

# Legislative Council

Wednesday, 25th August, 1954.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS APPEAL BOARD.

*As to Personnel, Cases Heard, Fees, etc.*

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Who are the members of the Western Australian Government Railways Appeal Board?

(2) Is the representative of the Railway Department over the retiring age for railway employees? If so, why is he retained on this board?

(3) How many appeal cases were heard during the year ended the 30th June, 1954?

(4) What fees and travelling expenses are paid to the respective members, per sitting?

(5) What amounts were paid, in salaries and expenses, to the respective members during that period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) A stipendiary, police or resident magistrate appointed by the Governor, as chairman.

(b) One person appointed by the commission.

(c) One person for each of the five sections of employees elected in prescribed manner by the employees, who acts as member of the board in relevant cases.

(2) (a) Yes.

(b) The person concerned had been a member for the board for some considerable time prior to attaining the retiring age and occasional use of his services has obviated the necessity to take senior operational officers away from normal duties.

(3) 23.

(4) (a) These are not paid to the chairman or a member appointed by the commission who is an active employee of the department, nor to elected members. A person appointed as a member who is not an employee of the department is paid a fee of £2 2s. per whole day or £1 1s. per half day of each sitting.

(b) For sittings involving travel to country places the chairman is paid travelling expenses at the rate of 30s. per day; departmentally-appointed members and elected salaried-staff members, the prescribed award rates; and elected wages-staff members, at the rate of 15s. per day.

(5) Information will require to be extracted from time sheet records and this will be done and supplied early.

## MIDVALE.

*As to Drainage Problems.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Government aware that serious drainage problems exist in the suburb of Midvale, and that during last week's heavy rains much of the district was under water, in particular Bushby-st., Midvale?

(2) Is there anything the Government can do, or has it any plans to relieve residents of this district from this very serious difficulty?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The Government is aware flooding does occur for short periods in Midvale during heavy rainfall.

(2) Plans have been prepared, at the request of the Midland Junction Council and the Mundaring Road Board, for the enlargement of the Bushby-st. drain and the subsidiary drains from the area towards the hills. Plans have been forwarded to the local authorities. The Bushby-st. drain belongs to the Midland Junction Council. There are no Loan Funds available this financial year for such assistance.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

*As to Approval by Premier.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

Is it a fact that the Premier approves all answers to questions asked by members of both Houses?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No.

**METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY.***As to Increase in Rates.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

Has there been any further increase in metropolitan water supply rates as at the 30th June, 1954?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No.

**MANNING PARK FLATS.**

*As to Reference to Canning Road Board.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

Has the State Housing Commission referred the matter of the proposed construction of flats at Manning Park to the Canning Road Board?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No. Plans and specifications have been drawn up to comply with local by-laws. The successful tenderer will apply in due course to the local authority for a permit to build.

**BILL—CATTLE TRESPASS, FENCING AND IMPOUNDING ACT AMENDMENT.**

Introduced by Hon. A. R. Jones and read a first time.

**BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.***Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [4.43]: I rise to oppose the second reading. I listened with a great deal of interest to what I believe was a very comprehensive debate on the measure. We heard some lusty speeches and some sterling inaccuracies in those speeches. On the other hand, we had some very thoughtful, well-delivered commentaries on members' views concerning the Bill.

I notice that in his second reading speech the Chief Secretary followed what is becoming a custom with him, by chiding members on the attitude taken by them when the measure was before the House on other occasions. Personally I can plead not guilty to the charge that he made concerning the inconsistencies of members. It was my bad fortune not to be in the House when the Bill was debated but I walked in on the occasion of the third reading and voted against it; and I would have spoken against it had I been here at the time of the debate.

I want to bring the House back to the main essentials concerning what this Bill stands for. I think we have to recognise that between the Government party and the other parties in this House, there must of necessity be a very divided sense of what is the correct way to

go about many things. We know that it is one of Labour's objectives to extend State trading in any way possible. If members want to go further and say that that is the implementation, or the beginning of the implementation, of socialism, that is their right. But apart from the issue of socialism, the Labour platform provides for the extension of State trading.

The Bill has been introduced simply to widen the charter given to the State Insurance Office so that it may enter into competition with the insurance companies which are already operating on a much wider scale than the State office has been able to hitherto. If we just consider the matter from the point of view of State trading versus private trading, we can get to what I believe to be the kernel of this measure.

I know there were a lot of interjections during the debate concerning the question whether the Government is desirous of implementing socialism. Many speakers have said that that is all bosh, and that all that is being sought is amendments to the Act that will bring the State office into line with other companies and enable it to feel that it has a better place in the sun.

What is the history of this legislation? When a similar measure was introduced last year, it contained provisions relating to life assurance. The proposal in that connection was dropped from the Bill; and on this occasion we have been told by the Chief Secretary that, in order to accommodate the House, the matter of life assurance has not been incorporated in the measure. That is very good; and we are glad to know that the Government has reached the stage where, in order to obtain something, it is prepared to drop something it knows is objectionable to members.

But can we say that we have heard the last of life assurance? If on one occasion the Government brings in a Bill including a reference to life assurance and then, for the sake of giving a similar Bill on a later occasion a better passage, omits life assurance from the schedule, that does not tend to persuade us that the ultimate objective is not a full extension of State trading activities.

I look upon this Bill as being one upon which we have to make a decision as to whether we are willing to allow the Government to extend its trading activities or to carry out what we feel to be the functions of a Government—to get on with the job of governing and to leave trading alone. In that regard, I have no hesitation in saying that we should not at this stage, or at any stage, be prepared to extend the charter of the Government in respect of any State trading concern.

