government, as has been stated in the pre-election campaign and in this House since, that they were not going to undertake the cessation of railway operations without the consent of Parliament. In consequence, I have no doubt, and I had no doubt then, that had this resolution not been carried, the question of closing railway lines as it now stands would not have been in existence.

During his speech the Minister for Transport stated that the proposals which have been put forward are satisfactory in

every case so far as he is concerned. I have only two railway lines in my district that were the subject of this resolution. One is the Elleker-Nornalup railway line. That was to be closed firstly on the 1st March; then it was postponed until the 1st April. Subsequently a deputation was taken by me to the Premier from the Denmark Road Board and in the net result the closure was postponed until the 1st May.

In the meantime the Transport Board visited the district and discovered, I believe, that there were considerably more problems there to be handled than appeared at first sight. What they came back and reported I do not know, and I have not been told until tonight of the reason for that decision to be deferred until, at the earliest, the 30th September. I certainly got a letter from the Premier saying that would be so, but I have not been told any reason for it until tonight. So far as I was concerned I was told that, for the time being, it was not closed.

In regard to the Gnowangerup-Ongerup line, the other one in my district concerned, the Minister for Transport, in regard to railways generally, gave the impression both in December and tonight that the quantity of traffic to be carried on those lines is in the vicinity of hundredweights per week. I would like to tell this House that between mid-January and mid-June there were three trains per week fully loaded which travelled between Ongerup, the terminal of that line, and Gnowangerup.

At that time there were still 2,000 tons of freight at Ongerup which had not been lifted. So that is a district—because the Minister made no exceptions—which carries only a few hundredweights per week! As a matter of fact there were at least 40,000 tons of freight to be moved over that line and it was to be closed on the 1st July. Again I do not know the reasons why it has not been proceeded with.

On the 17th June I received the following letter from the Transport Board:—

Further to recent correspondence and discussions relative to the above Ongerup-Gnowangerup railway, the tentative date for cessation of the railway service, namely 1st July next, has not been confirmed. The position regarding the transport of grain and fertilisers is to be discussed further in detail at a general conference on Thursday next and will have some bearing on the ultimate decision as to the date of railway service termination. I will therefore need to advise you later of an amended date.

At present I still do not know what that date is, but at the end of that letter, this is stated—

The Main Roads Department is fully au fait with requirements and has programmed to meet any demands likely

to be made upon the roads. Certain work is to be undertaken early in the new financial year. The whole programme will be spread over three or four years, and when completed will provide a high standard of conditions on the roads affected.

On the following day, therefore, I wrote to the Commissioner of Main Roads. I quoted that paragraph and asked him if he would be good enough to advise what was the programme in the next financial year to which the Transport Board referred, and what was the programme spread over three or four years which, when completed, would provide a high standard of conditions on the roads affected.

Under date the 25th June, this was the reply I received. After acknowledging the letter the commissioner went on to say—

I cannot be presumptuous in giving detailed advice at this time of the year of what our proposals will be in the 1957-58 financial year. As you know our programme is produced early in the financial year and then receives examination and consideration by the Minister for Works. In a way, presumption must also be refrained from in regard to forward planning as our funds are subject to Commonwealth legislation. Further, the Government has agreed that on the principal roads in certain areas where railways are discontinued, the Department's normal programme of important works is to be accelerated.

As between those two communications it must be agreed there is a great gulf fixed. I first of all sent the paragraph from the Transport Board to the local authority concerned. Then I was obliged to send in this communication in which I got no information at all, so we still do not know. Supposing the decision to close this line goes on, and there is nothing to say it will not, only that a date is not yet fixed, we still do not know what the road programme is going to be.

In an area, not where there are a few hundredweights of freight to be carried per annum but where there will be at least 30,000 to 50,000 tons and possibly more depending on seasonal conditions of course, to be carried over the road structures in this year, and that is one way only, we still do not know the road programme. Added to that must be the traffic which comes in and which I suppose is half the amount I quoted at the very least. So the net result of this resolution which was carried in December, so far as I am concerned, is that the Government was authorised to close the railways with a request verbally that it should later provide us with detailed information of road and rail transport, which it has not done.

That is the only part, which is substantiated by this correspondence, to which I can attach any importance whatsoever. As I have repeatedly said, the whole trouble was that the resolution carrying the words "that the railways listed in Appendix B should be discontinued" was assented to by both Houses of Parliament. However, I have already said that there are many more things that I shall say when the opportunity comes before me to move the motion to rescind that resolution, which I certainly propose to do, and to give this House considerable reasons why, in our opinion, that should be done.

I would like to say that I did not hide under a bushel when I came to the decision that that was the only course to be taken in the matter. I stated publicly a fortnight ago and it was duly published in the Press—the "Daily News," I think—of Saturday week and also over the network of the A.B.C. that I proposed to move such a motion and, I would, as I said, have far more preferred to deal with the matter in that resolution than this one. However, for the reasons I have given, I have felt from the beginning, and still feel, that the Government has been unwise in taking this action of rail closure instead of seeking to solve the problem by other means, and I do not propose to assist in striking out the words in this motion.

**MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON** (Cottesloe—on amendment) [11.31]: Very early in my speech I should like to say I do believe the Government is deserving of censure because of the stand it has taken in regard to the railways closure resolution passed in the House last session, and I oppose the Premier's amendment to delete certain words and to add some unspecified words at a later stage. It is rather remarkable that the Government, through its speakers, the Premier and the Minister for Transport, has been at some pains to discount the amendments that were moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition last session. The original motion was not carried. The resolution that was carried has in it three provisions, and, I submit, that makes it part of the motion.

In their speeches, the Premier and the Minister for Transport made very little reference to it and, indeed, they made no attempt to give the House details of any of the steps that had been taken to ensure increased efficiency in the workshops or railway administration generally. They gave very meagre accounts of the type of replacements that item (b) in the original motion requested, and like reference was made to the overhauling and reorganisation of the metropolitan Government passenger transport services, with a view to reducing the deficit on these services. These amendments are extremely important; they are so important, that had it not been for their inclusion, this motion



would not have passed through both Houses of Parliament. It would have passed in this House by virtue of the Government's majority, but I submit it would not have passed through another place.

