

continuous through the train. This might have been all right 20 or 30 years ago when trains were 20 to 30 trucks in length and locomotives were of small dimensions, but that is not the position today.

I would draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that several of the safety working rules are out of date. For months the E.D.F.U. has been trying to get the department to agree that when locomotives are multicoupled they be driven from short-end leading. This is in the interests of the safety of the public, and it is beyond my comprehension why the department takes a strong view in not allowing drivers to drive with short-end leading.

I draw attention to the siting of the standard gauge railway signals between Northam and Merredin. It is of paramount importance to remember that signals do not stop trains—brakes do. Therefore I cannot understand why the Government with this brand-new railway has installed a signalling system which is antique. A standard gauge train of 4,000 tons travelling at 45 miles an hour takes a chain under a mile to stop—that is, with the brakes fully applied. However, it is the intention to increase the speed once the standard gauge railway is fully operative to 60 and 70 miles per hour.

We have a signal siting committee, the specific job of which is to recommend to the department where the signals are to be erected. On this committee is a representative of the drivers' union, and I appeal to the Minister for this committee to be given far more co-operation than it is receiving at present, because it is most imperative that the signals be sited so that evasive action can be taken when a crash is imminent.

It would not have cost many more dollars to have apparatus attached to the signals, especially in the area of West Toodyay where there is a danger for three months of the year of particularly heavy fog retarding vision. The human element is always open to error and since the standard gauge railway has been in operation there have been instances of trains running past signals at danger.

Members of the Government have gone overseas and observed modern signalling devices in other countries. For the life of me I cannot understand why some modern methods of signalling were not adopted in this State. They are installed in Victoria and New South Wales, where they are attached to the signal. Once the signal is passed, when it is at danger, the apparatus on the signal makes contact with the brake on the train and stops it.

Perhaps I have painted a grim picture, but as one who has been associated with the railways and its problems and achievements during the past 25 years, I bring

these facts before the House. They certainly require attention and until they are adjusted and some proper agreement is reached as to where the signals are to be sited, the travelling public of Western Australia will be placed in jeopardy.

Referring to the amenities that have been provided in the last four or five years, I must say that the Government is to be commended. At Northam and Merredin the quarters have certainly come a long way from the days of the cyclone bed. In those days when one turned over every-one turned over. The silence of the night was often broken by the fall of a boot and then usually a raucous voice would call, "Go on, drop the other one."

We have certainly come a long way since those days, and when one considers that a railway man spends the greater part of his life in railway barracks, it is most important that the accommodation be modern. At Merredin and Northam the accommodation is certainly modern. In other parts of the State, conditions can be improved, especially where engine-men have to sleep in temperatures well over the hundred. I refer to areas such as Wyalkatchem, Cue, and Yalgoo. It is essential that the men rest. I trust that the building programme which I know is envisaged for these places can be expedited.

If the items I have mentioned can be given consideration—especially with regard to the safeworking structure of the department—there is no doubt in my mind that when the standard gauge becomes fully operative the railways of Western Australia will be the leader in the modern field of competitive transport.

I do not go along with the views expressed by the Commissioner of Transport that the container service will not be a success when the standard gauge line is in full operation. There will be an interstate interchange of wagons, and when the scheme reaches full operating capacity I am sure the people of this State will benefit greatly.

In conclusion, Mr. Acting Speaker (Mr. Mitchell), I wish to thank members of the House for their decorum and the close attention they have given to me. It is with interest, pride, and enthusiasm that I take my place in this Parliament—in its debates, and in its deliberations.

MR. STEWART (Merredin-Yilgarn) [4.20 p.m.]: Mr. Acting Speaker (Mr. Mitchell), it is my pleasure to speak to this House for the first time as the member for Merredin-Yilgarn. I am deeply conscious of the tribute the electors of Merredin-Yilgarn paid me on election day.