The Minister for the North-West: Even railways or shipping?

**Hon. H. HEARN:** The railways are an entirely different matter. A railway is a public utility. If the Government had been able to make as good a job of running the railways as private enterprise did during a difficult period, we would not be facing such huge deficits as we face year by year.

The Minister for the North-West: Which private railway are you speaking of?

**Hon. H. HEARN:** Do not forget that the railways are in a different category altogether. We have been told that it is very necessary for the State Insurance Office to have this extra charter. I want to remind members—this has been mentioned by other speakers on this side—that even at this stage there is not much need to encourage the work of the State Insurance Office. It is one of the largest traders in the State in the particular class of insurance in which it deals. Its total premium income last year was over £500,000. If we think for a moment, we recall that there are 52 private insurance companies operating here.

But look at the wonderful wicket that the State Insurance is on compared with those companies, because of the huge amount of insurance that must of necessity be controlled by it! There is no question that if we give the State Insurance Office the charter which we are being asked to agree to we will be sounding the death-knell of some at least of the private companies.

In the last resort, a country can be prosperous only by the development, not of Governmental institutions, but of private and free enterprise. If the position were that the insurance world was not being catered for properly, perhaps a case could be made out for the extension of the franchise of the State Insurance Office. However, I am sure there is not one member here who will suggest that there is any difficulty in catering for any class of insurance; but rather that the competition is keen and good, and that the State Insurance Office, doing the job that it does and gathering the power that it has gathered since it entered into the commercial and Government life of the State, does not need to have its franchise extended in any shape or form.

It is interesting to notice the change of front made very often by members on different topics. I recall that when we were debating the rents and tenancies legislation, reference on more than one occasion was made to the bad feature of allowing big buildings to be erected in Perth, and the adverse effect their construction would have on the housing position. That was stated in this House to be one of the chief reasons why the Government was not able to overcome the housing lag.

Yet we find in this debate that the same people are applauding the State Insurance Office because it will spend £400,000 on the

erection of offices in St. George's Terrace. Those members say, "There is so much money in this business; let the Government be in it." Now, members cannot have it both ways. If they are sincere on one point, they cannot use that argument in favour of extending the franchise of the State Insurance Office. Whether that building goes up or not, there is no doubt that the State Office will go from strength to strength. Its progress has been phenomenal without this extra charter. Because of that, I say that we should not under any consideration do anything that would extend the power of the State Insurance Office. Therefore I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. L. C. Diver, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

#### **BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 18th August.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West—in reply) [4.45]: The Bill had a very good reception; and although there were one or two points raised by members who, unfortunately, are not in their places at the moment, those points were not in opposition to the Bill, but more in the line of seeking information. Mr. Watson mentioned the question of rents and tenancies.

I think the point raised by the hon. member was a good one, but the answer to it that I have received is not entirely satisfactory to me. The answer is this:

Mr. Watson has raised the question of joint tenancy, and the eligibility for assistance of husband and wife, where both are working and their joint income exceed the limit provided under the Act for a worker. It is felt that this is a matter to be determined by the commission when dealing with the application. Should difficulty arise in this connection, an individual application could be made by either party.

Mr. Watson has also asked why the assistance under the Bill is to be confined to persons building homes. With the urgent need for additional homes, it is the desire of the Government to use the limited housing funds for the building of new homes. The provision of funds to purchase an existing dwelling does not relieve the position. The Government is at present carrying out negotiations with the Commonwealth Government to enable

the tenants of the existing Commonwealth-State rental homes to purchase the homes they occupy on reasonable terms over a period of 45 years.

Mr. Watson expresses the fear that additional finance may not result in more houses, and claims that materials are the limiting factor. The Government has taken steps to increase the production of building materials in short supply, and will continue to give assistance in the development of sources of local supply. Many people today who are desirous of building homes are debarred only by lack of the necessary funds to bridge the difference between the cost of the home and what lending institutions will provide, plus their own savings.

There has been a falling off in the private building rate during recent months, and appeals to the Housing Commission indicate that this is largely due to the difficulty in obtaining the necessary financial backing.

I am not entirely satisfied with that answer, because I do not like any determinations left so that it is possible for one decision to be given to one person and a different decision to another. I would much prefer something definite to be laid down. I can promise the hon. member that I shall give further consideration to this aspect with the idea of seeing whether it is possible to overcome the difficulty. It might be said that it could easily be overcome by amending the definition of "worker" in the Act so as to provide for double the amount of income; but that would, perhaps, widen the door too much. It might be possible to have some other and preferable adjustment made.

The main concern of Mr. Thomson appears to have been the cost of maintenance on the commission's rental properties; and while this has little to do with the proposed amendments to the State Housing Act, it is pointed out that maintenance costs are not a charge on the taxpayer or the community. All rents are calculated on an economic basis and include provision for the proper maintenance of the properties.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: They do?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Why is not the maintenance being done?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The commission has maintenance officers who make reports, and on their reports maintenance is carried out.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Would you say that the State Housing Commission is not the slightest bit concerned about the maintenance costs?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would not say that at all. I was answering the points raised by Mr. Thomson regarding maintenance costs, which are a concern of the State Housing Commission. Maintenance