The Minister for Education: How do you know?

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am suggesting this, because of something that took place prior to our debating this particular motion. It will be remembered that it was brought down in another place and, as a result of the discussion, all words in line 1 of the motion down to and including the word "operated" in line 10 were struck out, and the following words were inserted in lieu:—

the discontinuance and cessation of operation of the railways referred to in Appendix "B" for the reasons mentioned in Appendix "A" be deferred:

- (a) until after they have been considered and a decision made by the Legislative Assembly, and
- (b) until after the Government has brought forward definite separate proposals in respect of the area served by each railway—of road transport and roads in lieu of rail services.

It is logical to assume, I think, that support in another place would not have been forthcoming from those Liberal members who, at this stage, had been responsible for passing the motion, if the three amendments carried in this Chamber had not been incorporated in it. Certainly, it is rather remarkable to find the Government rejecting this out of hand and actually going forward as if the amendments were not therein.

In his speech the Minister for Transport made some very hot-headed statements, and I feel some of those words should be put into proper perspective. I hope to be able to prove just how worthless were many of his assertions. However, prior to doing that, I would say that the motion moved this evening by our leader, among other things, seeks to censure the Government because it has failed to honour an election promise that no railway lines were to cease operation or be pulled up without on-the-spot discussions with local authorities and other people concerned.

That brings me to the election promise made by the Premier and read out by the Leader of the Opposition this evening. In the campaign for the Murchison seat in November, 1952, among other promises made by the present Premier, was one that better railway services would be given to the Murchison electorate. Again, a promise was made that no railway lines were to cease operation without adequate on-the-spot discussions by Ministers with local governing authorities and other people concerned, and not even then unless Cabinet and Parliament first approved.

In trying to explain that away, the Minister for Transport said that it was resolved on the part of the Government not to have on-the-spot discussions with the people concerned, or the local government authority. It was resolved not to do that, but, instead of consulting the people, those people had parliamentary representatives and that the opinion of those parliamentary representatives would be obtained. Of what use is it to obtain the views of these parliamentary representatives that were concerned? Does the House remember what happened when these parliamentary representatives attempted to give their views on rail closures? Do members recall what happened when they did not vote on the rail closures? It is history that they were placed on the carpet in Mr. Chamberlain's office at Trades Hall, and they were really whipped into line.

The Minister for Mines: Your imagination is running away with you.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: There is no imagination about it, and it brings up a very vital principle indeed. Here we have the present Minister for Transport saying that the Government would get the views of the parliamentary representatives in those regions instead of having on-the-spot discussions with local governing authorities and people concerned, prior to the railway lines being closed. Yet when the representatives endeavoured to show in some way that they disapproved—and indeed one hotly disapproved of the action being taken by the Government with regard to a certain line—

Mr. May: I didn't.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am not talking about the hon. member.

Mr. May: Yes, because I am one that you presumed was on the carpet.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am not talking about the hon. member.

Mr. May: You included all five of us.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I will read it. Here it is.

Mr. May: I did not vote against it or speak against it.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am not accusing the hon. member.

Mr. May: You are using your imagination.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am not. I am going to read this newspaper article and the hon. member can deny the truth of that.

Mr. May: I would if it came from "The West Australian." I would deny anything in that case.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I would also like to bring out the fact that behind all this there is a very vital principle of someone outside Parliament whipping parliamentarians into line because they do

not follow the lines set up by the Trades Hall people. That is one of the rocks on which the Queensland Government will founder.

The Minister for Education: The Bonnie Rock!

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Members opposite will not find anything to laugh about. There is a lot behind this Labour Party at present about which members opposite are not pleased. Someone tonight was talking about the smooth political waters of the Labour Party. But there are a lot of under-currents at present—and trouble for them is just around the corner! As a result of the parliamentary representatives doing their job and disapproving of the action of the Government with regard to the rail closures, they were put on the carpet and whipped into line, and no one can deny that. I believe—here I am not on really solid ground, but I believe—that one would really have had to see and hear what went on in that Chamber to believe it.

Mr. May: One of these days I will tell you.

The Minister for Mines: Your informant was wide of the mark.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: This is what the Press had to say about the incident. This article was written by the political writer of "The West Australian"—C. E. Menagh—and it is headed, "A.L.P. Puts Five on the Mat." It reads as follows:—

The State Executive of the Australian Labour Party has yet to decide what action it will take against five Labour M's.L.A. who refrained from voting for a Government rail-closure motion in the Legislative Assembly on December 14 last.

Mr. May: That is completely wrong.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: The hon. member can get up and deny it afterwards.

Mr. May: I am doing so now.

Mr. Court: You tell us the truth. We would like to hear.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: We would like to hear all about it. This article continues—

The A.L.P. intends to insist, however, that no matter how safe a Government measure may be, party members must vote for it, irrespective of whether this will do them harm in the electorate or not.

By jove, there is a lot behind that! This is the same point on which the present Queensland Labour Government is foundering. The article continues—

The State Executive last night again deferred to decision on action against the five members—Messrs. T. Evans (Kalgoorlie), E. M. O'Brien (Murchison), W. Sewell, (Geraldton), J. Hall (Albany) and H. May (Collie).

It is probable that the executive will make a decision at its next meeting on March 25, when the general secretary (Mr. F. E. Chamberlain) will have returned from the biennial conference of the A.L.P. in Brisbane.

Mr. Court: The Premier is getting worried, because he has a couple of pairs tonight.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: The article continues, under the sub-heading of "Not Accepted"—

An explanation by Messrs. Hall, May and O'Brien that they were paired when the vote was taken has not been accepted as a valid excuse because they paired with Liberal members who were supporters of the motion.

It is probable that these three and Mr. Sewell, who explained that there was some confusion at the time the vote was taken, will be reminded that they will be expected in future to honour the party pledge and support all measures agreed to by Caucus.

If a recommendation by executive officers is accepted, this requirement will be read out in Caucus and at all district council meetings of the party within the State.

The proposed recommendation rebukes Mr. Evans for having spoken and voted against the motion.

The position of Mr. Evans must have been very insecure and is possibly insecure at present, and it could be partly because of this. The article goes on—

The present intention is to inform him that if he offends again, drastic action will be taken against him by the executive.