In following Mr. Lionel Kelly, who represented the electorate for so long, I indeed have a difficult task. Mr. Kelly

was liked for his charm, hard work, and willingness to help all in the community. He was respected by everyone for his kindness and courtesy and for his interest in all sections of the community. In his retirement, I wish that he be blessed with good health as a reward for all the good work he did in the interests of the electorate of Merredin-Yilgarn.

I would like you, Mr. Acting Speaker (Mr. Mitchell), to convey to the Speaker my congratulations on his being elected to his high office. I am confident his training, interest, fairness, and tolerance, will be appreciated by members; that he will carry out his duties with credit to himself; and that during his term of office the reputation of this House will be enhanced.

To the Chairman of Committees I also extend my congratulations. I am sure he will carry out his duties in a most capable and pleasant manner. I would also like to acknowledge the courtesy extended to me by all members since I was elected to this Parliament. I also thank the officers and the staff, the controller and his staff, and all the others with whom I come in contact in Parliament House. Their courtesy and kindness has made my initial period in this Parliament most pleasant.

I would like to tell members something of the electorate of Merredin-Yilgarn. It has its worries, difficulties, and problems, for it starts in the east at Kambalda—that area of metal which holds so much promise, not only for the Western Mining Corporation, but possibly for further developments—and extends westward to Koolyanobbing where the iron ore is being put to good use. I also refer to that ribbon of steel—the broad gauge line—about which the member for Northam has just spoken.

I call Merredin the heart of the middle west. To my mind it will develop as a distribution point for goods, not only from our capital city, but from the Eastern States. I hope the goods from the Eastern States will be minimised, and that the manufacturers around our city will be the largest users of that line.

Going south from Merredin, there are the shires of Narembeen, Kondinin, and Kulin, and extending west the shires are particularly well developed. However, on the eastern side the country is still in the pioneering or developmental stage, with all its attendant problems.

I hope to be constructively critical of the Government. We need to have a very clear picture of what we require and where we are going; and the problem is not one of requiring anything really new; it is just one of improving what has already been done, and accelerating this improvement. In the eastern wheatbelt we have a great farming area. Nowhere else in the world

are cereals farmed so economically or so consistently as in this area. I do not believe the land can be used for much else, apart from producing wool.

The No. 1 factor which makes this area so great is, of course, the people. I heard an honourable member from the other side lauding their virtues, and I join with him. After all, these people are in an area which, with a modest rainfall and rather poor soil conditions, was 30 years ago known as a marginal area, and they have transformed it into one of the major grain-producing districts of the State.

The factors which made this possible were, firstly, the greater power of tractors; secondly, improvements in machinery methods; and, thirdly, the use of fertilisers. The transformation which has come about through the use of fertilisers on poor soils is quite fascinating.

We are fortunate to have an oil industry in this State because one of the by-products of that industry is nitrogen. I feel that nitrogen has a tremendous future in cereal growing in Western Australia. Nitrogen—and other trace elements—has been added to the base of superphosphate. Different forms of manufacture are being undertaken in our own State at quite a substantial rate. The refining of nickel will contribute a form of nitrogen which will be helpful to our industries.

I want to emphasise that the consistency of production of the area I have mentioned has been brought about through management. The settlers remained there through the old days of bloom and boom, which seem to be declining. However, there are still quite large difficulties. In this dry farming district we have the paradox of the area being too wet in the wintertime, and too dry in the summertime. There are flooding problems in winter, and we need water piped there in the summer. Associated with the flooding problem, is the matter of erosion, and I intend to say something about the controlling of erosion.

For a start, I would like to compliment the Government, and the Minister for Lands for forming the key dam scheme. It was evolved by scientists, engineers, geologists, and soil conservation officers. The key dam scheme is quite good and allows a certain sum of money to be made available at a very modest repayment rate and interest rate to provide a settler with a dam that will hold sufficient water to last two years. Evaporation is very high in this area.

The point I want to make is that the scheme has been operating for two years. The area is not reticulated, but the comprehensive scheme has been saved 50,000,000 gallons of water through the provision of the dams. At present, something like 80,000,000 to 100,000,000 gallons of water has been stored for use by far-

mers in the future. I hope the scheme will be enlarged and that possibly the terms will be eased a little, because it is a very good scheme.