costs were the concern of the old Workers' Homes Board from the day of its inception. That phase has always been attended to by the State Housing Commission; and if the hon. member heard my reply to Mr. Thomson he would know that that is taken into consideration when assessing.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I thought you said that maintenance charges were taken into consideration when assessing the economic rent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. Of course, that would be impossible.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I thought you said that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. In the ordinary rent of a property, the maintenance may be taken into consideration, but not in assessing an economic rent. Only the income of the home is taken into consideration. In the ordinary dealings of the State Housing Commission, maintenance costs are considered when the rent is assessed.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Would you say that applied to workers' homes for purchase?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This relates to workers' homes. The question of maintenance has always been difficult. As a matter of fact, if the hon. member came to my district, he would see some of the first workers' homes built. Those homes are in a wonderful condition, notwithstanding the fact that they were built in about 1913 or 1914.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There are very few on the leasehold system today.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A number have taken action because they have had the opportunity of purchasing.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: For many years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Naturally these people have owned their homes for many years; but during the period of the repayment of the loan, the maintenance was the concern of the Workers' Homes Board, as it was then known. As a result of the attention paid at that time, those properties today—which, from memory, were built for about £500—could be sold for at least £3,000.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They are selling at that figure.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I admit that the principle is sound; but I thought I heard you say that the cost of maintenance was borne by the Government.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; I did not say that. In the old days an inspector, at varying times, visited these homes; and, where necessary, tenants were ordered to carry out maintenance. That was under the old Workers' Homes Board; but we are now dealing with the State Housing Commission and Commonwealth-State rental

homes. Particularly with the rental homes, the cost of maintenance must be taken into consideration when assessing the rent.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: The point I was trying to make was that the maintenance charges would be far less if the homes were owned by the individuals rather than by the State, as they are under the present set-up.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: While the homes are under the dominance of the State, naturally the State must see that they are kept in good order.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: When you referred to the ordinary rent of a Commonwealth-State home, what did you mean?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I meant the rent that is ordinarily paid according to the cost.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Is that the economic rent?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The economic rent is one which is assessed according to the income received in the home when a person is unable to pay the ordinary rent. The only other member I wish to answer is, strangely enough, Mr. Griffith.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If I send over this note, will you read it?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have been providing the hon. member with a lot of answers; but there is one important point I wish to make. I am pleased to see the improvement in the hon. member since he has been in this Chamber. His attitude is now entirely different from what it was when he first came here.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What has this to do with the Bill?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because of the hon. member's reformation, I thought that when he spoke on this Bill he would congratulate the Minister and the Government on the wonderful job they had made of it. To a large extent he did; but he spoilt it, and fell back into his old habits when he suggested that this Government—or any Labour Government for that matter—should take a leaf out of the L.C.L. book in regard to the building of homes for ownership. I wish to remind the hon. member, because he is new to politics, that a Government composed of the party to which we belong initiated the Workers' Homes Act as long ago as 1911. So we do not need to copy anything from the L.C.L. programme, as he suggested we should.

Further, I would like to ask the hon. member to use his endeavours, and ask his party to see that the Prime Minister permits Commonwealth-State rental homes to be purchased by the people who are living in them. We are keen on the idea,

and we believe that people should own their own homes rather than be forced to pay rent.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think negotiations are proceeding now between your Government and the Commonwealth Government.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They are. Ever since we have been in office we have been trying to achieve that objective. In conclusion, I would like to say that I am pleased at the reception given to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.10] in moving the second reading said: The need to introduce this Bill is due mainly to the creation in the railway service of a new branch, which is known as the motive power engineer's section. Section 78 of the principal Act makes provision for the appointment of a board to hear appeals from permanent employees of the Railway Department who have been fined, reduced in status, dismissed, or suspended with loss of pay, or whose transfer by way of punishment has involved loss of transfer expenses.

This appeal board consists of a magistrate as chairman, a representative of the Railways Commission, and an employees' representative. Various sections of the railway employees each elect a representative who acts on the board whenever an appeal from an employee of his particular section is heard. The creation of the motive power engineer's section within the Traffic Branch has required the transfer of a number of employees from the Mechanical Branch. As a result it has become necessary to alter the constitution of the appeal board to ensure that the employees transferred will be represented on the board.

I would like to make it clear that the number of employees' representatives has not been increased. All that the Bill seeks to achieve is to define clearly the employees who are the responsibility of each representative. In the drafting of this amendment the opportunity was taken to include the wages staff of the Stores Branch in the group covering the work-shops wages employees.

The other proposal in the Bill seeks to put into operation a suggestion made by the Chief Electoral Officer, who is appointed by regulation as Returning Officer for the ballots held in connection with the election

of the employees' representatives to the appeal board. The principal Act provides that these ballots shall be held every three years on the first Monday in February. The Chief Electoral Officer has drawn attention to the fact that this date has always clashed with the period during which the Electoral Office is occupied with the preparation for the parliamentary general elections.

As members are aware, the general elections are usually conducted in March, and they entail the working of a considerable amount of overtime by officers of the Electoral Department. The Chief Electoral Officer has suggested that a more convenient time for the holding of the ballot would be later in the year. A date in October is considered to be eminently suitable.

This is provided for in the Bill, as is another suggestion by the Chief Electoral Officer that the actual date in October, when the ballots are taken, might be provided for by regulation, this being the case in other Acts which provide for election of members to boards. It is considered that this would provide the necessary elasticity, within prescribed limits, to fix the date of the ballot whenever an election is necessary.

Under the Act as it now stands, the present employees' representatives will hold office until February, 1956. In order to achieve the object of the Bill, the last amendment provides that these persons shall continue to hold office until the next ordinary election is held on whatever day is prescribed in October, 1956. This is a small Bill which does not contain any very vital points. I look with confidence to the House to support it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. C. H. SIMPSON** (Midland) [5.13]: I have had a look at the Bill. It is purely a machinery measure, and there is nothing objectionable in it. In fact, it is framed to meet a situation which has developed because of certain minor changes in the internal administration of the Railway Department. Under the Act, where a tribunal is constituted with a chairman—who is generally a magistrate—a representative of the commission, and an employees' representative, the employees' representative is a nominee of one of the departments concerned with the particular appeal. In practice that has worked out better than having a single employees' representative who might quite easily not be fully acquainted with the conditions and circumstances of any one particular branch.