The Minister for Education: Nothing to what Arthur Watts will do to you chaps.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: That should show everybody concerned, and it should show the public what is the worth of the word of Labour parliamentary representatives who endeavour to dissociate themselves from any action the Government might take. In this particular instance they were endeavouring to do the right thing and represent their people. The Minister for Transport said there was no need to have on-the-spot discussions because the parliamentary representatives were there. But, of course, they were not able to represent their local people, because they were whipped into line—well and truly whipped into line. And that is a denial of the democratic set-up here and a denial of the parliamentary system.

Mr. Cornell: This is the second time these members have been censured!

Mr. Court: The only difference is that they could win this on a vote. They could not win the last one.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I do not intend to say very much more, because the ground has been pretty well covered. But it was fairly obvious from the start that no motion was needed by the Government to enable it to take this action. The Government could have taken the action required to discontinue these lines. The only consideration that possibly caused the Government to take the action it did was that it was an election promise. But that is only one very small part of the election promises. Certainly no on-the-spot discussions were held, and the parliamentary representatives were not able to do their work—not the Labour ones anyway. In any event, when this motion was passed, no notice was taken of it, and the Government took its own course of action without paying any regard to the amendments moved.

The Minister for Mines: Those were only afterthoughts.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am surprised that the Minister should say that, because they were considered amendments. I do not know whether the Government's sole reason for introducing the motion was its election promises. It could have been to seek permission of the House but, as I have said, that was not necessary. A part-reason—as has been suggested—might have been that the motion was introduced to drive another wedge between the Liberals and the Country Party and already the Premier has said that there does not seem to be much necessity for that, although whether this is true or not remains to be seen. Another reason—I hope it is a true one—could have been that the Government wanted to see what sort of reaction members of the Opposition would have to the proposal. It could have been that the Government welcomed constructive criticism.

The Minister for Education: We have not heard much of that tonight.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I hope that is a part-reason because the amendments moved contained sound and solid common-sense. The Liberal Party did not take upon itself the right to deny the Government the opportunity it was making to do something towards solving the railway problem. The Liberal Party decided that it would support the motion, subject to the three amendments with which we are all familiar, and in no way since that time has the Liberal Party deviated from that course. When it is suggested that a somersault has taken place, that is far from the truth. The motion, as passed, is there for all to read and when the smokescreen clears away, I think an unbiased observer will see it in that way.

There can be no doubt that the amendments are part of the motion and if any action is to be taken on the motion that action should be taken on the amendments

also. But I repeat that the Government has not yet shown us what action has been taken to comply with the amendments that were agreed to. It is obviously unfair that economies in the Western Australian Government Railways should be effected by imposing on a few people who are assisting to develop the outback of Western Australia, a burden the weight of which should fall on all sections of the community equally.

I conclude by saying that the Government is very deserving of censure because it has not honoured the undertakings included in the motion and has failed to overhaul the railway administration as the motion requested. All that remains for me to say is that the amendment moved by the Premier to delete most of the words of the censure motion is just one of the hackneyed courses that he has taken on many past occasions to try to throw a smoke-screen over the original motion. I oppose the amendment.

MR. PERKINS (Roe—on amendment) [11.55]: As the hour is growing late I do not desire to delay the House for long but to take this opportunity of disabusing the mind of the Minister for Transport of any idea he may hold that the alternative services being provided in districts where rail services have been suspended are satisfactory. There is a very strong feeling of resentment among the people of the districts formerly served by lines on which the services have recently been suspended, because they feel that the Government has made them the scapegoats for troubles which are far more fundamental in the Railway Department and which have still to be faced up to notwithstanding the closing of these 800-odd miles of line.

I believe the Treasurer of the State is going still to have plenty of trouble from the Railway Department and the closing of services on this 842 miles of lines will have but a trifling effect compared with some of the other reforms that I think will have to be made by the Government, sooner or later, with regard to the Railway Department. I do not wish to discuss those aspects at length tonight but to take this opportunity of voicing that feeling of resentment which I am sure any members going to those districts and meeting the people concerned will realise is very deep.

It so happens that the people of those areas who are being asked to bear this added burden are probably those whose position least enables them to carry it and hence the very strong opposition from those of us who represent country districts in regard to the policy that has been followed. The Minister for Transport and the Premier quoted various figures from Railway Department reports, but I think a great many members of this House are beginning to be suspicious of the soundness of some of the reports emanating from the Railway Department.

The Premier himself gave some indication of his doubts about the Railway Department reports when he said that if some further expert was called in to report on that department the State might be faced with a recommendation for further capital expenditure in order to bring the department up to date. Surely there is some approach to the problem other than that! I do not wish to discuss all those problems at this late hour but rather to deal with the position as it affects the country districts formerly served by the lines on which traffic has been suspended—I hope only for the time being.

Something has been said tonight about the alternative services, but in order to give members an idea of the difficulties facing people in the districts concerned, I will read portion of a letter which I received from the branch of the Farmers' Union at Bulyee, which is about halfway between Corrigin and Brookton. It says—

The railway freighter road bus continues to run on Thursdays and back Fridays but this cannot handle skins, poultry, etc. After representations to the Transport Board permission for a private contractor at unattractive freight rates has been obtained, but sooner than pay freight on a rail plus basis a voluntary service of farmers has been instituted on Mondays in place of the train as far as Bulyee to bring bread and mails. At the moment we are battling for fulfilment of the promise of a subsidised service at no extra cost for the first year. We feel entitled to a rail freight truck once a week on a through freight basis.

I am sure members will recall that during the previous debate this promise was made to people living in those districts, and that at least for the first year they would receive a service at no greater cost than the one they had received from the railways.

Of course, so far as the Brookton-Corrigin line is concerned the Monday train has been cut out because railway services on that line have ceased, and no alternative service has been provided on Mondays. The settlers themselves have arranged that alternative service. Members will have noted in the Press the service which was started on the Katanning-Pingrup line.

