

this time of the year the cattle eat it readily, and it kills them in a few hours. The plant is spreading, and people do not understand what it is. There is quite a lot of it on the roads of the metropolitan area. The other day I was on a 12-mile section of a highway, and saw one single Cape Tulip and took the opportunity to eradicate it. The plant appears to spread in places where one would least expect to find it. The Agricultural Department should see that the local authorities employ competent inspectors of noxious weeds, or else take some other steps to have the menace checked.

The Department of Agriculture has been doing a very good job latterly, but prior to the war it was understaffed. I hope that position will not recur after the war. The department cannot be expected to police the various pests if it has not sufficient men to do the work. More especially the department should give attention to stock diseases. A number of them are going unchecked owing to the department not having the necessary staff. This matter is of great importance to Western Australia because we depend so much on stock. Another important subject is the question of our main highways. Many years ago, at a south-western conference, I put through a resolution recommending to the Works Department that all main and feeder roads should be surveyed not less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ chains wide. The idea is that a one-chain road is no use for fast-moving traffic, especially in country areas where stock are frequently travelled. The resolution was not acted upon, although sent forward by the conference. Many years afterwards, however, the Main Roads Board did widen one or two main roads, and a few others have since been surveyed wider than one chain; but there are still hundreds of miles of important roads only a chain wide. We have the spectacle of the Canning Highway, a narrow road today. What will it be in years to come? I do not see why the widening of that road cannot be carried out before there is too much development. If the roads were surveyed $1\frac{1}{2}$ chains no one would lose very much, because the land is not valuable now.

We have seen the mistakes that have been made in the past. Mr. Seddon said that it was wrong for the Main Roads Board to construct roads parallel with the railway line because that did the railways a lot of

harm. It may have done the railways some harm, but it has done the public some good. I assure members that the main roads have been a blessing to the people of this State. I hope that after the war our transport facilities will receive an overhaul with a view to their being brought up to date. It seems to me entirely wrong to prevent people from having the best possible transport, just because it is interfering with a Government undertaking such as the railways. The Transport Board has done a very good job, and has apparently come to stay. However, we should allow people to use road transport if that is so much better than other transport available. Although we have to pay for the railways, we do not want them to stand in the way of development or in the way of people getting to and from the country quickly. I do not think there is any need for me to say much about schools. We know that every district has some complaint concerning the need of repairs to schools, but that is not the fault of the Government but of the manpower position. It seems to me that not now but after peace has been declared will be the time to delve into these matters.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 30th August, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (5).

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FUND ACT.

As to “Prior Membership” Contributors.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:

How many members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, re-

spectively, have taken advantage of clause 2 of the Schedule of the Members of Parliament Fund Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

Twenty-two members of the Legislative Council; twenty-four members of the Legislative Assembly.

BARBED WIRE.

As to Army Surplus Stocks.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is barbed wire from surplus Army stocks being released to farmers through the Department of Agriculture?

(2) If so, by whom was this barbed wire manufactured?

(3) Is it correct that this has been advertised as in rolls of 28 lbs. with an approximate length of 150 yards and the charge 7s. 6d. a roll?

(4) If so, is he aware that there are only approximately 100 yards in each roll?

(5) If he is not aware of this, will he have immediate investigations conducted to check this aspect of the matter?

(6) If such check proves the statement to be correct, will he immediately make representations through Army headquarters so that it may be ascertained whether the original suppliers have been profiteering at the nation's expense, and if so, do his best to ensure that suitable action be taken?

(7) Does he agree that if the facts are as stated, the supply of barbed wire to farmers on the terms mentioned is more expensive than the purchase of normal 800-yard rolls through ordinary channels, and if so, will he take steps to have the price of the surplus Army stocks reduced proportionately?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) No. Permits are not required for second-hand barbed wire.

(2) Information not available.

(3) Such an advertisement has not been noticed. It is understood wire is sold by weight.

(4) Length of roll depends on gauge of wire. If 12½ gauge, length is approximately 150 yards per roll.

(5) and (6) See No. 1.

(7) Barbed wire of local manufacture, 12½ gauge, contains approximately 600 yards per cwt.

MINE WORKERS' RELIEF FUND.

As to Contributors.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Mines:

For the year ended the 31st December, 1939—

(1) What average number of mine workers, as defined in the Mine Workers' Relief Act, and those who are obliged to contribute, or may contribute, actually contributed to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund?

(2) How many mine workers among them were engaged exclusively on the production of minerals other than gold?

(3) How many prospectors were among the total contributors?

(4) How many ex-employees not actively engaged in mining were among the contributors?

(5) What was the total amount of contribution for which the Government was liable for the year?

The MINISTER replied:

As the Board's year closes on the 31st January each year, the figures given are for the 12 months ended the 31st January, 1940.

(1) 9,832.

(2) Nil.

(3) Twenty.

(4) 123 Miner's phthisis contributors.

(5) £17,451 18s. 5d.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Railway Freight.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that on the 11th January, 1944, the railway freight charge on the carriage of superphosphate was increased by sixpence per ton?

(2) Is he aware that it was reported that this additional freight charge was imposed because of the assertion that the superphosphate, owing to alterations in quality as a result of war-caused conditions, may damage tarpaulins used to cover the superphosphate while in transit?

(3) Will he state whether this additional charge was imposed with his knowledge and consent?

(4) Will he state whether, because of additional costs incurred, as the result of war-caused conditions, in the carriage and handling of other classes of goods on the railways, extra charges have been imposed

on such other classes of goods in order similarly to compensate for the additional costs?

(5) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The charge was imposed as a contribution towards the cost of repairing damage caused by superphosphate to tarpaulins during transit and such charge barely covers the cost of repairs and replacements.

(3) Yes.

(4) There is no analogy as the department is not put to similar expense through the carriage of other commodities.

(5) Answered by No. 4.

STATE BRICKS.

As to Prices, etc.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What price per 1,000 did the State Brickworks charge for bricks prior to September, 1939?

(2) What is the present price charged by the State Brickworks for bricks per 1,000?

(3) Has the State Government considered the advisability of establishing branches of the State Brickworks in the agricultural areas?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) First-class standard red brick, 69s. per 1,000 on rail, Byford. (Less 2½ per cent. cash discount.)

(2) Tax free price, £5 9s. per 1,000 on rail, Byford. Tax inclusive, £5 12s. 9d. (Less 2½ per cent. cash discount.)

(3) Certain propositions placed before the Government are receiving consideration.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Leave to Introduce.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [4.35]: I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for "An Act to repeal section one hundred and eight of the Companies Act, 1893-1938."

I desire to thank the Government for adjourning the House last night before my motions were reached, because I was not present.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

As to Second Reading.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [4.37]: I move—

That the Bill be printed and that the second reading be made an Order of the Day for Wednesday, the 13th September.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison): Such a motion has been contrary to the procedure of the House for a long time. With all due respect to the member for Guildford-Midland, I contend that private members' business has always appeared on the notice paper in rotation. I do not know that any special privileges should be extended to a private member. On several occasions I recall that consternation was caused because by some means or other private members' motions were out of order on the notice paper; members' business which should have appeared at the top of the notice paper was placed lower down or at the bottom. It was then decided by this Chamber that the present procedure should be adopted and we were given to understand by the Government that private members' business would be taken in the order in which it was moved. I am informed by the Minister for Mines, who ought to know, that that has always been done since. It is a fair and just way of allocating private members' business. I am not singling out the member for Guildford-Midland, and I think he will not press his motion when he realises that by doing so he would be asking the Chamber to give him preference.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: Quite the other way.

MR. MARSHALL: I do not know whether the House will do so or not; but when we come to the day on which the members' business is to be transacted, his motion will be dealt with, irrespective of where it appears on the notice paper, by virtue of this motion. Accordingly, other private members' business will be crowded out. His Bill must be taken; the hon. member understands that. I am not inclined to support the motion, because if I do and it is carried other private members will be moving similar motions and will therefore be entitled to the like consideration. I think the present procedure, which has worked so well and smoothly should be strictly adhered to.

MR. SPEAKER: I must rule that the objection taken by the member for Murchison is fatal. There is nothing to prevent the member for Guildford-Midland, from moving that the Order of the Day be post-

poned until Wednesday, the 13th September, but it must take its place on the notice paper.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland): I have no objection. I did this to facilitate the business of the House and not to take any unfair advantage. I will not be here next Wednesday. It is the easiest thing in the world to have this postponed, and that will be done. I thought I would be straightforward about the matter. In lieu of my first motion, I now move—

That the Bill be read a second time at the next sitting of the House.

I will not be here then, but will move in that direction.

Question put and passed.

BILL—EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. N. Keenan and read a first time.

MOTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

As to Commonwealth Policy.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [4.42]: I move—

That Parliament views with deep concern the failure of the Commonwealth Government to announce some definite policy in respect to soldier land settlement and what financial assistance will be available to assist ex-members of the Forces who desire to take up primary production. This apparent lack of policy is bringing hardship to many Western Australian ex-servicemen and it is also against the best interests of Western Australia where there is so much suitable land available at moderate prices.

I feel confident that I have the support of all members of this House in moving this motion. I am sure that we all view with great concern the fact that there is no plan already in operation for soldier settlement, and the rehabilitation of soldiers generally. Some soldiers have already been discharged from the Army and are most anxious to take up land, but there is no provision for them to do so. We also have soldier settlers who were settled under the last, or present soldier settlement scheme, and who have been away and taken part in this war. Some of them have returned, but no national financial assistance has been provided for them. We can appreciate that their holdings have deteriorated during their absence, and that it is necessary for them to be rehabilitated, but no provision has been made to that end.

We are all concerned with the latest announcement that appeared in the Press on Monday. It states that consideration of the soldier settlement scheme has again been adjourned for one month. This is very disappointing to the soldiers and also to the members of this House, because we all realise the urgency for bringing into being some plan for the rehabilitation of our soldiers. The war has been going on now for just on five years. Surely, after our experiences of the last war, we know that we should have some schemes ready now. It seems to me that the Commonwealth Government will go muddling along until it is too late. We do not know when this war will finish. We all sincerely hope that the time is not far distant. What position will we be in if we are not ready to receive these men and rehabilitate them? Who will be blamed?

Mr. Needham: You should have voted "Yes."

Mr. THORN: That is all nonsense!

Mr. Needham: The soldiers voted "Yes" themselves.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THORN: It has been definitely proved that the Referendum had no bearing on the subject at all. We have already had an announcement through the Premiers' Conference, of different plans for housing and other schemes. They may have been held back until the Referendum was over, but they have definitely come to light now. I think the opinion of most members of this Chamber was that whichever way the Referendum went it would have no effect on the future progress of our States. How could it have? No Government would retard the progress of the States because they did not allow themselves to be bluffed into selling their birthright. This State can also be very proud of the fact that it has, per head of population, the greatest number of enlistments of any individual State. That makes our task the more urgent and heavy.

As I was going to say before I was so rudely interrupted we, as a State Parliament, will have the full responsibility for putting into effect whatever schemes are brought down by the Commonwealth, and we will get the backwash from any failures or delays in attending to these urgent matters. We know perfectly well that the machinery is set up in the States. We know that the representatives of the electors in

the different States understand the requirements of their electorates, and that they are the best and most capable people to handle this situation. Therefore, whatever the Commonwealth Government may say members will find that the full responsibility for the rehabilitation of our soldiers will rest on this Parliament, and if it fails we are the people who will have to bear the brunt.

Mr. Marshall: We have always to take the backwash.

Mr. THORN: Of course. We have heard a tremendous lot about the new industries in this State, but we require a magnifying glass to find them.

The Minister for Mines: What about the new party?

