

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 17th July, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

TRANSPORT.

(a) Freights between Laverton and Kalgoorlie.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that the Transport Board has accepted a tender for road transport of goods between Leonora and Laverton which has involved the residents in greatly increased costs?

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

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

(3) If the increases referred to in No. (2) are not in accordance with facts, will he supply the actual figures?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government's decision regarding the cessation of rail services provides for subsidies on miscellaneous class goods. In other cases the full cost of transport must be borne by the consumer.

(2) and (3) The figures submitted by the hon. member as combined rail and road costs are approximately 10s. to 12s. per ton too high. Rail freights do not include cartage and handling charges at Laverton from rail to consignee.

(b) Passenger Service, Leonora to Laverton.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he concerned as to a passenger service between Leonora and Laverton?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "yes"—

(a) What provision has been made to have passengers transported?

(b) Has due consideration been given to their comfort?

(c) What type of vehicle and what terms have been stipulated?

(d) What increase in fare is involved from Kalgoorlie to Laverton?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The small number of passengers travelling—approximately six per week in both directions—is insufficient to support the running of a special passenger bus service. Accommodation is available in the regular road haulier's vehicle for two passengers each trip, and a car can be made available for a minimum of four passengers.

(2) Approximately 7s. 6d.

NORTH-WEST.

(a) Development of Black Rocks Site as a Kimberley Port.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for the North-West:

What is the likelihood of the development within a reasonable time of Black Rocks site as a port for the Kimberley region in lieu of Derby?

The MINISTER replied:

The provision of a deep-water jetty at Black Rocks is considered to be essential to meet future needs of the district. As a result of the unanimous opinion of both Houses of Parliament, an all-party committee was appointed in 1954 to request financial assistance from the Prime Minister to provide development works in the North-West. The committee submitted the proposals to the Prime Minister in June, 1955. A deep-sea jetty and facilities

for Black Rocks estimated to cost in the vicinity of £1,600,000 were included in the proposals.

Up to date the Commonwealth Government has not replied to the request. Without Commonwealth assistance, it is not financially possible for the State Government to undertake this work in the near future.

(b) Wittenoom Gorge-Port Hedland Road.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Has the survey been conducted of a route for a road from Wittenoom Gorge to Port Hedland?

(2) Is the construction of a new road to commence this financial year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A preliminary reconnaissance has been made and location survey is well in hand.

(2) The sum of £20,000 has been allocated on preliminary construction work between Mulga Downs and Woodstock stations to be undertaken this financial year.

(c) Port Facilities, Point Samson and Port Hedland.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) With the prospect of a substantial and continuing market abroad for the asbestos production of Wittenoom Gorge, is it requisite that the ports of Point Samson and Port Hedland will both need to be used to facilitate the despatch of the mineral?

(2) Are the existing facilities at Port Hedland sufficient to meet the increasing demand of shipping at that port?

(3) If the existing facilities are not sufficient, what steps are being taken to extend and improve them?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) The question of providing additional berthing accommodation and loading facilities at Port Hedland is now being examined by the Public Works Department.

HOMES FOR THE AGED.

Inspections.

Hon. L. C. DIVER (for Hon. Sir Charles Latham) asked the Chief Secretary:

Will he inform the House whether any inspections are made of privately conducted homes for aged persons?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Privately constructed homes for the aged are registered under the Health Act by local authorities, which are responsible for their inspection.

CHILDREN'S DAY NURSERIES.

Inspections.

Hon. L. C. DIVER (for Hon. Sir Charles Latham) asked the Chief Secretary:

Will the Minister inform the House whether any inspections are made of children's day nurseries?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Places used as day nurseries are registered with the Education Department. They are regularly inspected by an inspector of the Education Department.

EDUCATION.

(a) Playground Areas, Swanbourne Primary School.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

Has any money been allocated in this financial year for urgent work to the playground areas at the Swanbourne primary school? If so—

(a) What is the amount?

(b) When is it contemplated this work will be carried out?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Yes.

(a) £200.

(b) As the Parents & Citizens' Association will be carrying out the work it is not possible to state when.

(b) Hollywood High School, Cost, Tenders, etc.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Hollywood high school included in the high schools referred to in His Excellency the Governor's Speech?

(2) If so, what is the estimated cost?

(3) Have tenders been called?

(4) From what areas are students to come?

(5) What will be the student capacity of this high school?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) An estimate has not been prepared as the design is not yet complete.

(3) Tenders will not be called as the work is to be carried out departmentally.

(4) This cannot be answered with any accuracy at present, as it will depend on numbers leaving primary schools and on building progress. But in the main the school is expected to serve the Nedlands, Dalkeith and Claremont areas and, possibly, areas west and north of these.

(5) 1,000 pupils.

(c) *Erection of School, Spenceer Park Area, Albany.*

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Has any action been taken by the Government towards the erection of a school in the Spencer Park area, Albany?

(2) If so—

(a) how many classrooms are planned;

(b) what stage has the preparatory work, if any, reached?

(3) Is it the intention ultimately to move the Albany primary school to this area?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Four classrooms.

(b) Plans are at present being prepared.

(3) No.

DRAINAGE.

Boyanup-Capel Scheme.

Hon. J. MURRAY asked the Chief Secretary:

With reference to the Boyanup-Capel drainage and irrigation scheme, will he inform the House—

(1) How much money has already been expended on surveys, plans, etc., in connection with this project?

(2) How much of this expenditure and work can be fitted into the new proposal?

(3) Where will the proposed dam on the Preston River be located?

(4) Because of the change of plans, can any indication be given as to—

(a) When work on drainage will be proceeded with;

(b) how much further delay can be expected with irrigation in this area in view of experimental work now taking place?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) An amount of £22,819.

(2) It all applies to any potential future developments.

(3) No finality has been reached regarding ultimate development of the Preston waters, but the most favourable site appears to be downstream from Thompson's Brook in the vicinity of the gauging weir.

(4) (a) The Government's works programme for the current financial year has not been finalised, but some drainage work is listed for consideration.

(b) There has been no delay. Surveys and investigations such as an experimental area, are necessary preliminaries in projects of this nature.

ROADS.

Widening of Bridge, Bassendean-Guildford Area.

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY asked the Chief Secretary:

Is it the Government's intention to widen the road bridge over the Swan river between Bassendean and Guildford in the near future?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No.

MINING.

Iron Ore Deposits.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What is the estimated tonnage of iron ore in the following deposits:—Widgemia, Nannup, Talling Peak, Koolyanobbing, Wiluna, and other known deposits in Western Australia?

(2) What is the percentage of iron in each deposit?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The answer to these questions are set out in the following table:—

Name of Deposit.	Estimated Tonnage (long tons 2,240 lb.)	Average content of metallic iron per cent.
Koolan Island	92,000,000	67.2
Cockatoo Island	16,000,000	69
Wilgie Mia (Weld Range)	18,810,000	64.38
Koolyanobbing	69,250,000	Surface ore 63.24 Deep ore 60.00
Mt. Hale	1,380,000	67.77
Mt. Gould	14,970,000	66.98
Mt. Stuart	Unknown (Nothing certain is known about this deposit)	38.32(7)
Talling Range	3,517,000	64.90
Gabamintha	200,000	53.77
Mt. Gibson	2,250,000	65
Mt. Caudan	Unknown (Large reserves of deep ore are available)	56.36
Mt. Rankin	1,000,000	38 to 45
Ellarine Hills (Mt. Goldsworthy)	10,750,000	64.23
Mt. Mason	450,000	67.12
Mt. Magnet Warram- boo Hill	9,000,000	35.85
Mt. Magnet	12,000,000	36.30
Edjudina Range	Unknown, but in the order of many millions of tons	38.09
Booyecoo Range	Huge quantities of medium to low grade ore are available	39.71
Johnston Range	Unknown, but many millions of tons of medium to low grade ore are available	36.84
Andover	Unknown. Titaniferous iron ore occurs in 24 small scattered lenses.	51.6

WATER SUPPLIES.

Reticulation Scheme for Northampton.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Chief Secretary:

When is it anticipated that a start will be made with the water reticulation scheme for Northampton?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The Government's work programme for the current financial year has not been finalised, but a commencement of the work is listed for consideration.

MOTION—SALE OF IRON ORE TO JAPAN.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [4.47]:
I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the proposed sale of Koolyanobbing iron ore to Japan, with particular reference as to whether the profit likely to be derived from such sale is likely to be sufficient to finance any other venture.

I move this motion because I believe that Parliament should discuss the use of iron ore in this State, particularly as the deposits mentioned by the Minister, in reply to a question asked by Mr. Logan, are a public asset. I do not think any Government should have the power to dispose of public assets without some reference to Parliament, particularly as it was reported in the "The West Australian" some time ago that if the arrangement were confirmed and iron ore was exported from this State to Japan, the profit derived therefrom should be used for the establishment of an integrated charcoal iron and steel industry in the South-West of the State.

Quite a number of factors enter into this, on which the Government has not informed the public, and on which apparently it is not prepared at present to inform Parliament. That is particularly so in relation to the economics of mining the iron ore and the cost of exporting it—that is as far as the ship's side.

Another feature is that of accessibility. This afternoon mention has been made of a large number of deposits of iron ore in this State; and neither the public nor Parliament knows which of these might be the most accessible and economic to operate, if an export licence were obtained from the Commonwealth Government to sell iron ore to Japan.

We can only go on the recommendations probably submitted to the Government that this 1,000,000 tons of iron ore be exported from Koolyanobbing. I am given to understand that on account of its qualities and lack of impurities the Koolyanobbing iron ore compares favourably with the best iron ore in the world. That opinion was obtained from a person who has had a great

deal to do with iron ore in this State, and he should know what he is talking about.

Accordingly when we have a deposit of iron ore such as that at Koolyanobbing, which is one of the purest in the world, we should give consideration to preserving it for posterity rather than to selling it overseas, particularly when we have so many deposits in this State which, though they might not be quite as good, would be acceptable to other nations.

There is another matter. The Government is not prepared to inform us at present what price is to be derived per ton from the sale of this iron ore; and I am of the opinion that it has no idea whether a profit can be derived. That being so, I believe that a select committee should be appointed to inquire into the pros and cons of this proposition. If that select committee did report that there was a likelihood of the proposition being profitable—and, therefore, worth while going on with—then it would boil down to a decision as to whether the money derived from that profit should be spent in another such venture as has been proposed by the Government, or whether the money should be spent in perhaps private development in some other way in the State.

When one looks at the report of Wundowie, showing its balance sheets since its inception, one rather wonders if the establishment of a further integrated charcoal iron and steel industry in the State would be a wise move. In the report, we see there is an accumulated loss at Wundowie of £590,636, and it is made up by the loss on working from the inception to the 30th June, 1955. The total figure is £344,135 less a profit for 1955-56 of £7,629. I am not too sure whether the profit shown for 1955-56 has been derived after interest on working capital has been allowed or prior to that.

From this is taken the Commonwealth grant for experimental purposes—£30,000—and the recoup from Consolidated Revenue Fund to meet losses on working for the years 1951-52 to 1954-55—£40,282—and it finishes up with a loan capital of £320,446. Overdrawn balance in the Treasury amounts to £3,966, leaving an accumulated loss of £590,636.

Is it a wonder that members would be averse to anything being done with the iron ore deposits in this State, and any suggestion being followed to commence another charcoal iron industry in this State, before they know something about it; before the Government commits itself and uses some of the assets of this State to sell to another nation, and fritters it away in a very doubtful venture?

In answer to questions in another place recently, the Government advised that it had a provisional agreement with Japanese interests for the sale of iron ore to the total of 1,000,000 tons. The

questions not answered were as to the price per ton the Government anticipated receiving, and the cost of mining and loading into trucks and carrying to the ships' side. They would not even give the figure as to how much per ton was paid to road hauliers for cartage from Koolyanobbing to the railways, and I do not see any reason why some of these figures should not be given to Parliament when requested. After all said and done I do not see, in any way, anything that would endanger the provisional agreement the Government purports to have with Japan at the present time.

Another question it was not prepared to answer was what is anticipated would be the cost of loading iron ore from the truck to the ships' side. Surely the Government could give an answer to those questions and give Parliament an indication of the costs of a venture such as this! It did say the rail freight from Koolyanobbing to Wundowie was 45s. 6d.; and from Koolyanobbing to the ships' side, 52s. 5d. However, what is the use of those figures? It would be impossible to ascertain whether the sale of this iron ore would be likely to return a profit or not.

I do not want to speak at great length on this motion, because I think it speaks for itself. However, I believe that before any asset of the State is realised on, it should be referred to Parliament; because, after all is said and done, members of Parliament are the elected representatives of the people, and surely they have a right to a say in the sale of State assets.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Do you mean the Legislative Council?

The Minister for Railways: They do not always agree with Parliament.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is a pity they do not. Perhaps things would go along better in the State if the Government did take some cognisance of what is said in Parliament on certain issues. We now find there is a suggestion of commencing another charcoal iron industry in the State, whether or not it can be proved a financial success. Wundowie may have provided a bit of employment, and it may have used up a certain amount of our materials in the State. But how long can we go on financing State ventures that continue to lose money?

At present, we are spending quite a large sum on money at Wundowie to increase the capacity of that plant. We have been advised through the Press that £800,000 will be spent at Wundowie in the next few years. If we are going to spend that sum of money in addition to the present capital expenditure, surely the State must get some return on money invested in ventures of that nature.

When we look around the State, we realise that there are many thousands of acres of land just crying out for development, and the Government will take

no action of any sort to assist in that development. One wonders how serious the Government is in being prepared to spend a further £800,000 on an industry on which over £1,000,000 has been spent.

The Minister for Railways: That is hardly correct.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: My final point is the development and use of timber in a venture such as Wundowie. We are told they use scrap timber, but in certain sections, it is necessary to get that scrap timber first. The dressed timber is cut into sawn timber and the balance has to be disposed of. We have mills in the State doing nothing much at the present time and some have closed up and their future is very doubtful. But if we are going to introduce another timber mill in conjunction with this venture, it will have to be a fair-sized one.

The forestry angle comes into it also. Is the department going to continue to let State ventures have large tracts of land for the charcoal iron industry and exclude everyone else? Finally, our forests will be the sole prerogative of the State to use, and not any individual. We have to call a halt to these things somewhere.

I trust that this Chamber will agree to a select committee being appointed to inquire into the sale of the iron ore and the possibilities of any likely profits from such a source; and, following that, to arrive at a decision as to whether it would be wise to spend the money derived—if a profit were derived—from this source, in the charcoal iron industry, or in other avenues in the State that would return to the State a greater benefit than the Government suggests.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.2] in moving the second reading said: This is the long-awaited Local Government Bill, and I hope my voice will hold out long enough for me to introduce the measure. The object of the Bill is to provide one statute for all local authorities in Western Australia. At present they operate under two statutes known as the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906-1956, and the Road Districts Act, 1919-1955. Under the Municipal Corporations Act, where a municipality is divided into wards there must be at least three councillors for each ward. Where a district is not divided into wards, the maximum number of councillors is 12. Under the Road Districts Act a road board is composed of not less than five or more than 13 members. The chairman of a road board is elected by the members choosing one of their number for the position.

The Bill proposes that existing cities and towns under the Municipal Corporations Act shall remain as cities or towns, but that local authorities now known as road boards shall be shire councils. The number of councillors for a city or a town not divided into wards shall be a minimum of six, with a maximum of 12, plus a mayor to be elected by the electors, with the provision that where a city or town is divided into wards there shall be not less than three councillors for each ward, in addition to the mayor to be elected by the electors. This retains the existing provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act.

With your permission, Mr. President, I would like the Minister for Railways to continue for me.

THE PRESIDENT: You have my permission. The Minister for Railways will continue with the second reading speech.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In the case of a shire it is provided that there shall be not fewer than four nor more than 12 councillors, plus a president to be elected by the electors. Where a shire is divided into wards, the number of councillors shall be such number as is from time to time declared by order.

This retains the existing provisions of the Road Districts Act, inasmuch as it would allow of more councillors being elected to one particular ward than another ward, with the exception that the president must be elected by the electors and not by the councillors.

In regard to the election of the president by the electors, I would mention that the Bill seeks to provide administrative machinery for all local authorities that are now covered by two Acts, and which may be termed, respectively, "urban" and "rural". Therefore, it is desired that the method of electing the mayor or president should be the same in each case.

In addition, this system raises the president to a position of dignity, honour and leadership which he could not enjoy if merely elected by the members of the council. It would enable the president to take a broad view and to adopt a policy for the benefit of the district as a whole rather than a "ward" view, as applies to persons elected to represent only a ward.

The system would overcome the "log rolling" and underground working which is so often seen in other States, particularly in capital cities, where the election of a mayor or president is carried out by the councillors themselves. It would also prevent the possibility of deadlocks because of equal numbers of votes being cast for contending council members. This has occurred in Western Australia in respect of road boards.

Under existing legislation the chief executive or non-elective officer of a municipal city or a municipal town is the town clerk; in the case of a road board, it is

the secretary. The Bill provides that in the case of a city or town the chief executive officers shall be:—

For a city—city clerk.
For a town—town clerk.
For a shire—shire clerk.

The provisions in the Bill relating to the constitution and altering the constitution of municipalities is substantially the same as is contained in the existing Acts.

In regard to the qualifications of mayor, president and councillors, there is a vital distinction in the Bill, inasmuch as it provides for qualification to be:—

Every person over the age of twenty-one years who is a natural-born or naturalised British subject and who has for a period of six months prior to his nomination been registered as an elector on an electoral roll and been residing in the district shall be eligible for election to the office of mayor, president, or councillor.

The provision in the existing two Acts is that the qualification shall be owner or occupier of rateable property and eligibility to be registered on an electoral roll. In support of the Bill, I say that the will of the people should be the basis of the authority of government. Adult suffrage is in accordance with the democratic principle that no person of adult years should be subjected to taxation unless he has the right to representation.

As occupiers of land, whether in their own right or as occupiers, most people are making a contribution towards rates levied by local authorities. They also contribute by motor registration fees to the funds of the local authorities most of which also secure Government grants to assist them in their work.

All residents of a municipal district and all electors of that district must comply with the by-laws of the council; and therefore, every adult resident of that district should have the right to elect the persons who make the local by-laws. The dignity of human life should be accepted as superior to the rights of property in determining the method of election for any public body such as a municipal council.

The extension of the right to vote at local government elections to all persons over 21 residing in a district ensures that a larger proportion of the people play an active part in the government of the area. By restricting the right to membership and the right to vote to those persons who actually reside in the area, any tendency in certain persons to occupy multiple positions in local government is prevented. This ensures that the energies of the members will be confined to bettering the conditions in the district in which they reside.

Local authorities are now insisting that they are entitled to be treated as the third arm of the Government. It can hardly be gainsaid that each arm of the whole body of government should be elected upon similar terms, and that the franchise for what some may regard as the least important arm should be as generous as that applying to the others.

In regard to electors, provision is made in the Bill that a person is eligible to be registered on the electoral roll of any municipality if he has attained the age of 21 years, is a natural-born or naturalised British subject and has resided for at least the preceding six months in the district of a municipality or in the ward of a municipality.

Hon. H. K. Watson: He does not have to be a member of the union.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; but it is a pity he does not.

Provision is made for an annual election to be held throughout the State on the third Saturday in April of each year and for approximately one-third of the councillors to retire each year. Under existing Acts elections for road boards are held on the third Saturday in April but elections for municipal councils are held on the fourth Saturday in November each year.

As previously explained, each elector will have one vote for councillor and one vote for mayor or president only. A mayor or president would hold office for two years, and a councillor for three years. At present a road board chairman holds office for one year only; otherwise the provision is identical with existing legislation.