Probably the department was rather unfortunate that the suspension of railway services took place during the wet period. I would not say that it was abnormally wet because naturally during the winter months we expect to have these storms passing through, and if we are to have a proper service for the people in these districts, we expect it to function during wet periods as well as dry periods. But when that service was instituted neither the passenger freighter bus nor the road truck got through to Pingrup. That naturally created a bad impression among the people of the district.

I am receiving numerous complaints about the service being provided along the Lake Grace-Hyden line now that the railway service has been suspended. We were assured that steps were being taken to have the roads brought up to a condition which would make them capable of carrying these alternative road services. The people in these areas quickly found out that that is not so and while some work was being done on the roads, the services were suspended before much could be done. The roads have not been capable of carrying a road transport service which will provide a suitable alternative to the rail service.

Because of the difficulties which have arisen so soon after the suspension of these railway services, residents of the districts concerned are beginning to wonder what the future holds. Admittedly, arrangements were made by the Railway Department to shift the grain remaining in the bins on the lines that were being closed, and also arrangements were made to complete the carting of super necessary for the current season. But so far as I know, no definite arrangements have been made as yet about the cartage of grain from those sidings next season. Judging by the attitude of the Minister for Transport up to date, he does not contemplate reopening the lines so that the grain can be shifted from the bins next season and I can imagine that a great deal of planning will be necessary if there is to be no chaos in the handling of the next harvest.

I think I mentioned, when the previous motion was before the House, that in the grain producing areas the position is particularly difficult because the whole of the farming technique has been built up on the basis of the farmer being able to deliver to the bins provided at the sidings situated close handy to their properties during the rush harvest period. The farmers' equipment is designed for that purpose and it is not designed to cart over longer distances to some other railhead. Further than that, the whole bulkhandling system can be thrown out of gear if too many farmers decide to change the point of delivery of their harvest.

Mr. Ackland: Under the Bulk Handling Act, a farmer must deliver to the nearest delivery point.

Mr. PERKINS: That is another point. Even if some latitude were allowed in that direction, it would raise a great many difficulties and, in my opinion, a major problem would still have to be tackled. Let us suppose that for the next harvest farmers continued to deliver to the existing bins. What arrangements will be made for transferring the harvest from those bins, which will then be off the line, to the railing point?

Hon. D. Brand: That is something we have not been told.

Mr. PERKINS: No one knows anything about it; and one can imagine the uneasiness among farmers in those areas. The Lake Grace-Hyden line is a good example in this instance. It is one of those lines which reach out into the newer parts of the State now being opened up and there are a great many new settlers developing farms in that area. One would have thought that this was a line which would be regarded by the Railway Department as a feeder bringing in the produce in order to obtain that concentration of freight on the main lines of the State. But it is one of the lines on which the railway service has been suspended. I have been informed by the Transport Board that it is proposed to shift the grain from Pederah, Karlgarin and Hyden sidings into Kondinin. Kondinin is quite a suitable siding but has only the ordinary grain receiving facilities.

So one can imagine the extra cost involved if farmers have to pay for a make-shift system of loading out of the bins at the former sidings of Pederah, Karlgarin and Hyden. Instead of the grain being loaded into the railway trucks it will have to be loaded into motor trucks, transported into Kondinin and then transferred through the ordinary small elevators which are used for the receiving of farmers' grain. In those circumstances one can easily imagine that as well as the extra costs of road transport as against railway transport, farmers will be faced with an additional charge for the double handling of their grain.

As one goes further south on that particular line, the position becomes even worse. I have been informed by the Transport Board that it proposes to deliver from the sidings of Pingaring, Dornock, Wardercarrin and Kuender, down through the Lake Grace line. Pingaring is the largest of those sidings which serves a very big area to the east of it. The nearest siding on the Newdegate-Lake Grace line to Pingaring is Burngup. This is one siding that has a reasonably good road leading down to it.

I can assure the Minister for Works that if it is proposed to cart grain from perhaps Pingaring and Dornock down to Burngup, the Main Roads Department will need to do a great deal of work on that road. It is most unfortunate that at Burngup at present there is no bulkhandling installation whatever. Who is going to pay the cost of providing some facilities there for the transference of the harvest from the other sidings I have mentioned? Or is it proposed that the road transport trucks are going to pass their nearest siding on the existing railway line and carry on further towards Lake Grace?

For my part, I mention these points merely to show the chaotic condition that exists at present. Because of this we, who represent the districts concerned, cannot

give any firm opinion to the residents of those districts when they inquire what the position is likely to be at the next harvest. In those circumstances, I believe that the Government has been unduly hasty in taking the action that it has. Further, there is probably less justification for the cessation of services on the Lake Grace-Hyden line than on almost any other branch line in this State that one can think of.

I know the agricultural areas of Western Australia fairly well and I think I am justified in saying that there is a greater extent of new country being developed adjacent to that railway line than there is along almost any other line in the State, not excepting some of the country represented by the Leader of the Country Party. There is a vast area there available for settlers and I have been most anxious for the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Railways to inspect that country at first hand, because it is of little use one looking at maps in Perth. To gain a proper appreciation of the problems involved one has to see these areas for oneself to realise what the district represents.

There is a railway map on the wall of the Chamber at present and if any member cares to look at it he will see how vital a line such as this is if the agricultural areas of Western Australia are to continue to develop. By the Government following this policy, does it mean that it is writing off the future agricultural development of Western Australia? I take my hat off to those new settlers in most districts because of the difficulties they are facing and overcoming at present. The Premier will recall that I have brought to him at least one deputation, apart from making other representations asking that the credit facilities of the Rural & Industries Bank should be made available to the settlers in these new districts in order to give them some sort of a chance to get on their feet to develop the grain-growing areas of Western Australia in the same way as earlier generations of farmers have done before them.

Unfortunately, practically no extra assistance has been given to these men and, in the great majority of instances, they are having a very hard struggle. In such circumstances, one can imagine how discouraging it is for men, who are already pioneering new country and facing great difficulties, to find that their railway line is to be closed. Members should appreciate that in most of our wheat and sheep areas, it is necessary to concentrate on the growing of grain for a few years before the land can be developed for stock-raising.

From time to time advice has been given that possibly over much of our agricultural country, the production of wool offers at least as many opportunities as the production of grain. On the other hand, however, the production of grain will always

play a very important part in the farming operations in those districts. Therefore, these farmers could be very valuable producers of freight for the Railway Department. It seems to me that the Government has adopted a policy of despair in dealing with the problems of the Railway Department in the way it has done.