Mr. THORN: That will not help, but the Minister will feel the effects of the new party before he is very much older. We need a magnifying glass to find the new industries that have been started in this State. They are not here! Therefore, we must realise and appreciate that our greatest source of rehabilitation for the returned men is the land. We are a land-minded population. Our own soldiers, and even those in other States, have expressed a wish to go on the land in Western Australia. Many young Eastern States soldiers have assured me that as soon as the war is over they are returning to this State.

The Minister for Mines: I wonder why?

Mr. THORN: Because they realise that we have the land here, and that the price of land is quite reasonable compared with that in the other States. Much more land is available in this State than there is in the other States, and it is to the land that we must look to rehabilitate our soldiers. It is time we had a scheme ready and were in a position to advise our soldiers what to expect when they return.

There has been a lot of talk about the failure of soldier land settlement after the 1914-18 war, but surely to goodness we have learnt from those failures! All said and done, it was a partial failure only, like group settlement and most of our land schemes. Many of our soldiers on the land succeeded and were able to pay their way. We have learnt from the mistakes then made. Reference has been made to price-fixing. This State was the first of all to pass price-fixing legislation and that will be of great benefit to us when the next land settlement

scheme for soldiers is undertaken. Many of the men who were settled on the land after the last war were crippled by high costs. Galvanised wire, so necessary for trellising vines and fencing properties, is about 23s. a cwt., whereas soldiers after the last war paid 80s. a cwt. High costs also ruled for galvanised iron; in fact, prices of all necessities were at the top because there was no price control. Now, fortunately, we have price control; we have our own State legislation, which will be invaluable in the direction of preventing high costs of settlement.

Mr. Marshall: Is not that Act to operate only for the duration of the war?

Mr. THORN: Yes, but surely we will appreciate its value and continue it! Another reason for the partial failure of the land settlement scheme after the last war was the high price paid for re-purchased estates. When those estates were subdivided, and handed to the soldiers, they never had a chance, owing to the high cost. Soldier settlers no sooner started operating than the markets of the world flopped and they! could not get a payable price for their produce. With all these factors against them, they certainly had a hard row to hoe, but in spite of all, I think I am correct in saying that soldier settlers have produced from their holdings £20,000,000 worth of primary products. Therefore nobody can contend that the soldier settlement scheme of 20 odd years ago was a complete failure.

Some months ago the Land Committee of the Returned Soldiers' League sat in conference to devise a land settlement scheme so that we might be ready to put it into operation when the time came. Most of the members of that committee are soldier settlers from the last war. After months of work and consideration, the committee drew up a scheme and, through the Federal office of the organisation, presented it to the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth has considered the scheme and regards it fairly favourably; in fact, we have been informed that quite a large portion of the scheme will be adopted. Thus the R.S.L., as a movement, has tried to play its part in assisting the Commonwealth to introduce a scheme that will avoid the errors made in the previous scheme. But I wish the Commonwealth would get a move on.

The report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission also contains the framework of a very good scheme. I have perused the report and I consider that the scheme outlined is a sound one. But what reception has it met with? I think I am right in saying that the Commonwealth considers it too costly. I believe the estimated cost is £40,000,000. If that is so, I do not for a moment consider that it is too costly. If we do not have a scheme ready to put into operation, what is going to be the result? The men being demobilised will have to be maintained. I believe it is the intention of the Commonwealth to keep them in the Army until we are ready to absorb them, and will not that cost the country millions of pounds? It will be a matter of frittering away millions in maintenance instead of having a scheme ready under which these prospective settlers will be able to go straight ahead. Therefore I say that £40,000,000 for a scheme is not too much. However, we are likely to be up against objections of this sort all the time. Seemingly there is a difference of opinion between the Commonwealth and the State Premiers as to sharing the cost of the scheme, and I suppose they will go ranging over that question for months and losing a lot more valuable time.

I regard soldier land settlement as being mainly the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth has taken all our revenue and is taxing our people up to the hilt. This being so, why does it not go ahead with the scheme and accept full responsibility, allowing the States the management of it? At any rate, I hope that will be the final outcome of the conference deliberations. As I have remarked, we hear complaints from all over the country and even from soldier settlers from the other war. We know that much money has been spent on printing pamphlets, on newspapers and on paying professors to lecture on land settlement and rehabilitation after the war. The management of the affairs of the Commonwealth at present appears to be in the hands of young professors. These young men are directing affairs today and I for one do not feel prepared to accept their advice on land settlement. I would much rather have the advice of a man of practical experience and of members of this Legislature who have been conducting the affairs of the country.

They are the ones to guide the Commonwealth Government as to the people to be settled on the land and the best means of settling them.

Mr. Marshall: That is a most unscientific observation.

Mr. THORN: In theory, perhaps, but not from the practical standpoint. I consider that my observations are most scientific. After the 1914-18 war, more than 5,000 men took up land in this State under the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme and I presume there will be just as many—probably more—desirous of going on the land after this war.

There is a matter that should cause concern to every member of the House. I refer to the slaughter of dairy stock. It is a disgrace that today our heifer calves and vealers are being knocked on the head, being slaughtered holus-bolus for beef. When the war finishes, we shall find ourselves in a very serious position because of that. We shall not be able to look to New Zealand or Canada, or to other countries outside Australia, to help us with our dairying industry after this war as they did after the last war. I trust the matter will be very seriously treated in connection with our future settlement, and particularly in connection with the dairying industry. The slaughtering of heifer calves and heifer vealers should be stopped immediately. I have here some letters that I would like to read regarding repatriation. One states—

With reference to your communication regarding purchase of a farming property, I desire to advise that any applications in respect of land settlement should be addressed to the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme, Agricultural Bank, Perth, which department will give you details of the scheme.

That is a reply sent to a man who wants to go on the land. Here is another letter he received—

We acknowledge your letter of the 22nd ultimo concerning the proposed purchase of a farm under the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme, and have to advise you that up to the time of writing the bank has not been advised of the completion of plans concerning the repatriation of soldiers from this war; therefore at present the bank is unable to assist. We understand that the settlement of soldiers on the land is one of the matters being dealt with by the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission.

And there is a further letter addressed to the same person—

In reply to your letter of the 4th October, and further to mine of the 3rd June last, I regret that I am unable to advise you what progress has been made by the Commonwealth authorities in the matter of repatriation of soldiers from this war. Unless or until this bank has been appointed to carry out the Government's policy in this connection, we will be unable to give you any advice.

The first of these letters is from the Repatriation Commission, and the other two are from the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia. That is the position in which we find ourselves today. Even our Agricultural Bank cannot give proposed settlers any information. The position is pretty hopeless, and unless we do something and do it quickly we shall find ourselves in a mess. As I said before, the blame, instead of being cast on the Commonwealth Government, will rest on our shoulders. No members with knowledge of the facts will deny that today we do practically all the work for the Commonwealth connected with post offices, pensions and so forth; and what do we get for it? We do not get thanks.

Mr. SPEAKER: That matter does not come within the scope of the motion.

Mr. THORN: I urge the Government to give consideration to the motion, which I have pleasure in moving.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): I associate myself with the motion moved by the member for Toodyay, on which it was not my intention to speak. However, I have risen because of the unfortunate interjection that came from the member for Perth. A "Yes" vote or a "No" vote on the Referendum has absolutely no connection whatever with the need for us in this State to do something for the returned soldier in the way of land settlement, as proposed by the motion. Are we to assume, because of the unnecessary interjection, that on the ground of there having been a "No" vote in Australia there is no need for us in this State, or in any Australian State, to take up such matters as those stated in the motion? I venture to suggest that even had there been a successful "Yes" vote, the problem would still have come back to Western Australia, with the added disadvantage of our having to do all the work and having immense difficulty in obtaining

the money required. The motion is especially appropriate because no Australian State will have a bigger primary producing problem to face than Western Australia will have. I happen to know that the men who have come back find there is nothing ready for them, nothing at all!

A man who went to the Agricultural Department a little while ago to make certain inquiries was told in the course of conversation that the gentleman who interviewed him was impressed by the fact that all the men who returned from the war wanted to grow something. These men have come back from the war with a firm belief that they can never return to the civil occupations which they followed prior to enlistment. Consequently a vast number of the youths returning will gravitate towards the land. Provided conditions are made suitable and comfort is adequate, and commensurate with the life people have to live in the bush, there is no finer calling in the world that those boys can go to than farming is. Farming means freedom of life. That life has to be planned for them in advance, so that such questions as abnormal debt and abnormal taxation will be resolved and these settlers will get a fair chance. By this motion the member for Toodyay simply asks us as a responsible Parliament immediately to set about working out the plans, so that these young fellows will have the opportunities I have just mentioned, and especially the simple opportunity of living a decent life, unencumbered by financial worries, on the land. Nothing whatever has been prepared up to date; not even blue prints.

We know that there was a post-war Rural Reconstruction Commission, the chairman of which was our Minister for Lands, and the personnel of which might be regarded as highly intelligent. We know too, from the little we have been told, that these gentlemen have put up some scheme for the returned soldier on the land. The Commonwealth Government, however, has remained mighty silent about that phase. Assuming even that there had been a "Yes" vote, there would still have been that silence. Members of every Parliament in the British Empire have stood on their feet, one after another, and have talked about post-war reconstruction, about the golden age which they promised the people. I have arrived at the conclusion that every word they uttered was uttered with their

tongues in their cheeks. The war can end tomorrow, and if it does God help those boys of ours when they come back here! The member for Toodyay suggested it would be necessary to keep those men in the Army. He is probably right, but it will be almost impossible to keep men in the Army after an armistice has been declared. I know that from my own experience.

This motion is therefore perfectly proper. It asks us, as responsible and intelligent persons, to set about the task of preparing plans so that our boys can go straight from the Army to the land if they wish to do so. I am amazed that with the trend of events and with the knowledge we have of the progress of the Allied arms, the work has not yet been done. It would not surprise me in the slightest degree if within seven days from now the German people asked for an armistice on any terms whatever. The breakdown of Germany is getting nearer and nearer. When it comes we shall have to get into some sort of panic rush to evolve plans for the rehabilitation of our boys. The present deplorable state of affairs should never have been allowed to come about. Still, "better late than never!" I commend the motion to the House. Members cannot possibly turn it down.

On motion by Mr. Leslie, debate adjourned.

MOTION—HARBOURS.

As to Formation of State Board.

MR. HILL (Albany) [5.15]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House a State harbour board should be formed for the purpose of providing the State with a co-ordinated and efficient policy of harbours and port developments, administration and control.

I have persistently drawn the attention of members to forms of transport and the need for sound transport administration. The motion does not go as far as I would like, but is intended only as a step in the right direction. I hope the day is not far distant when we shall have not only a State harbour trust board, but a Minister and a department of transport to co-ordinate and control all transport activities. When Mr. Bruce was Prime Minister, he realised the importance of having a complete system of transport which would enable our total costs to be kept at a minimum, so that Australia could compete in the markets of the world.

Mr. Bruce arranged with one of the leading transport experts of the Empire, Sir George Buchanan, to visit Australia and report, not upon the expansion of Fremantle harbour, but upon transport in Australia with special reference to port and harbour facilities. Sir George Buchanan's report is divided into two volumes. I draw attention particularly to Vol. 1, which deals with the economics and administration of transport. In paragraph 37 he says—

Ports are the medium or clearing houses between sea and land transport. On their proper location and efficiency the success of the transport system as a whole greatly depends, and examples can be given in various parts of the world of ports being established at great cost in unsuitable localities (because land settlement first took place in that neighbourhood), regardless of the fact that perhaps a few miles away there existed a fine natural harbour. Australia is well provided with ports and harbours, both actual and potential, and in studying for the first time the policy of port development in each of the States of Australia, a stranger cannot fail to comment on the interest taken by all classes of the community in all the States in the development of ports. Every township of importance on the coast has its own scheme for turning itself into a port; indeed, some townships of little importance also have their schemes. It is all to the good that there is a keen public interest in port development, and the State is bound to care for isolated communities, where such communities depend for their needs on water carriage and must also despatch their products by water. Apart from such cases, however, the State is bound to guard carefully against lavish expenditure and unprofitable projects.