The Bill provides for polling hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., this being the same as those for parliamentary and municipal elections at present. In the past, road board elections have been held from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and this has caused much confusion. The provision in the Bill will therefore make polling hours uniform throughout the State.

Power is given to the Governor to declare certain areas in which special provisions for polling can apply. These special provisions would enable an elector to apply for a voting certificate so that he could vote in absence without any further reference until such time as he changes his address or the returning officer has cause to believe that he is no longer resident in the same place. This is intended to apply to North-West areas only, and to give some relief to the unsatisfactory method that now prevails in regard to voting in that area.

The Bill provides that the system of voting shall be preferential. At present, parliamentary and municipal elections are conducted on those lines, whilst road boards follow the method of "first past the post." By bringing road boards—

what the Bill terms "shire councils"—into line, the system of voting throughout the State for all purposes of government would be uniform.

The Bill provides that, for the more efficient administration of local government, the Governor may make regulations prescribing the educational and professional qualifications necessary to be held by persons occupying the positions of clerk, engineer and building surveyor, and makes provision for the constitution of committees to examine these persons or class of persons. It would be necessary to exempt certain districts from this provision, particularly in the North-West, as it would be practically impossible to obtain applicants there with the necessary qualifications.

At present, no qualifications are necessary; and many appointments, by force of circumstances, have been made to the position of chief executive officer of a local authority, with unsatisfactory results. The proposal has the full support of the West Australian Institute of Municipal Administration, which caters for the advancement and improvement of proficiency of officers engaged in a local government career.

Provision is made in the Bill that where a municipality credits service towards long-service leave, then in the event of an officer ceasing work with one municipality but immediately taking up employment with another municipality, the municipalities concerned are to be responsible for the total long-service leave eventually becoming due, and such leave credit is to be apportioned in accordance with the time spent by the officer in each municipality.

Ample power is given in the Bill to municipalities to make by-laws for any purposes of the Act. Power is also given to the Governor to make model by-laws which may be adopted by municipalities with or without alteration; and to the Governor to make a by-law for any purpose for which municipalities could make a by-law if such action was considered necessary.

Any by-law so made by the Governor would override a by-law by a municipality. A similar provision is already contained in the Road Districts Act, and a provision is contained in the Municipal Corporations Act in relation to buildings; but it has been found necessary to exercise these powers only on rare occasions.

Municipalities are authorised to sell assets with a proviso that where any particular item to be sold is entered in the Council's inventory at a value of less than £100, the council may sell it by private treaty. Where the value is in excess of £100 it can only be sold by resolution of an absolute majority of the council. In the case of a hall or trading undertaking, authorisation by a special meeting of

ratepayers would be required, and in all cases where the value exceeds £100 it must be sold by public auction.

Although in the past local authorities have adopted the practice of selling generally by public auction, there has been no compulsion to do so. Municipalities will be required to cause streets and ways to be properly sign-posted to indicate the street names. This provision will apply to all cities and towns. In a shire it will apply to townsites only. A similar provision at present exists in the case of cities and towns in the Municipal Corporations Act so that the only addition is townsites in a shire council.

Provision is made whereby at the request of two or more municipalities the Governor may constitute a county district or a regional district for local government purposes. This county or regional district could only carry out the powers placed in it by the municipalities agreeing to its constitution.

In the past much confusion has existed in the interpretation of the existing legislation dealing with the creation of a building line. In order to clarify the position, particularly in regard to resumption and ownership, the most important provisions of the City of Perth Act of 1925 relating to building lines have been incorporated in the Bill.

Part XX of the Bill, which deals with cattle trespass, pounds, pound-keepers and rangers, was inserted at the particular request of local authorities so that they might know exactly what action could be taken in regard to straying stock and the correct procedure to be followed by way of impounding. The Cattle Trespass and Impounding Act as it now stands, has been a bone of contention for years and is one of the most difficult Acts to interpret; all local authorities having experienced the greatest difficulty in this regard. The provision of Part XX of the Bill makes it quite clear to municipalities what can and cannot be done.

Part XXII dealing with trading concerns enlarges the power of municipalities and includes a specific provision authorising the planting of trees for afforestation combined with the maintenance of the forest and the selling of thinnings and timber from the forest. It also provides that a municipality may, with the approval of the Minister, engage in any other trading undertaking.

A further special provision in the Bill will authorise municipalities to construct and maintain weirs, levees or other embankments, excavate and open drains and ditches, remove obstructions from a river, water-course or stream, and divert or straighten the bed of a river, stream or creek for the purpose of reducing flooding on to a street, reserve or other public place. The municipality will be enabled

to carry out this work irrespective of whether the river flows through private property or otherwise.

Some local authorities in the country have experienced the greatest difficulty in endeavouring to prevent town flooding due to the fact that there is no provision in existing legislation authorising the carrying out of works on land other than that under the control of the local authority. The Bill gives the necessary power and it is most desirable that municipalities should have this power.

The portion of the Bill dealing with application of the municipal fund includes a new provision authorising a municipality to insure its councillors against any injury to themselves or damage to personal property arising in the course of duty being carried out by any member of the council.

A further provision authorises municipalities to purchase motor vehicles for resale to officers of the council for carrying out their duties, and there is a final provision whereby the Minister can authorise expenditure of the municipal funds in any other approved manner.

Further, in connection with ordinary revenue of a municipality it is provided that the council of a municipality shall have regard to the needs of the inhabitants of its district as a whole and shall not keep ward accounts for financial purposes.

This, however, will not preclude a shire council from keeping a separate account to record the expenditure of a sum raised by differentiating in rating for a specific ward or for some specific portion of the district of a shire council or for loan charges in respect of a loan raised for the benefit of a particular ward of a shire council.

At present, under the Municipal Corporations Act, the keeping of ward accounts for finance is not permitted and although there is no specific provision in the Road Districts Act authorising the keeping of ward accounts the practice has grown up through the years.

It has grown to such an extent in some cases that no difficulty would be experienced in quoting instances where some local authorities, divided into wards, in their endeavour meticulously to try to see that the revenue of one ward is not expended in another ward, have gone to such extremes that the members of each ward actually constitute a separate board within the main board. Further, an instance can be quoted where separate estimates are actually put up for each ward of the local authority and then a combined estimate for the district.

Fortunately, some local authorities have abandoned this parochial idea and have treated wards for the purposes indicated by legislation; that is, for the purpose of

representation. So far as works are concerned, the district is treated as a whole and essential works carried out where they are required irrespective of where the money comes from.

The provision in the Bill dealing with valuations makes it mandatory for every municipality to adopt the unimproved capital values of the Taxation Department and makes it an obligation on the Commissioner of Taxation to supply these valuations. At present, local authorities can make their own valuations or appoint a valuer. In quite a number of cases, valuations are made by board members sitting around the board table. At present, municipalities must rate on the annual rental value unless approval is obtained to rate on unimproved capital values.

Road boards must rate on unimproved capital values except in certain limited exceptions, unless approval is given for rating on annual rental values. In regard to the proposal that unimproved capital values only be used, it should be appreciated that the adoption of unimproved values encourages the use of land for the purpose to which it is most suitable.

The use of unimproved values assists in industry and business by lessening the load of rating upon those concerns while, at the same time, freeing some capital from land speculation for investment in business and industry. It ensures justice as between ratepayers in that each holder of land contributes towards the cost of local control in exact proportion to the unimproved value of the land held by him. As this unimproved value has been created not by his own efforts but by the efforts of others this means that he pays for the privileges conferred upon him by the possession of that land.

The use of unimproved values takes away what is known as the unearned increment from land and therefore encourages production as distinct from speculation. Unearned increment has always been regarded as a fit subject for taxation. In the words of the well-known economist, Colin Clark—

Taxation on unimproved land values is in a class by itself for goodness. It is almost the only taxation which is without effect on the incentive to produce or save and it should therefore be exploited to the fullest possible extent.

It is interesting to note that there are 126 road boards at present in the State, each and every one of which rates on unimproved capital value, with some exceptions where townsite areas are rated on annual rental values. There are 21 municipalities in the State and of these the municipalities of Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Midland Junction and South Perth have adopted unimproved capital values throughout. The City of Perth has adopted

unimproved capital values for its endowment land which is the choice residential portion of the district, including Floreat Park.

The Bill proposes that municipalities be authorised to strike one rate to cover all their obligations in carrying out the powers and duties conferred by the Health Act, Water Boards Act, Vermin Act, Road Drainage Act, Noxious Weeds Act, Bush Fires Act and any other Acts administered and conferring a right or imposing a duty or obligation on the council. The maximum general rate to be so levied shall be—

Where the council provides a reticulated water supply—Three shillings in the £ of the unimproved value of rateable property; and

Where the council does not provide a reticulated water service—Two shillings in the £ of the unimproved value of rateable property.

The rates shall be uniform throughout the municipality unless the municipality is authorised to differentiate in rating but it is provided that only in the district of a shire council can there be any differentiating in rating, as mentioned earlier.

Provision is made for all appeals to be dealt with by a valuation appeal court which would be appointed by the Governor. Under existing legislation, with the exception of the City of Perth, all appeals are dealt with by municipalities and road boards themselves. Where these authorities also make the valuation the appeal is actually one from Caesar to Caesar.

A further provision where rates are in arrears gives power to a municipality to serve notice upon the lessee of the premises requiring the lessee to pay to the council the amount of rent, if any, accrued due and the rent as it becomes due under the lease until the amount of the arrears of rates payable have been liquidated. The powers of sale of land for non-payment of rates, as at present provided for in the Road Districts Act, has been re-enacted with the difference that land could be sold if rates had been in arrears for three years instead of five years as at present.

The provisions of the Road Districts Act, whereby vacant rateable property whether enclosed with a fence or not and in respect of which no rates have been paid could be reverted to the Crown, has been re-enacted. The important difference is that the provision in the Road Districts Act related to land situated wholly or partly within a townsite and rates had to be in arrears for at least seven years. The provision in the Bill, however, applies to all land and limits arrears of rates to three years.

The provisions relating to general borrowing powers are practically the same as in existing legislation, but an additional clause has been added authorising the municipality, with the approval of the Governor, to borrow for other plant,

machinery, things, works and undertakings not specifically set out. This is a considerable extension of powers. The Bill provides that the accounts of all municipalities—that is, cities, towns and shires—shall be carried out by auditors who shall be known as "Government Inspectors of Municipalities."

At present, audit inspectors of the Local Government Department conduct the audit of all road boards, numbering 126 in all, throughout the State, whilst the audit of the accounts of municipalities—numbering 21—is carried out by auditors elected by ratepayers of the municipality. Prior to 1933, the audit of accounts of road boards was carried out by ratepayers' auditors, but in 1933 the Government decided that the accounts of road boards should be audited by Government inspectors. When the scheme was commenced, road boards did not want it and many protests were made.

However, the Government of the day insisted and, as the years went by, the local authorities themselves found the auditor to be their guide, counsellor and friend, as well as auditor. Today, it would be difficult to find a road board having any objection; and in fact, the contrary prevails. Under the Municipal Corporations Act there is no such provision and the auditors are elected by the ratepayers.

It is true that they have to belong to a recognised institute of accountants, but it is difficult to feel that they would have the detailed special knowledge to enable them to see that the administration of municipalities was strictly according to law. This is quite a lengthy Bill and no doubt its contents will occupy the minds of members of this Chamber for several weeks to come. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. R. C. Mattiske, debate adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. A. R. Jones and Speech on Rail Closures.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I rise to make a personal explanation. Last night, when I was speaking in support of the motion moved by Sir Charles Latham, in connection with rail closures, I made the statement that 38 people had left the township of Laverton. I was misquoted in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" in which I am reported to have said that 38 families had left the district. As there could be such a big disparity in numbers between 38 persons and 38 families—because in the latter case the number could range from 200 to 300 people—I felt that I should make this personal explanation. I said that 38 people had left; I am certain I said that. That is confirmed by the Hansard report, which mentions 38 people.

MOTION—RAIL CLOSURES.

Call for Reopening, Inquiry, etc.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government having grossly mismanaged the handling of the country rail line discontinuance, and having not conformed to the conditions imposed by Parliament, and accepted by the Government, this House now calls on the Government to reopen lines already closed and not to discontinue any further rail services until—

- (a) a searching and expert inquiry has been made into each line and the reports and recommendations from such inquiries are submitted to, and accepted by, Parliament; and
- (b) the Government honours the undertakings given to Parliament when the amended rail discontinuance motion was passed in 1956; and
- (c) the Government brings forward to Parliament acceptable proposals in accordance with the motion of this House agreed to on the 8th November, 1956, and which was ignored by the Government.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.33]: I secured the adjournment of the debate yesterday because I considered that another motion about to be moved in this House should take precedence of it. That is my opinion, of course. I submit as my reasons that some time ago this House debated and passed a motion, in which the Government had the support of both Houses of Parliament, to do certain things with regard to railway closures. Now we have before us two motions, one to rescind the motion passed in December last; and the other calling upon the Government to do certain things—including the reinstatement of services which have been closed; not to close any more lines; and to effect economies in the railways.

I submit that unless one motion is carried, the other can have no force, because any responsible body or the Government can say that it still has the good graces of both Houses of Parliament of Western Australia to do certain things; that it has done part of those things and will continue to carry out the balance. But if we have a motion to rescind—as has been moved by Sir Charles Latham—and it is passed, then the other motion can have a very good effect because it calls on the Government to do those things which it has not performed in compliance with the motion carried in this House in December last.

That motion called on the Government to consider and make economies. I have no doubt that economies can be made. I am not competent to say just where and how, in detail; but sufficient evidence has been brought before this House and referred to—and we have received replies to questions—to point out to any thinking person that extravagances and wastages have gone on in the railway system.

In my opinion—an opinion shared by others—we should bring some competent person from outside the State to go into the question of reorganising our railway system. One man alone would not be competent to do this, because the railway system is divided into three phases. There is the management; there is railway running; and there is the workshop side. We require someone competent in the three phases of railway work to submit reports before any action is taken.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Why someone from outside the State? The existing management were all imported from outside the State.

Hon. A. R. JONES: They were not imported for the specific purpose of giving a report on the running and management of the railways.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: Wasn't their appointment made following on a report by someone brought in?

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is correct. I believe someone was brought here from Queensland.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Royal Commissioner was Mr. du Plessis from South Africa.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Nevertheless, it would take somebody very competent to do what I propose. It appears that we have not sufficiently competent men in this State to do that job. Over the past few years it has been shown that the diesels have effected economies; and even though they have cost the Government—and, I suppose, the suppliers of them as well—a considerable amount of money, they are now at the stage when we should be able to get good service from them.

While it has been admitted that £300,000 has been saved by the working of diesels over the last 12 months, we could look to greater savings in the future because of the additional number of diesels coming forward and the greater efficiency they are giving. Of course, as each diesel goes on the line, a steam locomotive is taken off. I suppose that is how it works. That will eliminate the huge cost involved in the cartage of coal and water to various outstations.

It has been mentioned many times that the railway tracks are in such a bad condition that it is necessary to close them down because the maintenance cost to keep them in operation is so heavy that not only is the State unable to afford to

pay it, but it cannot afford the staff from other sections of the line to carry out the maintenance work because the other lines are also crying out for maintenance and renewal. That has been illustrated by various figures given in this House. The position is not nearly as bad as was explained by the Ministers in both Houses when they related the sad story of the bad condition of the railways.

Many hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent on the lines which have been closed to traffic. As I said last night, two lines which I had inspected were in very good order. I venture to suggest that on both those lines there would be very little maintenance needed for at least four or five years. I should say that a casual gang doing daily maintenance, with no major repair or renewal, such as the laying of hundreds of sleepers and rails, is all that is required.

So it would be quite in order to say that rail services could operate over the lines which have been closed to traffic for a period of four to five years without any great cost at all, and this saving would allow the department to make use of the money and labour to catch up on the lines which are used to a greater extent and are in need of maintenance.

I feel sure that economies can be made in the reconstruction, reballasting, and re-laying of railway tracks. More machinery could be used. Already a fair amount of machinery is being employed; but one often sees the spectacle of the machine working and the men standing by idly watching. That is no good to anyone, of course. If 20 men are employed in a gang to stand by to watch the machinery do the work, we might just as well not have the machinery.

If more machines were employed and more contract work was let, I believe that the rehabilitation of the railways could be undertaken at a greatly reduced cost compared with the cost we have heard of in the last few years. Only recently I was told by one of the engineers from the Midland Railway Co. that the firm of Baker Bros. had done repair work for them, and in very quick time was able to construct a complete culvert consisting of a series of big Hume pipes—I think they were 4ft. pipes—over a week-end.

The engineer told me that there was a saving to the Midland Railway Co. of £3,000. If that amount can be saved on one job, we can easily understand how many hundreds of thousands of pounds could be saved over a period of years, if the department got down to reorganising the system under which repairs are carried out.

That firm also did a section for the Government railways, somewhere near Waeel. The line ballast had to be raised by 15 to 18 in. and the work had to be done with as little disruption to traffic as possible. So the week-end was chosen for the job.

Baker Bros. submitted a plan in which they could cut out a section of a quarter of a mile or more, and drag the sections off the existing line clear of the place where the work had to be done. They did that. They pulled the sections out of the way. Bulldozers were there to help in the work. After cleaning off the waste ballast, cinders, etc. the new ballast was pushed up, smoothed over by the machines and the sections were dragged back. I believe there was no disruption of service at all.

If a job like that can be done with very little labour and with no disruption to service, there is no reason why the same thing could not be done on a large scale. So it does seem even to a layman that quite a number of economies can be effected in the railway system so that it will not be necessary to think about the curtailment of services anywhere.

From time to time we have heard criticisms of the conduct of the Midland Junction Workshops. I think that most of that criticism has stemmed from members who believe that the executive officers there are not doing their job, and that too many men are employed in doing too little. In fact, the Minister for Railways said, at a meeting at Cadoux, that too many men in the railways are doing too little.

The Minister for Railways: In the railways; not in the workshops.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Can you produce a tape recorder to prove that?

Hon. A. R. JONES: We cannot blame a person for doing nothing if he has been given nothing to do. It seems to me that it should be possible for the Government, instead of carrying out major repair works and major building programmes with regard to railway trucks, carriages and the like, to have more of this work done by contract.

In order that decentralisation, which we are all looking forward to and are working for, might be assisted, I would suggest that the railway premises at Bunbury, Katanning, Merredin and other such places should be set up as repair shops only. In those centres all running repairs could be done. To a certain extent repairs are being done at such centres now, but they could be carried out to a much greater degree. Any complete overhaul at the end of a certain mileage could be effected at the workshops by contract. I believe that savings could be achieved in that way, but I am not competent to say just how and where. However, all these things should be taken into consideration.

It has been said in this House, and in another place, that the farmers of Western Australia—and the closing down of railways hits them to a marked extent, as well as the mining people and pastoralists in the outback—have been subsidised

for years in regard to the cartage of their wheat and super. I refute that. In the period following the end of the war, prices for wheat were very high, and that continued until comparatively recently. During that time the farmers could have been enjoying much better prices for their product than they did in fact receive, because they subsidised the people of Australia to the extent of well over £160,000,000.

Just lately the farmers have again subsidised the people of Australia by providing cheap wheat to the millers in order that the milling industry could be carried on and workers in that industry could retain their employment.

So when people say that the farmers have been subsidised in respect of cartage over a number of years, I contradict that flatly, because they have not been subsidised for anything, when all subsidies are taken into account. On the other hand, as I have pointed out, they lost over £160,000,000 through accepting a lesser price than they need have done in order that the people in Australia could have wheat cheaply; and recently, though prices were against us and we received less than the cost of production, the Australian Wheat Board has made wheat available to millers in order that the latter could compete against overseas competition, and thus retaining the industry and their workers.