As members know, the Railway Department is split up into a number of sections. The motive power engineer's section, which deals with the power side of railway operations, is a new section in the railways. It has proved a distinct improvement in the

administration and operation of the section which formerly controlled this phase of the railways. Because of these changes in the general routine of administration, it is necessary to pass this Bill so as to distinguish clearly what it is necessary to adopt in practice.

The suggestion of the Chief Electoral Officer in regard to the election of the employees' representative is a sensible one; and, as the Chief Secretary explained, the change will enable the ballot to be conducted at a time of the year when his department which conducts this election is not confronted with other and more pressing matters.

Having studied the Bill, I commend it to the House. As it is a very small measure, not deserving of long debate, I have seized the opportunity of speaking to it after the second reading speech of the Chief Secretary; and I urge the House to pass it. It can be taken at its face value.

**HON. G. BENNETTS** (South-East) [5.16]: I am glad that Mr. Simpson supports the Bill. He is an ex-Minister for Railways. This measure is a very important one because the representative of the workers in the branch which requires the ballot will be appointed. With the appointment of representatives who possess knowledge of the particular class of work performed, a better outlook on the evidence can be obtained. I therefore consider this Bill to be worthy of acceptance by this House, and I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

#### RESOLUTION—NORTH-WEST.

*As to Commonwealth Financial Assistance.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion by Hon. A. R. Jones that the following resolution in which the Assembly sought the Council's concurrence be agreed to:—

That this House expresses its opinion that that portion of the State which lies north of the 26th parallel of latitude is incapable of being fully developed if wholly dependent upon such finance as is only obtainable from State resources.

It therefore requests—

- (a) That the Government present a programme for the development of that portion of the State to a committee consisting of the Premier (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), the Minister for the North-West (Hon. H. C. Strickland, M.L.C.), the Leader of the Opposition (Hon.

Sir Ross McLarty, K.B.E., M.L.A.), the Leader of the Country Party (Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G., M.L.A.) and the Speaker and Member for Pilbara (Hon. A. J. Rodoreda, M.L.A.).

- (b) That this Committee consider the programme as presented to it by the Government and, if thought necessary, amend the programme.
- (c) That the Committee submit such programme personally at Canberra to the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer.
- (d) That a special annual grant of an amount considered necessary for such developmental work be requested for a period of 10 years in order to carry out the programme.

**HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.19]:** I commence by congratulating Mr. Jones—who has been accused of being a port-hole tourist—on the manner in which he presented his case for financial assistance to the North-West. Commonsense, applied to the knowledge which he possesses, enabled him to submit the case he did.

The solution to the problems of the North-West is by no means easy. Even experts will disagree on the methods to be adopted. Much has been said about the neglect to develop the North-West in the past, and especially about the assistance which is required to rehabilitate that area. But up to date we have heard mostly talk; nothing definite has as yet been presented. No previous Governments have had a considered plan which they could study and endeavour to put into operation.

Looking at the progress of Western Australia as a whole, we find that the inhabitants have developed firstly the country within close proximity to transport and other facilities, where the nature of the land was familiar to them. In many cases they by-passed what was considered as sand plain, in order to take up what in their opinion was first-class land. Today, with the further knowledge gained as a result of the scientific research which has been made into this type of country, it is no longer classified as third-class land. Most of it can be regarded as first class.

The same thing can be said about the North; people who pioneered that part of the State; who developed it, and took up land, acquired only those areas which they considered best. Had those people seen the same possibilities in the North, as settlers saw in the South, the former would have expanded just as much as the latter. So it becomes apparent that the North did not hold the same possibilities as the South.

Despite this, development has taken place; and by looking at the diversified industries at present operating in the North, and without going into as great detail as Mr. Barker, one can claim that the wool industry is perhaps the greatest, with meat as a sideline to it. This industry has by far the greatest income in the North-West. Unfortunately it has declined to such an extent that it has left the North, which it had maintained in the past, in a rather precarious position.

Second in importance is the cattle industry. Allied to it are the meatworks in Wyndham and Broome; the air-beef station at Glenroy; shipments of meat to Robbs Jetty; and lately the new experiment of a shipment of cattle to the Philippines by landing barge from the 90-Mile Beach near Anna Plains station. This shipment of cattle meant that beef was being exported from Australia, where it is not plentiful; but if it is a means of increasing the finances of the cattle breeders of the North-West, then I think it should be encouraged.

Apart from those two main industries, there are many others of a diversified nature, among them being the iron-ore industry at Yampi and Cockatoo Island; and the blue asbestos industry at Wittenoom, which at present employs somewhere around 1,000 people. Incidentally, I am told that place has about the biggest two-up school in Australia. It is even as big as that at Kalgoorlie.

**Hon. J. J. Garrigan:** Is that an industry?

**Hon. L. A. LOGAN:** I suppose it can be called an industry. Other industries include banana and bean growing in Carnarvon; whaling at Point Cloates and Babbage Island; fishing—particularly of schnapper and dhu fish—at Shark Bay; and pearling at Broome and, to a small degree, at Onslow. Oil is beginning to show prospects; what the future holds for that is very hard to predict. Metals in many forms are found; gold in quite a few places; sheelite and beryl, mainly out from Port Hedland between Hedland and the Bar; lead at Ragged Hills in Onslow; tin on the Shore River; and manganese at Port Hedland.