Another of the leading transport authorities of the world was the late Sir David Owen, for 16 years General Manager of the Port of London Authority, and President of the Institute of Transport of Great Britain. In one of his articles he very truly said—

Empire trade may be encouraged or vitiated by the degree of efficiency of its ports.

In his presidential address to the Institute of Transport he dealt with the problem of port costs. In the course of his remarks he said—

A port is not in itself a means of conveyance or of transport. It is only a facility for the actual means of transport. A port, in order to be effective, must adapt itself to the changing means of transport. If it does not its trade will leave it. Or if that is not possible the result will be a handicapping of trade by increased costs and delay.

Forty years ago the Port of London provided proof of Sir David's contention. That

port then consisted of a conglomeration of docks under the control of various dock companies, shipping companies and railway companies. The port was not adapting itself to the changing means of transport. Its trade was leaving it and the port was on the down-grade. As a result of the findings of a Royal Commission, the Port of London Authority was appointed, and that authority took control of the port in April, 1939. Central administration provided a co-ordinated and efficient policy of development and control. The down-grade was converted into an up-grade, and before the war the Port of London's trade broke all existing records.

Let us now turn to this State. We have spent £26,000,000 on our railways, which are under the control of a Commissioner and his department. He is responsible to one Minister. On our water supplies we have spent £14,500,000. Our Director of Works is one of the most able hydraulic engineers in Australia. The whole of our water supplies is under the Water Supply Department, which is responsible to one Minister. We have a loan liability of £3,400,000 on our roads. Our Main Roads Department is responsible to the Minister for Works who also controls all local governing bodies, which in turn control the other roads of the State. When we turn to our ports, what do we find? We have spent £7,500,000 on our ports, and we have no one department or one Minister controlling them. The Fremantle Harbour Trust is responsible to the Chief Secretary. The Port of Perth is responsible to the Premier. The Bunbury Harbour Board is responsible to the Minister for the North-West. The jetties at Albany, Esperance, Busselton and Port Hedland and the wharves at Geraldton are under the Railway Department. The jetties at North-West ports are under the Harbour and Lights Department, controlled by the Minister for the North-West.

The Minister for the North-West: Very good administration, too.

Mr. HILL: I am not doubting that. Bulk-handling is under the control of the Minister for Lands, and coal storage facilities under the control of the Minister for Agriculture. When any expenditure is wanted at a port it is not considered by any governmental body, but the people concerned have to come cap in hand to the Minister for Works who administers har-

bours and rivers. On all sides we hear complaints of our high charges and inefficient service. Let us see what others have to say. I will read paragraph 351 of Sir George Buchanan's report—

A few remarks on the subject of administration at the Port of Fremantle are due. There is obviously too much interest taken in Fremantle Harbour by politicians and this I respectfully suggest is detrimental to the progress and well-being of the port. The reports of the parliamentary debates in the Legislative Assembly bear eloquent testimony to this state of affairs. It is one thing for a Minister of the Crown to control a department entrusted to his care, but quite another thing for a great undertaking such as Fremantle Harbour to be controlled in its administrative acts by debates and divisions in Parliament. Again, if the functions of the Port Commissioners were those of earners of revenue for the State, a case might be made out for political control. But the port is not a tax-collecting organisation; the sole concern of the Fremantle Commissioners is to devise and control an undertaking that will hand on to consumers, whether in Australia or overseas, at the lowest possible cost, all produce passing through the port, and therefore the political interest taken in Fremantle port affairs, and the close control exercised by the Government, I venture to suggest, are misplaced. State control over the ports exists throughout Australia and I have pointed out, State by State, where this control hampers progress. In no State, however, are such burdens laid upon ports, or, in other words, upon trade, as those that exist in Fremantle, and in no State perhaps is the need for a reform in methods of administration more urgent than is the need in Western Australia.

Mr. North: What year was that?

Mr. HILL: That was 1927. Now let us turn to the Eighth Report (1941) of the Commonwealth Grants Commission. In paragraph 178 the report states—

Harbours.—The expenditure out of loan funds on outer harbours in Western Australia is large and it does not appear to us that a sufficient attempt is made to get an adequate return from the users in the districts served. If the traffic will not stand the cost, there is no reason for expenditure on harbours unless it is essential for the industry of the district, in which case the industry should be charged through a special rate. This policy has been tried in other parts of Australia, and insistence upon it has on occasions led the people of a district to decide that the expenditure on a harbour was not really necessary for their interest.

A multiplication of harbours is uneconomic. It is true that in Western Australia the Port of Fremantle returns a large profit, but this does not make up for the losses on the other ports. In any case the profit of Fremantle is no excuse for an unscientific and unco-ordinated policy of harbour development. A

large expenditure has been made on the Bunbury harbour, which is only about 100 miles from Perth, and it is doubtful whether it has succeeded in overcoming the disadvantages of the port.

I will now quote a few figures to show the result of this unscientific and unco-ordinated control. In 1924 the Fremantle Harbour Trust had a loan liability of £2,156,000. It showed a surplus of £117,000. In 1939, our last normal year, the loan liability was £3,406,000, and the surplus was only £116,320. The only out-port for which figures are available is Bunbury. There, in 1924, the loan liability was £453,000, and the surplus £796. In 1939 the loan liability had grown to £687,000, and a deficiency had replaced the surplus. The deficiency was £22,831. Now let us take all the ports of the State. Unfortunately there are no figures available for the years preceding 1931. In that year the ports showed a surplus of £102,000. The surpluses for the following years were—

Year.	Surplus.
1932	£20,540
1933	£33,746
1934	£36,652
1935	£4,362

The total surplus for the years 1931 to 1935 was £236,000, the whole of which was paid into Consolidated Revenue. In each of the succeeding six years a deficiency was shown as follows:—

Year.	Deficiency.
1936	£17,000
1937	£28,000
1938	£32,000
1939	£18,000
1940	£61,000
1941	£116,000

Other nations and States have changed their port control. In 1921 the Port of New York Authority was formed and the chairman of that authority in the course of a speech made remarks which are so applicable to this State that I will read them. He said—

As a nation we have been prodigal in the waste rather than in the use of our national resources, but in the Port of New York we have been prodigal in the neglect of our opportunities. Even prodigality in the use of them could scarcely exhaust their immense possibilities. We have grown amazingly in spite of neglect of port planning because of the natural advantages afforded us but in doing so we have created points of congestion which check the easy flow of commerce, limit our capacity and entail heavy expense.

We are using automobiles, telephones, amplifiers and many products of invention, art and science for our comfort and better intercourse among ourselves but in our port terminal operations we are in the main using the methods of our forefathers when old St. Paul's churchyard was uptown. If Rip Van Winkle suddenly returned to look upon New York with its skyscrapers, its wonderful shops, its ever fascinating crowds he would say, "I must have had a long sleep," but when he wandered to the Hudson River and saw the tugs and lighters and car floats, he would say, "Oh, not I, but the people of New York have been asleep."

I shall not take your time to either ask or answer why. As members of the Port Authority it is

Not ours to reason why

We have but to do or die

in the attempt to overcome the loss and inertia of the past, to plan so that we may catch up with our past mistakes and recover our lost opportunities. It is a herculean task. I shall not weary you with details or statistics. The picture you are to see will state them more graphically and impressively.

What is the problem? Briefly it is to apply modern science, experience and invention to the development of the natural advantages at hand.

What are the obstacles? Here are just a few—

1. The general ignorance of and indifference to the subject.

2. The immense and complex character of it.

3. The diverse authorities and interests involved, many of which see only their own tiny part or prerogatives and are jealous of others, or are unable or unwilling to look at a larger horizon.

4. Stubborn adherence to old customs.

How are these obstacles to be overcome?

1. By education of all the people as to what the port problem really means to them in the cost of doing business, of living and in the facility to earn their living.

2. By exhaustive, intensive and continuous study by qualified and trained men such as those on the staff of the Port Authority and as they have been doing it.

3. By a proper spirit of co-operation between all the various public and private agencies working with and through a co-ordinating agency with adequate powers of administration. The compact between the States of New York and New Jersey provides such an agency and most of the many other official and unofficial units are showing such a spirit of co-operation.

4. By demonstrating the economies and advantages to be obtained by the application of modern scientific methods, so as to remove prejudice and change uneconomic customs.

I think it will be agreed that those remarks apply equally to Western Australia. We have created here a point of congestion which has limited our capacity, entailed

heavy expenditure and created a very lop-sided State. The necessity has been suggested for appointing an authority to catch up with past mistakes. Thus it is essential in Western Australia that we shall have a State harbours board so that we may have co-ordinated and efficient policy of harbour development and control. One of the greatest obstacles that such a board will have to overcome is the general indifference regarding our ports or, rather, ignorance regarding them. Some people seem to think that transport troubles are ended when products reach the port of shipment. If that were so, I would be a very lucky individual. I had a wharf attached to my fruit shed, and in one year I sent more produce over my little wharf than was handled at the port of Bundaberg in the year 1935-36. With the advent of improved road facilities I abandoned my wharf in favour of motor transport. In my case my troubles do not start until I get my products to the port of shipment.

It may be thought that I was fortunate in being only 17 miles from Albany compared with the position of a grower at Bridgetown 170 miles away from Fremantle. On the contrary, the advantage has proved to be with the Bridgetown grower, because it costs him less to get his fruit from the packing shed at Bridgetown to the ship's side at Fremantle, 170 miles away, than it cost me to deliver my fruit from my packing shed to the wharf at Albany, a distance of 17 miles. I favour the establishment of a State harbours board, for with only local boards there would be a tendency towards parochialism. Naturally each port would claim that the commodities available should be handled by it. There would be too much competition. We require to have ports for the country, and we should not endeavour to run the country merely for the benefit of the ports. I am definitely against the present port zone system, which is based on one factor only—railway mileage. Our object must be to provide export facilities at the lowest possible cost.

With a sound port policy trade will naturally flow to its economic port. On the other hand, I also consider we should have local harbour boards at the more important ports, in addition to the State harbours board. It will be recognised that each port has its local problems, and we must be careful to build up a sound policy of decentralisation.

When we set up a State harbours board, we must ensure that it is, in fact, a State harbours board and not a Swan River harbour board. It is interesting to note what is done in other countries. In South Africa for instance, all forms of transport are controlled by the Railways and Harbours Administration. After the last elections held in that Dominion, a Minister for Transport was appointed. Unfortunately, I have not seen any report from South Africa since that appointment was made, and I do not know what changes were introduced after that change was effected. I have a copy of the report issued by a Royal Commission of transport which carried out investigation in Queensland. The report is dated 1937. The recommendations of that body are so much to the point that I will read portions of them—

It will be apparent from our review of the particular ports and their problems that the question of port control called for attention early in our inquiry. We heard voluminous evidence about it. Many witnesses suggested that some co-ordination was necessary and much evidence was directed to the point whether ports and harbours should be brought under State control.

The system of control by Harbour Board was established as far back as 1892 by the McIlwraith Government, when it was stated by the Premier (Sir Thomas McIlwraith) that the centralised system of administration previously operating had failed.