Tremendous areas of country are being opened up but soil erosion is a problem. There is a great clamour for land to be opened because people want to go farming. In the case of conditional purchase land, a farmer has to declare, and show evidence, that he has the money for a certain amount of development. Nobody seems to be concerned with soil conservation, but it is a good thing. Provision for it should be written into the lease, and there should be a definition of the fencing required, and of the contours of high and doubtful land, because if an area is not contoured then a lot of farms will be in trouble with flooding problems.

Soil conservation should be commenced at the top of a hill, but usually those farmers at the top of a hill are least conscious of the problem. I believe that in respect of this question, we have to legislate, the same as we did for the eradication of rabbits and for the provision of firebreaks. The provision will have to be statutory to force farmers to contour the land. We have to lift our thinking. We have a good department, but not good enough to control this problem.

I certainly intend to do everything I can to convince the Minister that something should be done about this land. We must understand that the problem of farming in this area is pre-care farming. Once the development period is over we can expect, in the next decade, that the population will recede. The tractors will get even more powerful and the machines will get bigger and faster. A larger servicing population will be required in the towns.

I do not think that is a bad feature. After all, it takes 100 per cent. of effort to feed people in a primitive society. The more progressive the society, the smaller is the proportion of effort necessary to feed the people. That is why we welcome development in the cities and the towns.

I would like to go through some of the other features to give an indication of our expectations and the help which we will require from the Government in the future, and I wish to touch on education to some extent. I compliment the Minister on his efforts. He has a tremendous job in being responsible for educating the children of the State over such a wide area. It must be very difficult indeed. The junior high schools are appreciated, as, too, are the senior high schools. However, in an area which is so vast, it is necessary that the people, who were described by a member on the other side of the House as "the little people" but whom I describe as "the important people," should be able to have their children educated. If one lives 100 or 150 miles from a high school, boarding accommodation is essential.

I commend and compliment the Minister on the Country High School Hostels Authority. The hostels are very good. There is only one fault: we do not have enough of them, and we want more money. The hostels enjoy a tremendous reputation and, to get that reputation, they must have earned it. I hope the Minister is listening very closely to my plea for more and larger hostels to enable the children from the out-back areas to receive an education. To my mind that is decentralisation in a practical and economic way.

There is one other point I would like to mention to the Minister while on the subject of education. I know there is a move afoot for some sort of course in farm management. We have an industry which produces hundreds of millions of dollars every year, yet we are not making any effort to improve the position by training anyone in the management field. All existing management consultants are trained elsewhere. A few are trained in the Eastern States, but the majority are trained either in New Zealand or elsewhere overseas.

Farm management is a logical development. I know it is on the way, and I hope the Minister will look at the matter very sympathetically, because the agricultural industry will be a mighty industry in Western Australia forever, I believe.

To refer to other matters, the S.E.C. extends quite extensively through the Merredin-Yilgarn area. However, it does not extend far enough, because it does not go as far south as it should. I am hoping this extension will come about. It is particularly important for the people to obtain cheap power. It does not matter how humble the home, if it is air-conditioned it makes for gracious living and keeps the woman happy. Happiness in the home and education for the children are so important.

Since I have been in the House, I have not heard mentioned the matter of subsidies for swimming pools in the country. In my opinion it is a delightful move and much appreciated. The smaller the place, the more difficult it is to provide the amenity and, of course, once it has been provided it has to be kept running. I know that subsidies are appreciated by the smaller communities, because it is not possible for all folk to take their holidays in the school-holiday period. There is nothing more distressing than to see children roaming around and making their own sport. However, anywhere a swimming pool is located, the children really enjoy themselves. They look forward to the holiday break and to enjoying the amenity, which people in more fortunate places take as a matter of course.

We are quite well served with health services, and I am very appreciative of that. The Minister has infant health clinics going along quite nicely and the

dental clinic operates very solidly. These things are much appreciated, and I would like to congratulate the Premier for putting through the fluoridation measure in an endeavour to try, if not to eliminate, to minimise the need for the efforts of the dental clinic.