I appreciate the difficulties that the Premier, as Treasurer, is facing but surely when we are beset with such great difficulties, it is no excuse for losing our sense of balance and taking, in my opinion, such precipitate and unwarranted action as has been taken in recent weeks. It has also been said by the Minister for Transport tonight that the farming community in some areas where the services of the railway branch lines have been discontinued, has not been making use of the railway services available. So far as these outer grain-producing areas are concerned, I can assure the Minister that that statement is not well based because I cannot imagine any settler in that area carting any great quantity of produce by road while rail services are available to him.

Again I say that if members will look at the map on the wall of this Chamber, they will realise that the distances involved are too great for a farmer to carry any large quantity of produce. In all the circumstances, I felt that I could not miss this opportunity at least to assure the Minister for Transport that the alternative arrangements that have been made to date are far from satisfactory and unless a great change takes place in the near future, it does appear that an even worse position is likely to develop before the next harvest is moved from those particular areas.

**MR. CORNELL** (Mt. Marshall—on amendment) [12.20 a.m.]: I do not propose to indulge in lengthy discussion on this motion because, like the Leader of the Country Party, I think that anything we in this corner of the House have to say could, with profit, be left until another motion which he has on the notice paper is brought on in the not far distant future. The discussion this evening has taken on many and varied aspects; it has run off the rails at times. My friend, the member for Leederville, could not resist the temptation to trot out his hobby horse and have a crack at the farmers whom he considers a favoured section of the community. Of this favoured section he contends that the wheatgrower is the most favoured.

I understand that the Minister for Works is an authority on this subject, but I think it was said that when the wind blew from the east, Hamlet went mad. I think that any wind from the wheatbelt does throw the member for Leederville completely off balance! Since the motion was agreed to by this House

in the dying hours of last session, a good deal of water has run under the bridge, and it has run in the direction forecast by the Country Party. The railways have been closed irrespective of the rather general terms of the addendum which was tacked on to the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party.

Railways have been closed, and, in many cases, despite the assertion by the Minister for Transport to the contrary, no road service has been offered at all in substitution. When I spoke to the motion in December last, I think I said that the attitude of the Transport Board to the railway in my particular area—and no doubt that attitude was consistent as regards areas in other parts of the State—was to close the railways because they would still get the traffic anyhow; and the farmers would merely be required to cart their produce to the nearest continuing railhead.

That is what has happened. At Burakin-Bonnie Rock farmers have been informed that the goods offering are not sufficient to justify any form of road transport, and farmers, with the exception of wheat and super would be required to cart in the main to the Bencubbin line. That has been confirmed, I understand, by a tour carried out by the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in that particular area. Accordingly, promises that might have been made regarding the closures of the railways and the substitution of some reasonable form of road transport in compensation and in substitution have not been kept.

The Minister for Transport: What have they got to cart apart from wheat?

**MR. CORNELL**: I will come to that probably tomorrow when the motion which is to be moved by the Leader of the Country Party is discussed. If the Minister so wishes, I could, of course, procrastinate as have some other members! The Minister for Transport also went to town on what he was pleased to term the sabotaging of the railways by farmers. He could have added, "and others," because farmers are not the only ones who use the road transport. As the member for Roe has pointed out before, in the areas affected by rail closures, the amount of road transport that takes place is negligible for the reasons he has already given.

The total earnings of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, for instance, for the year ended the 30th June, 1956, amounted to £64,000—and by total earnings I mean before the Railway Department apportioned this figure as between that railway and the remainder of the system. That works out at nearly £400 per farmer. Obviously the quantity of road transport carried out by the farmers in that area is practically negligible.

Whilst we are on the subject of road transport, it seems to me that quite apart from the use of road transport by farmers,

the Transport Board is responsible to a great extent for this sabotaging to which the Minister for Transport has referred, in making available so readily permits to road transport operators. So it would seem that the Transport Board is aiding and abetting in this so-called sabotaging.

The Minister for Transport: That is usually the result of representations made by members of Parliament.

Mr. CORNELL: If the Minister can tell me of one occasion on which I made such a representation, I will buy him a new hat. Seeing that the Minister would like specific information in regard to this matter of road transport I will quote one case for him. Recently an oil company erected a service station and depot in a town in my electorate. Instead of the cement for the floor and the yard of the depot being mixed and laid on the spot, as one would think would happen, it was brought up by road from Perth by the Ready Mixed Concrete Company. I understand that in one week-end alone the vehicles belonging to the Ready Mixed Concrete people did nearly 30 trips. Incidentally, that did not complete the job. So whilst there may be good reason for that sort of thing, it would have to be very good to satisfy me, because I am sure anyone will agree that the concrete cement could have been sent by rail, mixed in the district on the job and laid by local or imported labour.

The Country Party attitude to this question of rail closures has always been that it is a retrograde step, and during the intervening period since the motion was passed, our attitude has remained unaltered. Like other private members, we are at times obliged to accept this type of motion, but this is one for which I will vote without a great deal of enthusiasm because, as I see it, it could have been easily avoided. The non-implementation of the condition attached to the motion, in my view, was not very surprising, nor was it surprising to certain other members on the cross-benches. I feel it was never really capable of any particular interpretation because it was merely a matter of a point of view.

There are those who say these railways should not be closed until the Government does certain things and complies with certain conditions. The Government, in turn, has said, "That is exactly what we have done. We provided adequate substitute road transport. We have done everything and provided the affected farmers and residents with a comparable system of road transport which will give to them precisely what the railways would have given had they not been closed." The members of the L.C.L. do not take that view. I do not either. As I said, the words added to that motion were not capable of a reasonable interpretation because they

could be twisted around, as was done by the Government which declared that it has abided by the terms of that resolution to the letter.

As the Leader of the Country Party pointed out, the speakers from the Liberal Country League when this motion was being debated, were pretty sparse. From the list which I have extracted, I find that in this Chamber only three members on that side of the House addressed themselves to the motion, and only four did so in the Legislative Council. It would be very pertinent to ask the members of that party what their attitude would have been on the motion without any amendment, that is, whether rail closures shall or shall not take place.