In those ports now under the control of Harbour Boards the evidence was strongly in favour of the retention of that form of administration, which, on the whole, has worked satisfactorily.

In most cases the chairman of the Harbour Board is a prominent business man and the members are the representatives of various interests in the district served by the ports, with Government representation.

That Harbour Boards generally have rendered good service cannot be disputed, as their members have been imbued with an earnest desire to develop their ports to the best advantage; but some ports have reached a stage when their interest burden has become such that they are finding it difficult to carry on. Particularly is this so in the case of Rockhampton, which at the 31st December last owed £250,641 in interest, and had a total indebtedness of £772,872.

Then the report goes on to state—

The Commission has had no evidence to warrant a recommendation for any drastic change of administration of those ports and harbours not now controlled by boards, with the exception of Brisbane, which is efficiently administered but which may benefit from a change of control. Everything points to the fact that the Governor-in-Council (through the Harbours and Marine Department) is exercising proper

control of those ports. Moreover, the evidence also shows that the Harbour Board's administration in almost every case is efficient, but that between two boards there has been a contest for trade at the expense of their revenues, which contest should be terminated; that more co-operation among Harbour Boards is desirable to prevent the unnecessary duplication of costly plant where one set of equipment can be used to serve two or more ports; and that one board may be spending more on river improvements than its facility is worth.

Defects in the Harbour Board system may, however, be remedied by giving to a central authority a measure of control of the boards' activities.

Actually there is no proper scope for the intervention of a transport co-ordination authority, as such, as its real function is to co-ordinate and ration conflicting services of different kinds. If the co-ordination of shipping services with that of the railways were contemplated, the position would be otherwise.

We recommend that the present system of harbour board administration be allowed to continue, subject to the proposed central control, not only of capital outlay on the construction of harbour works, but also of revenue expenditure on maintenance. This would ensure that unnecessary work would not be undertaken out of revenue funds that should be utilised for repayments to the Government and would tend to more careful control of capital expenditure.

We recommend, therefore, that a Central Ports and Harbours Authority be established. The constitution of this central authority is primarily one for the Government to determine. It may be, however, that a suitable body would comprise three or five members, including a harbours engineer.

The function of this authority should be to control and co-ordinate the activities of the various harbour boards and to administer the harbours and ports now operated by the Treasury.

I am inclined to endorse that recommendation, which I regard as most applicable to Western Australia. In New South Wales, in 1936, the Maritime Services Board took over the control of the ports there and also assumed control of the Sydney Harbour Trust. Thus the whole of the boards there are controlled by one authority, with local advisory boards at the more important ports of Newcastle and Port Kembla. In Victoria we have the Melbourne Harbour Trust, one of the most efficient organisations in Australia. There is also the Geelong Harbour Board. Four years ago I had the pleasure of being the guest of the members of the latter board. They asked me what sort of control we had in Western Australia, and I told them. Their reply was, "Efficient administration in those circumstances is quite impossible." The outer ports in Victoria

are controlled by the Government. I venture to suggest that Victoria has much to gain from the creation of a Victorian harbours board controlling all ports. In South Australia the control of all ports was taken over by the South Australian Harbours Board in 1913. That body is also a very efficient organisation. Before the war it had paid £1,100,000 into Consolidated Revenue. Members know what is the relative position in Western Australia. Now we come to a very important question of financing our ports. In 1929 a Commonwealth committee appointed to inquire into transport facilities in Australia reported as follows:—

Main ports at capital cities show an annual profit of about £500,000, most of which enhances State revenues. Minor ports of the mainland States make an annual loss of about £490,000 which is met from State revenues.

About 30 per cent. of the overseas trade is carried out at the main ports, and thus overseas trade is at present being taxed to some extent to meet the losses incurred at minor ports. Many minor ports have for a lengthy period shown annual losses, failing to earn even their working costs. Other outports are losing trade on account of motor transport concentrating trade at larger ports.

The tonnage now used in the overseas trade is in excess of requirements.

It is recommended that—

(a) The finances of the main ports should be separated from those of the States, and port charges adjusted to ensure that the annual revenue of the main ports shall be sufficient only to meet working costs, interest and amortisation.

(b) Losses at minor ports should be met from State revenue, and annual losses now incurred be reduced by closing certain ports, and by rail and road transport concentrating the sea-borne trade at other more suitable ports.

In Queensland, a Royal Commission that dealt with the same subject apparently expected, like Sir George Buchanan, that each port should stand on its own feet. I do not consider that policy is right. Because some ports with natural advantages are cheaply managed while others are very costly to administer, I favour the grouping of all ports so that those with natural advantages will assist regarding the losses on other ports not so favourably situated. In New South Wales the profits derived from the Sydney harbour are by no means sufficient to meet the losses on the outports of the State. Four years ago I had the pleasure of lunching with the Minister for Transport in Sydney. I told him I considered the port should be brought under the con-

trol of the Minister for Transport, but the Minister, Colonel Bruzner, did not agree with me and held that the ports were an entirely different proposition from ordinary transport facilities. I do not wonder that a Minister would not want to control all the harbours. The Sydney Harbour, of course, is a beautiful sheet of water with fine facilities, but it is not a cheap harbour to develop. On the other hand, there are 28 outports in New South Wales, and almost without exception they have proved to be a heavy burden on the taxpayers of the State.

In Victoria the Melbourne Harbour Trust has to pay 20 per cent. of its gross receipts into Consolidated Revenue and the amount so paid is, I think, more than sufficient to meet the losses on the other ports of that State. In South Australia all ports are grouped and the loss on one is offset by the profits on others. Of their overseas ports—Port Adelaide, Wallaroo, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln and Thevenard—the last mentioned port is the only one not paying its way. There are 78 outer ports in South Australia. When I was there eight years ago I met the General Manager of the South Australian Harbours Board. I thought it would be extremely interesting to find out how the coastal shipping in that State would stand up against motor transport. When I again met that gentleman four years ago, he greeted me with this statement: "Motor transport is playing up with our coastal shipping." He had a map of South Australia on the wall and pointing to it said, "Wallaroo is here and there is the centre of Yorke Peninsula. It is possible to convey sugar from the works to the centre of the peninsula from Wallaroo by motor at 10s. per ton. He said, "What hope have we of competing with them? I only wish we could close down 60 of our ports." He added, "The trouble is that when we suggest cutting out one of these old worn out jetties, the politicians complain, 'Why cut out something we have had for 50 years?' forgetting the answer, 'We did not have motor transport 50 years ago.'"

I wish now to say a word about the finances of the ports of Western Australia, as I do not think that will be out of place. Let me compare the Fremantle harbour with the Melbourne Harbour Trust where £9,000,000 has been spent, but £4,000,000 has been paid off. At Fremantle, a sum of

£3,400,000 has been spent on the port, and the loan liability in 1939 was shown at £3,407,000, in spite of the fact that the Fremantle Harbour Trust has paid something like £2,300,000 into Consolidated Revenue. When we turn to the port of Albany, we find some interesting information. I have complete figures showing the expenditure on that port. The returns I have indicate that the total expenditure on the port of Albany has been £196,336 from local moneys. The revenue expenditure amounted to £18,596, making a total expenditure of £216,500. In 1938-39, the port was expected to pay interest on £273,000. Some of the items charged to the Albany harbour are very interesting. In connection with the Albany jetty road an expenditure out of revenue in 1859 is charged up as £258 8 2d. Up till 1871, a sum of £6,898 5s. 8d. had been spent on the Albany jetty road. I do not know where that road is. For all I know, it may have started at the causeway, but the amount is still charged up. In 1872, the people of Albany complained because the revenue from the harbour was greater than the expenditure in the whole district. No figures are available as to how much the Government has collected from the Albany harbour. All we know is the every penny spent on the port, plus another £50,000, has been charged to it, and it is expected to pay interest on the total sum.

Here is another interesting item. The expenditure on the Albany-Kalgan River between 1911 and 1913 was £1,400. I could tell members a lot about that expenditure. The work is 16 miles from the Albany harbour. I was chairman of the settlers' association in those days, and was one of those who negotiated with the Government to get the work done. We wanted to use water transport and required that some rock bar should be blasted out of the river. The Public Works Department would not be guided by local experts on the spot, so we who had been miners and knew how to blast rocks. The member for Guildford Midland was Minister for Works at that time. He was at my home, and we had a flying-fox across the river. The Minister had a ride on the flying-fox and when we got him in the middle we said, "There you will stay until you promise to have the work done." When the Minister returned to Perth, he no doubt acted on the principle that a forced promise was not binding.

ing. Another item charged to harbours and rivers is interesting. The Bunbury harbour shows a loan liability of £689,000. The deficiency in 1938-39 was £22,821, and that was the total deficiency of the port for that year. The Geraldton harbour showed a loan liability of £699,000 and a deficit of £32,192. But there is £300,000 worth of wharves under the control of the Railway Department there, and no figures are available as to whether they have shown a profit or a debit. The Albany port shows a loss of £4,809. The jetty showed a profit of £3,000, so there is only a difference of about £1,800. The Swan River shows a loan liability of £400,000, of which the sum of £300,000 was spent in reclamation, and I do not see that Swan River reclamations should be charged to the ports of Western Australia.

Then we have other jetties and works, bridges and plant. It would be interesting to know what we have for a loan liability of £400,000 for our jetties, steamers and plant. When we get our State harbour trust board, I suggest that the loan liability be fixed at a reasonable amount, in view of the enormous sum that has been paid into Consolidated Revenue, and also because no provision has been made in the past for sinking fund. It is absolutely essential that we group the financial ports of Western Australia. Fremantle, the capital port, has almost a monopoly of the import trade, which pays wharfage. The outports handle a large percentage of the exports, which do not pay wharfage. Some of the profits of the capital port should be utilised to reduce the interest against the outports. To keep down the liability in the future, it is essential that all proposed harbour works should be carefully investigated before any expenditure is incurred.

For many years in Parliament the politicians who are able to pull the most strings were able to get their pet railways. When the damage had been done, a Railway Advisory Board was appointed. Its functions are now taken over by the Transport Board. Before any new railways are proposed or approved, that board has to report fully and give an opinion as to whether the expenditure is justified. It is not economy to spend £1,000,000 a year on a port, which would mean an annual expenditure of £50,000, merely to save £5,000 or £10,000 on haulage. I should like to

draw attention to paragraph 549 of the Buchanan report—

A feature of Australian port development in the past has been the development of ports in unsuitable situations, and to neglect various fine natural harbours where no engineering works were required other than construction of wharfs. To give examples:—Rockhampton, on the Fitzroy River, should not have been developed, with a harbour like that of Gladstone only a few miles distant. It is difficult to understand, again, why a port should have been created at Newcastle with the natural harbour of Port Stephens next door. And, finally, in Western Australia, it would be cheaper to build railways to Albany, rather than spend the money necessary to develop Bunbury into a first-class port.

In the report of the Royal Commission in Queensland, a lot of space is devoted to a suggestion for the closing down of Rockhampton in favour of Gladstone. Its members were a judge of the Supreme Court, the Commissioner of Main Roads and a business director. In 1939, a ship called at Albany. I met the captain, but do not know his name. He had distinguished service in the last war and, amongst other things, was honorary A.D.C. to His Majesty the King. I mentioned this controversy between Gladstone and Rockhampton to the captain, and the fact that there was no shipping man on the Royal Commission in Queensland. He said, "It is a great pity there was no shipping man on the commission because he would have recommended the closing down of Rockhampton and the development of Gladstone." When I travelled to Brisbane some four years ago, I met a Queensland member of the House of Representatives, who said, "Our trouble is that we have too many ports. Gladstone will gradually swallow Rockhampton. It would be better for them to realise that now and close down Rockhampton and develop Gladstone."