The Minister for Railways: What are the components of the cost of production?

Hon. A. R. JONES: It is done by Federal authority, of course.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know them; I was wondering what they were.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The costs of production are taken each year; and as costs of all commodities used in the wheat industry rise, so the committee which goes into the matter makes a recommendation to the Federal Parliament that the cost of production be raised by a certain amount.

The Minister for Railways: That means rail freights on super and wheat.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Yes, all those things. The report of the department said that there was a better year from the point of view of revenue last year because so much wheat had been shifted. The Minister said that this was explained by the fact that there was a double crop last year. That is not so. There was a large crop, plus a carry-over from the year before.

The claim that farmers are subsidised is refuted by other statements that have been made. It is very easy to see how wheat can be carted cheaply per ton when all the Railway Department does

is to provide a rake of trucks at a siding. The wheat is loaded on to the trucks, sheeted down, labelled and consigned by the farmers' own company; and, at the most, the station master takes the consignment notes—or one note for the whole parcel. If it is consigned from a station where there is no station master, not even that service is performed by the department.

When the wheat arrives at its destination, it is put on the weighbridge with a view to computing the charge for freight. It is pulled into a siding and taken off by the bulk-handling organisation, and the Government does no handling whatsoever. Is it not thus reasonable to assume that wheat can be shifted at a very satisfactory cost, inasmuch as there are no overhead charges such as apply to other goods handled by the railways, the receiving officers putting them into the trucks and moving them at the point of destination where they are delivered to the purchasers?

I still feel that while this motion is possibly necessary, it cannot be effective until the motion moved by Sir Charles Latham is carried. I cannot predict what this House will do, but I made an appeal last night that the rescission motion be carried, because I thought we had made a mistake.

Point of Order.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: On a point of order, I hope you, Sir, will be as lenient with other members who follow the hon. member—

The President: What is the point of order?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I suggest that Mr. Jones is discussing the motion that is on the notice paper after the one moved by Mr. Simpson.

The President: Mr. Jones is speaking to the motion moved by Mr. Simpson.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Yes; and I take it that that is the motion he should stick to, and not discuss the one moved by Sir Charles Latham.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I suggest, Sir, that your view might well be that owing to the interrelated nature of the two motions it would be convenient if in the debate they are referred to simultaneously; that would save a lot of time.

The President: At odd times it may be necessary for a member, when speaking to one motion, to make a reference to the other. In this instance we are dealing with Mr. Simpson's motion, and I think that this is the first reference Mr. Jones has made to the motion moved by Sir Charles Latham in the whole of the speech he has delivered, and that reference was made by way of comparison.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is such a great similarity in the motions that you would have great difficulty—

The President: I know. If I hear the hon. member referring to the rescission motion I will ask him to revert to a discussion of Mr. Simpson's motion. Mr. Jones may proceed. I think this was the first time you had made mention of the rescission motion, Mr. Jones?

Debate Resumed.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I spoke to the rescission motion last night; I am now discussing Mr. Simpson's motion. As a matter of fact, I have now finished speaking. I intend to reserve my decision on the motion until I have heard the rest of the debate.

HON. F. D. WILLMOTT (South-West) [5.55]: As some members of the Liberal Party have been accused of backing and filling on this railway question, I propose to try to show very briefly that our view has been the same throughout the whole discussion and throughout the whole controversy. Members will recall that on the 8th November, 1956, the Minister for Railways introduced a motion in this House dealing with railways. On that occasion, Mr. Simpson moved an amendment to the motion which had the effect of causing the motion to read as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House 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.

There, right at the outset, is clearly defined our attitude to this question. That motion went down to another place where another motion was dealt with and returned to us with some provisos to which this Chamber agreed. I would like to read those provisos to show what was intended. I do not intend to quote the whole motion, but merely the provisos, because members know quite well what the motion was. The provisos were:—

Subject to the Government—

- (a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be

achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and

- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (c) Overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficit on such services.

There again our attitude towards this question is clearly defined. Unfortunately, the Government has not adhered to the terms of those provisions; far from it. In dealing with the motion at present before the House, if members examine the terms of the motion they will see that it follows exactly the same lines of thinking and contains the same provisions as we sought to have implemented previously. I do not propose to read them, as they are on the notice paper, but they seek to implement what we have thought on this question all along.

It is not a matter of saying "hands off all railways"; but we say—that this motion makes it clear—that we do not think the Government was right in implementing the closure of railways without providing for alternative transport and without making a full inquiry into the railways administration as a whole. I submit that had the Government made approaches to the various local Government authorities and others concerned in the districts where closures were to take place, a great deal of the controversy which has arisen would have been obviated.

The Government, unfortunately, saw fit to follow a course other than what we think was right and simply rushed in and closed down the lines concerned without any regard for the provisions in relation to an inquiry into railway administration and the existing circumstances of each proposed closure; and the result is the position with which we are faced at present. The Government's failure to observe the conditions agreed to makes the present motion necessary; and I cannot agree with the view expressed by Mr. Jones, that the motion does not mean anything, because it is a most positive one which calls on the Government to do something.

The Minister for Railways: It would cost a lot of money, too.

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: I believe our thinking is in line with that expressed by other bodies and by various meetings held in this State. Reference has been made to the Road Board Association conference which was attended by representatives of 88 road boards. At that meeting a motion

was carried unanimously in almost the same terms as the motion before this House at the moment. That motion reads—

That this conference protests strongly against the closure of any railway line in the agricultural areas without an exhaustive inquiry into the financial and overall economic aspects by investigators from outside the State, and demands that lines already suspended be reopened pending inquiry.

I can see very little difference between that motion and the one with which we are at present dealing, and I repeat that our thinking is along much the same lines as that expressed at the Road Board Association conference to which I have referred.

Reference has been made also to the protest meeting recently held at Northam and attended by people from most parts of the State. The first and main motion carried at that conference was as follows:—

That this meeting protests strongly against the closure of any railway line in the agricultural areas without an exhaustive inquiry into the financial and overall economic aspects by investigators from outside the State, and demands that the lines already suspended be reopened pending such inquiry, and also requests the Legislative Council to rescind the motion already agreed to in regard to rail closures.

I submit that that again is very much in line with the purpose of the motion now before us; and I therefore feel that I can support the motion with complete confidence, in the certain knowledge that it meets the wishes of a large body of informed opinion throughout Western Australia. Although I was not present at the protest meeting at Northam, those who attended assure us that it was a most representative one.

The two motions to which I have referred ask, to all intents and purposes, for the same thing as Mr. Simpson's motion seeks. I submit that our attitude towards this question has been consistent all along and remains unaltered. There is no substance in the accusation that the Liberal Party is backing and filling on this question.

I propose next to deal briefly with the question of transport in relation to primary production. From what has been said in this House, many members appear to be of the opinion that rail transport is the only form of transport that can adequately serve primary production. That may be so in some fields of primary production but certainly does not apply to all; and, as an instance, I will quote the apple industry in the South-West. Apple growers there have in recent years built up a very valuable export market in Singapore and it is based almost entirely on road transport, as I propose to demonstrate.

The rail freight on a case of apples from Bridgetown to Fremantle—the same applies to other districts, but the figures would be different—is 1s. 10d. per bushel, and the shippers sending apples to Singapore pay the growers who cart the apples to Fremantle by road 2s. per bushel freight, so the cost in that case is about the same, inasmuch as the other 2d. would be absorbed if the grower had to truck his apples to the railway for transport by rail to Fremantle—

Hon. H. L. Roche: Does that mean that you could do without that railway?

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: The crux of the matter in regard to the apple export market in Singapore being based on road transport lies in the fact that apples transported from Bridgetown by road are picked in the morning, packed on the afternoon of the same day and are taken through by road to Fremantle by 8 a.m. next day, which means that only nine days elapse from the time when the apples are picked until they are on the Singapore market.

It has been definitely stated by the shippers that apples being sent to Singapore in those circumstances arrive there in much better condition than apples transported by rail to Fremantle. The railways naturally cannot take the apples straight through during the night as a motor truck does. First, the apples have to be delivered to the railway and then they are often shunted off at Bunbury or elsewhere along the line, with the result that they arrive at Fremantle sometimes after 24 hours in transit, during which time they may be lying in the trucks during the heat of the day with the result that the fruit becomes heated, following which breakdown occurs quickly.

I am not trying to kid any member up a gum tree in this regard but am giving the absolute facts. By putting our apples on the Singapore market in first-class condition, having transported them by road from the orchard to Fremantle, we have been able to compete with California and South Africa for that market and beat them. I am convinced, from what the shippers and growers have told me, that we would not have been able to do that had the apples not been transported quickly to the ship and shipped straightaway.

I may have something further to say in this regard when another motion is before the House; but in the meantime I repeat that any accusations that my party has backed and filled in relation to this question of rail closures is absolutely incorrect. I have endeavoured to point out what has been our attitude throughout; and I assure the House it is the same now and that it is in line with the thinking of many other people throughout this State.

HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West) [7.30]: From recent utterances the basic thoughts behind the rail suspension move, and the reactions to it, have become more obvious. I was most interested the other day to hear a man with some official standing in the Government making great play of what he considered to be the basic issue of the original motion. He maintained that it was one of rail closure, which would indicate quite clearly that the Government's policy in regard to this matter was and is rail closure only. That is perhaps why the Government has got itself into such a parlous condition over the matter. Surely the basic issue in this question is transport! The suspension of certain lines should be regarded purely as part of a plan in the overall efficiency of Western Australian transport.

I fully support Mr. Simpson's motion because the Government has made it quite clear that it regards the issue as one of rail closure only. Once the Government has got that over, the whole thing is finished—it can be done in any old way. But our attitude to the question has been and is that rail closures must be considered in the light of the whole transport system of the State. The transport system of any country covers not only rail but also road, air and water. It is most deplorable that in the past—and it certainly will be in the future—we have not been able to worry about waterways and canals in addition to our rail, road and air transport.

Because of these divergent views on the question of rail closures we have to consider the matter still further. As I said, the Government's view is "rail closures—period." Our view is that rail closures should be considered only in conjunction with the general transport system; and it is interesting to study the history of these views which were gained from Parliament. We have heard many times that the question was taken to Parliament; it was not.

Parliament consists of the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council, and the Sovereign—in this State, the Governor. An opinion was expressed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, but not by Parliament. It has been said that this House made a mistake. If it did so, it was in endeavouring to limit the actions of the Government by a motion instead of by an Act. The Government of this State has the power to close any railways. That, I think, has been clearly proved and stated many times, without contradiction.

The Minister for Railways: Not to close lines.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That is so; the Government has power to suspend services but not to close lines. Despite the fact that the Government had that power, it asked the Legislative Assembly and the

Legislative Council—the Legislative Council originally—to express an opinion in the form of a motion, which those two Houses did. It is quite clear that, having asked for an expression of opinion, the Government was virtually asking for the conditions under which it could proceed in the exercise of powers which it already had. Having asked for an expression of opinion, it is reasonable to suppose that the Government had a moral obligation to abide by the opinion expressed. But I have yet to see or hear any statements made by the Government which prove that it has abided by the conditions for which it asked.

It has been said that the conditions are incidental. But as I said a moment ago, the Government asked Parliament—or rather it asked the Legislative Council originally and then both House of Parliament—for an expression of opinion on the matter—a matter on which the Government had full authority and power to act.

The Minister for Railways: We did not bulldoze it.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I will agree with the Minister that the Government did not bulldoze it through Parliament; I give the Government credit for that. But having agreed to the conditions, surely the Government had a moral obligation to abide by those conditions in their entirety! But what did the Government do? It proceeded in defiance of the conditions which it had accepted. Those actions amply demonstrate that the Government sees the question in the light of railway suspensions—finish.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: My colleagues and I say that railway closures are part of an overall transport plan. That is a vastly different matter. The Government's idea is to close in and say, "There are three fellows who have trucks of a couple of tons each and they can handle the transport. We will close this line." Yet the conditions which the Government accepted are clearly set out. Even though the Government had no need to ask for the conditions, it did so and should abide by them, because it accepted them in full—

The Minister for Railways: And they were observed.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That has yet to be proved; the evidence is very much to the contrary. People in all walks of life are convinced that they have not been observed. Organisation after organisation has moved motions—and Mr. Wilmott read them out—similar to the one which is now before us. The Government received an expression of opinion from this House and proceeded to act and exert the authority which it had anyway. The Government also proceeded to disregard—but not completely in many cases—the conditions which it had accepted.

This House saw fit to implement those conditions by means of a motion only. No Act was passed, and therefore the motion is not binding. We can move motions until we are blue in the face, but the Government can continue to act as it has already acted until such time as we are prepared to limit the rail closures or suspensions by means of an Act. Therefore it would appear that the most logical thing to do would be to call upon the Government to face up to the moral obligations which it has by its acceptance of the conditions laid down in the motion agreed to by both Houses of Parliament. To say now that we will withdraw our previous opinion to my mind has a value yet to be proved. As I have previously said, the Government can suspend rail services at any old tick of the clock; it has that power. If Parliament disagrees with the Government having that power someone should introduce legislation to cover it. But as yet nobody has done so.

The Minister for Railways: That does not mean to say that nobody will.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: No; and I think it might be a reasonable thing. It is fairly clearly laid down how a new line shall be planned; but nothing is laid down as to how a service shall be stopped.

The Minister for Railways: I quite agree with your opinion there.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I think it might be a good idea to include among the Acts of this State one that lays down what shall be done when a service is to be discontinued. At the moment there is a bit of a vacuum in that regard in our Act. But the fact remains it is not there; and this House has attempted to regulate the Government by a motion—an expression of opinion which is not very forceful. I still think the position of the Government in this matter is quite clear. It asks for that opinion, but does not accept the conditions which are put to it. And they were good conditions.

We believed the Government was acting in good faith. We did not know at that stage that its policy in this matter concerned rail closures only; we thought the Government was looking at it from the overall transport angle. The precipitate action of the Government has rather proved to be to the contrary.

The Minister for Railways: Not proved.

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I think the motion moved by Mr. Simpson is, in the circumstances, deserving of support.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [7.46]: I am one of those who feel that any action this House can take that will prevent the discontinuance, let alone the pulling up of lines, is justified.

The Minister for Railways: I agree with you.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am quite clear in my mind as to what I want and how I feel about it; I always have been. I feel that the mounting pressure of public opinion should be a clear indication to the Government not only of the unpopularity of its action, but of the fact that the opinion expressed has been expressed by citizens who have a sufficient sense of responsibility to have given freely of their service to the State for many years.

The opinion to which I refer was, of course, the outcome of a very large meeting composed mainly of representatives of local government from 88 different boards in this State. When an opinion so overwhelming, and so unanimous is expressed, any Government with a sense of responsibility must take notice of it. It is an indication of the dissatisfaction of the people of what appears to be on the face of it almost a confidence trick that has been worked on them.

Western Australia is, with the possible exception of the Northern Territory, the only pioneer State left in the Commonwealth. It is a State that is still undergoing a developmental stage—a stage of progress and expansion in huge areas of not only undeveloped but uninhabited land—and to find that it is this State that is contemplating the closure of the number of miles of line that have been put before this House is absolutely astounding. I think it is a little short of criminal; particularly so when we see that in almost every other country of the world the railway systems are expanding at a terrific rate.

Mention was made in another place of an article in a recent "Readers' Digest" magazine of the development in American railway circles. Today the railway system in America, run by private interests, is not only competing with other forms of transport but is also competing on a very keen basis. Road transport, air transport and sea transport are almost being run into the ground by the railways.

The system operating in America is one in which they go out after business. They do not sit back and say, "Let us have protection and limit the type of freight and the type of goods that the road transport system can haul." That is not what they ask. If they did, they would not get it. If they wish to keep their heads above water they have to go out after the business in a very keen and cut-throat form of competition.

The Minister for Railways: Where is this?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: In America.

The Minister for Railways: Then why are they closing so many lines?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Because in some places in America they still have, as we do, mongrel gauges; and where they

exist, they are being closed. But when one considers the mileages in America and those in Western Australia—one State of the Commonwealth—the disparity in the disbandment of lines is so great that there is no justification whatever for that action here.

I would point out to the Minister that whereas in some parts of the State lines are being closed, ostensibly because of lack of traffic, the Minister already has on his plate applications from areas for an extension of work to pick up freights that are available; and these applications have been refused.

The Minister for Railways: Where?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I refer to Gibson's Soak on the Esperance line, one of the only paying lines today. People there applied for such a simple thing as loading chutes.

The Minister for Railways: It is six miles from the next.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: With some pretty wild bush in between. That request was made so long ago that, by the time the actual siding was put in on Shark Lake, it was not only inadequate but it was put in with such a grade that everything had to be blocked to prevent the rolling stock from running downhill. Today that siding will not cope with one-third of the traffic offering. Trucks have to be dropped off at Norseman and picked up later on. That fact alone justifies the application for the installing of the equipment asked for.

The Minister for Railways: Who is arguing with you?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The Minister's own department is arguing, and has argued by means of correspondence. We have had letter after letter saying that when the district has developed to the stage that it warrants this facility the matter will be considered. If this facility were provided, the district would develop even faster than it has done. The Gibson's Soak area is asking for so little. It is merely asking for the means to handle stock.

The Minister for Railways: Mr. Bennetts fixed it up.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If he has, he has only done so within the last fortnight, because it was only a short while ago that I received a letter from the Minister saying it could not be done. There is a line where they are asking for development; but because of a matter of a few miles through bush, with nothing on the main highway, it has been refused time and time again. I am delighted if the Minister is conveying an assurance to me that the request is to be considered.

The Minister for Railways: I will see it is put on the loan programme for this year. In fact I have seen it put on.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am very grateful indeed to hear that, and I will take back any criticism that I have directed at the Minister in this matter even in the past.

The Minister for Railways: I would like to remind you that this is not the Address-in-reply.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am aware of that. When this matter was under discussion last year there was a small but significant cross-fire of words between the Chief Secretary and myself. I asked him what would be a rough estimate of the loss involved in the materials in the lines that were to be pulled up. The Chief Secretary replied that there would be no loss because the materials taken from one line would be used on another. I notice there is very little comment about that. My retort to the reply was, "You are going to cannibalise the line." To which the Chief Secretary replied, "Yes." Does the Chief Secretary remember that?

The Chief Secretary: It must have been so if I said it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: How can there be any cannibalising of lines unless these lines are to be pulled up? So the Government has soft-pedalled on this matter and has just discontinued these lines. I do not know the estimate of lines that we have in this State today. Let us say that we have £4,000,000 of railway lines laid in this State. Once a line is discontinued it will deteriorate 50 per cent. faster than a similar line which is still running under traffic. I was surprised to find that that was so, but I believe it is quite true.

If one line in a certain condition is discontinued and no traffic is run on it, in 12 months it will deteriorate 50 per cent. faster than if it had the normal traffic running over it. The reason for this is that the compacting of the bed by the traffic helps to maintain the embankments and ballast and assures that this is kept tight and secure. When there is no traffic it becomes friable, and every little rain frets it away; and the result is that it becomes loose. That is one feature. But apart from this the traffic itself helps to keep away certain insects that attack the wood sleepers which, in Western Australia, are not treated. Some of the lines that have been pointed out as having been discontinued for various reasons were actually in an excellent state of repair. In fact some of them had just undergone an extensive programme of rehabilitation. These lines will be far worse in six months' time than if they had still been under traffic.

As one who has always lived on the end of a long line going into the country, I know how people who depend on the railway lines feel about what is looked on as their lifeline. The whole reason given for the discontinuance of the lines is economy. Roughly half a million pounds has been attributed as a loss to this 800

miles of line. But with a possibly railway strike on his hands, the Premier hurriedly gave an assurance contrary to what was thought, and said that no one was going to lose his job. So what was some 4,000 miles of line needing a certain work force is now to be reduced to 3,000 miles of line, roughly, with the same work force.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It amounts to 4.2 men per mile.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: So in actual fact the lines are going to cost more per mile to run and therefore will be run at a greater loss.