In my view certain members would have supported the proposition whether the conditions were moved by the member for Nedlands or not. There was no doubt but that the member for Blackwood, as has been pointed out, declared unequivocally before the motion was amended that he proposed to support it. The amendment was moved at about 1.15 o'clock in the morning. It was not spoken to other than by the member who moved it, and it was accepted by the Minister without a great deal of cavil.

The Minister for Transport: Another interesting point was that the Country Party move to delete the Nornalup line was opposed by the Liberal members.

Mr. CORNELL: That is another point I want to bring to the notice of the House. During the debate the member for Darling Range moved to delete one of the lines specified in the motion; he moved to delete the Elleker-Nornalup line. That was in the nature of a test case. At that stage we had ideas of going through the whole list and deleting them one by one, but the support we got for that proposition was such that we, colloquially speaking, had to give it away. We did not proceed with that line of attack. The only members who voted for that proposition were the members of the Country Party.

The Minister for Transport: There were no conditions attached at that stage either.

Mr. CORNELL: None whatever. I should state my point of view in particular and that of the Country Party in general to this motion. Had it been opposed and had there been no conditions attached, it was reasonable to assume it would still have been passed by this House and by another place. Therefore to come in at this stage with a motion of censure on the Government for implementing something to which some condition might have been attached, but which had been passed by Parliament, is rather late in order to rectify a position which, in our view, should never have arisen.

I read in the Sydney "Bulletin" certain fundamental facts which according to the well-known New York columnist, Sulzberger, applied to diplomacy. He says that in diplomacy there are four cardinal rules. Rule one is to always keep the initiative; rule two is to always exploit the inevitable; rule three is to always keep in with the outs; rule four is never to stand between a dog and a lamp post. I do not know whether our friends in the Liberal Party feel that they have not kept the initiative, that they have not exploited the inevitable, that they have not kept in with the outs, or that they might have stepped in between the dog and the lamp post. To move a motion at this stage censuring the Government for doing what had been passed with the addition of some pious addendum which was pretty indefinite, is too late. They are my sentiments and I want them to be on record.

**MR. ACKLAND** (Moore—on amendment) [12.37 a.m.]: It is my intention to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and to oppose the amendment suggested by the Premier. Like my Leader, the member for Stirling, and the member for Mt. Marshall I am of the opinion that we have wasted many hours this evening because this motion was quite unnecessary although I am ready to support anything which has the possibility of retaining the railway lines which are intended to be suspended.

I do know that the member for Stirling gave at least 14 days' notice through an article in the Press of his intention to move for the rescission of the resolution which was passed by both Houses of Parliament. The Labour Party had been quite correct when its members stamped over this State and mentioned in the Press that they had a mandate from Parliament to close the lines referred to. They also said that they had a mandate by an overwhelming majority of members of both Houses. That is very deplorable in a State of our size with a small population, a State that has so great a potential, where everybody including the Government is trying to encourage outside capital to develop it.

We, as a Parliament, by an overwhelming majority showed them that we have no confidence in the future of this State. We have introduced and passed a motion which is one of contraction or drawing in. We have passed a motion in which we ourselves, the elected representatives of the people of Western Australia, have said "We have no confidence in the progress and prosperity of the State unless it is wrapped up in the metropolitan area." The prosperity of this State is dependent entirely on the outback country.

I have no intention to speak at any length on this motion. I am sorry that the Minister for Railways is not here,

because at Cadoux he stated that the Country Party members did not have sufficient interest to move amendments to delete from the motion the various railway lines that it was contemplated closing. The member for Mt. Marshall has stated what happened when we submitted the first amendment, which was moved by the member for Darling Range. The member for Mt. Marshall was not quite correct when he stated that only members of the Country Party voted for that amendment because I have the division list in front of me and I notice that the member for South Perth and the member for Vasse joined the Country Party on that occasion.

When one looks at the division list and sees the array of members who voted against the amendment, it is obvious that we were only wasting time by going through all the list of lines it was to close and moving them one by one to be deleted from the motion I think that the Minister for Railway's remark was quite uncalled for if he had known where he stood. He also said publicly and in the Press that I was not sufficiently interested to record my vote when a division was taken. Early in the evening I was sent out of this Chamber in a division and told I was paired for the whole evening with the Minister for Mines and was not able to vote during that evening.

The unfortunate part is that whether the Whips were too tired or whether the staff forgot—I do not know which—both our names had been omitted from that division list. However, an explanation had been made and the Minister for Railways must have known what the true position was. This evening, the Minister for Transport has twitted me for going around the country and stirring up agitation amongst the farmers, telling them that 2,000 miles of railways were going to be closed.

It was said in Parliament and is recorded in "Hansard"—I have not had time to look it up—that this was only the first section of 2,000 miles of railways which were to be closed. We know it was recommended by the committee which made the report, which is as full of inaccuracies as it is possible to be, that if the Government had not been intending to close these railways and given instructions to bring in a report with the object of closing them, it would have found these inaccuracies. We will make further reference to them when dealing with the motion of substance which is to be moved by the Leader of the Country Party.

The Minister for Transport: You may rest assured there were no instructions.

**Mr. ACKLAND:** The Minister and other members of Cabinet were lacking in a sense of duty when they accepted such untruths and such complete inaccuracies



as appeared in that report. I will not deal with them tonight as I intend to speak on the other motion.

I want to have something to say about the member for Leederville. He never tires of showing his antagonism and, I think I could almost say, spleen, for the farmers of Western Australia. I have not had a chance of reading his script, and if I am wrong, I will stand corrected. However, I think this evening he was talking about the farmer being given a subsidy for his wheat during the year 1947. It does not matter which year it was. I have perused and carefully studied the balance sheet of the Australian Wheat Board and it disclosed that for the 14 years ending in the 1955 season, the wheat farmers of Australia subsidised the people of Australia to the extent of an average of more than £15,000,000 a year over the whole of that period. The total sum is somewhere between £210,000,000 and £220,000,000.

Mr. Potter: Why don't they subsidise the railways?