Last year I had the pleasure of meeting the leading port engineer and the leading port administrator of Australia in company with the leading railwayman of Australia. They were on a visit to Western Australia. I previously met port men in Sydney and Melbourne. They told me they had examined the ports of Queensland. I said, "How is the Rockhampton-Gladstone controversy getting on?" They said that that did not concern them, but that the logical thing was to close down Rockhampton and concentrate the trade in Gladstone. A few weeks ago

I met an important Commonwealth official, a former Minister of Queensland. I said, "I hope I am not treading on your corns if I refer to the Gladstone-Rockhampton controversy." He said, "No, the sooner they cut out Rockhampton and develop Gladstone, the better." In Newcastle we have another tragedy. In 1919, one of the problems which Lord Jellicoe had to report upon was the congestion in the Sydney Harbour. In his report he recommended the development of Port Stephens as a naval port. I had the pleasure of meeting two gentlemen who were with Sir Leopold Saville when he inspected Port Stephens. One of them said to me, "Port Stephens is where there should be the dock." The trouble with Port Stephens was that it resembled Albany in that it had no engineering works. Newcastle as a site for a dock was, they said, a hopeless proposition, and so the dock had to go to Sydney.

When I was at Newcastle, I spent an interesting time with the harbour master. He told me that but for the B.I.P., Newcastle would not be a seaport today. Newcastle is not used by producers because they find it is more economical to send their produce to Sydney rather than mess around with Newcastle. The harbour master had a chart of Newcastle in front of him. He pointed to a bend in the river and said, "We wanted to dredge the bank away to get rid of that bend in order to facilitate navigation. We dredged and dredged, and finally had to put a row of sheet piling around the bank and reclaim it because the soil fell in as soon as we dredged." We must be careful when we consider any proposal for harbour works. It is very easy to throw away money on the construction of harbours. When one is up against Nature, one never knows how one will interfere with what Nature has done. I should like to point out, in conclusion, that our objective must be to have a complete and national system of transport which will keep down our total cost to the minimum so that our producers may compete in the markets of the world.

We have to consider the problem as one big State problem and not as a series of local problems. I repeat, it is not economy to spend a million on harbours, which means an annual expenditure of at least £50,000, in order to save £5,000 or £10,000 in railage. We have to consider all problems of transport as a whole and which of the various

means of transport is capable of doing useful work for the benefit of the community. The golden age of railways has passed, but railways under wise control are still our main means of land transport. Motor transport has capabilities of useful service for the community, but not unlimited service. Air transport has come to stay. We want a policy which will encourage more coastal shipping, but the trouble is that the workers in the various activities seem to consider that their particular job is the end instead of the means to some other end. For instance, the railway mind is inclined to think that a port exists for no other purpose but to act as a feeder for the railways. Some railway men would almost go to the extreme of cutting out motor transport, while some motormen would advocate that motor vehicles be allowed unrestricted competition with the railways. Our aim must be to have each of the various means of transport working where it can best serve the interests of the community as a whole, and to achieve that object we must see ports in their proper perspective, acting as efficient links between the various means of land transport on the one hand and sea transport on the other. It is with that object that I move my motion.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

MOTION—MEAT SUPPLY.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [6.2]: I move:

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the supply of meat to the people in the metropolitan area, and its disposal, with particular reference to frozen meat; and to make such recommendations as the committee thinks fit.

In submitting the motion to the House I am actuated by two reasons; the first is the recent experience of consumers in the metropolitan area who had to purchase frozen meat and the second is my desire to have an inquiry made into the method of supplying meat to the metropolitan market, with a view of ascertaining whether some improvements can be made that will ensure the quality of the meat supplied and a reasonable price to the producer and to the consumer. While the motion only asks for the appointment of a Select Committee, I would much prefer the appointment of a Royal Commission, because the matter is not a

small one. It is an involved and very big question and consequently it could be dealt with better by a Royal Commission taking evidence on oath and conducting its proceedings in public so that the whole question could be thoroughly investigated in all its aspects.

Members will probably recall a motion that was discussed in this Chamber last year dealing with this question. It was then mentioned by the Minister for Lands that it was undesirable to publish figures of the quantities of meat available. There is no desire on my part to have that phase of the matter investigated; if it is desirable to keep such matters secret at present I do not want them disclosed. My desire is that we shall investigate thoroughly our present method, which has been in vogue for the past 50 years or so, in order to ascertain whether we can devise better methods of handling the stock for the metropolitan market. One reason that actuated me in taking this action is that within recent months the Minister for Lands stated certain representations had been made to him with a view to enlarging the Midland Junction saleyards. That is another matter that could be investigated on this proposed inquiry, because I take it that any additions to the saleyards would be such as to serve for another 20 or 30 years. Further, it may be possible for us to obtain financial assistance from the Commonwealth and therefore, before incurring such expenditure, I hope full inquiry will be made.

I am aware that the Minister has appointed a committee to go into this matter of the meat supply for the metropolitan market, but that committee is not taking evidence on oath and the evidence submitted to it will not be available to the general public, both consumer and producer. I do not know who the members of the committee are, except one, and I have not the slightest doubt that they will thoroughly investigate the matter and that the conclusions they come to will be their considered opinion, but in order to carry weight I think any evidence tendered should be published, so that the public may be aware of it. As I said, the present method of selling our stock at the Midland Junction market has been in vogue for many years. One of its great disadvantages is that the Railway Department experiences some difficulty in transporting the stock to the one point practically between midday on Tuesday

and 8 a.m. on Wednesday. Any enlargement of that area to meet the increased number of stock will enhance the difficulties of the Railway Department. It necessarily follows that in order to deal satisfactorily with all this traffic the department must have a large number of stock trucks, which for the rest of the week are possibly standing idle. That is uneconomical. If we could devise a system whereby the stock could be brought down not on the one day but on each day of the week, obviously the railways would have an easier problem to solve and would not require such a large number of stock trucks.

The Minister for Justice: Do you not think that some of the stock could be killed in the country?

Mr. SEWARD: I am only starting my case. I probably agree with the Minister on that point. Another of the great disadvantages of our present system is the fluctuating market; neither the producer nor the consumer is satisfied. Some of the stock, probably owing to congestion on the railways and for other reasons, arrives at the stockyard at midday on Wednesday, when the majority of it has been sold and possibly most of the buyers have got their requirements. This late stock, even though it may be of better quality than that sold earlier in the day, is then sold at probably shillings below its value, and consequently one hears the producers complaining that owing to one reason or another—excessive yarding or late arrival—their stock has been sold at much below its value. During another week, possibly owing to wet weather in the country preventing the loading of stock, meat is in short supply at the market and is sold at an increased price of 3s., 4s., or 5s. a head, and accordingly the producer benefits. But what of the consumer? He is hit by those higher prices, yet he does not derive any benefit when there is an over-supply. Consequently under our present system nobody is satisfied and it is high time we investigated it with the object of bringing about a change.

What particular system can we adopt, it might be asked? One suggestion, repeatedly made by many people, is the system of selling on the hooks; that is, sending the stock to the abattoirs direct, having it slaughtered and graded, and then having the price fixed by appraisers according to the grade. If such a scheme were adopted it would obviously solve many of the Railway Depart-

ment's difficulties, because instead of sending the stock to Midland Junction on the one day—Wednesday—it could be rationed out and different districts could send their stock to the abattoirs direct on different days of the week. This would avoid taking the stock off the pastures on Monday or early on Tuesday morning and sending it to Midland Junction to be put in the yard, stay there all day, and after having been sold, removed and killed late on Thursday or Friday without having had anything to eat from Monday. That depreciates the value of the stock, whereas under the system I have outlined the stock, when slaughtered, would be in better condition. The producer would get a better price for his stock and the consumer would be assured of better quality meat. The railways would certainly have a much easier task.

I know there are difficulties involved in this particular method. I know that some men, closely connected with the meat trade for many years, tell us that the system cannot be worked in this State. Others, who have also been connected with the meat trade, say that it will work. That is one of the main reasons why I should like an exhaustive public inquiry to be held, so that we can have this particular question settled. Obviously, if the system is feasible it certainly will benefit both the producer and the consumer. We already have a similar system in operation in the Albany district. The Albany Freezing Works receive consignments of lamb, mutton and pig which they kill and grade, paying the purchaser the appraised price on the books. That probably caters well for the requirements of the lower Great Southern district. I remind members that the time has come for us to consider the future. Only a few days ago the Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, stated that if inland killing centres should be established Commonwealth finance would be available only to those who killed for export as well as for local consumption. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that in making money available the Commonwealth Government will only consider such inland centres. To protect our interests and so that we may participate in any finances which the Commonwealth Government may make available for this work, we should get busy and determine whether this is a feasible project or not and, if it is, where the inland freezing works should be established.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SEWARD: I was drawing attention to the need for conducting this inquiry so that we may be ready with plans for the introduction of inland killing centres after the war, in the hope that such places would be selected having regard to their suitability and not merely because some over-zealous locality put forward an application. Also we might combine the export killing with the home consumption killing and therefore interest the Commonwealth Government in assisting us to finance this venture. That concludes the reasons that I have for moving this motion as far as improving the system of marketing meat is concerned from the producers and consumers' points of view. By the adoption of some better system the increasingly big problem that we set our railways will be removed because of the orderly transport of our fat stock to the killing centres and, in addition, the producer will be able to get his stock to the market in better condition and so secure a more regular and better price. Also, the consumer will be assured of a better quality article.

I think that on these counts alone this inquiry would be fully justified, but there remains the second part of my motion. It refers to the quality of the frozen meat that was recently supplied to the market. As is well known, of recent months the market, by reason of the fact that sufficient fresh meat was apparently not available, was supplied with frozen meat and the butchers had to take a certain percentage of their requirements in that form. On the eve of his departure from this State the Meat Controller, Mr. Tonkin, published a statement in the Press in which the following appeared:—

I understand that some criticism has been levelled at the quality of the frozen meat released, and that some retail butchers have refused to handle it. It is amazing that this should occur, particularly as the meat industry of Australia has been built up and still depends on its export trade in frozen meat.

I have no hesitation in saying that the frozen meat industry of Australia was not built up on the type of meat supplied to the metropolitan area in the last few weeks. In some instances it was black, tough meat with no fat attached to it. Had that meat been supplied to the United Kingdom, or any other country to which we send our frozen meat in times of peace, no purchaser would have come back for a second issue of it if other meat had been available.

The Minister for Justice: Did you discuss the position with the Deputy Controller in Western Australia?

Mr. SEWARD: No, but he read my motion and, as a result, it subsequently reached my ears that he wanted to know if I would withdraw it. I did not know to whom he spoke, but whoever it was seemed to indicate that I would not withdraw the motion, and that prompted his statement. I do not know whether Mr. Tonkin saw this meat, but I presume, as Controller of Meat in Australia, it is his duty to find out exactly what meat is supplied to the consuming public.

Mr. Watts: He should have been made to eat some of it!

Mr. SEWARD: If only a few complaints had been made one might feel inclined to let the matter pass, because various complaints—some of which were not justified—have been made right from the inception of the rationing of meat. Most people realise that if we have to supply extra meat to the United Kingdom, they should be ready to fall in with any necessary plans to reach such a desirable objective. But, as I will point out directly, the plans that were made to put meat into the freezers last year were not guaranteed to get the best meat available. Further on in Mr. Tonkin's statement we find this—

Those who are critical of the frozen meat trade are doing a disservice to Australia.