The Minister for Railways: You are a bad mathematician.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I may be; but the Minister is a bad maker of alibis.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Bad officers.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The fact remains that after the reduced mileage there was still the same work force. The Minister claims that as a method by which he is going to effect economies. I would be the last one in the world to say we should pay off 2,000 men.

The Minister for Railways: You would like to see them go.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I would not; and I do not think the Minister actually believes that remark either.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He is unfair if he does.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not think he means it. I say that if the Railway Department went out after business, and did not sit back and complain about the competition it is getting from road transport and reorganised its activities, it would make rail transport attractive to the user. In most countries in the world, if I were to put a case of fruit or a piece of equipment on a train it would be delivered to its destination. But that is not the position here. If I put an article on the railways in Perth and send it to Kalgoorlie or Bunbury, it would be delivered to the consumer. However, that is not the position here today. It can stay in the shed at Kalgoorlie unless one has a friend in the shed who will phone up to say that a parcel is there waiting to be picked up. It may stay there three or four days. I have seen lots of names in the paper, of people who have goods in the sheds or the parcels office at Kalgoorlie advising them to pick them up. That is the only way they have of knowing anything about it. That position is not very convenient for a person who lives out of town and only comes in once a week.

This service could absorb most of the excess employees there are now. Why cannot the Government use to a greater advantage a service which is now in operation between Kalgoorlie and Boulder every day? Sometimes the load is no greater than that on the table in front of us. It

goes from the Kalgoorlie goods shed to Boulder; why, I do not know. Why could not that truck deliver goods to the rail users in the districts? Not only in Kalgoorlie; it could apply anywhere. It is a service that should make the railways attractive to users. If I had a quantity of furniture to transport I would sooner put it on the railway if it were going to be delivered to the customer, and be saved the worry as to whether he was going to get it or not.

We know that at the back of the mind of everybody who is discussing this problem, is the number of men involved. It has been said that with the mileage to be closed, and based on a rough allocation of men per mile, there are about 2,000 men involved. We should be able to do with 2,000 less with 800 miles closed; but instead the work force is increased by 2,000, despite the fact that the increase in overtime for the last 12 months was something in the nature of £1,000,000.

The Minister for Railways: That included penalties.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is the figure in the public mind; and, if the figure is wrong, I think that in justification to the Minister and the Government it should be corrected.

The Minister for Railways: It was last session; it was explained then.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It did not get to the public, which is entitled to know. It is still in the minds of the people that £1,000,000 has been paid in overtime alone.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is high; you will admit that.

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I will tell you where it is high.

The Minister for Railways: There is no argument.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You will not argue.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If the Government succeeds in making this action stick—the closing of 800 miles—I think there is no doubt in anyone's mind that these discontinued lines will ultimately be 800 miles of abandoned or pulled-up lines. There is not much doubt about that.

The Minister for Railways: What is that?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If the Government gets its way with the present scheme of discontinuing 800 miles of line, it will ultimately mean the pulling up of 800 miles of line.

There is little doubt in anybody's mind that it will happen, unless the expressions in this House tonight have some effect.

The Chief Secretary: You would have to agree to it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Not one single mile of it, will I agree to. I would not presume to ask the value of the 842 miles of line; but the fact is that when the line is pulled up it will be sold as salvage.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It will cost more to pull it up than the material is worth.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It would be 800 miles of second-hand railway line. The sleepers could not be used again, and the Minister knows that. Although the line may be worth £2,000,000, when it is pulled up we would not get a cracker. As salvage it would not be worth 2s. because the £2,000,000 is still there in the form of culverts, stations, and platforms, etc. While the line is in operation they are an asset to the State; but when the line is pulled up, that £2,000,000 remains there except for a few paltry pounds in second-hand railway line.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: We have to come to Parliament before it can be pulled up; you know that.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If the Government gets this one through, it will get the other one through.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: By your help.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It would not have my help for even one mile of line.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Horatius on the bridge.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No; I live at the end of one.

The Chief Secretary: I remember one you helped to close.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I was a very embryo member at the time.

The Chief Secretary: No excuses!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I would like the Minister to check on that and see what voting did take place before he accuses me of that.

The Chief Secretary: You are not sure.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Neither is the Minister.

The Minister for Railways: I am sure.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Certain actions have been taken to try to economise prior to this. The previous Government went into dieselisation on a section of the line. This phase is very familiar to me, and more so than to some members, because Kalgoorlie is the line most greatly affected. The picture given by the Government at that time was that there was going to be a great saving in cost to the State when this line was converted to diesel. We were told there would be a reduction of manpower on the line; that there would be quicker schedules; cheaper running and all sorts of wonderful changes.

However, remarkably enough, before the actual changeover took place, members travelling on that line noticed the blossoming up of two and three-roomed cottages in twos and threes every few miles. In addition, today there are far more men stationed on that line, and those men are working longer hours. Some are working overtime, while others are on shift work. How long can that continue? That is in direct contrast to what happened on the Trans-line when it was dieselised.

The Minister for Railways: You know all about it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: With the high speed travelled now, there are a number of safe working points along the line, and these chaps are working 12 hours a day per shift.

The Minister for Railways: What are they doing?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not know. There should be a reduction of staff along that line instead of the men occupying all these cabins.

The Minister for Railways: Signal cabins.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No; the Minister does not know about them.

The Minister for Railways: You called them cabins.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I suggest that the Minister take a trip along the line and he will see these houses in groups of two and three; and, as I have said before, only a few miles apart. Therefore, to my mind, the actual staff on that line has increased rather than been reduced as a result of the diesels.

The Minister for Railways: They are re-laying the whole line.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I know that. But that work is being done by permanent way gangs. The chaps I refer to do not belong to road gangs.

The Minister for Railways: Perhaps they are kangaroosers.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: We cannot find out; I would appreciate the information.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I suppose they draw their pay.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I know that much of the talk which has gone on has been somewhat jocular and no strong language has been used, although members feel strongly about it. I know that there are many ways where little things could result in economies being effected, and this is obvious to all who keep their eyes open and take an

interest in what is going on. If there is to be a reduction in staff why start at the bottom of the heap?

We know that one type of employee in the railways is hard to keep today; and I refer to those employed on the the permanent-way gangs. It is not a very congenial job, and therefore it is hard to keep the men. It is not an attractive enough job, and it looks too insecure. As compared with the Commonwealth line there appears to be on our line a preponderance of inspectors, chief inspectors, foremen and sub-foremen, etc. They are not needed.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you did not want to get rid of any.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I said: If there is to be a reduction, why start at the bottom? Let it start higher up, because there does appear to be an overloading of foremen, sub-foremen, permanent-way inspectors and divisional inspectors. I have here another instance of where a saving could be made. This is a small matter and might even be considered cheap.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Do not make an excuse for it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not need an excuse for it. I saw something on a stretch of line that rather shocked me—it was in connection with the pulling out and replacing of sleepers. Certain lengths of line were being replaced and the fish-plate bolts, four to each plate, were being sheared off with a special cutting tool used by a fellow who was pretty good at the job. At one blow he would shear the nut off the five-eighth bolt holding the fishplate. I made inquiries about this from the ganger, and he said, "Those are our instructions. They are just sheared off." I inquired and found that the retail price of the bolt to any private citizen ranged from 3s. to 4s. 6d. Of course, it would be much cheaper to the Government.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: How much time would be saved?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Well, these bolts were just sheared off; but the Commonwealth Railways have found that it pays them to undo the bolts, collect them, take them to Port Pirie and have them re-annealed for use again. It pays the Commonwealth Government to do that; but not the State Government. Why?

This is only a small matter. But multiply what was happening in the small section where I was, over the 4,000 miles of line that we have, and it would amount to a pretty decent sort of a bill. That was on the Salmon Gums-Esperance line. On the same stretch, sleepers that had been replaced in the last few years were stacked alongside the line and sold to farmers for a few pounds a ton. Sleepers cost anything up to 15s. each.

The Minister for Railways: More than that.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Then the position is worse than I thought. I know that once a sleeper is pulled out, no matter what its condition, it cannot be safely used again. But why were they pulled out after being down for such a short time?

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Why didn't you ask the local engineer?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is not always easy to get hold of him.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: He would have the answers, though.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes; but then again he might not give the information. Members know that the employees on the line are a little chary about talking to their members on matters like this if the information is to be used.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Not the engineers.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is remarkable how cautious some of them are. Perhaps it is just me that some of them do not trust.

Hon. J. J. Garrigan: Has that always gone on, or is it just recent?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not know how long it has been going on, but I saw it myself quite recently.

Hon. J. J. Garrigan: Not five or six years ago?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No, quite recently. There is another point that is a little more serious; and just what is involved in it, I do not know. A contract was entered into by the Government railways with the quarries at Merredin for the supply of blue metal ballast for the re-ballasting of this section of the line. The price was something in excess of 30s. a yard. The term of that contract ended about 18 months ago, I believe; but the railways have continued to take the metal from this firm despite the fact that they have been offered ballast which had been submitted to the usual test—breaking and cracking test for hardness—by the Kalgoorlie Road Board at less than £1 a yard. This material could be sent back and even stockpiled along the line by using the empty trucks returning after having brought coal to Kalgoorlie. This offer was refused.

Again, the Bullfinch mine at Bullfinch offered the Government unlimited supplies of ballast material which had passed the necessary hardness and breaking test at a figure of just over £1, I believe. This again was refused.

The Minister for Railways: The railways have to use something for money. Loan funds are used to buy ballast.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is the whole point. The contract the Government had at 30s. a yard had ended many months ago, and instead of seeking a better one or accepting an offer at less than half that amount, it still continued to take the material from the Merredin people at the old figure.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you said that contract was completed.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I said the period of the contract had ended but the railways still continued to take the material although they were offered a suitable material at a lower price.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They were paying 30s. for something they could have purchased for 20s.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is the point. Even if tenders were called again and the Merredin group was prepared to come down to the figure put forward by the other people, questions could be asked as to why the excessive figure was paid in the first place.

This is just one of the little things that are going on that people can see, but nothing is done. If questions are asked we are always given a reason or an excuse, but in the aggregate these things must have an effect. Railways run by private enterprise, if they do not show a profit, at least run economically compared with the Government railway system which appears to be dragging its feet and running into the doldrums. It is inefficient and behind the times. Today, the American group I have mentioned is still replacing and extending, and its discarded system was 20 years ahead of ours.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: In finance as well, would you admit?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Like other members, I have been critical. One can often be criticised because one criticises without offering some helpful criticism or alternative. One might be considered presumptuous to offer advice or constructive criticism when one has only a layman's knowledge of these matters. But ideas, no matter how humble they may be, can often be the beginnings of quite good results. The area served by the line running through Bullfinch and Warralakin is dismal to travel through. It is a dry district and no progress seems to be made. Everyone there seems to be a little on the hopeless side. Why could not the technical experts and advisers in the department use their skill and knowledge to create work there for the railways?

Most of these farms were started years ago by men who went into the virgin bush, and they had to try to find sites for dams with probably no better knowledge than simply to go on the look of the country. They might say, "This looks

good here; we will put a dam in this spot." Now that the area is cleared it appears that some of the dams are wrongly sited.

If the department could evolve a scheme whereby its engineers could go through these areas and advise on the resiting of the dams and on the finding of water in deep bores or even shallow bores, the position might be helped. We have experts and engineers who can do that; and if good sites for dams were found and dams put down, the farmers could carry more stock, and this would mean more business for the railways. Today our engineers are probably not used to their full capacity.

The Minister for Railways: Dam sinkers will find a dam site for anybody who wants one.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes; but a dam sinker is not like an engineer. The people I am talking about are not in a position to be able to pay the rather high cost of sinking a dam on a risky site. What I suggest may be costly, but it might mean more work for a line that we think is going to be closed. If this will save the line from being closed, then it is well worth while. I am only offering this as a suggestion. I do not doubt that the Minister and the engineers can blow it sky high in five minutes, and that would scrub it. But I have talked it over with other people and we feel there is something basic in the idea. There is no doubt that originally the dams on these farms were sited on a hit-and-miss basis. This does not apply today because a dam sinker can go on to an area that is partly cleared and good sites would probably be fairly obvious to him.

There is a new farming scheme called Keyline, which to men not interested in farming is fantastic. An engineer started it. He took up a hopeless piece of land that had been given away because it was eroded by wind and rain. By this Keyline scheme he brought it back into a state of production that overshadowed all the other farms in the district. That was done purely by engineering principles. If that sort of thinking was invoked—and we have the necessary people in the department—this line which at present is looked on as being a hopeless proposition could probably be saved.

I cannot help but feel that the action of the Government today in not giving serious consideration to the closing of these lines is little short of criminal. I support the motion.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [8.29]: Because I was on my way overseas late last year, I was not here when the matter of railway discontinuance was discussed in the House, so I have made it my duty to look at the Hansard reports in order that I might be aware of

what really happened. I must say that it has indeed been very interesting going through the reports.

First of all, we all know that the motion that was originally moved by the Minister for Railways in this House was amended by the House and sent to the Legislative Assembly. I am sure that members are aware of the manner in which that amended motion from this House was peremptorily dismissed on the 27th November by the Premier who moved that the Order of the Day—Resolution: Railways, discontinuance of certain lines, Council's Message, be discharged from the notice paper. The Government took no notice whatever of the message that was sent to the Legislative Assembly from this House. It took no notice at all! Of course, that has happened before. I can recall putting forward the case of certain people whose land the Government had acquired and the Government also thought fit to ignore my submissions at that time.

Shortly after this, however, one finds the Government putting forward a motion of its own which was dealt with by another place and eventually sent to the Legislative Council for its concurrence. Before that happened, however, certain matters were included in an amendment moved in the Legislative Assembly, which were accepted by the Government. I would now like to take the opportunity to quote from the Parliamentary Debates of last year at page 3336, when the Minister for Transport was closing the debate on the amendment that had been moved. The Minister said this—

I do not think the Act is as outmoded as the hon. member suggests. I assure the House, finally, that the matters mentioned in the amendment and those outlined by the member for Nedlands are receiving the attention of the Government at this very time and for this reason I have no objection whatsoever to the addition of these words to the motion we are considering.

The Government accepted the amendment that was moved by a private member in another place.

The Minister for Railways: By the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in another place.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is difficult to hear the Minister. I am quoting what the Minister for Transport said on the question and nothing else. The amendment was moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I admit, but the fact remains that the Minister for Transport accepted the terms of the amendment which were in conformity with the views that have been held by the members of my party right throughout the debates on this question despite the childish motion that was placed on the notice paper in another place by an hon. member.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must not make reference to a debate held in another place during the same session.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: So the reference that has been made about L.C.L. members backing and filling on this question is without foundation because I agree with Mr. Willmott that there has been no backing and filling by the members of my party and that our policy has been consistent throughout.

I appreciate the difficulty the Minister for Transport must find himself in. He submits one motion to us; it is amended by this House; it is sent to another place; it receives a very peremptory dismissal from the notice paper by the Premier; the Minister for Transport then supplants that motion with another one, and the poor old Minister for Railways does not know whether he is coming or going in this matter because of all the events that are happening.

The Minister for Railways: What a pity! You take a bit of keeping up with, I admit, but I know where I am going.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister enjoys one of those happy dispositions which enables him to keep up with events, I admit. The motion that we are now discussing conforms to the thoughts of the people of this State. Further, it is in conformity with the thoughts of delegates to the meeting of the Road Board Association, and it must not be forgotten that the meeting of that association held this year represented a very large section of the people throughout the State. I was present at the Northam protest meeting which was called to discuss this question. That is the meeting the Minister for Railways was invited to attend.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But he did not attend.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I think it would be as well to acquaint members with what took place at that meeting. Hon. D. Brand, the leader of the L.C.L., and Hon. A. F. Watts, the leader of the Country Party, attended that meeting and on the platform with them was the chairman who was appointed at the meeting, together with the general secretary of the Farmers' Union. Mr. Brand, as the leader of the L.C.L., stated his case in the way that he viewed it, and Mr. Watts put forward the case on behalf of the Country Party. Believe me, this was a gathering of men and women that had very sincere and heated feelings about these rail closures and Mr. Brand and Mr. Watts told them what they thought was the true position. Out of the deliberations arrived at during that meeting, we find that the following motion was carried:—

That this meeting protests very strongly against the closure of any railway lines in the agricultural areas

without an exhaustive inquiry into the financial and overall economic aspects by investigators from outside the State, and demands that the lines already suspended be reopened pending such inquiry, and also requests the Legislative Council to rescind the motion already agreed to in regard to rail closures.

Hon. L. A. Logan: And the word "agricultural" was taken out.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, it was taken out and I think the word "all" was inserted in its place. At this meeting it was quite obvious that the thoughts of the large crowd of people who attended were in conformity with those held by members of the L.C.L., which they also held when this motion was introduced at the opening of Parliament. The motion therefore conforms very largely to the representations that have been made by people throughout the State.

It is interesting to note that in the schedule of the Government's motion, mention is made of the Cue-Big Bell line. I understand that that line was closed before the motion was presented to Parliament. Can the Minister tell us whether the line was closed before the motion was brought before Parliament?

The Minister for Railways: It was not closed.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Was it discontinued?

The Minister for Railways: The services had been discontinued.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The schedule to which I have referred showed that the Elleker-Nornalup service was to be discontinued, but that line has not been closed. However, when it suits the Government to say that Parliament has agreed to this motion, I join with Mr. MacKinnon in saying that, strictly speaking, Parliament has not agreed to this motion because Parliament is the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Governor representing Her Majesty. The legislature and His Excellency must agree to an Act, and an Act becomes the law of the land. Regardless of whether it wishes to or not, the Government is under no obligation to take any notice of any motion passed by Parliament. However, the Government did retract and say, "Cut the Elleker-Nornalup line out of the motion." But did it make any reference to the Cue-Big Bell railway line? No, of course it did not! I know that this is only a minor point, but it is part of the argument.

So far as my party is concerned, its members feel that agreement was reached on the terms of the motion passed last year subject to certain conditions, on which our views were consistent throughout all discussions on this subject. Having had those conditions accepted by the Minister for Transport in another place, we felt that

the Government would fulfil them; but such was not the case. There were many members of Parliament at the Northam meeting besides myself, and it was surprising to me to hear men who had attended from the various centres at which the rail closures had occurred, placing before the meeting their accounts of the hardship that they were suffering. One after another these men explained the difficulties they were encountering because the Government had gone ahead in its action to suspend these railway lines without making arrangements for suitable alternative road transport and the other conditions which it had promised to fulfil.

The Government apparently said to itself, "Having received the consent of Parliament to close these lines, we will bulldoze our way through and if there is any trouble in the future we will say that Parliament agreed to it." In fact, that is what the Premier and the members of his Government have been crying to the Press ever since this motion was agreed to. The Premier has cried, "Parliament agreed to it!"

The Minister for Railways: Well, did it not? What are you disputing?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am not disputing anything. I am simply saying that the motion was agreed to by Parliament, but the Government has not fulfilled the terms and conditions that were attached to the motion. That is not my opinion, but the opinion of 700 or 800 people who attended the meeting held at the Capitol Theatre, Northam. I attended that meeting principally to find out whether there would be any merit in the case that they intended to put forward and, after hearing the opinions expressed by various people at that meeting, I came to the conclusion that there was a great deal of merit in their case. Speakers at the meeting stated quite emphatically that they were encountering hardships as a result of the Government's activity.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Inactivity.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, inactivity. We are now demanding that the Government adhere to the terms and conditions set out in the motion. I hope that this House will agree to the motion. If it does, then the Government will be given an indication of the thought of the Legislative Council on this matter. I support the motion.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [8.46]: I rise to say a few words in support of the motion moved by Mr. Simpson. I do not wish to speak very long, but there are one or two points I desire to make before a vote is taken. In doing so I express some little regret at the action resorted to when a motion was moved by the Minister in this House on the 1st November last and debated at length. It was amended for the purpose of giving not

only another place a chance to discuss the motion in the amended form, but also the people of Western Australia the opportunity to express their views with regard to rail closures and the like. That was the purpose of the delay.