Mr. ACKLAND: It so happened that the farmers could afford to pay the subsidy because the price of wheat overseas was so high, but in recent months the position is entirely different and this motion for discontinuing these lines is going to drive a great many wheatgrowers out of production.

Mr. May: Don't you believe it.

Mr. ACKLAND: I say it is, because today and since January of this year the price of wheat has been gradually decreasing overseas until we are selling below cost of production. We believe that the Japanese agreement will somewhat improve the position, but on top of that the farmers have been subsidising the millers of Western Australia. I wrote a letter to "The West Australian" and they put in a lot of stuff I had used over and over again, because I knew very well that if I talked about wheat stabilisation, to which they are opposed, they would print it.

Then again, I told them that during the last four months, the farmers of Australia had subsidised the milling industry to the extent of over £1,000,000, so that 5,000 mill hands could be kept in employment and also so we could compete with the subsidised flour from the United States of America and France in particular as well as others. We have been selling wheat to the millers for as much as 1s. 2d. below its value on the overseas market, or as much as 1s. 6d. below cost of production. I am surprised that the Premier has so closely associated himself in this matter with the member for Leederville. They both made reference to the fact that the farmers can no longer be subsidised. The farmers have a subsidy scheme, but the Federal Government has not contributed to the fund.

Mr. Johnson: The State railways have been subsidised a darned lot.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Commonwealth Government has not contributed because the farmers themselves have paid into a wheat stabilisation scheme fund which, I am afraid, will be depleted by the end of next year. But as the period of guarantee will have ended, the Federal Government will not have to honour any guarantee as to price that it might have been responsible for, in order to make up the difference to the cost of production.

There is going to be a repetition at the ends of the lines which are or have been closed as we have in the Lakes District today. I have a friend in the Lakes District who I heard state at a meeting that, except to the owner, the values of the farms in that district were nil. If he died tomorrow and bequeathed his property to somebody, they would want to dig him up and hand him back the responsibility, for the simple reason that his property had no value. We are having instances of that today where lines have been closed because people who were interested in buying properties have lost all interest in them, and the owners have no chance, whether for health reasons or anything else, of disposing of those properties.

I have one final thing to say, and that is with reference to the obligations of the Government. I believe that it will honour the obligation it undertook to subsidise, over a 7-year period, "M" class goods; and a lot of people believe it will subsidise many other goods. On the average of the past five years 4,000,000 bushels of wheat have been grown along the lines that are being closed. Realising that it will have to go both by rail and road transport, if the Transport Board gets people who are prepared to cart wheat for 5½d. per ton mile as has been done in the Lakes district, and if the Government honours its obligations and meets the extra handling costs, it will cost on the average 8d. per bushel, or £140,000 for the first year. If it subsidises the super, which is another "M" class commodity, I believe that that £140,000 will be greatly increased.

There is another aspect, and that concerns an alteration of the receival points of wheat. Co-operative Bulk Handling has storage for nearly 90,000,000 bushels in Western Australia. It is far more than is needed in handling a crop in this State. The company has honoured all its obligations under the Co-operative Bulk Handling Act and has put wheat at the natural receival points, having established more of these than is necessary in my opinion, as one of the directors of many years' standing.

But there may be chaos at the new rail terminals because of rail closures. It is a responsibility of this Government to make the handling function satisfactorily. Co-operative Bulk Handling will honour all

its obligations under the Act. But there is no justification for it and no obligation on it to build other storage because of this mad action of Parliament—and I say that it is mad. I believe that eventually the Government—whether it be the one in power today or a succeeding Government—will reopen every one of these railways because it will be in the interests of Western Australia to do so. I have asked people in country districts not to lose hope, not to pull up their stakes and get out.

Mr. Potter: They would not do so, anyway.

Mr. ACKLAND: The hon. member would be surprised! I will tell him tomorrow of something they have already done. I believe that the Premier has enough interest in Western Australia—I believe he has as much as I have—to see the folly of what has been done, not by the Labour Party, but by this Parliament, because what has been done could not have been done without the assistance of the people who sit in opposition in this House.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	25
Noes	18

Majority for ..... 7

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Evans	Mr. Moir
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Norton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hall	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Potter
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Siesman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Toms
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Court	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. I. Manning

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Rodoreda	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Roar	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Brady	Mr. Crommelin

Amendment thus passed.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [12.58 a.m.]: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—

House expresses approval of the steps being taken by the Government to bring about a large-scale reorganisation of the railway system, these steps including the current Royal Commission of inquiry and the proposal

to give the railways more reasonable protection against unfair road transport competition.

**HON. D. BRAND** (Greenough—on amendment) [12.59 a.m.]: We cannot agree to this amendment.

Members: Why?

Hon. D. BRAND: For the simple reason that it is not true. It says that the House expresses approval of the steps being taken by the Government to bring about a large-scale reorganisation of the railway system.

The Minister for Transport: Don't you?

Hon. D. BRAND: In fact, there are no steps being taken at present except the suspension of country rail services. There is no real evidence of it other than an inquiry regarding certain allegations by commissioners in respect of the administration. Apart from that, no real effort is being made; and although I listened in the hope of hearing from the Government just what proposals it had to offer other than those put forward in respect of the closure of lines, I listened in vain.

We all realise that if our railway problem, which is fundamentally one of finance, is to be tackled it must be attacked in a different way. As a member representing the country areas I believe the endeavour to deal with our railway problem has been started from the wrong end and that was the reason why the Liberal Party moved the amendments which were accepted by this House. The Minister for Transport made it very clear where he stood in respect of the country people and the situation in which they find themselves and it is on this issue that we crossed swords with the Government.

In spite of the difficulties and problems arising out of the closure of these railway lines the Minister for Transport has not been prepared to go to those areas and see, as we have seen, the problems faced by country people. As one member said, it is all very well to sit here and read a map and in a very full way express the case for the Government, as the Minister has tonight, but I repeat that he should go to the districts concerned and see the difficulties for himself. The issue is not only one of closing railways and letting people of the country solve their own problems.