In case members are not aware of it, manganese is not only playing a part in the manufacture of iron and steel, but also in the treatment of uranium. This is probably the reason for the Commonwealth Government's ban on the export of manganese. Some 7,000 tons of manganese is at present being specially crushed and treated at Geraldton for shipment to Darwin to be used in the treatment of uranium. If manganese is as important as that, it is essential that we retain our limited supplies.

I say "limited," because although we know there is quite a lot of it in Western Australia, if we are to use it for

the treatment of uranium as well as in the manufacture of steel and iron, the life of the deposits, as estimated by the experts—based on the need for its use in the manufacture of iron and steel—will have to be revised, taking into account the fact that it is being used for treatment of uranium.

The best solution of the problem of the development of the North-West is first of all to rehabilitate the existing industries. Dealing with sheep and cattle raising, which can be grouped together, the main improvements which could be effected are the subdivision of the stations; the provision of water supplies for the subdivided areas; and pasture renovations and conservation. These are the three most important factors, and they are related; one cannot do without the others.

It might be said that the squatters can be blamed for not doing the things I have mentioned. Although the squatters have had some years of very good prices, they have also experienced many years of lean prices. For a good number of years they were not controlling their own finances; the banks and firms controlled them.

If the three requirements I have mentioned were supplied, I believe that, on most properties, the cattle and sheep numbers would again increase. The experiments being conducted in the North, plus the experience and findings of the C.S.I.R.O., should show results.

To endeavour to put some industry in the North merely to provide the means for spending money would be entirely wrong. The North at present suffers from isolation probably more than anything else, and this is a disadvantage that must be overcome. If we can, by providing irrigation, develop areas and produce rice and other primary products economically and find a market for those products in the Near East, we shall have something worth while; but to endeavour to produce commodities that are being produced more economically elsewhere, and sell them on the world's markets, must prove to be so uneconomical as to be not worth while. When we talk about developing the North, we must discover something that will make the effort worth while, and it is by no means an easy matter to do so.

When speaking of the cattle industry and its rehabilitation, I omitted to mention the two main diseases which trouble the pastoralists—namely, pleuro and tick. It has been stated that a good many of the cattle are in very poor condition, and I venture to suggest that if those two pests could be overcome, a greater percentage of cattle could be marketed in a much primer condition than at present. However, scientific research should assist to provide methods of controlling those two diseases.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Settlement should be helpful.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: But that will not provide a remedy for the diseases, though subdivision may help in the work of combating them.

When speaking of pests and diseases in the cattle and sheep industries, Mr. Jones mentioned that he did not like the treatment he received at Broome from mosquitoes and midges. Probably the attacks of these insects are enough to drive any visitor out of the North because, believe me, they take a lot of putting up with. I had to endure the inconvenience of them for a matter of about ten months; but people who live there have to put up with them all the time.

I have come to the conclusion that there are several requirements that cannot be avoided if the North is to be populated. These include water supplies; transport, whether by land, sea, or air; housing; education; and communications. Hon. G. Bennetts: And hospitalisation,

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; as the hon. member has suggested, hospitalisation. If progress is to be made by any community, those essentials must be provided. However, the isolation of those areas and the tremendous distances that have to be traversed add to the difficulties. I am afraid that, for many generations to come, a good many people will have to put up with that isolation and a lack of some of the amenities in endeavouring to make the North what we hope it eventually will be.

I do not agree with the statement by Mr. Barker that much of the blame for the kangaroo pest can be laid at the door of the squatters. This pest must be exterminated before the sheep or cattle areas can be rehabilitated.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Then who is to blame?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The hon. member might as well blame farmers in the wheat belt for the rabbit pest. If he had had experience in trying to exterminate the rabbits, he would not talk in that way. The hon. member mentioned an instance of 15,000 kangaroos having been poisoned on one station. I can go one better than that, for I know a station where 20,000 were poisoned.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: In one night?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I did not say that.

The Minister for the North-West: Who had the job of burning the carcasses?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The station managers realised that they were the only ones at the time who were trying to combat the pest, and did not carry on. I do not think we can escape the fact that the kangaroo is probably the greatest pest with which pastoralists have to contend. This

animal is pretty selective; its bite is very short; it is a quick mover; and it feeds on the best of the grass, whatever the season of the year. That is the reason, and probably the main reason, why our sheep numbers in the North-West are being depleted, and the extermination of the kangaroo is one essential to the rehabilitation of the industry.

The statement has been made that the Commonwealth has not granted any aid to the North-West. Let me remind members that all the losses sustained on the State Shipping Service have been recouped by the Commonwealth, through the Grants Commission; and those losses have been not inconsiderable. Western Australia receives considerable sums of road aid money, and much of that is expended in the North. A few Commonwealth-State rental homes are being built in the North, which again represents Commonwealth assistance.

Sums of Commonwealth money have been spent on the aerodromes and facilities, and it was Commonwealth money that made possible the establishment of the whaling station at Babbage Island. Further, quite a large amount is being spent in the North by the C.I.S.R.O. Consequently, while we are asking by this motion for Commonwealth assistance for the North, do not let us forget that it has given us considerable help. Let us be honest about it. The Commonwealth geologists have been in the North for a long time, and they were the men who prepared the ground and the sites for the oil companies to come in.

The Minister for the North-West: They have been there since 1946.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I mention these matters because some people have an idea that we have not received any help at all from the Commonwealth, and it is only right that we should be fair. Irrespective of what party has been in power in the Federal sphere, assistance along the lines I have mentioned has been continued.