Here I take the liberty to disagree flatly with Mr. Tonkin. As a matter of fact, I think it is our duty to rivet public attention on such a matter because, far from doing a disservice we are doing a service to Australia. We are pointing out that meat that has been supplied to the market is not up to the standard on which the Australian frozen meat industry has been built. We may be drawing public attention to it at a disservice to some of those who are in control, and who should ensure that the public get supplies of good meat. But that particular point does not interest me very much. The complaints made were not few in number. Everyone who had anything to do with this meat complained about it. There must, therefore, have been something wrong with it. I have not had much opportunity to investigate the matter, but I did make a few inquiries and they confirmed the opinion I already had, namely, that the meat liberated

on the metropolitan market was not purchased for the purpose of freezing and subsequent release for consumption as frozen meat. It was bought for dehydration. I know that it consisted mainly of old ewes bought up last year at 3s. or 4s. a head, and members can imagine the type of mutton it was. The meat was put into the freezers for the purpose of dehydration.

The Minister for Justice: What is the idea of using inferior meat for dehydration?

Mr. SEWARD: The best grade of meat is not suitable for dehydration because the fat boils down or disappears. My advice is that only the poorest quality meat is fit for dehydration.

The Minister for Justice: It is very inferior meat, then?

Mr. Mann: It is common market practice.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. That is the particular type of meat, I understand, that was released. As proof of my statement that this should not have been the only meat available, I recall the discussion that took place in this House last year on a motion moved by the member for Beverley. The Minister for Agriculture spoke during the course of the debate, and quoted from a letter which he had written to the Minister for Commerce giving utterance to the general opinion held throughout the sheepowners of this State. I quote his remarks—

It is considered that in this State it would be desirable to explore every avenue to have all suitable export types treated for export, so that the large amounts of mutton which are in the country could be used to better advantage for civilian requirements.

Last year was a very good one and large numbers of fat sheep were available at shearing time. The member for Beverley strongly stressed that point in his speech. He said it was desirable that that particular type of meat should, as far as possible, be killed and put into the freezing chambers in order that it would be available to the consuming public in the autumn of this year when the supplies of fat meat are less. But, as the Minister pointed out, that was not done. The Minister, further on in his speech, said—

With the price of ewe and wether mutton as it is at present (2½d. per lb. and falling) it is likely that much fat sheep of these types—which is in effect available—will not be forwarded by producers owing to the low returns likely.

That is exactly what happened. The producers found themselves in a great difficulty. They had the sheep in good condition and knew that if they did not sell them they would probably deteriorate through the summer which, unfortunately, proved to be exceptionally long. Owing to the mess-up in connection with the prices and the difficulty of getting any fixed price for this particular type of mutton, they were forced to hold their stock on the farms. As a matter of fact, the Minister mentioned in his speech a conversation he had with Mr. Farrell. This is what he had to say—

I am advised by Mr. Farrell, telephoning from Melbourne on Sunday, that he has every reason to believe that the United Kingdom will include mutton in its next contract for meat, at a price favourable to mutton producers.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

That was the position. It was not done at the particular time. The owners did not know what price they would get for their mutton. They certainly did not want to send it to the market and get the price for dehydration mutton. As a consequence they held it for so long that the summer was far gone and the sheep had lost all their condition, with the result that a great deal of that type of mutton was lost to the consumer. That was the position last year. Had that mutton been available at a reasonable price and put into the freezing chambers the public would have got a good article, the producer would have got a reasonable price, and there would not have been the dissatisfaction that has arisen by reason of the poor quality of mutton supplied recently.

This poor quality stuff was dehydration mutton. I understand it was bought at 3s. to 4s. per sheep and sold to the butchers at 5½d. to 6d. per lb. What the consumers paid for it, I do not know. The increase of price, of course, was brought about by the freezing charges which I believe are about one-sixteenth of a penny per lb. per week. The mutton had been in the freezers for a long time and the charges had mounted up. This points to the necessity for ensuring that only the best type of mutton goes into the freezers. Mutton of the best grade might be put into the freezers, but it comes out a grade lower. If it goes in as first grade, it comes out as second grade. Therefore we should put only the best stuff in and not permit this other poor mutton to be frozen.

There is another point. Butchers were particularly perturbed in their handling of this frozen meat by reason of the fact that they were not given any instructions as to how it ought to be handled. With a man accustomed to handling frozen meat, it can be done efficiently. The meat needs to be thawed out. A butcher gets a frozen carcass and it might take one, two or three days to dispose of it. If it is being passed in and out of the butcher's freezer for two or three days, by the time he serves the last cut it is almost a black jelly. A bigger butcher, however, can dispose of a large quantity quickly. He can cut up a carcass and sell it quickly and generally it is of better quality than the meat sold by a smaller butcher. The butchers should have been instructed how the meat should be handled or treated before they retailed it to the consuming public.

Those are the reasons that actuated me in moving the motion. I hope that a Select Committee will be appointed or if the Minister prefers it, a Royal Commission, so that the whole matter can be thoroughly investigated in the public light, and particularly that growers might have made available to them any evidence on the selling on the hoof principle. They are interested in it. I have been inaugurated at Albany, and growers want to know why it cannot be adopted throughout the State. It would be beneficial to the growers and I believe would also be beneficial to the consumers. I hope that the Minister will approve of an inquiry, and even broaden it to inquiry by Royal Commission instead of by Select Committee.

MR. MANN (Beverley): I am glad that the member for Pingelly has tabled the motion and I hope that the House will decide in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission. There is tremendous scope for such an inquiry. First of all I should consider the distribution of meat in the city area. Then it should consider the killing. I think the time has arrived when we should provide for killing in the country and for refrigerated space on the railway to bring the meat to the city. Take the position at the Midland market. Often the stock trains run late. I can speak from experience because I worked for a stock firm and I know the condition of the market. A breakdown might occur and some of the sheep be sold in the morning and others in

the afternoon, and in those circumstances the prices often vary.

If a farmer happens to bring a piece of mutton to the city for a friend he is often told what wonderful mutton it is. The reason is obvious. The farmer kills a sheep and allows the carcase to hang overnight. Very few of the farmers have refrigerators, but they keep the meat in a cellar or in some cool spot. The sheep that are sent to the Midland market, however, may have been travelled 20 miles and then been trained 200 miles. Then they are left at Midland and often they will not take water. Thirsty sheep may be taken to water and they may refuse to drink. The result is that the mutton is parched and dry before it is sold, and is not to be compared with mutton killed in the country. In the United States of America, the sheep are killed in the country, put into refrigerated vans and sent to the town. In the same way our metropolitan area should be supplied. Therefore I say that the killing part of the business is definitely one for investigation.

The other question is that of selling on the hook. Sheep intended for the export trade are taken from the farm to Robb's Jetty and killed and graded there. A question associated with that of selling on the hook has regard to the offal—the liver, heart and so forth. At Robb's Jetty all hearts, livers and brains are frozen in lumps and in that form shipped overseas. I cannot see why the same principle cannot be adopted at Midland Junction.

The Minister for Mines: Who owns the offal?

Mr. MANN: It is sold with the carcase. Why cannot that system be applied to Midland Junction? Stock agents cannot control the movement of the market, though a grower is not permitted to order a truck for sheep except through a stock agent for fear of glutting the market. Consequently this week there might be 20,000 sheep of heavy quality coming into the market on a very hot day, and prices will fall. This might be followed by a cooler week.

Mr. Seward: Or by wet weather.

Mr. MANN: That is so. Thus the market fluctuates all the time. It only needs two or three big buyers to hold off and they can handle the market as they like. If the hook system were adopted, killing would be carried on constantly all the week and strikes would be avoided because the position of the slaughterman, who wants to

work as much as he can, would be improved. Thus the work would be distributed over the whole week. This is a point that ought to be investigated.

I honestly believe that the Government is going to be faced with the same position with regard to mutton in the city as prevailed last year. A lot of sheep will be coming down as soon as the wool is off and by about November Midland will have a fairly heavy market. The general opinion in the country is that by February a very difficult position will have arisen with regard to mutton supplies in the city. If we get a heavy storm in January, the rain will do good by replenishing water supplies, but it will spoil any reserve of dry feed and farmers will not have the feed to keep the stock in condition. So I say to the Government, "Watch your step very carefully in regard to future supplies." I agree with the member for Pingelly about the black stuff that was sold to consumers. Dehydration mutton is an old type of ewe or four-tooth wether.

I attended the Subiaco sale last Friday and saw a buyer purchasing any type of cow that showed any meat at all and paying £9 or £10 per head. I made inquiries and was told that he was buying dairy cows in milk and killing them. For the last three years the Midland market has been killing at a terrific rate some of the world's best heifers, and the consequence is that this State is going to be faced with an insufficiency of cows. According to this morning's newspaper, lack of manpower is one reason why dairy production has fallen off, but another reason is the killing off of heifers that should be the breeders of the future. Some control should be exercised over the slaughter of heifers.

I hope the House will agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission. Whether the inquiry be made by Select Committee or Royal Commission, it should be representative of the three parties in Parliament. We do not want civil servants appointed to it. To me it seems that the State is being run at present by civil servants. If we had a committee or commission representative of the three parties, we would be in a position to call the requisite evidence and get full information on the questions that are involved. Even to-day, without that power, and without any committee appointed, it is to be hoped that this matter will be taken into consideration. I strongly urge the ap-

pointment of a Royal Commission. This is not a party question, but one which concerns all of us.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

MOTION—POST-WAR ACTIVITIES.

As to Development of Tourist Traffic.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.2]: I move—

That in spite of recent somewhat gloomy prophecies as to the State's future, this House suggests to the Government that it should include as part of its post-war activities a concerted plan to make Western Australia a tourists' paradise, and Perth the Paris of the Southern Seas.

It may not be known to members that just outside San Francisco there is a large notice reading, "Welcome to San Francisco. This is the best climate in the world, next to that of Perth, Western Australia." Very few people in Australia know that the notice is there; but it represents a very gratifying fact and shows that in the outside world, or at least in some places, it is known that we have this splendid asset. Very few democracies in the outside world have had the decency to stress the knowledge that we in Perth enjoy the best climate in the world. The world at large knows nothing about us. In addition to our climate we have, since developments during the last few years in aviation, the fact that our country has become suddenly accessible. Formerly we were, so to speak, part of the other world to the great world at large. We were then at least a month away by a good steamship. But day after day the European and American worlds are being brought to within three or four days of Fremantle. All those things must lead us to alter our conception of Western Australia in the scheme of things.

The third factor is known to all members, that just before the outbreak of this war a statement was made in "The West Australian" to the effect that the greatest industry in Canada was not the wheat industry, nor some other industry that we know of, but the tourist industry, which brought in the biggest money of all. The fourth point I wish to stress is that the City of Durban, though I have not been there for some years, has been able to state that it had no rates thanks to tourists from Johannesburg and other parts of the African con-

tinent. The fifth point I would make is that there have been some rather gloomy forebodings expressed recently as regards Western Australia in the matter of ordinary legitimate industries and big manufactures.

No doubt all those problems will be handled in the best possible way; but when they are all handled there still will be perhaps some difficulty for us in reaching that prosperous position in which we would like to see our State, the position we held in the good times. If those five points are accepted, it is easy to make out a case for the early appointment, after the cessation of the war, of a tourist director and a tourist office. After all, we have for a hundred years or so been sending wealth out of Western Australia, and the time has surely come when we may try to get back some of that wealth, and by an expenditure of money in reasonable and sound directions bring back a large income to Western Australia, over and above all the things we are planning now to do and will do after the war.