Originally, when the Minister moved the motion, he endeavoured to bulldoze it through this House and suggested there was no need to do what we were trying to do, which was to refer it to another place for comment and amendment. He got very hot under the collar at the action taken by us. Surely it was incumbent on the people of this State who were affected by this move, to get in touch with their representatives and to hold public meetings to discuss the matter before it was dealt with in this House. On that score only, I express very deep regret.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Government depended on its weight and numbers in the Council.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I thank the hon. member for his interjection. The people depended on their weight and numbers in the Council to give this motion what might be termed in the vernacular as "short shrift." The very action of the Legislative Council in referring the motion to another place without giving it short shrift in the first place should have been an indication to the people and Government in no uncertain manner that some people were waiting for an expression of opinion. Every day we get expressions of opinion from members of all types of organisations; some we take no notice of, but others we do, because we realise that they are valuable expressions of opinion. Speaking personally, I expected to be inundated with protests from various sections of the people.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Press does not publicise these things. We get no mention.

Hon. J. MURRAY: I did thank the hon. member a while ago for his interjection, and I do so again, but I shall pass that aspect by for the moment. Suffice it to say that the action which I expected from the general public of Western Australia and from the people mainly concerned with rail closures was not taken.

From that I pass to another personal matter and that deals with railways and transport generally. This problem is the biggest headache which has faced any Government in this State. It has been going on for a long period of years; in fact, since the inception of railways in this State. It has been a continual headache and it will probably be a headache after I am dead and gone. It is my regret that it has continued over the years to snowball and to become a greater problem for the Government of the State, because it is a drain on all sources of revenue to meet the losses in the railways. I see no very clear way out of it

at the moment. Unfortunately, the people who have contributed to the debate on the motion I referred to, and all the country people who have held protest meetings, have not put forward one alternative proposal to those suggested by the Minister so far.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Are they competent to do that?

Hon. J. MURRAY: I would say that they could at least give Parliament and the Government the benefit of their thoughts if they considered that certain things being carried out by the Government were not an answer to the problem. It is all very well to take a negative attitude and declare "Hands off our railways. Hands off this or that. Somebody will pay," without putting forward any solution. I must express regret on that score.

Unfortunately it seems to have developed throughout Australia—this State is coming into line, but for many years it was not quite the same—that few people in public life, and practically none in the street, are prepared to give the Government assistance in the solution of serious problems. I know from discussion with a member of one party that it is held that it is not the prerogative of that party to help the Government out. I know that is the view. But it is a most regrettable circumstance when so many people, irrespective of their political colour, hesitate to put Western Australia first.

The solution of this railway problem and many other minor problems that come before Parliament is, in the main, the duty of the Government, but the public and all of us should also get together to try to arrive at some solution. The answer to this railway problem is not easy to arrive at. I am sorry to say that after the Government had taken a very firm stand in its approach to the original motion, and after the motion went down to another place, that body moved to delete it from the notice paper. That was all the heed the Government took of our original motion. It allowed that motion to be amended in another place; it accepted the amendments; it brought them before this Chamber, and because it was brought forward in the amendment form with conditions laid down before the vote was taken, this House accepted the motion as being an honest expression of opinion by the Government, that is to say, if this House voted for this motion the Government would accept the conditions laid down.

When the motion came before this House it was not one from the Opposition parties in another place. It was one brought forward by the Government. It included the various conditions which have not been carried out. I express some degree of pleasure that when I agreed to support the motion, I said I was doing certain things if the lines were not pulled up; that they were still there to be put

into use again; and that if the Government did not honour its promise, then we would have another look at the matter. I support the motion.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [8.56]: When speaking to this motion, Mr. Jones mentioned that he had moved the adjournment of the debate last night for no other purpose than to allow the other motion to take precedence. I must confess that I cannot see the wisdom of such an opinion and I would express the hope that this House will continue to deal with this motion tonight and take it to its logical conclusion and dispose of it one way or another; and having done that, to proceed with the other motion and dispose of it one way or another.

With respect to the resolution passed on the 18th December last, the position was that, for the reasons therein set forth and subject to conditions which were also set forth, this House agreed that 842 miles of our 4,000 miles of railway line should be closed. We agreed to that resolution with this background. During the five years to the 30th of June, 1956, the railways had sustained a loss of £21,750,000 and it had sustained this loss notwithstanding the expenditure, during that period, of another £25,500,000 from loan funds in rehabilitating the railways.

So today the position can be summarised in this manner. For the five years to the 30th June, 1956, the loss was £21,750,000, during the year just ended the loss was a further £4,500,000, and the estimated loss for the current year is £7,000,000. It does seem to me that those figures and this position should cause the gravest concern to every thinking and responsible person. Even the most reckless and thoughtless person could hardly remain unmoved. Seven million pounds a year! A piece of simple arithmetic will show that in 10 years that would amount to £70,000,000. We could install a few country water schemes, and establish a few Ord River schemes and various other schemes with an amount of that magnitude. Yet that is what we face with the position of our railways in Western Australia. With that background, I feel that, basically, the resolution which this House carried in December last was sound. I voted for it; and even today I see no reason why I should not have voted for it, or why I should have voted otherwise.

Last night, I listened attentively and anxiously to those members who spoke, but it seemed to me that in many respects they were begging the question. There must of necessity be regrettable but unavoidable cases of hardship. But we find that occurring not only with respect to the closure of railways. For instance, under the Town Planning Act, that is becoming a day-to-day occurrence, both in the country and in the city. Take the

people who are living in Mounts Bay-rd near the Narrows bridge. There is another case where, through Government action, values of property have been very seriously decreased.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They are not making their living out of those properties.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: It still has to be demonstrated that land values will fall to the extent indicated last night. If values did fall, then the owners of that land would at least have some small compensation in the fact that the land tax which Parliament imposed on them last year would be less in the future than it is in the current year.

Then we have been presented with the spectacle of the high cost of road transport. One member came to the defence of the railways by pointing out the high cost of road transport, and the appalling future with regard to road transport, and how great the costs thereof would be. I beg to disagree. I think that Mr. Willmott, in his speech earlier this evening, showed that with regard to some classes of primary produce road transport has considerable advantages over rail transport.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Our motion concedes that.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I trust that if any suggestion ever appears in this House that we should solve the railway problem by compelling people to send their goods by rail, by compelling them to refrain from using road transport, such a proposal will not meet with ready acceptance here.

We have been told that the substitution of road transport for rail transport in the areas that are affected by this motion will mean heavy increases in the amount of freight that has to be paid by primary producers. Again I say that the case cited by Mr. Willmott shows that that is not necessarily so. Last night, Mr. Thomson mentioned that in connection with the Ongerup line, the closure would involve an increase of 25 per cent. in freights. He also informed the House that that would be the position with reference to the settlers at Jerramungup. As I understand it, the position regarding the settlers at Jerramungup is this: When these protest meetings were being organised, whoever was organising them was a pretty thorough gentleman and, believing in the saying "the more the merrier," approached the settlers at Jerramungup to join in the protests and in the protest meetings.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is that not imaginative? I do not think there were any.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: They were asked to ascertain what the effect would be on their freights. My information is that the settlers requested their advisers—and I understand they are pretty competent

advisers—to look into this question; and the information that was furnished to them, as a result of a pretty comprehensive and exhaustive investigation, was that the road freight from Albany to Jerramungup via Borden and Ongerup would be 25 per cent. less than the existing rail freight from Albany to Ongerup plus the further road freight from Ongerup to Jerramungup. So there is a case which is pretty illuminating. The information is not only that there would be no increase but that, in fact, there would be a saving.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: But they are not permitted to use road transport.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: They will have to use road transport if there is no rail service.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: But there is a rail service.

Hon. H. L. Roche: There will be a railway from Gnowangerup.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: I think you are evading the issue.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. K. WATSON: These figures are based on the Government's proposals. Protest meetings have been held in various centres. They remind me of the closure of the Marble Bar railway in 1950. We had the usual protests on that occasion; and, as the Minister has said previously, he was one who protested. But today he sees that the protest he then made and the fears he then had were groundless.

I feel that this is not a question to be decided around the parish pump. It is one to be looked at nationally and rationally. We have to bear in mind that our railways are showing a loss of £4,000,000 per annum, and there is a prospective loss of £7,000,000 this year. I suggest that the proper way to look at the question is not to say that Mrs. Smith will have to pay 6d. or 1s. more on a parcel from Geraldton to Yuna, but to look at it from the point of view that these annual railway losses are costing Mr. Smith and Mrs. Smith, and all the little Smiths, and every man, woman and child in Western Australia £10 a year. The loss in the railways at the moment is costing £10 per head per annum.

That is the way to look at it; and for those reasons I feel that the motion which this House carried on the 18th December last was well founded and should not be disturbed. But that is not to say that I approve of the method and manner—arrogant and ruthless—in which the Government, while purporting to carry out the resolution, has in fact flouted it and treated it with contempt. The resolution was carried subject to these conditions—

Subject to the Government—

(a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R.,

including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B," and

- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B," and
- (c) overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficit on such services.

None of those conditions has been observed; and because those conditions have not been observed, I am supporting the motion which has been moved by Mr. Simpson.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [9.13]: In addressing myself to this motion, I would like to point out that the motion agreed to by this Chamber on the 18th December last year was very different from the one this House agreed to and referred to the Legislative Assembly earlier in that session. During his speech tonight, Mr. Willmott attempted to show this Chamber that the amendment agreed to by this House to the original motion moved by the Minister for Railways on the 1st November, 1956, was similar to the amendment that was finally agreed to in this Chamber with the support of Liberal Party members. No such thing!

Those amendments are entirely dissimilar, and I defy any Liberal Party member of this Chamber to say otherwise. If we look at page 2076 of Hansard of the 8th November, 1956, we find these words in the amendment which was forwarded by this Chamber to another place—

(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.

In other words, this Chamber refused to consider the motion until the Government had agreed to that amendment. That meant that before any railways were closed, before the motion was considered again by this Chamber, the Government had to bring forward definite proposals in respect of road transport in lieu of rail services. But what happened eventually? That was discharged from the notice paper.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Nobody took any objection to it in another place.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Objection was taken here.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But nobody objected there.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Members of the Country Party in another place all voted against the motion together with the amendments. The portion I am referring to reads as follows:—

(b) Ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B".

In other words, the motion gave the Government authority to suspend operation of the railways as long as it ensured, at a later date, an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before the cessation of operation of the railways mentioned in Appendix "B". Those two amendments are entirely different from one another. One asked that we have an alternative transport system submitted to us and the other gave the Government the right to close the lines and then ensure that alternative transport was made available.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You are misconstruing it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Perhaps; but the Leader of the Country Party at Northam the other day admitted that the Liberal Party were taken for a ride and Mr. MacKinnon confirmed that during his speech this evening. I cannot recall his exact words but in effect he informed the House that Liberal Party members, including himself, were of the opinion that the Government would fulfil the conditions of the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in another place.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Would it have made any difference? The Government could still do it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Perhaps; but there is no use saying these motions are similar because there is no similarity between them. If this House had stuck to its original intention of attempting to force the Government to submit alternative proposals prior to agreeing to the motion it would never have agreed to the motion. Members of the Liberal Party here and in another place were definitely taken for a ride.

With regard to another aspect of the matter, I asked some of my colleagues this evening under what Act the Government operated in relation to these rail suspensions. I asked whether it was the Railways Act, the State Transport Co-ordination Act or only the motion, and their answer was that the Government acted on a whim, and I think they might have something there.

In this regard the transport Act gives the Transport Board the right, with or without the direction of the Minister, to inquire and report on whether the service on

a railway or part of a railway or any tramway or part of a tramway is adequate for the requirements of the district or area which such railway or tramway serves, and if, in the opinion of the board, the services of any railway or tramway as aforesaid are inadequate and the requirements of the district can be better served by road or air transport, the board may recommend closure or partial suspension of the services of the railway or tramway, but any such recommendation shall be put before Parliament for its sanction or otherwise, provided that the Minister shall direct that the board shall call tenders for road or air transport to serve the district previously served by the railway or tramway, and the result of such tenders as are obtained shall be put before Parliament before a closure is effected.

Perhaps the Government has got around that by appointing the inter-departmental committee to make recommendations. On that committee was the chairman of the Transport Board, Mr. Howard, so I would say that in substance, that committee took over the duties of the board referred to in the transport Act; and therefore it was the duty of the Government, before putting any motion or Bill in this regard before this House, to call tenders for alternative transport and submit the proposals to Parliament.

In his speech, Mr. Watson said he could not see the reasoning tonight of Mr. Jones who stated why he moved the adjournment of the debate on this motion last evening. But, of course, being a city member, Mr. Watson has probably never seen a horse harnessed in a cart and facing the wrong way. I have seen it done as a practical joke in the country.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: Are you sure you have not done it?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have never done it. But that is what the hon. member wants done in this instance, so that before driving away, the driver must take the horse out of the cart and re-harness it facing in the right direction. Surely when the Government has been given a mandate by Parliament to do a certain thing, that has to be retracted before any other action can be taken! If that were not so the man might try to drive his horse backwards and that is just how ridiculous the present position is in that respect. I am trying to explain to the hon. member in simple terms that Mr. Jones moved the adjournment of the debate last night so as to put the two motions in the proper perspective.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The Government has not been given a mandate by Parliament.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Government has been given the right to suspend operation of railways. The motion, as agreed to, is there to be seen.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: A motion is not a mandate.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: This one is, subject to the Government doing certain things afterwards.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What about motions passed by this House and then ignored by the Government?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Time and time again this House has agreed to motions and has requested the Government to do certain things, but I cannot recall one such recommendation to which the Government has given full effect. Last session this House agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission on licensing, but we have heard nothing further of it so far. There has been mention of an all-party committee but no mention of what this House agreed to last year in that respect.

I do not wish to go over old ground again, but we must realise, even in spite of what Mr. Watson said, that it is costing the public of this State perhaps £10 per head to maintain and run our railways and not all of that cost is incurred by the 842 miles of railway on which the Government has suspended operations. The whole of the system contributes to that cost. Even if the suspended services were responsible for a great deal of the cost, they are operational and developmental lines and are run for the good of the State—

Hon. H. L. Roche: Like the North-West shipping service.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, and that costs the State over £1,000,000 a year.

The Minister for Railways: It is much less than that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It may be only £500,000 now.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Government paid in about £600,000 last year from the Treasury, so it must have cost more than £1,000,000.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member forgets all the adjuncts to the shipping service such as wharves and so on. Surely the Minister will not say that with all those costs included, the State Shipping Service does not cost well over £500,000 a year!

Hon. W. F. Willesee: The cost would be much higher if it were a railway.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Perhaps; but I agree that the North must have a shipping service. People there are entitled to it just as people in the outback are entitled to their transport services, and the State must pay for them if necessary. Do we not all pay for the cost of the railways and bus services in the city? Of course we do; and we are losing over £1,000,000 per year there. But we have not sung a song of hate about it or asked the Government to suspend those services and let city people walk or ride bicycles.

We admit that city people are entitled to their transport and that residents in the North-West are entitled to their shipping service, but let the country people who produce the wealth of the State also be provided with reasonable transport services. Do not hamstring their future operations and development or take away the value of their properties by suspending their railway services and giving them as a replacement some almost non-existent service.

Surely most members of this House know what the railways mean to the people of the outback! If they do not, it is high time they woke up to the facts. I think it is most necessary that the House should agree to the motion before it, and I trust that the Government will act on the motion and not ignore it. Surely the Government can act when called upon by a responsible House of this Parliament and reopen those lines? It is not a demand but a request to reopen them. Even if the motion is agreed to, the Government still has the authority to suspend rail services until such time as the motion is rescinded. I trust the House will agree to the motion, which I support.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [9.29]: I intended to support the motion without contributing to the debate; but, from what Mr. Watson said, it would appear that he did not hear what I said last night and there is one aspect on which I would like to touch this evening for his edification. In my concluding remarks last night I said that doubtless there were areas that could be serviced by road transport provided those concerned could load their goods at the farm and discharge them at the port. Tonight we heard his tirade about road transport beating rail transport. We have admitted that it can do so under certain circumstances, and Mr. Watson mentioned nothing new in that regard. He spoke about the terrific railway losses and said that there was only one thing to do—that is, slice the railway system as the Government is doing.

There is one important point that Mr. Watson missed and that is: How much revenue do the primary producers create for the State? If his policy is continued, it will lead to a contraction in our export credits; it must inevitably follow if there is a contraction of our railway system. If our export credits are affected in this way, it will severely affect the economy of the State and no one knows that more than Mr. Watson; but he just does not want to see it. He accuses people, especially members of Parliament, of not making any contribution towards the solving of this financial problem. If there is any man in this community who had to run the gauntlet of public opinion in endeavouring to assist the Government to provide finance to alleviate those losses, surely I can claim to be

the one because I supported the Government's land tax proposals last year, that were so galling to Mr. Watson and certain of his colleagues.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And you would probably be prepared to double it this year.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: As I said last year, I know of no more equitable way of paying for our railway losses than in such a manner. It appears to me to be a far more logical approach to the question of railway losses than does the discontinuance of our railway services. With those few remarks I support the motion.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [9.33]: As I spoke to a similar motion last night, I did not intend to speak to this one. However, as Mr. Watson saw fit to misconstrue my remarks, or deliberately endeavoured to mislead the House as far as the railway position is concerned, I thought I should rise to rectify something which he may have said unintentionally, but which possibly he deliberately intended to say.

Point of Order.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Mr. President, on a point of order, I ask the hon. member to withdraw the assertion that I deliberately attempted to mislead the house.

The President: Mr. Thomson, Mr. Watson has asked for the withdrawal of the words concerned.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Very well, I must withdraw under the Standing Orders, and I do so.

The President: Thank you. The hon. member may proceed.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I have no doubt that if the settlers were permitted to use road transport to shift their goods to Albany they would be able to cart them at a rate 25 per cent. cheaper than they could do on the railways. But they are not permitted to do that, because the Transport Board insists, where rail services are discontinued, that the settlers convey the whole of their goods to or from the nearest railhead. That was also recommended by the committee which worked out these rail closures, and Mr. Watson knows that that is the position. For him to say that under present conditions road transport rates are cheaper than rail rates, means that he must have some inside information which members of this House have not been able to get up to date.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It may well be that I have some information that has not reached you, and I suggest you check up on it yourself.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: We can go only on the information given to us. As regards the new system of landing goods at Katanning and transhipping them by road to Ongerup and Jerramungup, I would say that this will work out to be 25 per cent. dearer than was the case prior to the closure of the rail services. So far as we are aware, it is not the intention of the Transport Board to allow goods to be transported direct by road from the port of Albany to Jerramungup, although this concession is enjoyed by settlers living 10 miles south of the Borden line. If Mr. Watson can convince me, in any way, that my figures are wrong—that is, the figures I gave him last night—I will be only too happy to agree with him. But I feel sure that he cannot do so; and I would not have spoken this evening and taken up the time of the House had it not been for the fact that he disputed the figures that I gave.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [9.36]: I see, from looking at last year's Hansard, that the motion was introduced at a very late stage of the session and when we had a terrific conglomeration of legislation.