It has been suggested that one of the best means for the defence of the North would be the establishment of airstrips throughout the area or a chain of air strips right down the coast.

The Minister for the North-West: They are already provided.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: But only to a minor degree. This could be a two-way argument, because these strips could also be used by a potential enemy as landing grounds for parachutists; and with long-range bombers and fast long-range fighters such as are in use today, it is probable that the base for such defence would be better if further afield. I happened to be a member of one of two companies stationed in the North for 10 months, and we were the only troops between Perth and Darwin.

Hence I can realise the difficulty of safeguarding that area, without a considerable number of troops and large quantities of equipment.

Members may be thinking that I do not altogether agree with the motion, but I am in favour of it. I have, however, been endeavouring to point out some of the difficulties so that the Government and the proposed committee would approach the question along practical lines and not try to induce the Commonwealth to spend millions of pounds without getting adequate results.

If we look at the Commonwealth Constitution, we must realise it is almost impossible to grant money to a State for a specific purpose. The Snowy River scheme has been mentioned as being financed by the Commonwealth; but that is a national scheme affecting three of the most important States, and not one State only; and that is difficult to overcome. If an approach by a State for a grant for a specific purpose were granted by the Commonwealth, all the other States would naturally clamour for the same treatment; and that is the problem that must be solved.

The committee suggested should, I believe, be an exceedingly good one, being comprised, as it is, of the three leaders of the political parties in this State, together with the Minister for the North-West and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. In the last two we have men with a fairly sound knowledge of the North-West; and, together with the three leaders of our political parties, they would ensure that when the committee presented its case it would be speaking with a voice representing the whole of Western Australia.

Again I commend the hon. member on the excellent case he put up; and I hope and trust that when the committee does approach the Commonwealth Government for assistance, it will be given not only a good hearing but also financial support.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [5.46]: I have no wish to delay the House in regard to this motion, which I believe will be found most acceptable to this Chamber, as it is one which commends itself to members. During the early part of the 25 years during which I was in business at Pindar, that centre was a stopping place for travellers from the North-West. Most of them came from the Gascoyne and Roebourne districts; and in those times pastoralists from the Kimberleys, and the owners of cattle stations, invariably made their journey to and from the south by sea.

I might add, here, that the sea service given in those days was very much better than it is now, because there existed provision for companies, such as the Blue Funnel line and others, to call regularly at the ports when travelling both up and down the coast. From 1920 onwards an

air service was established and provided a means of transport which was availed of by many people; but in the main, the pastoralists, of whom I met a number, came down by car from the nearer areas—the Gascoyne and Roebourne districts.

As members have said, there is an enormous potential wealth to be developed in our northern areas; and, while I entirely agree with the way in which the resolution is framed, I would offer one suggestion for consideration—not by way of altering the terms of the motion, but in order that members might bear in mind the fact that, if we adopt an East-West line as a hard and fast division between one land area and another, we can easily create, on either side of that line, differing sets of conditions.

For many years suggestions have been put forward such as that people north of the 26th parallel should be relieved by the Commonwealth Government of their taxation liabilities, as was done in the Northern Territory. In regard to that proposal—with which I am instinctively in sympathy—I have always felt that, instead of having a line drawn straight across the map, we might, with advantage, adopt what I would call a rainfall line, and take in those isolated areas in the eastern portion of Western Australia and continue down to the coast. That is something which members for the North-East Province might bear carefully in mind.

The Minister for the North-West: Taxation zoning?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes. I do not for one moment say that that should be included in this resolution, as it would complicate matters; but I believe that if in the area mentioned special attention is to be paid to development, and possibly some concessions given to those residing there, people living well to the east of Meekatharra, and right down towards the southern border of the State, are equally entitled to share in those concessions. Residents in such areas live under hot climatic conditions, and in considerable isolation, and experience difficulties of transport and communication. They are at least as deserving of consideration as are people living, perhaps, in the Carnarvon district where, on the whole, the climate is very good; and where there are available all the amenities that a sea coast town provides, as well as the advantages of being in the centre of a rich producing area.

A recital of what the North can do in the production of wealth has been fairly fully given; but I remember Mr. Wise, a former Premier, saying that there was enough asbestos in the Hamersley Ranges to keep the world market supplied for a considerable time. He said that at present-day values it was computed that there was £6,000,000,000 worth of asbestos in those ranges; and that may be later, with

the introduction of mass production methods and improved techniques, it would be possible to expand that market by disposing of the product at a cheaper price.

It is interesting to recall, in passing, that Pilbara was the first goldfield in this State. There is a great deal of lead in the Onslow district; and, I might add, there is a vast amount of mineral wealth in the North. I, for one, was hopeful that with the prospecting for oil and, later, when its discovery on the North-West coast was an accomplished fact, people with money might be induced to consider the possibility of wealth production in the North-West through the exploitation of the mineral resources. The Yampi Sound iron is an instance of the natural wealth of the North which is now being exploited.

The history of the world over past ages teaches us that communications and transport have been amongst the main factors in the development of any country. In many other lands use has been made of inland waterways; and where such facilities have existed, population growth has always been rapid. Unfortunately we, in this country, have not such inland waterways available and must depend upon roads, railways, or sea transport. I feel that the North-West does deserve special consideration in the provision of roads if only because it is unlikely that the areas concerned will be provided with railway facilities until there has been tremendous development and a consequent concentration of population in that part of the State. Until that stage has been reached railways in the North would be an impossibility from an economic point of view.

A further important reason why our North-West should be developed, and population attracted to and held in that part of the State, is the defence of the Commonwealth; and that is a cogent reason why I believe that the proposition put forward in this motion might have a strong appeal to the Federal Government. It is true, as Mr. Logan said, that that Government has provided a lot of money for the development of the North-West.