Although I was not here at the time, I have no doubt that in moving the amendment with reference to alternative road transport we indicated our belief that there was a proposition in regard to road transport substitution for railways, but the Government, in the way it has gone about the matter, has ignored public opinion and that is not to its credit and is the reason for my moving my motion. The Minister for Transport referred to the view that the railways should be a

business organisation and the question of whether as such they would continue to operate unpayable lines. He suggested that as a business organisation the Railways Commission would close the lines and strike its own freight rates and the Premier interjected and said, "Of course, if you are going to have that, you must appreciate that the policy of the railways is the policy and decision of the Government of the day."

If it was a private concern free of political interference and with the right to hire and fire, that would put the whole system, from the commissioners to the office boy, on a businesslike basis and that is a problem which must be faced over a number of years. In the meantime, irrespective of what the member for Mt. Marshall has said about the Liberal Party, or dogs or anything else, I say we have stood and still stand on the point that we were prepared to support the Government conditionally, particularly in the Upper House where there is an Opposition majority, and I say the Government missed a golden opportunity of doing something to solve its railway difficulties with the support of the Opposition. The Minister for Transport was hard pushed to explain why, in spite of the closure of the railways concerned, the estimated railway deficit for next year is £7,000,000, a clear indication that there has been no worthwhile impact made on the problem of railway finance.

With regard to the other steps, including the current Royal Commission, I have no query about that but trust that the Royal Commissioner will come to some satisfactory conclusions and help the Government in a solution of this particular aspect of the railway problem. While we have been chided as the Government of the day which set up this three-man commission I would point out that Victoria has a three-man railways commission whereas New South Wales has a single-man commission and I say it comes back to the question of the personnel controlling the railways and not the number. It could have been this or any other Government which, as the result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, appointed the chief commissioner and one on the technical side and another on the administrative side—

The Premier: Your Government appointed two of the three commissioners.

Hon. D. BRAND: Of course we did. I am simply saying it is a question not of the numbers of commissioners but of the personnel.

The Premier: But you appointed the personnel.

Hon. D. BRAND: We did and we take the blame or the credit for it. As far as I know the third man appointed did not help the position at all and he was appointed by the Labour Party.

Mr. Court: The Government now wants to appoint three public service commissioners instead of one.

The Premier: Of course it is the personnel that counts.

Hon. D. BRAND: As regards the proposal to give the railways "more reasonable protection" against unfair road transport competition, that aspect is causing real concern throughout Western Australia and my party does not propose to assist the Government in any shape or form in tightening up the Transport Co-ordination Act.

The Minister for Transport: You will be on both sides of the fence.

Hon. D. BRAND: No, we say that if you are in favour of road transport in any shape or form you cannot support a move aimed to give the railways greater protection than they have at present. As I have said tonight, millions of pounds will have to be spent on the railways if they are to be modernised, and the Premier said he did not question that. Neither do I, but we have to find the money to bring the railways up to a position where they can compete with road transport even in respect of the service—

Mr. Ackland: Their own engineers tell us they are not in a bad state.

Hon. D. BRAND: Then let us take the attitude that they have to compete with road transport without becoming a protected monopoly—

The Premier: At the same freight rates?

Hon. D. BRAND: That is the Premier's problem. Rail freights are decided by the Government from time to time and the Premier told the electors that there would not be an increase. In reply to an interjection by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition the Premier said that if the land tax was agreed to by Parliament there would not be any increase in freights for approximately twelve months. Nevertheless, rail freights is a question which the Premier must decide and one for which he must accept any political stigma that might arise. I oppose the amendment and trust that the House will not see fit to support it as it is an amendment moved by the Premier to avoid embarrassment to members of his Party who are not happy about the actions of the Government in respect of rail closures. We all know that, but enabled as he is by his numbers the Premier wishes to avoid embarrassment to members of his party by this means.

The Minister for Transport: I do not think the Country Party is very happy with you.

**HON. A. F. WATTS** (Stirling—on amendment) [1.9 a.m.]: I think I can express my views on this amendment in about six sentences. Firstly, I do not know what steps have been taken by the Government to bring about a large-scale reorganisation of the railway system, so I cannot approve of something of which I am unaware. Secondly, I do not know what the proposal to give the railways more reasonable protection against unfair road transport competition is likely to do and therefore I cannot approve of something of which again, I am unaware. In fact, in general principle I will be positively opposed to the whole proposition when it does come up. So the situation is that as I do not know what I am being asked to approve of, and it is unlikely I can approve of it in any event, I oppose the proposition.

**MR. CORNELL** (Mt. Marshall—on amendment) [1.11 a.m.]: One certainly does not know what will happen to a motion when it is introduced into this House—

The Minister for Transport: Or to a Bill.

**MR. CORNELL**:—judging by what has happened to this one. But I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Country Party and I think it might be an opportunity for the Premier in his reply to give the House some indication of what he has in mind so that possibly the independents, anyhow, might still be able to weigh the pros and cons of this motion as to whether they will vote for or against it.

First of all, perhaps he could enlighten the House a little more as to the scale of the re-organisation that is taking place and, more specifically, he could tell the House exactly the scope of the inquiry being made by Magistrate Smith. It is reliably stated that the Railway Commissioners have not spoken to each other for years; but apparently the result of this inquiry is because they have spoken about each other.

Perhaps the Premier could tell the House whether the Government instituted this inquiry prior to those allegations being made by one Commissioner against another or as to whether they were the result of those allegations. So far as the proposal to give the railways more reasonable protection against unfair road transport is concerned, the word "reasonable" is a blessed word behind which Cabinet Ministers snugly shelter. I would like the Premier at this stage, whilst not giving away any secrets of what the legislation will be, to spread himself a little as to what the Government has in mind in connection with the position.

Amendment (to insert words) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	25
Noes	.....	18
Majority for	.....	7

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Evans	Mr. Moir
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Norton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hall	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Potter
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Toms
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brady	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Court	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. I. Manning

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Brady	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Crommelin
Mr. Rodoreda	Mr. Thorn

Amendment thus passed.

Motion, as amended, put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	25
Noes	.....	18
Majority for	.....	7

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Evans	Mr. Moir
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Norton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hall	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Potter
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Toms
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Court	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. I. Manning

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Brady	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Crommelin
Mr. Rodoreda	Mr. Thorn

Question thus passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

House adjourned at 1.18 a.m. (Wednesday).