The Minister for Railways: That was the second occasion.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: On the first occasion we sent the motion to the place where it should have been introduced, because it was of such vital importance. It was not a question which should have been decided by members in this House, but by Assembly members, because they were affected by it much more than we were. This sort of motion, like money Bills, should not originate here, because, after all, it concerns a vital and important financial matter, and it affects not only the Government but also the farmers of this State. It applies, in a general sense, only to those engaged in agriculture, and I agreed with Mr. Simpson last year when he moved that the matter be referred to the other Chamber. The motion was eventually sent back to this House.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It was a different motion.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; it was slightly altered. But the principle was the same. Mr. Watson surprised me this evening, because I would say he knows more about figures than anyone in this House, and I would go to him for advice on such questions. The report of the commissioners for last year is most interesting and I propose to read a little of it. This is what it says—

Operating results reached new levels in the year just ended; the tonnage of goods and livestock increased by 11 per cent. to 3,792,856 tons and the ton mileage increased by 9 per cent. to 608,418,205 ton miles. At the beginning of the year traffic prospects were

obscure due to the uncertainty of the wheat market, but haulage of wheat was better than expected for most of the year and for the last two months it reached a scale not before experienced in the history of these railways. On present indications this intensive movement may continue until the end of 1956 and perhaps longer.

It goes on to say—

Earnings increased by £743,756 to £13,274,166—an increase of nearly 6 per cent.—but operating expenses increased from £14,925,985 to £16,123,763, an increase of 8 per cent.

Does not Mr. Watson realise that even those men on the land producing the wealth of the country have no control over the railway expenditure, and there is no explanation as to what brought about that increase?

The Minister for Railways: The more you carry the more you lose.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Does that not apply to all railways? Of course it does! It applies to the whole Government railway service. As I said last night, I do not think there would be 3,000 tons carried in the whole year on the line between Northam and Perth, because that is only a trunk line for the branches that permeate the agricultural areas. As a practical farmer, and as a man possessing some political knowledge, I am quite satisfied, in my own mind, that with the railway system that we have today we can go on like this indefinitely until we will reach the stage where we will force the agriculturists off the land. The report goes on to say—

Including interest, and an amount of £42,933 for rehabilitation of fully depreciated assets,—

That is not a very great amount to spend on the rehabilitation of the railways. Continuing—

—the deficiency for the year was £4,615,844 compared with £3,809,522 in the previous year.

The commission does not inform the Minister, the public, or this Parliament how that amount is arrived at. As I told the House last night the metropolitan railway services also come under the commission's control and those lines are making terrific losses. Yet those are not attacked. But I will explain the cause later.

A great deal of money has been spent on diesel electric locomotives, and both the Minister and Mr. Watson know that these engines have not been very satisfactory. As I have said, a large sum of money has been expended in trying to keep those locomotives in running order. On this aspect, the commission says—

The process of replacing steam locomotives with diesel electric locomotives in certain areas was advanced

and will be continued in the ensuing year. The order for 48 X class main line locomotives was completed in August 1956. The results of operations in the transition period of partial steam and partial diesel operation do not show the full advantage of this form of traction. Certain initial defects in the X class locomotives which are being corrected under the manufacturer's warranty have prevented the best use being obtained from those that are in service.

Evidently Mr. Watson cannot convince himself, but I can see—very easily—that a great deal of the loss incurred was brought about by the failure of these engines and the cost of putting them into serviceable condition.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That was only incidental.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The commission says that there was an increase in earnings of 6 per cent., and an increase of 8 per cent. in working expenses. That is really a difference of 2 per cent.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You will find the Arbitration Court merrily increasing the loss again by granting a further increase in the basic wage.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Of course! There will be an increase in the working expenses according to the increase granted to each member of the railways staff. I know that the loss on the railways is enormous. I would like to place someone in the Railway Department to find out what is the reason for this financial loss. We could put a man like Mr. Watson into the railways for that purpose, but he is not likely to sacrifice his private practice in order to fulfil a task of that nature.

May I remind this House that New South Wales only recently brought an expert from the United States of America to investigate its railway system, and I understand the Premier of this State has asked for a copy of the report that was presented to the New South Wales Government by that gentleman. I want the Minister for Railways to make a copy of that report available to members of this House.

From our point of view this is not a political problem. It is a matter of vital interest, and it concerns the failure or success of this State in the future. A State that is relying for its economic stability on the production of cereals in the mair cannot be developed successfully. It could not be developed successfully, even if its principal production was wool, without the assistance of an efficient railway system.

Last night I pointed out to the House how, up to a certain stage, the railways year after year made a profit; and then

suddenly this terrific excess of expenditure over earnings took place, and that trend is growing particularly fast.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It is galloping!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I will not say that Mr. Watson is not concerned about this matter, because I am sure he is, just as every other member of this House is concerned. We must therefore take steps to find out where this loss is occurring. That is the point that is worrying me. The commission's report also states—

Generally, the locomotive power situation shows substantial improvement over that of the first years of the commission's administration, but from the table at page 13 can be seen that a large proportion of the stock is still well over-age. However, the over-age deteriorated condition of carriages and wagons is causing considerable concern. In the absence of sufficient loan money a replacement programme so obviously necessary cannot be undertaken, which means that large-scale repairs must be done to meet traffic demands and in an endeavour to keep vehicles safe. These major repairs are of doubtful ultimate value and the money so spent would be better invested in completely new stock. In the interests of public safety if the present shortage of loan funds continues, the condemning of vehicles will be inescapable.

In the third last paragraph of this "general review" appears the following:—

Closure of some of the non paying branch lines will help the rehabilitation of the remainder of the system—indeed it will improve the position of Consolidated Revenue Fund at Treasury—

I want members to remember this—

—but the point must be borne in mind that minor or piecemeal closures will have comparatively little effect. Substantial benefit can accrue only from a major contraction of the present attenuated railway system from 4,119 miles to roundly 2,500 miles.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It should have added, "with a corresponding contraction of all expenses."

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; but there is no indication in the report that they intend to do that, because they say they are going to keep on all the staff. Even in the motion before the House—

The Minister for Railways: Who said that?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I understood the Minister to say that nobody would be dismissed.

The Minister for Railways: That is right.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Well, what are they going to do with them?

The Minister for Railways: You have been told half a dozen times already.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: There will not be any dismissals, because if any men were put off there would be a strike. There will be a certain amount of wastage due to old-age retirement and invaliding out of the service, but it will not be evident to any great extent, certainly not sufficient to catch up with the leeway in this expenditure. All the Government has done at the moment is to say, "We are going out to the extreme edge of the settlement where the wealth is being produced and we are going to clip these areas a bit. This means that you are not going to have wheat or cereals grown because it will be unprofitable to cart them over long distances."

I would like to quote some figures to the House. On page 11, item 5 of the report of the Western Australian Government Railways, the details of the rail and road passenger traffic for the year in question showed that over the suburban rail services there were 11,480,958 passengers carried over an average length of seven miles. The passenger miles amounted to 80,407,864 and the earnings were £361,354. The earning per passenger mile was 1.08d. In the country the number of passengers carried was 789,819 over a journey length of 104.85 miles. The passenger mileage was 82,813,129 and the earnings were £667,770. But the earning per passenger mile was 1.96d.; nearly 2d. The city folk can be carried around for almost a penny.

The Minister for Railways: This is more than we get from timber from Elleker and Nornalup.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If that is so why does not the Minister put up the freight on timber? Can the Minister in his capacity as a businessman expect to supply the public with goods at less than top price? That is exactly what he is trying to do here. What the Government is doing is to say, "We are going to make it difficult for a small section of the people who are already placed in the worst possible conditions." There is no doubt about that. The Government is saying, "We are going to make it difficult for these people who are placed where water difficulties exist, and where climatic conditions are precarious." The rainfall in these areas often peters out, and failures are far more frequent on the edge of the settlement than in any other part. But they have still gone on producing; and as I pointed out last night, they have produced quite a lot.

I have before me a booklet, "Rural Research in C.S.I.R.O." It is known that this is an organisation to which we

look for advice; we accept it as a standard and regard its findings as extremely useful. In case members think that a lot of profit has been made, I would like to quote a couple of figures. It must also be remembered that we have just gone through a very good period. In this publication is shown the average return on capital invested in various enterprises, such as dairying, etc. in the States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. In New South Wales we find that the rate of return is 28.5 per cent., in Victoria it is 4.6 per cent., in South Australia 8.1 per cent. and in Western Australia 6.9 per cent., while in Tasmania it is 3.6 per cent. The average for the whole is 6.4 per cent. It will be seen therefore that we are just a little over the average. If the Government is to reduce the earnings any further it will not leave much for the period that may lie ahead of us. As I have just said, we must remember that we are enjoying a very successful and buoyant market at the moment.

About nine or ten months ago it was anticipated that there would be great trouble in the disposing of our wheat, and the chairman of the Wheat Board rushed over to see what could be done in Great Britain. We are timid people and get easily upset when we think there is going to be no market for the goods that the people in these areas are producing. Now the Government proposes to cut off the railway system that serves them and make it even more difficult for these unfortunate people. Now that it is apparent that Japan is to take a lot of our wheat, surely we should not make it difficult for these people to take advantage of that. Surely we should help them to produce and export these goods. The action contemplated by the Government will certainly not help the farmers.

Of course, I support the motion moved by Mr. Simpson; I could not do anything else. I feel that prior to Parliament's meeting the Government rushed headlong into the closing of these railways. It is possible that the Ministers themselves were not directly responsible. They might have been pushed by someone from behind.

The Minister for Railways: Get thee behind me Satan!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Government is only transferring the problem that we have from the Railway Department to the Transport Board. During the railway strike in 1952 I saw the condition of the road to Merredin where wheat was carted from the most eastern portion of that belt. The road itself was full of holes and caused many accidents and waste of wheat from the trucks tipping over. Some of the wheat was salvaged but a lot could not be.

The Minister for Railways: But you still kept the strike going.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The railwaymen kept the strike going. In any case it was held over a very frivolous matter indeed.

The Minister for Railways: The Government of the day kept it going.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not propose to labour that matter with the Minister; nor do I intend to seek a remedy for the strike weapon that it used. There would be an awful hue and cry if we stopped producing wheat. It might possibly educate these people if we were to import wheat as is done in other States. In New South Wales they are buying wheat from South Australia. Tasmania is another State that suffers in that direction.

I do not know whether this motion will have the desired effect. It is purely a request to the Government not to take the action it intends. The Government has a very good excuse in that on the 18th November last another place passed a resolution and we acted on it. In the meantime the Government has had time to think that out.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Acted on part of it.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: When this motion goes to the Government it will also act on part of it.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: We cannot stop that. We can only tell the Government what we think of it.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I hope members will feel as I do. I want to expunge from the records of this House the mistake we made in not absolutely refusing the Government the authority.

Hon. J. Murray: You are not casting a reflection on the vote of this House?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am not casting any reflection. But each one of us will make a mistake sometimes. We are all human. If I did it deliberately the interjection might be applicable. On that occasion we made a grievous mistake, but I was one of those who was right. I am not blaming other members for their action, because they did it when their brains were fagged. In all the years that I have been here I have not seen such a rush of legislation in the last minutes as took place last year.

I commend the Government on the fact that Parliament has met earlier this year; it will enable the legislation to be dealt with as early as possible. Someone mentioned, "What about the Local Government Bill?" We will try to help another place with that. However, when we do get legislation from that place, it should at least be workable to the authorities which

contribute such a tremendous benefit to this State in an honorary capacity.

The Minister for Railways: You can take that as read.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: What a bait! Could the Minister imagine that? I appeal to members not to make that mistake again. I want the people affected to have their railways. We shall go out among them and tell them, if necessary, that they have to pay a little more in freight. It would be preferable to spread the added burden over all the people rather than take away what they seem to have.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [10.2]: There has been quite a lot of talk on this motion. Sir Charles Latham remarked that it was not a demand but a request. I view it more as a censure. The motion reads—

That in the opinion of this House the Government having grossly mismanaged the handling of the country rail line discontinuance, and having not conformed to the conditions imposed by Parliament, and accepted by the Government, This House now calls on the Government to reopen lines already closed and not to discontinue any further rail services until—

- (a) a searching and expert inquiry has been made into each line and the reports and recommendations from such inquiries are submitted to, and accepted by, Parliament; and
- (b) the Government honours the undertakings given to Parliament when the amended rail discontinuance motion was passed in 1956; and
- (c) the Government brings forward to Parliament acceptable proposals in accordance with the motion of this House agreed to on the 8th November, 1956, and which was ignored by the Government.

The motion which was passed on the 18th of December last in this House should be analysed before such a motion as the one we are now dealing with condemning the action taken by the Government is put to the vote. Examining the original motion and taking into consideration the attitude of the Government since it was agreed to, we find that there is no necessity for moving the motion now before us. The original motion was quite clear. It said—

That in the opinion of this House, having regard particularly to the considerations referred to in Appendix

"A" to this motion, the services provided by the railways listed in Appendix "B" to this motion should notwithstanding certain other considerations, be discontinued and that such railways should cease to be operated—Subject to the Government—

- (a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and

It is very important to look at paragraph (a) which I have just referred to because it raises the question as to whether the hen or the egg came first. How can we ensure that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways, without ceasing to operate some lines? Paragraph (b) of that motion says—

- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and

Inquiries and investigations have been made in every district, and the Government is assured—

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Did you say inquiries have been made?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; and the Government is assured there is adequate replacement of transport services.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: Not many of the people affected are assured of that.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You should have gone to the Northam meeting.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not received any letter from even one district. I do not know that any of the Ministers has received such a letter, or any officer in the Railway Department or Transport Board. If anyone knows of a complaint from a district, apart from one or two being recently organised—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Who is doing the organising?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know what happened at that meeting. I shall give this House my opinion of that meeting when I deal with it. Paragraph (c) of that motion stated—

- (c) overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficits in such services.

I would say that every one of those conditions is being attended to.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What is being done at the workshops?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows that a big inquiry is going on. It commenced in the workshops in March last.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Royal Commissioner is in England. You know very well that persons cannot be compelled to give evidence there except in their offices.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not wish to comment on the hon. member's remarks now.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is the matter sub judice?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. In March this year an investigation commenced at the workshops. When a report is laid on the Table of this House or another place, I am sure that members will be satisfied with the investigation.

Condition (c) has been attended to—that is, the overhauling and reorganising of the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficits in such services. As has been well publicised, it was the intention of the Government, even last year, to set up a metropolitan transport trust to rationalise and reorganise all metropolitan transport services because the Government's attention was drawn to the fact that several of the bus companies operating in the metropolitan area were almost in as bad a financial position as the tramways. In fact, at a general meeting of bus operators, which was held early last year, with the exception of about three, every bus company representative at that meeting declared that his company would be pleased to sell out to a metropolitan trust.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Was that due to the unfair competition of the Government?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was not due to any unfair competition by the Government that I know of.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Are they still paying you 6 per cent. gross?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; it has been reduced. But I could not answer that correctly. There is one particularly good company which buys hotels and is doing well; but the smaller men are in difficulties, as well as one of the larger operators. However, this is not due to competition from the railways. I would say that perhaps the initial bus routes set up in competition to the railways are responsible for the situation today in regard to suburban railways. That would be my opinion. I can remember a Government which built a new station and also started a new bus service from that station.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You are speaking of 15 months ago. What is the present position in regard to the transport trust and bus companies?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know the general attitude of the bus companies, or whether it has changed from 15 months ago, because there has been no general meeting at which I have been present or of which I have knowledge. However, I do know of two companies which would be very anxious for anybody to take them over—anybody at all. One is a big company and the other is not so big.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What was the Bill mentioned in the Governor's Speech?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not seen the proposed Bill myself; but it would have as its objective a proposal to set up a metropolitan transport trust and rationalise—

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Did you say nationalise?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Rationalise—the hon. member is not deaf.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They will cost more than £2,000,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would say that I have successfully disposed of two of the conditions. A Royal Commission has been set up to make inquiries. We are not saying that this will be the answer; but it will make recommendations upon which the Government may or may not act. This we do not know until we see them, and it is something which I cannot anticipate.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: In the meantime the farmers suffer.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are not suffering or going broke.

Hon. L. Diver: They will be after this.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are told that 38 families have left Laver-ton. I did not know 38 lived there.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not 38 families; 38 persons.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I say this is a censure motion on the action of the Government. It is a censure motion claiming that the Government has not carried out certain conditions. I would point out that the first railway line to be discontinued was closed down only three months ago, and some only a little over a week.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Too long.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If members expect to have financial results shown—

Hon. A. R. Jones: Financial loss.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: — at this stage I would say it is quite impossible. It is unfair to expect anybody to show financial results without a reasonable trial.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: In a year you will have the same problem.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is biased. He cannot help thinking along one track.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I am more experienced than you are.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Admitted. But it sometimes wears out. It depends on who the person is. We have to look at the position as it is today, not as it was 30 years, 40 years or 10 years ago. It is the position which confronts any Government—I do not care which Government is on the Treasury bench. The Government of the day has to endeavour to finance the whole railway system and operate the full length of railway lines. The Government is attempting to do this, but it is absolutely impossible.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Do you think there will be a saving? What about the estimated £7,000,000 deficit?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will correct that statement. There has been a projected deficit of £7,400,000 by the commission in its return to the Treasury, based on conditions as they were about three months ago. It is based on railway operations and a drop in revenue which must result this year because there will not be as much wheat shifted. The projected deficit from the commission was £7,400,000 and that includes depreciation and interest. Whether that will eventuate or not I do not know, as it is for 1957-58.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It will, if you do nothing about it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Interest will go on.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Interest grows all the time. It will grow and continue, and we must reach a stage where it cannot be financed.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Then why does not the Government resign? It should do so now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would not matter what type of government was in office; it would be faced with the same position. Mr. Murray said there has been quite a lot of criticism; but no constructive criticism. We have heard of all the protest meetings, but nothing has been suggested as to how we might keep the railways going.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Put up the railway fares in the city equal to what you charge in the country.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And go out of existence.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The railways would get no patronage then. We must cut expenditure. That was the intention of the original motion introduced into this House. We must reduce expenditure generally, and mileage. I am not saying there cannot be savings. I say there can be, and I claim the Government is taking the right action to effect savings.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: What do you anticipate will be the savings on the closing of 800 miles?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot anticipate it, but the hon. member can work it out in simple arithmetic. Already 300 fewer men are employed in the railways than were employed three months ago. Each man's wages can be assessed at £800 a year, anyway. Mr. Ackland says there should be 6,000 less. That would equal something like £6,00,000. Mr. Logan told us last year that there could be 4,000 less. Each one would represent £1,000 with his uniform, long-service leave and all the rest of it. Mr. Diver told us only last night that at least 2,000 should go, and he wants to know why they have not gone. Sir Charles Latham claims we have more men employed than we had before. Well, the question was answered by the Premier only a couple of days ago.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I said there are no less.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There are 400 less. I do not know what members expect to happen in a few months; but I will tell them what has happened in the last six months, and I am saying there has been a reduction in staff. At the end of December, 1956, there were 14,184 people employed in the railways. At the end of June, 1957—last month—there were 13,712—a reduction of 472.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is a small reduction on 14,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know. But that reduction has taken place in six months, and it has taken place with no dismissals, except for someone who might have deserved it. It has come about by the normal wastage which occurs, and without there being any replacement.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is a lot of normal wastage taking place.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We can see that anywhere. If the hon. member walks through a department store on a Tuesday or Wednesday he will wonder why so many assistants are employed; but if he goes through on a Saturday he will know.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If all this is taking place how do you reconcile the fact that the Premier says you will lose £7,000,000 this year?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is a projected deficit by the Railways Commission.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But he said it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not denying it. What is the hon. member arguing about?