I know that when the previous State Government was in power, considerable sums which were spent on transport facilities for the North-West were never regarded by the Federal Government as money which should not have been spent. The Commonwealth was always quite sympathetic and understood the need for the development of that area. On the whole, I believe this resolution is a positive and constructive approach to the solution of the problem and I have pleasure in giving the motion my whole-hearted support.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.55]: I think this is a very important motion, from the defence aspect if nothing else. We saw, during the recent war, just what could happen; and I believe that today the position has grown even

worse in some respects than it was in those days. The communist ideology has spread to countries closer to our shores; and with our North in its present condition, it would not be hard for an invader at any time to seize that part of our country.

I had a cutting from "The West Australian" or the "Daily News," of about two months ago, in which was reported the visit of a representative of the Indian Government who had passed through this State—and, in particular, through our North-West. He mentioned the huge population of India, and remarked on the vast area of country in the north of this State, undeveloped and unpopulated; country which, as he said, could produce many varieties of foodstuffs. I take it he referred to the Kimberleys, and he mentioned the growing of rice in that area.

He said that his own country was one of the United Nations—together with Ceylon and another country that he mentioned. He referred to the fact that we were populating Australia with migrants from Europe and other places, and suggested that we might take a certain number from his country, as he thought they would be an asset in the development of the North-West.

In today's issue of "The West Australian" there is mention of an Indian general who visited Southern Cross yesterday, and was entertained by the local road board. He mentioned the 80,000,000 population of India, and said he thought we could get from his country useful classes of migrants—educated Indians—who could assist in the development of our North. We have stuck to the White Australia policy for a long time, but whether we can maintain it with our present population I do not know.

As we have been told by members representing the North, that part of our State is great cattle-producing country. We know, from what Mr. Henning said yesterday, that the class of cattle produced there could be improved; and that we could, by the use of proper methods, secure a much better type of beef cattle. The growing of rice and the conservation of water have been mentioned.

I have been north only as far as Marble Bar and the Pilbara goldfields. I do not agree with Mr. Jones about "port-hole" tourists, as I believe that what was seen from the portholes of the ship enabled him to bring back a lot of good information from that part of the country. I travelled by sea, also; but I have, in addition, travelled from Marble Bar to Cue and Day Dawn on horseback, with stock. We arrived with the stock in very good condition—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You are a man of many parts.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am. We had 418 head of cattle and 18 horses, and we struck bad weather on the last few miles of the Murchison country. That set us back a bit, and we had difficulty in getting water; but up till that stage our cattle were in first-class condition. That goes to show the extent of the feed right through that country, when stock can be driven through it and arrive at their destination in good condition. Also, we were not the only men driving stock along those routes. Numbers of sheep and cattle were being herded along and they arrived in good condition, also.

From what I have observed in latter years, I think some of the station-owners are over-stocking their properties whilst depending on natural grasses for feed. Mr. Welsh, before he retired from membership of this House, once mentioned to me that on the station where I was at one time engaged, a great deal of the grasses had been eaten out; and, as a result, the property had suffered a great setback, and would be unable to produce for some time to come. If the station-owners made certain that they did not over-stock their properties, they could carry sheep and cattle on them for many years.

As has been mentioned in the House, there are great prospects for the North with the discovery of oil, copper, and asbestos. I worked at the copper mines at Whim Creek; but because the conditions were so bad I would not stay more than one day. However, that is by the way. There is no doubt that copper is available there, together with gold, tin, and other rare metals. Unfortunately, these deposits are in an isolated part of the State, and a great deal of money would have to be spent on the building of roads and other improvements before much development could be carried out.

Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that this expenditure must be made, if only for defence purposes. Also, unless the North has good roads and airfields, and is provided with a regular air service, there is not much chance of encouraging people to settle there. In addition, we must provide hospitals and schools. Dental service is another important amenity that should be made available in that part of the State. I know that in my electorate we have great difficulty in obtaining adequate dental treatment. The provision of housing is another important factor.

To my mind, the committee, as suggested in the resolution is a very good one. The resolution provides that the committee shall present its report direct to the Prime Minister. That is a good feature. What information the members of the committee can present, of their own personal knowledge, in addition to the report itself, will prove to be of great assistance in the presentation of the State's

case. If members on both sides of the House will support the resolution, I am quite sure that the report that is eventually presented will prove to be of great advantage to the North-West.

I have been in Carnarvon, Roebourne, Shark Bay, and Whim Creek. At Carnarvon there is a great opportunity to achieve much development by way of agricultural pursuits, provided sufficient water can be made available. At present one of my sons-in-law is working part-time at the research station near Carnarvon. He intends to become a bee-keeper. At present he grows grapefruit on a private allotment, together with beans and bananas.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is irrigated land, is it?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. He is doing fairly well; but the inadequate water supply is his greatest problem. I have not visited his property for some years, and therefore I cannot give many details regarding it. I would like to see it before I express an opinion about it. It has been suggested, however, that the research station at that centre has proved to be of great advantage to the settlers in the district. I know what its experiments could mean to the settlers because I am fully acquainted with the work that has been done by the research station in my province. The members of this House should give some lead by indicating what can be done in the North-West and should assist in every way to meet the requirements of the people in that area. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion; and I hope that, in the near future, something will be done for that district.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [6.5]: I am not going to say more than a couple of hundred words.