We know that the whole world caters for tourists, but still we have an excellent opportunity in the sense of our very small population against the large population outside. To make my point a little clearer, nobody will censure Western Australians, when their long leave comes or an opportunity for a tour of the world presents itself, for exercising their right. But if half the people in this State now were to take a ticket for a world tour, they would be the merest handful compared with the citizens of the countries they would visit. When we bear in mind that there is only one Western Australian in every 4,000 people of the world, we see how large a number there is to draw upon to visit us if we go into the question thoroughly. What are the attractions that Western Australia offers to the outside world? In the first place we are, as I have said, accessible. For anybody leaving Europe or America it would be, in the new conditions of transport, not difficult to visit Western Australia. We, at the other end of the world to them, would be somewhat attractive to start with, providing that the work of the tourist director and his staff receives attention in those countries from which we desire to attract tourists.

Having got that fact in our minds, that there will be an urge in other countries to come much further distances than formerly, because the world has become shrunken, we

see that the people of other countries may come to consider the attractions Western Australia has to offer as greater than those of other parts of the world. In the first place, the factor of climate, which means little to us, means everything to the people I am thinking of. Curiously enough it happened last week that I read in a large English paper called "The Manchester Guardian," an article discussing the South of France, the vaunted pleasure resort of Europe for the very rich people of the world. That article quoted a chemist from Cannes who stated that half the people left the place in much worse health than they arrived in, and that the conditions there were shocking; that the climate was bad, and that the hotels were badly run and gave very poor value for money.

In Western Australia we have perfect climatic conditions for most of the year, and the fact that we produce a great many excellent foods and wines and beers gives a very good start for somebody who wants to come away and enjoy a trip. Partly with Government money expended through the tourist bureau and partly with funds supplied by private enterprise, which would benefit from a large tourist population, this country could be made very attractive. Private enterprise would benefit greatly from the bringing of a large tourist population to Western Australia. On the Government side the duty of the Tourist Bureau, besides advertising Western Australia's attractions, would be to indicate suitable centres to which we desire tourists to come, centres having first-class hotels run not necessarily by the Government but built and managed under supervision. We could not have tourists interfering with our ordinary life, but we must face the question in a sensible way. A great deal, of course, would depend on choosing the right man to run the show as tourist director. He would require a very large salary, and he ought to have worldwide experience, if such a man can be found. His job would be, apart from other things, to give much better utterance to a number of the things which I am endeavouring to express now. All equipment would have to be the very best that money can buy.

This motion is not a sentimental one, but one of hard cash. In London, where I lived as a student, there was an honest firm which advertised, "It is your money we want." That is the position as regards this tourist motion. It is the hardest cash motion that

has come before the House this session, and will be recognised as such if my intentions are correctly conveyed to members. The tourist director would point out in other directions the amenities which we can supply as well as any other country. If things are done, they must be done on the very best scale. One thing we should do is to get hold of the Commonwealth Government and have a very straight talk to it, have a real show-down with Commonwealth Ministers after the war as to how far they are to permit themselves to be influenced by powerful interests in eastern Australia as regards the development of our secondary industries. If from these hard conversations with Canberra we find that our success in this connection is going to be very limited in the matter of secondary industries, we shall have a right to go to the Commonwealth Ministers and tell them frankly that we are determined to have Western Australia developed into a country with a big population and therefore must expect from the Commonwealth, for this purpose amongst others, those large sums of money which are needed to attract a large section of the world's population to spend their time with us, with the ultimate object of obtaining a large sprinkling of oversea visitors who would become enamoured of conditions here and would settle in Western Australia, thus adding to this continent's population.

The motion mentions the word "Paris," which seems to have something laughable about it. The city of Paris, however, has a large population which can live very comfortably from the profits of the tourist trade. My endeavour is to ensure that the assets we have will be used in an intelligent manner to get revenue from tourists. Having imbued the Government with the idea of building up some first-class hotels where they are wanted, we would next go into the transport question. Today this is a little work-a-day State battling along with wheat and wool and a little bit of manufacturing and a little bit of fruit—battling in a humble way, unknown to the world—and we have to be content with very small, humble conveniences. But if we are prepared to engage a first-class director who is a world expert and understands the tourist traffic we will be able to put a twist of a very different nature on all our activities. There is room for us to modernise our railway system from Adelaide to Perth, to improve our shipping

facilities, boost up our airways and improve the east-west road by bituminising it all the way.

We could improve our parks and put our electric cables underground, and have proper streets instead of streets in which there are poles and bits of wire everywhere for us to fall over so that the place looks like a wild-west town. We could do all that with a very easy conscience from the financial viewpoint if we knew that there was a prospect of an influx of tourists who would bring lots of money to spend, and many of whom would settle here and add to our population. If that policy were adopted we would create here an industry such as they have in Canada, the greatest industry in the Dominion. I challenge anyone in this House to say there is any State in Australia that could offer similar conditions to ours, if we were prepared to set to work and consider the development of the tourist industry as part of our post-war reconstruction plans. We must next consider what attractions we can offer to tourists when they come here. Of course, details would be left to the director but, if it is our intention to pass this motion with a view to its being put into effect, we should consider a few matters that might well be looked into.

I have suggestions, some of which might be rejected as quite futile, but I offer them for consideration. I suggest that the entertainment question should be considered. I do not refer to picture shows; they are available everywhere at all times. I think that when we advertise in America and Europe urging people to come to Western Australia, which has the best climate in the world, we might add that it has the best orchestra in the Southern Seas. That would be worth putting to those who like that sort of thing. We might also have one or two good jazz bands, thus catering for people that like that form of music. Here we have a climate admirably suited to open-air arenas. When I was in San Francisco on my way to the last war I went to a place called Oaklands, where there was a beautiful amphitheatre. It had no roof and was something like the old Roman theatres. In that arena I heard the violinist Kreisler play to an enormous audience. It was a beautiful night, such as we have in Western Australia. The situation was ideal and the arena was very cheaply constructed.

If we are going to do this thing properly we must spend money and in that way we shall get money back. That is something we could do. We are a musical race. The few orchestras that exist are highly praised. Western Australia must have one of the best, if this scheme is to come to fruition. Money is worth spending on such an object. Then there is the question of what people like to see. We might cater not entirely for the wealthy people of the world but for "Mum, Dad and the family" during the long service leave which I hope all workers will be granted after the war. Even if there were only a certain number in the category we could cater for them. They would not live in a very high way but they would constitute a big increase in the population during their stay.

During this war business people and others have felt the effect of the presence of tourists. In the old days we used to say, "Join the Navy and see the world." Our tourists of the last few years have been in uniform but they have had a great effect on the business of Western Australia. One has only to speak to the taxi-drivers about that and also to the owners of other businesses. Their presence has led to an increase in the note issue. The member for Murchison could give us accurate information on that but I think that it has risen to £150,000,000. When these tourists leave us we shall begin to feel the draught again! Experts in this House have told us that the future of our various industries will be difficult. Here is a new industry which, if handled properly, will come to the top and consequently the subject is one we cannot afford to neglect.

Returning to suggestions for the entertainment of visitors to this State: Having been assured of a comfortable trip here and reasonable accommodation and good provisions, including the best beers and wines if they want them, they would expect to see in this country something different from what they have been accustomed to seeing elsewhere. They do not want to see the old things all over again but to witness something new. What can we offer them? That is the question we have to consider.

Mr. McLarty: A trip to the Zoo!

Mr. NORTH: In that connection I must confess that Toronga Park is superior to anything we have. As a matter of fact I had a note here to remind me to refer to

the zoo. I have in mind what we might do if we had some really enthusiastic visitors. It might be possible for us to show them our industries. I do not mean that, after having travelled on a rattling train to Kalgoorlie, they should then be invited to go down a mine, although no doubt that would be very interesting. What I propose is that the Tourist Bureau should take over a first-class sheep station and a farm and an orchard and provide on them first-class accommodation for visitors.

Mr. Marshall: With a first-class debt attached to them!

Mr. NORTH: We would get our money back. If we did that and put good accommodation on these places we could invite people to spend a week or so there to see how our orchards, farms and stations are run. They should be taken to such places in the very best transport and given an idea of our prospects in this country. I see the Minister for Native Affairs looking at me. Surely he could dig up something fairly good in regard to the aborigines, if he knew that we were organising the thing properly. Of course, this would begin in a very small way and grow like a snowball. I should think the Minister could organise a native camp, not too near the city but with excellent means of transport thereto. No matter how far away it was the camp could be reached easily and quickly in these days and the Minister could arrange a first-class corroboree at suitable intervals. I remember seeing one when I was a child and I have never forgotten it. Nothing impressed me so much. People from the other side of the world would expect us to show them something different from what they had been accustomed to see.

Then I think we could look up the chief historical events connected with exploration. There are a number of places in Western Australia in which interesting events occurred. Those spots could be beautified. Where possible, water could be laid on and arrangements could be made to take visitors to such areas. Later, if money began to roll in, we might establish little halls on these sites and screen technicolour pictures of the events relating to the particular places. Again, there is the matter of sport. We have great sports in Australia. I do not need to dwell on that matter. Anyone coming across the world would enjoy our racing and trotting fixtures. We have

a lot to do, however, to make our beaches and other pleasure resorts attractive to tourists. If we suggested doing that today we would be charged with extravagance. In these days the economic outlook is still so—I was going to say "stone-age," but it is more true to say that we have passed the stone-age and are now in the "stony-broke" age. Nowadays if we want a road we must say it is a military road.

If we want to run a comfortable train quickly to the other States we do not say we want to do it because we desire to have a jolly fine trip from Fremantle to Melbourne, but we say we want it for military reasons. That is the argument used for a standard gauge. We can safely consider these matters from the tourist point of view, however, because we can assure ourselves that other fellows will help us to pay for the schemes. I thought that to put into effect some of the proposals I have in mind we would have to amend the Town Planning Act, but in looking through it this afternoon I consider it to be very comprehensive. There is not much that we cannot do, even today. I have no doubt that if any amendments were needed certain of our legal members would have little difficulty in suggesting what form they should take. In fact, I think the Commonwealth Government would realise that the State would be entitled to spend money on the development of an industry that may not be competitive in an economic sense. It might adopt that attitude particularly as the East seems to be so frightened that we might start secondary industries in a big way. We could make out a first-class case in that regard.

When a new director is appointed to the Tourist Bureau, the whole question could be gone into thoroughly and a complete and satisfactory plan worked out over the years. We would have plenty of friends who would support the idea. Certainly the catering interests would be favourable, as well as those associated with shopping and transport facilities. I do not know who would object to the policy of attracting people to our country, with the object of securing from their number some new settlers for the State. After living for some years in England as a student, I became convinced that Western Australia is one of the least known places in the world with regard to its natural attractions. Why do we have such splendid people living here? Certainly it

is not merely because they are flourishing, but because they know, as a Californian scientist mentioned recently, Perth has the best climate in the world. That is a tremendous advantage and must appeal to those who live in fog-bound countries where the only light that is enjoyed is often artificial. The issue involved in the motion is that we shall do our duty to the country in which we live. With regard to the remark by the member for Murray-Wellington, I appreciate his interest in the Zoological Gardens. If he desires one established in his electorate, I am willing to support his objective.

Mr. Holman: He has plenty of rabbits with which to start off his zoo!