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That is £2,000,000 more than this year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have explained it was a projected deficit from the commission about three months

ago based on the railways as they operated then and on the previous nine months' figures. I am sure we will not reach that deficit if members allow us to effect some economies.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: That deficit was based on the effect of these economies.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will explain it as simply as I can to the hon. member. That was a projected deficit based about three months ago on the previous nine months' operations of the railways and on the estimated tonnage that would be carried during the 1957-58 financial year.

Hon. A. R. Jones: There must be something wrong.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There could be; but that is an estimate. To get back to the question of the employees: Mr. Simpson in the course of his speech said there were 2,000 more employees in the railways now than in the time of the McLarty-Watts Government. Well, it depends on the time he talks about during the term of the McLarty-Watts Government. Was he talking about 1947, 1950, 1953 or what year? Because at the end of June, 1947, when the McLarty-Watts Government had been in power for a few months, the number of employees was 10,026. In June, 1953—

Hon. C. H. Simpson: We were out then.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, for three months. At the end of June, 1953, the number of employees was 13,030, an increase of 3,004. In the years since the McLarty-Watts Government was in power the highest number employed was 14,184.

The reason there would be a large number employed at December, 1956, would be the big re-laying programme for a start. There would be many more men engaged in the fettling gangs and the maintenance gangs on the line than at any other time. As I have explained previously, there is a turnover of something like 1,300 or 1,400 a year in these gangs. There is, of course, much more traffic, too. Last year was a record year for the railways. They shifted 1,500,000 tons of wheat. The train mileage was the highest on record, being more than 8,250,000 miles; and the tonnage exceeded 4,000,000 tons, the highest ever carried overall.

In order to operate a record year we require more hands; and, as Sir Charles Latham pointed out, more overtime is involved because the railways work around the clock. Mr. Simpson understands the overtime question very well. The figure of £1,000,000 was given last year; but it was mistakenly given, because it included the penalty rates, such as Sunday time and time worked outside of normal hours—such as night work for engine crews, guards and anybody else. They go on to penalty rates, and that is why the overtime looked so great.

To get back to the motion itself, I would like to say that Mr. Baxter was quite correct when he summed up the effect of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly and accepted by the Government. Mr. Griffith pointed out that when a move was made to discharge the motion that went from this House to the Assembly it met with no opposition whatever but was simply discharged from the notice paper and the original motion as introduced by me here on the 21st November last year was introduced into the Legislative Assembly.

The only amendment to that motion was one moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Court, and it was accepted by the Government. The Minister for Transport said at the time that the Government was already considering these particular steps.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Tell us why the motion from this House was ignored.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was a two-pronged motion—

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But why was it ignored?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was ignored by members of the hon. member's party, as well as others. The Minister for Transport moved that it be discharged from the notice paper and it was ignored by both Liberal and Country Party members in another place.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: They could not debate the matter.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They could have moved to have it reinstated.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We are going to move in that way directly.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Doubtless the hon. member attended a party meeting at which the matter was thoroughly discussed. There is no doubt that agreement was reached at such a meeting as to what amendments should be moved in another place, and there was no trouble about getting the amendments on the notice paper there. The mover of the motion said—

If there were piecemeal closures of 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 and that is common to both Government enterprise and private enterprise.

That was said by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition during his speech prior to moving his motion to amend the original motion introduced into this House. The "(a)", "(b)" and "(c)" attached to the Government's motion in another place by the Opposition and accepted by the

Government without any further amendment must have been acceptable to all concerned. The point was that another place agreed that the Government should discontinue these services subject to its ensuring that certain results could be brought about; and, as I said earlier, those results are being brought about. Economies are being effected, and every endeavour will be made to ensure all possible economies in relation to railway administration and operation.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Were those amendments the same as the amendments sent from this House to another place?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; they were vastly different amendments. The amendment which went from this House demanded that proposals for alternative road services be brought to Parliament before any lines were closed—a pretty hopeless proposition and rather impracticable.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: As unpractical as the way in which the railways are run?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As the way in which they have been run—let us put it that way. We are endeavouring to effect improvements and with the hon. member's co-operation I am sure Parliament will be shown that improvements have been made—in due course. Mr. Simpson, in moving his motion, was adamant in stating that the Government had bulldozed the closing of the lines and had been unnecessarily hasty. The motion said that they must cease to be operated and the Government took three months to suspend the operations on any of the lines, after the passing of the motion.

I wonder what criticism of the Government there would have been had no lines been closed when the House met on the 4th of this month. I would like to know what members might have had to say under those circumstances. I think they would have said, "When are you going to start doing something and save money?" I repeat that the Government has not acted hastily but has taken every care necessary with the result that so far what has been done is operating successfully.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Since that resolution was carried they put 302 more men on—from the 1st July, 1955 onwards.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The number has been reduced in the last six months, since the passing of the motion. I have the latest figures, which I received only today.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If the Government has done all these things, as the Minister says, why are the people up in arms?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will tell the House about that later on and give my opinion as to why people are up in arms. Mr. Simpson said we had bulldozed our way in closing the lines but there was no bulldozing at all in the closing of any of these lines. It was three months after the passing of the motion before operations ceased on the first lines. They were the Ajana and Yuna lines; and the only complaint I received from that area was from a man at Dartmoor—a foreigner of some kind, to judge by his writing. He wrote a long letter to the Premier, who sent it on to me, some months before the service ceased—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And it did not affect you.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It did not affect us at all; and my information regarding the Ajana line is that the people in that area are very pleased to be rid of the rail service and to have a regular road service. I have heard that from farmers in the area, and I understand that business people in Northampton are pleased with the service that the Midland Railway Company is giving through its road transport service.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We have heard stories different from that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Perhaps the hon. member does not associate with the right type of people.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: The meeting at Northam did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will tell members all about that later on. I have heard no complaints about the Boddington to Narrogin line or the Corrigin line. I have read in the Press about protest meetings, and I attended one myself.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Probably they have given you away as being hopeless.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I am certain they have.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot help that.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: At Cadoux?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I went to a meeting at Cadoux; and it was well attended, too. The hall was full, and there would have been between 300 and 350 people in it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did they trust you?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Unfortunately, I found that the people had been misled into believing that the Cadoux line was to be discontinued. The first question asked was along those lines—as to what alternative transport was proposed in that instance. When I replied that the line was not listed in the motion for closure, and that it had never been

proposed, and certainly would not be closed by this Government, pandemonium broke loose. They stamped the floor, they whistled, clapped and cheered, and I wondered what I had struck.

Suddenly it dawned on me. These people had been whipped into a state of believing that 2,000 miles of line were to be closed. Members who represent them would not believe what they were told in Parliament; they went away and told their electors the opposite, and frightened the lives out of them. They would not take an assurance from the Minister; they would not take an assurance from anybody. But they go around whipping the people into frenzy and fear. I would say that that was how they got their audience at Northam.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: No.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You should have gone there to find out.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wrote them a letter, and I would have gone to find out. I have been to many meetings.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did you enjoy them?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, every one of them. I went to the meeting at Cadoux. I had one friend when I entered the hall—I had my wife with me. But I am sure I had a few more when I left the hall.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You took her to be sure you had one friend?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The poor country people have been whipped into a state of fear and frenzy; and how is beyond my comprehension.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You are crediting them with a very low intellect.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When I introduced the motion into this House on the 1st November last year, I had this to say—

The recommendations were set out in stages. Cabinet dealt with the recommendations and decided to adopt that part of the report concerning the closure of lines as stated in the motion. Actually the discontinuance of the lines mentioned in the motion was proposed to be undertaken in two stages: firstly, 630-odd miles of line, to be followed as quickly as possible by another 360-odd miles. The Government did not agree with all the recommendations, and deleted some to bring down the length to the 842 miles mentioned in the motion.

That is as clear as anything could possibly be. They had a tape recorder at Cadoux and they recorded what I had to say in case I made a mistake. I think the people thought I went there to tell them lies.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: No, they wanted to make sure that you were reported accurately.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That meeting was organised by the Farmers' Union and I was invited there by a branch of that organisation. I agreed to go, and I gave an assurance which, if they have not rubbed it off the tape recorder, they still have. I said that there was no intention of closing any more lines. That was on the 7th April.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: It sounds like McCarthyism.

Hon. L. C. Diver: There have been too many assurances from different Ministers.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have been too honest with them. On the 9th May the Farmers' Union set out a proposal in the "Farmers' Weekly," and they sent a petition around the country. They set out what they claimed was the first stage, the second stage and the third stage. All sorts of frightening things are mentioned on the side in order to coerce the people into voting or recording something against the second and third stage. That was put out by the Farmers' Union. They had a tape recorder. Even after I had given them an assurance in the House and told them what the Government was going to do, they persisted and whipped the people into a frenzy and took up the attitude of a militant union. I am talking of the executive of the Farmers' Union.

Hon. H. L. Roche: You would hate that, would you not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are defying the highest authority in the land.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The Minister for Railways?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The opinion of Parliament.

Hon. H. L. Roche: You have elevated yourself.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No wonder there were over 600 or 700 farmers at the meeting at Northam, especially when they were whipped into such a frenzy. But let members talk to farmers themselves. They are not very excited about it all.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: How often do you see many of them?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I see quite a few of them.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: A very small percentage.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I was at Jerramungup a few weeks ago.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: And the people were delighted.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I was told, "If you come here to talk about railway extensions, or try to bring the railways here, you had better look out for yourself because we do not want the railway." That is what I was told.

Hon. L. C. Diver: If they had a railway and you were taking it away it would be a different story.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That would be the local carrier.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That person will be living there for the rest of his life as a farmer.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: He was only one. What about the others?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know what the people of Ajana and Yuna would think of this Government if the railways were reopened.

Hon. L. A. Logan: What did they say in the letter which came from Yuna?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A gentleman in that district told me quite frankly that they are better off without the railways.

Hon. L. A. Logan: That is not correct.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is my information.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That is not what they tell us.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You have some very satisfactory informants for yourself.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not going to tell the House who said that, because I was told in strict confidence.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That person would be ashamed to say it in front of his fellow farmers.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Those are the facts. It is quite easy to organise a meeting and whip up the people if you want to mislead them.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Bunkum!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not saying that the hon. member misled them; but I am saying that the Farmers' Union has deliberately misled them.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Is what you have a reprint of the report of the commissioners?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not studied it and compared it with the commissioners' report.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You study it and the report.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am looking at the map.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You look at the commissioners' report.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Is the hon. member talking of the stages?

Hon. L. C. Diver: Yes.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is talking of the report of the committee.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes, the inter-departmental committee.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have read to the House what the Government adopted from the report and members still do not believe us.

Hon. L. C. Diver: No, because your policy alters from time to time.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The policy alters from time to time! Members have been told how the Government bulldozed its way through in regard to the closure of these lines. However, members have also been told in this House that the Government could have acted in exactly the same way as the previous Government. It need not have brought the matter to Parliament at all and just taken action to discontinue the rail services.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Which services?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The rail services in question. As has been pointed out to the House by Mr. MacKinnon, the Government could have closed the line in exactly the same way as the McLarty-Watts Government did, and also in exactly the same way as the present Government took action to close the Mundaring line. But the Government did not do that. Instead, it brought the matter before Parliament so that all members could have their say; and, what is more, the motion was before Parliament for seven weeks—from the 1st November until the 18th December.

Every member who was opposed to the motion, however, was extremely quiet during that period. What they had in their minds I do not know. But it would seem to suggest only two things: namely, that they thought, "The Government is on the right track evidently, so we are not going to oppose this motion"; or, "Let the Government go and as soon as it acts in regard to the closure of these lines we will belt the stuffing out of it." That is the pattern that took shape.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Be fair!

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the pattern that took shape up until the 4th of May of this year. I am only basing my remarks on what has been registered and what did happen.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They did not believe the Government would close the lines.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In actual fact, the Government has not closed the lines. However, I cannot understand the hon. member saying that they did not believe the Government would take action.

Every person, from one end of the State to the other recognises that the financial position of our railways is in a desperate state. It is therefore hard to believe the hon. member when he says that after the motion had been carried by Parliament he and his colleagues did not believe that the Government would go ahead in closing the lines.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The members of the Country Party believed it, but farmers didn't.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Some of the pastoralists did, because I had deputations waiting on me from people living in the Laverton district and that centre is about the most distant from the metropolitan area apart from, say, the people in the Wiluna district. That deputation met me whilst the motion was still before the House last year. Any other organisation could have done exactly the same thing.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They were like the Liberal Party; they were taken for a ride!

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That remains to be seen. However, to accuse the Government of not carrying out its obligations according to the terms of the motion is absolutely incorrect, because the conditions in that motion are complementary to and coincide with the rail closures. They represent undertakings that the Government agreed to in regard to the closure of certain lines.

It was well understood by the members of this House who spoke in support of the motion that all possible steps should be and would be taken to effect economies in the railways apart from merely closing the lines. That is the argument that has been put forward by Mr. MacKinnon. He said, "All the Government says is, 'Close the lines' and nothing else." He knows quite well that the Government is doing everything possible. But all of these things cannot be done immediately. It will take a long time to get the railways back on a sound financial footing.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Never in your time!

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know. I might be fortunate in seeing a change in the railways at least from deterioration into appreciation. I might have that good fortune. We heard Sir Charles Latham telling us about the subsidies. He said that there had been some complaints that the farmers are being subsidised by the railways; but that, on the contrary, the farmers are subsidising the people in the metropolitan area by selling them cheap wheat. I suppose that same argument holds good in every other State in the Commonwealth.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did you blame me for saying that? Because I did not say it!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I correct myself; it was Mr. Jones who said it. If that is correct, the same would apply in every other State in Australia.

Hon. L. C. Diver: It's correct all right!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will give members an indication of what might happen if the wheat farmers in this State had to pay the same rail freights as those paid by the farmers in the non-claimant States. Before I do so, members should not forget that our freights should be the average of the freights charged in the non-claimant States; that is the opinion of the Grants Commission. The following figures are based on an average haul of 150 miles.

In Western Australia the rate per ton today is 39s. and the cost on 1,500,000 bushels—that is the quantity that was carried last year—would be £2,925,000 in round figures. In Victoria that same quantity of wheat would be carted, over the same distance, at a freight rate of 45s. 2d. per ton and the cost would be £3,387,500. In New South Wales the rate is 60s. per ton and the cost would have been £4,500,000. In Queensland the rate is 63s. 5d. per ton and the cost would have been £4,756,250.

The average cost, based on the figures for the non-claimant States, would have been £4,214,583, so that the cost to the wheat farmers in Western Australia was £1,289,583 less than the average for the non-claimant States. Therefore I would say that the wheat farmers in Western Australia should have no complaints about the rates they are paying for rail haulage. Speaking generally, about 80 per cent. of the goods hauled by rail is carted at less than 6d. per ton mile.

It was said by Sir Charles that between 1d. and 2d. was the average passenger collection per mile. By interjection I said that we were carting timber for that freight rate before I became Minister. I am not sure of the year during which this freight rate was fixed—it could have been during the time that the present Government was in office—but the freight rate on timber carted from Nornalup to Kalgoorlie is 1.47d. per ton mile. That is worked out on the basis of telescopic freight rates.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What is more profitable, timber or passengers?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are all profitable to the user.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I asked you which was the more profitable, timber or passengers?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have told the hon. member that the more the railways carry the greater is the loss. The same applies to the State ships.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Therefore, the more passengers the railways carry, the more they lose.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It might not work out that way. If the railways can fill their carriages, there might not be a loss; but it is a different thing in regard to quantities and tons.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Will the Minister tell us the difference in the rates for coal and wheat?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think the rate is the same for both items. They come under miscellaneous freight rates. The freight rate on coal hauled from Collie to Kalgoorlie would be very close to that being charged for the haulage of timber. Under the telescopic system the further the goods are carried, the less the cost becomes. For instance, if goods are consigned at the miscellaneous class rate from Fremantle to Esperance, they will be carried over the last 100 miles at less than 1d. a ton mile.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That would be microscopic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is just it. It has been claimed that farmers will walk off their farms because the railways in their areas have ceased operating. If we have a good look at the position we will find that with the possible exception of a few in the Hyden area, and a certain number on the other side of Bonnie Rock, and those in the Yuna and Ajana areas, those in the inner areas have only to carry their produce another 20 miles at the outside and they are on another railway.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Where do you mean?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In the wheat areas.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Are you referring to the Brookton-Corrigin line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not very far from it; in a 20-mile radius.

Hon. L. C. Diver: How does it affect the whole economy of the harvest?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not worked that out, but judging from a letter I read in the newspaper on the 24th June, written by a man from Beacon, I should say it would not send that farmer broke. A man from Beacon wrote a letter to "The West Australian" on the 24th June in which he pointed out that a farmer at Beacon had paid £50,000 in taxation in the last eight years.

Hon. L. C. Diver: So in appreciation of his efforts, you close down the railway!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: All I want to do is to point out that the average working man would not earn £50,000 in his lifetime, let alone be able to pay taxation to that amount. If, as the correspondent in "The West Australian" has said, this farmer at Beacon is paying

that amount in taxation, I am sure that the extra it is going to cost him to cart his wheat to market, is not going to amount to £5,000 or £6,000. If he is paying £5,000 a year he is also saving £5,000.

Hon. L. C. Diver: If he is paying that taxation, do you think he is going to grow wheat?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He is growing it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He would have sheep.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is possible; but the extra cost would not cripple him. Even if it is found that the transport costs are jeopardising his industry—and one hon. member questioned me last year as to the definition of “industry”—provision would be made to see that his industry was subsidised, if a subsidy were warranted. We would ensure that it was kept going. There is nothing fairer than that. That was a recommendation contained in the report, and it was adopted by the Government.

Because a railway ceases to operate that does not mean that it will cease for all time. It has been declared by the Government that this is a trial in the wheat areas. The Premier has said so himself and has asked the people to give it a trial. If we find it does not work out as the committee suggested it would, we will be in a position to set our services going again. As I explained last session, that was the reason why I brought down a continuance motion rather than a closure Bill.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: In other words, it is purely an experiment.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not entirely.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It sounds like it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, it is not entirely an experiment.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: No matter what you did, you would not satisfy Mr. Baxter.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As I have said, if this does not work out as the Government or Parliament expects it to work out, we would be able to start our services up again. I feel sure that the hon. member who moved this motion did not earnestly feel that those lines should be recommenced and the services operated again. Some of them certainly do not warrant reintroduction.

The re-establishment of the services would cost the Government a lot of money. The reintroduction of services on the Ajana-Yuna line would be costly because the staff has been removed and, as Mr. Logan pointed out, some of the staff have also been moved from the Geraldton station itself, because the status of the district has been reduced. Economies have been effected and that is what the Country

Party has demanded. We effect these economies and some members complain because they happen to affect their own electorates!

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The economies are not in the right place.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know when they will ever be in the right place. Some members exhort us to commence at the top as well as the bottom. No matter what we do, we do not seem to be able to please anybody.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I am not surprised.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It seems to me that the only way that the minority section in Parliament on this question could be pleased would be if we continued running these lines at a loss of millions and millions of pounds a year.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You mean through these 842 miles of line.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Quite apart from materials, the cost of upkeep alone is prohibitive. The cessation of the two lines in the Geraldton area has resulted in economies by the reduction of the status of the station and of the area; it has gone a little further than the men actually working on the line. Mr. Logan says we should put them back again.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You have put the cost into some other area.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is very hard to convince.