I come now to the subject of housing. We are getting our fair share, but of course it is never enough. Whilst I hope that the very eloquent members in the House who have told such distressing stories will obtain sufficient houses, nevertheless I still hope we will get our fair share of houses in the Merredin-Yilgarn electorate, because certainly a great need exists.

I appreciate the new scheme for Government employees, particularly teachers; because many of these are young girls who have only been out from training college for a year or two. If there are insufficient houses in the community, where are these people going to be housed? The scheme is very necessary and very good and, as I have said, much appreciated. I look forward to seeing it develop as time goes on.

In an area which is so large, of course transport is a necessity and the provision of good roads is particularly important. I hope the Government maintains its policy of feeding as much of the petrol tax money as possible into the country with a view to providing sealed roads, particularly over the flooded and salted sections, because they certainly cause plenty of trouble to transport. I believe this is one of the most costly factors with which we in the farming world and those who work for us have to contend.

I support the Government in its endeavours to promote the interests of Western Australia. I hope in my own way to promote the interests of Merredin-Yilgarn and, through Merredin-Yilgarn, the interests of Western Australia. We should all be conscious of the fact that Western Australia was developed by people with a positive approach; it was not developed by people who looked backward.

MR. TAYLOR (Cockburn) [4.37 p.m.]: Before addressing the House, I would like to make certain references which give me the greatest pleasure. I begin by offering my congratulations, along with those of other members, to you, Sir, on your appointment to the position of Speaker of the House. I would like to thank my party for the confidence it has shown in me by endorsing me for the seat of Cockburn; and I also thank the electors of Cockburn for electing me by such a handsome majority. I thank the members of my own party who have helped me so much before and since the election. Also, I pass on my thanks to the staff of the House who have assisted me to settle in. In addition, I thank members and Ministers

on the other side of the House for the many courtesies and kindnesses they have shown me since I have been in the Parliament.

The first duty which I feel I should carry out is to make reference to the former member for Cockburn, Mr. Henry Curran, whose place I have taken in the Parliament. Through listening to some of the older members on this side of the House, I can believe that Mr. Curran had before him a long and able career but for his unfortunate accident. In working through the electorate of Cockburn, I know that Mr. Curran made, and he still maintains, many friends. It will be my task and my hope in the years to come to work as he did in the electorate and to improve if I can.

I am sure Mr. Curran would want me to thank those other members for the Fremantle area who so ably helped look after the Cockburn electorate during his illness. In particular, I think of Mr. Ron Thompson, M.L.C., who did so much during the three-year period for Mr. Curran, and who also helped me to obtain the seat.

If I put to one side for a moment the speeches on housing and land resumption, I think that what has impressed me most in the House since I have been here are the speeches which have been made by members from the country. As many would know, over the last five years I spent a lot of time travelling the State from one end to the other. I have worked with people in the country. I have had the privilege of milking cows, picking apples, cutting a little maize, throwing a few fleeces of wool, picking a few mallee roots, sitting on a harvester, and pushing a few bananas into crates in Carnarvon, and I have also had a run on a cotton-picker on the Ord.

From listening to the problems that have been outlined I would like to say I can also appreciate some of these, because I have been pulled out of bogs in the Warren electorate; I have been pulled out of Lake King in the Roe electorate; I have been pulled out of the mallee in the Merredin-Yilgarn electorate; I have spent a night in a creek in the Avon electorate, and have been bogged up to the axles of my car in the Greenough electorate.

If I come to the House with some little background so far as the metropolitan area is concerned, I also have some understanding of the problems that face the country areas. Having been born on the goldfields and having relatives there, I naturally, too, have a smattering of the problems of the mining industry. Accordingly I think it is right for me today to devote some of my time to what must be the fourth pillar of the economy of this State. I refer, of course, to industry.

Very few members of this House really appreciate the term "industry"; particularly heavy industry. It is something that