Mr. NORTH: I understand that there is a possibility that the South Perth Zoo may have to be closed down and be established somewhere else. That, however, is not for me to say. I do not know that people would come to Western Australia simply to see the zoo. There are zoological gardens elsewhere. However, the hon. member's suggestion could be included in the list. In the latter portion of my motion there is a reference to Paris. The association with the French capital arises in my mind in the sense that we have in Perth a city that can become very important and large. It would do so if we developed the income with which to operate in this way. I got into holts during the week with a long-headed intelligent elector of mine who operates in St. George's-terrace in a big way representing large interests. He was furiously ranting about the possibilities of a large population in the State. He asked me where we were going to put the people. He said that in the North-West we could not put an additional settler, while in the wheatbelt there were merely unoccupied farms that could be occupied. He said that the Goldfields might absorb the number employed there before the war. He agreed that we might squeeze a few more into the South-West—possibly between 50,000 and 100,000 new people. Of course, that would be a lot if they were all producers. With regard to the establishment of secondary industries he held that the Eastern States concerns would continue to exercise the power over us that they wield today. He contended that it would be very difficult for us to make progress in a limited time. The question we are considering tonight, however, is entirely different.

Paris and other similar cities do not live only on the basis of factories established

there. Nevertheless, those cities induce the establishment of large undertakings necessary to cope with the requirements of the visitors they attract. We must also remember that we are entering the large-power machinery age, and the most efficient of the secondary industries are gradually using less and less manpower. We know that there are plants of 1,000,000 h.p. or more producing commodities on a large scale, and in others no man is employed on the premises at all. That being so, as the years go by, we cannot afford to neglect our tourist interests in Western Australia, and if there is anything to be learned from other countries we should send a qualified representative to investigate the conditions and bring back new ideas to improve our position here. We cannot afford to miss the chance of promoting activities that will be fostered by an active development of the tourist traffic. It should be easy for the Government to become enthusiastic about the idea and set about planning at an early stage to meet the situation as the war position improves. The Tourist Bureau could very well be opened.

The Minister for Mines: There is one in Barrack-street.

Mr. NORTH: I had in mind that the Director of the Tourist Bureau had been retired and, in fact, the bureau is practically closed. I think the Government might well take into consideration the suggestions I have made as well as a hundred and one other proposals that could be advanced. The House will be quite safe in carrying the motion, and the Government would be well advised to take steps to encourage the tourist traffic so as to be ready when the clouds of war have passed by.

On motion by the Minister for Mines, debate adjourned.

MOTION—VERMIN ACT.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.40]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon—

- (a) Desirable amendments to the Vermin Act;
- (b) Ways and means of establishing in Western Australia a capital fund from which expenditure and/or compensation necessary may be met in combating all kinds of vermin and diseases in the form of

scourges, insect pests and plant diseases, such to include rabbits, emus, dogs and foxes.

Some three years ago the member for Beverley moved a motion which had designs similar to those of the proposal I now ask the House to accept. The credit, if there be any credit attached to bringing such an important motion before the Chamber, lies substantially with the member for Beverley because he had, in the intervening period, taken very great interest in the subject and had it not been for the fact that the Minister for Lands and I had some discussion about the actual terms of the motion before it was presented for consideration, in all probability notice of motion would have been given by the member to whom I have referred. At the time the member for Beverley moved his motion, the Minister for Lands opposed it on the grounds, in short, that it was unnecessary, that the requisite information was already in the hands of the departmental officers and, therefore, it was not necessary for the committee of inquiry to be appointed to consider the matters involved.

Since discussing the question with the hon member, I came to the conclusion that the Minister's opposition at the time was substantially the result of a misunderstanding of the underlying intention of the motion then moved. As I said before, the Minister has discussed with me, to some extent, the terms of the motion as I have now moved it, and I feel that in all probability, for reasons he will be able to give to the House himself, he may be able to support it. The creation of a vermin fund, and the best way of making available the money that will be required to deal with the vermin problem in Western Australia, has been the subject of debates and discussions by many bodies interested in rural matters. It has, for example, been the subject of much discussion over very long periods—it has been debated in conjunction with other aspects of the vermin laws—at road board conferences that are held every two years in Perth.

One has only to attend those conferences to realise what an important part the question of vermin destruction in all its aspects has played at those conferences. In addition, the Road Board Conference of the Great South Association some two or three years ago asked for a committee to be appointed to inquire into the question of the vermin fund and the means whereby it

should be raised and distributed. All this is not to say that there is criticism of the administration which has existed up to date. I do not wish what I have said to be taken in that respect as an underlying reason for this motion; but there is undoubtedly a claim—and a justifiable one—that the whole of the burden for the creation of this vermin fund, and particularly the whole of the burden if it is to be increased, which I believe is very necessary, should not rest on the agricultural landholders themselves, as it now does. At present, as we all know, a vermin rate is struck on agricultural land. It makes up the vermin fund and is collected by the Taxation Department for payment to the central authority. A vermin rate is also struck by local authorities and collected by them. That is utilised in local combats with certain types of vermin. During recent months we have had evidence of an increase in vermin difficulties in this State.

Without question rabbits have multiplied and prospered. It is quite clear that the damage done by rabbits to crops and pastures would be sufficient to maintain—if the damage were not done—a very much increased number of livestock. We know, too, that the dingo pest has been very evident in various areas, many of them being the more settled areas in the southern district. We know too that complaints have been made about the depredations of emus. This pest is coming down from the north and occasioning trouble in the more or less southern part of the State, as well as in the eastern district and in the north-eastern wheat belt. It is quite clear that these vermin are the enemies of every citizen of the State. If there be a diminution in the productivity of our agricultural lands there must be a diminution in the national income. If there be a diminution of productivity there must be a lessening of our food supplies.

During the past week or so we have had evidence of the difficulties arising in the food production of this country. If we have an enemy who causes destruction to one section of our community, such as the Japanese who bombed Broome, we do not ask the residents of Broome to bear the cost of defence or the damage. That Japanese were to bomb Perth, we would not think of asking Perth residents to bear the cost of defence and the damage. That

would be ridiculous. So, if we can arrive at the conclusion, as I believe we can, that the vermin causes so much loss to the national income that they are to be regarded as common enemies of all our citizens, then surely it is time we found out some reasonable and equitable manner by which all citizens should contribute to their destruction. That is the genesis of the proposal in this motion, that ways and means be found of establishing in Western Australia a fund from which expenses and compensation, if any, may be met. I think there is ample justification for the inquiry.

We do not want to rush into any proposition. We do not want to increase the imposts on any citizen if it can be avoided. We want to spread the expense, whatever it may be, over as large a number of people as possible and in an equitable and reasonable manner. I am not going to suggest for one minute how that can be done, because I think it is a proper subject for inquiry, investigation and report to this House by a committee after having heard evidence from those far better qualified by their experience and knowledge to give evidence on such a subject than I am. I know there are many citizens with practical knowledge of the depredations of vermin and with knowledge of the efforts made by local authorities to combat the vermin, and some people with considerable knowledge of departmental activities and the distribution of the Central Vermin Fund, who should be called before such a committee to testify on a matter of this kind.

There are other aspects of the question which have been included. I think I am correct in saying the Minister suggested that inquiries should be made into other forms of scourges, such as insect pests and plant diseases. They are in the same category; they are becoming the enemies of production and of our national income. Everything that we can do to get a fair understanding of the relationship that these bear to production and destruction we should definitely do. At present various minor funds under different Acts are in existence and these are used in one way or another for the destruction of some of these pests, or at least for their reduction. Whether or not those methods are better than any co-ordinated central authority can devise I do not attempt to judge, but I say that the matter should be examined in all its aspects, and that the men who

have been engaged in dealing with these funds and combating these pests should be given an opportunity to appear before a committee of responsible members of this House to give their version of the position and so enable such a committee to present a report disclosing the essence of the wisdom of those people after it has heard their evidence.

The motion also makes reference to desirable amendments to the Vermin Act. We are aware, for example, that at present local authorities have power to assist in the financing of rabbit netting. These local authorities have from time to time raised the question as to whether the system could not be improved. They have suggested that they should be authorised to strike rates on individual properties, the proprietors of which have received assistance from them for the provision of rabbit netting. As I understand the Act, if these local authorities desire to strike a rate it must be over the whole district. In that case the persons who have received no assistance would be equally liable, apparently, for the repayment to the local authorities of the money expended to finance such a proposition. That seems to me to be unjustified. During the past two or three years local authorities have communicated with me and made suggestions along those lines. I have submitted them to the Minister, but so far we have been unable to come to any agreement on the subject. I think we both agree that it is desirable some change should be made, but what that change is and whether any change that two persons might agree upon would be a satisfactory solution of the problems of various districts, is a much more difficult matter to decide.

The only way of solving these problems is to afford the members of local authorities—those who are interested in these matters—an opportunity to submit their case to such a committee as I propose should be appointed. I do not think, for instance, that the proposal should be compulsory on local authorities; there is every reason to suggest that it should be optional, but again I have no doubt that that is a subject for argument and I am simply expressing my own opinion. The question of zoning local authority districts for the purpose of vermin inspection has also been the subject of much discussion and, as far as I know, no one has been able to arrive at a conclusion as to whether it

is desirable or not. Some little time ago a circular was issued by the Department of Agriculture, I think in perfectly good faith, requiring that every local authority operating as a vermin board should immediately appoint an inspector in its district and keep him employed throughout the year doing this, that and the other. But even supposing that that is a desirable practice in ordinary times, difficulty would be experienced in finding persons who would be able to discharge such duties and in deciding upon the means which they were to use or enforce for the destruction of vermin in many districts.

In the case of rabbits, poison was not available; it has been almost impossible to obtain the poison, and that circular did seem to me to have been sent out at the wrong time, although, as I said, there is no doubt about the bona fides of the department. However, the circular did occasion much worry and concern to many local authorities. Some of these are quite anxious to approach the question of combination with adjacent authorities in the appointment of inspectors and in the subscription to the expenses of an inspector in such a zoning system. As far as I know, no-one up to date has decided whether the scheme is practical or not, or what sort of system should be adopted if it were. That again is another question for careful consideration. We come also to the question of whether it is possible to devise cheaper and better methods for the destruction of vermin. As one goes about the country—as many members have been doing more than usual in recent weeks—we find that many queries are made as to the methods employed by some farmers and by some local authorities in the destruction of vermin. Some people say there is nothing as good as the fumigators which are coming under notice, with nice little blowers attached to them. Others say these fumigators do not suit their book at all.

One local authority, in particular, has communicated with me regarding the desirability of finding heavier-than-air gas to deal with rabbit burrows. That authority suggested that what is required is some kind of tablet which the authority contends—and I am inclined to believe it—is not beyond the scope of human ingenuity to devise and which, when thrown into a burrow, would evaporate and give off heavier-than-air gas that would destroy the vermin in the burrow. I

made some inquiries as to whether this was a practical proposition and was informed that investigations were being made in England, but that definite information was not available at present. So it will be apparent to members, I think, that this question of vermin destruction and pest destruction, as well as plant diseases, in all its ramifications is one which is as much the concern of this part of the State in which we are now debating as it is of any other part of the State, especially those parts of the State which we are inclined always to term our rural areas.

It has its effect on the occupation, business, turnover and employment of every citizen of this State, and unless it is taken in hand and the best possible methods and the best legislation put in operation for its control, there is no question whatever that the losses which have been occasioned in the country districts and will be occasioned in the future, unless we are very careful, will be reflected—and reflected very severely—in the prosperity and future progress of the metropolitan district and of the State as a whole. Therefore, as I said, these things are rapidly becoming the enemies of every person in Western Australia. In those circumstances, it is the duty of everyone in this State to put on his thinking cap, at least, and consider what are the best things that can be done in the future for their eradication and prevention, if that be practicable. In these circumstances and after, as I have said, a discussion with the Minister which leads me to believe that he will be prepared to give this motion a considerable degree of blessing, I take great pleasure in moving it for the consideration of the House.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.3 p.m.