Hon. L. A. Logan: I am.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member should be fair. I have given him figures which he can check at his leisure.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Premier estimated that the railway losses this year would be £7,000,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have explained that already, but I will write to the hon. member tomorrow, giving a further explanation.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Thank you very much.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not much good my trying to convince some members in this Chamber that we have made a correct approach in an endeavour to effect improvements in railway accounts. I do not propose to pursue that argument any longer. Parliament, by a majority, has agreed that it should be tried and the Government is satisfied. If we find we are on the wrong track and that the wheat harvest cannot be removed, then the railways will be restored. I cannot give any greater assurance than that. I have given that assurance to every body of men I have met since December last. The Premier also gave the same

assurance last week at the Road Board Association conference. I do not think any more can be done.

I conclude with the hope that the House will not agree to this motion, because I claim the Government has, although not completely fulfilling the conditions, commenced to effect economies and complied with the conditions required of it. I claim that the wording of the original motion does not insist that the results aimed at were to be achieved before any of the services were terminated. I claim that the overall improvement was fully tied up with the cessation of services and that unless the Government is able to cease the operations of the services referred to, it will not be able to commence any action at all to effect worth-while savings in the railways financial position. I say that the intention of Parliament at the time the motion was carried was that all the conditions were to be taken together, and the Government has done that.

Not one instance has been cited to show that people have been completely disregarded and left to suffer disadvantages. I admit that on the Bonnie Rock and Mukinbudin line some tidying up is needed. The Transport Board found after investigating this area, that the quantity of goods sent there in this off-season was far from sufficient to attract any cartage operator at all.

I shall give the House some idea of the requirements during the off-season. On the Geraldton-Ajana line where the people are well catered for and satisfied, 460 tons of light regular traffic was carried. There is what is known as occasional traffic of 370 tons. There is the wheat traffic of 15,000 tons and super 1,000 tons. The Midland Railway Co. extended its service to that area on a trial basis originally. It had no idea how it would turn out but it has proved successful.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is that company using the railway line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, it uses road buses. Mr. Simpson approached me a long time ago on this matter. I daresay that company will readily sell its railway line if it can find a buyer. The traffic on the Wokarina line is much the same; light regular traffic amounts to 260 tons per annum. On the Boddington-Narrogin line the light regular traffic amounts to 16 tons per annum; on the Mukinbudin-Lake Brown line, 15 tons per annum; and on the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line it is 14 tons per annum. The seasonal or occasional traffic amounts to 2,334 tons per annum, wheat 28,423 tons, super 3,194 tons, or a total of 34,091 tons.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Another factor comes in there. They have been making that line a terminus for their perishables. They had to start a system with the closing of that line.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is correct. As from today, the bus service has been extended through Beacon as a trial. It will not run from Merredin to Wyalkatchem and back; instead of that it will go to Koorda and Beacon and the other way to Merredin. I am certain it will prove to be quite satisfactory for mail and light traffic. If the service does not prove to be adequate it will be supplemented.

One can imagine how difficult it is to get any contractor to take on a service when virtually at this time of the year there is nothing offering. When the wheat carting starts tenders will be called in the manner suggested by Mr. Baxter. As I have said, if we find things going wrong, members can rest assured that the railway service will be restored. The figures I have given indicate the amount of goods carried over those lines. It is very light indeed.

I repeat that I do not think Mr. Simpson, with his vast knowledge and experience of the railways—far longer and more comprehensive than mine—earnestly believes that each and every one of these lines should be recommenced. In not one instance has there been a complaint of any magnitude for an alternative service. I oppose the motion.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [11.18]: The Minister for Railways has indicated that he views this as a censure motion. Personally, I am not worried about what he thinks it might be. I have been of the opinion that the weakness of the wording in the motion was the very reason for the Minister to attack it and to say that the Government had fulfilled the conditions that are set out therein. Naturally this gets down to a matter of opinion as to who is right and who is wrong.

The Government has stated that it has fulfilled the conditions set out in the motion which was passed on the 18th December last, so it claims that it has an expression of opinion from this House to go ahead with rail closures. As I said earlier, that is the weakness of the motion. Whilst I do not agree with all the wording in the motion, portions of it are necessary if the other motion is carried. For that reason I intend to support the motion now before the House.

In speaking last night I told the Minister for Railways that the two reasons given by the committee which recommended the closure of the lines were, firstly, on the ground of economy, and, secondly, on the ground that the state of the tracks was such that they were unsafe. The Minister disagreed with that statement, but if he reads the motion put forward by him on the 8th November last and also by the Minister for Transport in another place, those were two of the four reasons given for the closing of the lines, because of the condition of the State railways generally and particularly of the railways listed in Appendix "B." No. (4) referred to the

heavy expenditure involved for rehabilitation and operation. Might I say at this stage that the Minister stated that £25,500,000 has already been expended from loan money in rehabilitating the railways. Surely it is a shocking admission to make that £25,500,000 has been spent and the railways are in a worse condition than they were before. Some one is falling down on his job to make an admission like that.

The Minister for Railways: They are not worse.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is the statement which was made.

The Minister for Railways: You said they were worse.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Have a look at the report and see who made the statement. I want to know just how and when and why the so-called economies can be effected by closing 842 miles of line. The evidence given to us during the debate was that £544,000 would be saved by the closing of these lines, and that included the natural maintenance of the lines affected. When we get down to running expenses it would be about half that amount—a miserable £250,000 out of a loss of £4,500,000. It is infinitesimal.

The Minister has now tried to tell me that because Geraldton station has been reduced to a stage where it cannot carry a station master, economies have been effected. The majority of men from Geraldton are still employed by the railways and are receiving their salaries every week and fortnight, so where is the economy? It has been proved that 81 per cent. of the cost of the railways is in wages, salaries and allowances. These men are still receiving their salary, so where is the saving and economy? All that has been done is to shift the cost from one line to another, which is already overburdened with expenses and losses.

During the debate last year the Minister said that 362 men would be affected and they would not be sacked but would be absorbed by retirements, sickness and similar conditions. He has given the figure of 400, but some more men were put on after the debate last year, because, when a question was asked as to how many employees there were in the railways, the figure given was 13,900. However, the Minister says 14,000, so men were put on after the debate started in this House. When we go back to the number of employees when this debate started, there are not many less today; roughly 200. Therefore, how can economies be effected?

I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that the greatest turnover in men is with fettlers. If 100 fettlers pull out, are the surplus guards going to be put on as fettlers? If there are surplus shunters, are they going to be employed as fettlers? Of course they are not! Fettlers have to be replaced from the ordinary working man, not from the upper staff

of the Railway Department, and the economies the Minister is talking about cannot be effected. It is absolutely impossible. The Minister wanted to know why everybody was so quiet during the time the motion left this House to go to another place. They were absolutely dumbfounded and the expression of opinion was given to me many times in my area that it could not happen here. They said, "Do you think the Government is serious?" When I told them that the Government was serious, they laughed at me.

The Minister went on to say that there had been no protests from the Ajana and Yuna areas. I entered my protest in this House when the motion was discussed on the night of the 18th December. I protested on behalf of a lot of people. I did not protest individually because it is not possible to bring the individuals down, but I did it on their behalf because I had been asked to do so by many of them. The municipal council protested, as well as the Northampton branch of the Farmers' Union, Ogilvie, and the Upper Chapman Road Board.

The Minister for Railways. The Geraldton Council showed a profit:

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They will not show a profit; do not worry about that! I can read a motion passed at a meeting at Yuna not long ago. I did not organise the meeting but was invited to attend it. The Minister has had this motion, yet he says there were no protests there.

The Minister for Railways: Not about alternative transport.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: This is a different matter, although I told the Minister last night what the extra costs are going to be. I will not read this motion because the Minister has had it. I had no hand in organising the meeting but was invited as member for the area. One speaker was from the Ogilvie area and he also went to Northam to put the views to the Northam people. That is sufficient to prove that there had been protests in that area.

The Minister attempted to ridicule the Farmers' Union because of a map it put out on the 4th May. Let me assure the Minister that because of the recommendations of the inter-departmental committee which had been set up by the Government and portion of which had been accepted by the Government, there was a fear in everybody's heart as to what would transpire eventually. Therefore, in my opinion, the people were justified in the action they took, to make sure that no further rail closures would take place. They had every justification.

When a report is submitted by supposedly reputable men, and the Government accepts portion of their recommendations, and there is a commissioner of railways who has stated very definitely

that at least 2,000 miles of line should be closed, that is sufficient to put fear into the hearts of people in the country areas, and for them to be wary about accepting the Minister's statement that no further rail closures will take place. The Minister for Transport has not given that assurance. All he said in reply to a question was that there would be no further closures unless they were submitted to Parliament. That is entirely different to saying straight out, "No further rail closures." These people are justified in approaching the problem with caution and in kicking up as much fuss as they can to make sure that no further closures take place.

It has often been said—the Minister said this a few minutes ago—that the greater the tonnage carried, the greater the loss. Time and again it has been stated that wheat is carried at a loss, but I notice that the railways took care to cart by rail all the wheat along the Yuna-Ajana line before closing it this year. The line could have been closed two months earlier and the wheat left for road transport. It is difficult to believe that wheat is carried at a loss on these conditions.

Last night the House was given figures in regard to tonnages carried by the railways in 1928 and 1956. If members study the figures they will find that in 1928 some 1,357,000 tons of agricultural products were carted and in 1956 the amount carted increased to 1,732,000 tons. Yet the Government has the effrontery to say that the country people are not using the railways. These figures should provide enough evidence to prove that the country people, particularly in the agricultural areas, are supporting, and always have supported, the railways. I venture to say that if all the traffic available in the State, outside of a 50-mile radius from Perth, was carted by the railways, the extra tonnage the railways would have to carry would be very small.

The amount of money to be saved by closing 842 miles of line is so small that it will not be felt; it will not be effective in any way. The fact of the saving being so small, compared to the loss of the producers in those areas, is every reason why I, at least, am sincere in asking that these lines be restored. I hope and trust that the House will carry the motion. I believe that we should carry the other motion to rescind the previous resolution, but it is certainly necessary to pass the motion to reinstate the services that have been suspended.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland—in reply) [11.34]: As the mover of the motion, and replying to the debate, I want first of all to thank those speakers who have promised to support me. We have had a very interesting debate and I at least have learned some things that I did

not know before because there are many angles from which the difficulties have been examined.

I shall, in replying, endeavour to deal mainly with those points that have been raised by the Minister for Railways. I wish to thank him for the courtesy he has extended to us in dealing with a difficult task. He introduced no personalities; he maintained a good temper throughout; and I think that, as far as he is concerned, we do not attach any feeling in regard to the censure motion. But we do feel, as he says, that it is a motion of censure on the Government.

The Minister said that the Government's actions should be analysed, and he then proceeded to restate the motions and to trace their history and the treatment accorded them in the two Houses. Most of the criticism, he claimed, was levelled at the Government on the score of the lack of economy. He pointed out, rightly from his point of view, the measures the Government had been trying to carry out to achieve this end. It so happens that his viewpoint and ours do not agree.

He referred to a statement I made that there were 2,000 more employees in the railways than during the term of the McLarty-Watts Government. He gave the number employed at the 30th June, in round figures, as being 14,000 men and said that for the last six months, there had been a reduction of 400. That would appear to prove, on his own admission, that at one time there were 14,400 in the service. He said the figure at the 30th June, 1953, was 13,030, which would be roughly 1,400 less than the figure I have just mentioned. But I remind him that the McLarty-Watts Government went out of office in February 1953, and there was to my knowledge, an intake of men into the railways—to what extent I do not know—between the time it went out of office and the 30th June of that year. So I would say the figure of 2,000 that I quoted is substantially correct.

The Minister pointed out—and I admit there is some force in his argument—that there was a body of men required on the reconditioning of the track and the re-railing of it. He pointed again, rightly, to the added tonnage that the railways are called upon to haul. But I say again that I think the 2,000 extra men—I adhere to that figure because I think it is right—amount to more than would be required to do that extra work.

Reference was made by Mr. Griffith and Mr. Baxter to the action in another place in discharging a motion from the notice paper and the Minister explained that that was done on the Premier's motion. I presume it was done as a matter of routine and quite possibly those in the House had the idea that the terms and conditions transmitted from this House to another place would receive consideration when the

final motion was agreed to in another place. Actually they did not, and the motion, with other amendments, was carried by a majority of that House and was then sent here.

The Minister for Railways referred to a statement I made that the Government had bulldozed through the closures that had been mentioned as making up the 842 miles of line; or the proportion of them which had been effected so far by Government action. But I point out to him that there had been an impression created that the Government would not close those lines until the conditions of the amendments made in another place, and accepted here, were substantially complied with. And those affected were taken by surprise when told suddenly that their lines were to be pulled up.

As I said when speaking to the motion earlier, a complaint they all made was that while vigorous action was taken regarding country lines, there was no evidence of any attempt to effect economies in the metropolitan area. The man in the country had to take it, but people in the metropolitan area were to receive special consideration.

The Minister says the country people were scared by the publication in "The Farmers' Weekly" of the stages of closure recommended by the special committee set up by the Government, and he claims that the Government had not wholly accepted those recommendations but agreed only to 842 miles of line being closed. This expert committee which was appointed by the Government, and which spent months of study on the subject, claimed that no substantial economy in the running of the railways could be effected unless 2,000 miles of line were pulled up.

I cannot help thinking that it was the idea of the Government that if the closure of this 842 miles of line was accepted in the country without reaction it would proceed with the original plan or recommendation of the committee to pull up 2,000 miles of line altogether. Otherwise I cannot imagine those reports being tabled and referred to and no adequate explanation being given as to why the Government intended to accept the recommendation only in part and not wholly.

It has been said that the closing of the Ajana and Yuna lines excited no reaction; but I would tell the Minister that there was plenty of criticism by individuals affected and the road boards concerned, and a motion was carried at a meeting of the Northern Ward Zone Road Board Conference condemning the closures, and in line with the other motions passed at meetings in different parts of the country.

Reference has been made to the closures effected during the regime of the McLarty-Watts Government. I think the Sandstone line was the first to be pulled up in this State, and following that closure, a subsidy was paid. The next was the Marble

Bar line, and the Minister was one of those who entered a vigorous protest against its being pulled up.

The Minister for Railways: I have since admitted I was wrong.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You did what you are condemning us for doing.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The line from Marble Bar carried a special freight rate which was equivalent at that time to the cost per mile of road transport, or thereabouts; and the Government handled the closure of that line with consideration. It met various deputations in regard to the effects that would follow the closure, and held up the closure era for a considerable time so that the water problem at Port Hedland could be overcome and the question of alternative transport could receive due attention. All those questions were solved before the line was finally closed.

The very short length of line to Mundaring—only four miles—had for years been practically unused. It was in use while the Mundaring Weir wall was strengthened; but once that job was done there was no need to retain that line, and it was pulled up. There was no reaction following that closure, as the people concerned had good roads and were pleased with the alternative transport.

Attention was rightly drawn by Mr. Jones to the fact that while farmers are complaining at lines being pulled up and subsidies being gradually pared down, the farmers themselves over the years substantially subsidised the community by accepting a home consumption price for wheat during a time when wheat export prices were much higher than they are now. The Minister said the same applied to other States, and I agree; but in no other State has action been taken to close a series of lines. I saw those concerned at top level on my visit to the Eastern States—with the exception of Tasmania—and they expressed amazement that there was in this State a contemplated programme of wholesale closures.

Lines have been pulled up here and there in other States where necessary, but no other State has contemplated pulling up almost half its system as the departmental committee here recommended.

The Minister for Railways: That was not endorsed by the Government of this State.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The Government is pulling up 842 miles—

The Minister for Railways: That is not 2,000 miles.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The report of the committee advised that worth-while economies cannot be effected unless its recommendation to pull up 2,000 miles of

line are carried into effect. The question of uneconomic freights on timber has been raised; but the telescopic system operates in practically every part of the world where there are railways, the idea being to help the man in remote areas, promote rural development and decentralisation and, if possible, attract people to the outer areas.

The operation of railways almost everywhere has been political and not economic, the policy being to help develop parts of the country which often finally come into production, thus making the line concerned pay. The keeping of freights low is also a policy matter, and I think any responsible Government believes that low freights benefit the whole community. If there is a subsidy, it benefits not only the man on the line but also the whole community, because indirectly any cost the producer has to pay is passed on by means of that portion of his produce which is consumed within the country. The Minister said I was not earnest in suggesting that all these lines should be restored.

The Minister for Railways: I said I did not think you would be.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am in earnest to the extent that I think these men have a right to consideration and a right to have alternative facilities provided and subsidies where necessary, before their lines are taken away from them. One point about which I am rather intrigued and concerned is the admission by the Treasurer that there will be an anticipated loss of £7,400,000 this year. That seems an extraordinary jump from the £4.7 or £4.8 million of last year.

The Minister for Railways: It was £4.6 million.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am sorry that the Minister did not explain how that tremendous difference came about. I do not know whether the Treasurer was trying to cause us to panic because of that great sum, but it does not seem to me to square up with the experience of the last two years. One point that the Minister made was that in all the criticism there was very little of a constructive nature; so I shall recount to him some of the experiences we had, for what they are worth, during the strike period.

During that time we had only a quarter of our engine power left, and that thanks only to the apprentices who loyally kept on working, plus the assistance which the railways were able to provide for them. We maintained an output of 25 per cent. of our normal engine power; and with that 25 per cent., by organisation and by a bit of sacrifice on the part of the people concerned, we were able to deal with half of the traffic that went to the country. The other half

If the railways had not continued to handle that 50 per cent., not only would there have been a chaotic condition in Western Australia, but we would also have been forced to import over a thousand vehicles from the Eastern States to help us over our difficulties. Because we had 25 per cent. of our engine power available we were able to dispense with bringing vehicles from the Eastern States.

That meant several things. First of all it meant that the metropolitan train service was entirely cut out. That did not seem to matter much because it meant only slight inconvenience to the public or those who came into town to work and had to go home again. I would remind members that while we look upon the losses in the metropolitan transport system as something shocking—and perhaps we think of some action which we might take as affecting the people concerned—I would remind them that only 30 per cent. of people in the metropolitan area actually use the railways to come to town. The other 70 per cent. use buses.

Those who live in the north, such as the Scarborough area, or those who live to the west or south all travel by road transport. A big proportion of those who live in areas served by the railway come to town by buses. As a matter of fact, many of those who use the railways are concessionaires, and I have always held the view that concessions are a political matter and should be absorbed by the Treasury, and that the railways should not be called upon to carry them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: If the Treasury is prepared to subsidise the railways by the concessions which it gives to these people, it could just as easily subsidise travel by road transport as by rail. During the period of the strike many men were laid off because we did not have the work to give them and only half of the normal traffic was handled, and that only by a reorganisation of services. Trains were not permitted to depart unless fully loaded. It was impossible to work to any set time-tables and I suggest that we might be able to learn some lessons from that time of stress.

I believe that if these lines were preserved and time-tables were reorganised so that we would at least get the benefit of having bulk commodities carted by the railways, and if the Government took the bull by the horns and said, "In regard to metropolitan transport, fares will be increased," we would be able to effect economies in our railway system. I would remind members that fares in the metropolitan area are the same as they were in 1921, when people could travel by road cheaper than by rail.

In conclusion I would say that the Government, better than any of its critics, knew the position which was developing; and I still think it has substantially failed to honour the conditions laid down in the motion agreed to by both Houses—that is, to effect economies, to reduce the deficit, to provide adequate facilities for the lines which were affected and to overhaul the losses on the metropolitan system.

Above all, having a knowledge of this developing position, the Government should long ago have brought over an expert skilled in railway matters, preferably with an appreciation of the difficulties, and possible advantages in some directions, of a 3ft. 6in. gauge, to overhaul our system and to give us advice.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	11

Majority for 4

Ayes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. P. D. Willmott
Hon. G. MacKinnon	Hon. A. F. Griffith
Hon. R. C. Mattiske	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. J. D. Teahan
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. P. J. S. Wise
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

House adjourned at 11.59 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 17th July, 1957.

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