The Minister for the North-West: We will count them.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I cannot even be compared to Mr. Jones who has been referred to as a "port-hole tourist," because I have never been in the North. All my information about that area has been gleaned from articles in the Press, and from the speakers I have heard in this Chamber. I would like to support the resolution that has been presented to this House by the Legislative Assembly. I am of the opinion that members should agree to the establishment of this committee so that an appeal may be made to the Commonwealth Government for aid to the North, but on one basis only. I think the time is ripe for such action inasmuch as the defence of Australia is regarded as being a first priority by the Commonwealth Government.

Members know that a fortnight ago I was unable to attend the sittings of this House because I was ill. Whilst I was

in bed at that time I took the opportunity of listening to a broadcast of a debate in the Commonwealth Senate. The question under discussion was the formation of the proposed Asian committee. There were two members in particular who held my attention. One was a Liberal member, whose name I do not know as he was the first Liberal speaker and the other was a Labour member, Senator McKenna. Their remarks were of sufficient importance to make me realise that the defence of this country is of paramount importance because of the threat from Asian countries close to our shores, who are opposed to our way of life. I refer to the threat of communism.

There is no doubt that if members of this House could read the speeches made by those two members, it would be to their advantage. I think the debate was held on either the 10th or the 11th August. After listening to what they had to say, I am sure that the time is ripe for this committee to make its appeal to the Commonwealth Government, because I am quite satisfied that it has in mind a plan for the extensive defence of this country. Whether that plan is based on the defence of our mainland, or away from our shores, I cannot say. However, it gives me great pleasure to concur in the formation of this proposed committee, because the time has never been so opportune for it to present a report to the Commonwealth for assistance to the North.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [6.10]: I rise also to laud the appointment of a committee of this type. I trust the resolution will meet with a different fate from that which has befallen other motions that we have previously discussed. This is not the first time, since I have been a member of this House, that I have seen motions passed which have had some reference to the North-West; and yet very little has resulted from such action.

In order to justify some of the remarks that I might make, I wish to state that during the war years I saw a great deal of the North-West; but of the Kimberleys I am totally ignorant. Unfortunately, my journeys to the North have been few and far between during the last few years; but I have a large number of friends, and I am constantly in touch with many who are vitally interested in that portion of our State.

I applaud the manner in which Mr. Logan attacked this problem because, personally, I would make an appeal to any committee to be factual in its approach to the Commonwealth Government and to refrain from all sense of exaggeration, even though it may be patriotically State-minded. There are certain facts that we must accept. Firstly, if ever there are large towns built up in the North-West, they will not be populated by Europeans. It is of no earthly use seeking large centres

of European population so that they may act as a defence force for the North of this State.

Secondly, we must realise that to request many defence projects to be placed in the north of this State, is to ask for something which is against the views held by the Army authorities on the general plan of defence for this nation as a whole. In the war years, even, when the menace of war was close to our shores, the authorities in this State had the greatest difficulty persuading the Army chiefs that money spent on civil defence in this State was well spent, because their idea was that the defence of Australia lay outside Australia's borders. The views expressed by the Commonwealth authorities emphasised that view—namely, that the defence of this country does not lie within its shores—and the provision of an adequate Air Force and Navy appear to be the keynote of defence as we know it today.

It is very interesting to look back on the war years and realise how many false views were held on the defence of the North. I can well remember visiting Cue on one occasion, and finding three men—I think they would be members of the Volunteer Defence Corps—who told me that they held one of the most important posts in Australia's defence, because Cue would be the centre of any pincer movement against the enemy. That is the sort of exaggerated statement which I am afraid would not meet with favour in Commonwealth circles. Therefore I put it to the members of this proposed committee that when the defence of Australia is used as a reason for requesting the Commonwealth Government to assist the North, it must be realised that whatever is done in the North-West must fit into a complete pattern of defence for Australia as a whole.

One point that must be of interest to this Parliament is that whilst we, as a Parliament, make provision for members to visit all the southern portions of the State by rail, or to travel by means of passes to the Eastern States of Australia, no arrangements are made whereby members of Parliament can visit the interior of the North-West. It has been arranged that members can obtain a pass to travel by ship to the North-West ports, but there is no means by which individual members can be given the opportunity to see the huge area for which they must pass legislation.

The Minister for the North-West: There is always Shanks's pony!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is a very hard pony in that area. I suggest that members of this Parliament should have more knowledge of that area; and it would not prove costly for any Government to arrange for a member of Parliament to be issued with a free air fare to the North once every three years. It would mean that only 25

members would be allowed to make the trip at one time, and I am quite certain that only half of them would exercise their rights.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You would not see much of the country by that means of travel.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: One could make his entrance to the North in that manner, and then travel to Fitzroy Crossing, and through other areas, by other means of transport much quicker than one can travel up the coast by ship.

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

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Before tea, I was emphasising the fact that I hoped there would be no exaggeration of the conditions in the approach to the Commonwealth Government. I think one has to be quite definite that we will not attract people to the North-West until we have amenities there; and from what I know of amenities, we will not get them until we have people. Accordingly, it looks like a vicious circle, unless somebody is prepared to supply the amenities in the hope that the population will eventually come. Nothing that the North-West produces up to date calls for a large population. The mining centres are very widely scattered; and even with the best of them, we cannot expect them to do more than house a small population—unless, of course, at some future date we find something of the size of the Hamersley Ranges.

One of the greatest problems of the North-West is water. It may be conserved in the Kimberleys; and from all accounts from our ex-Director of Works, the Ord River scheme is of tremendous importance. As far as irrigation in the North-West is concerned, the question of water seems to me at the present juncture to be almost insoluble. Therefore I cannot see how we can expect any large congregations of people in that area. Further, one must realise that if there are people, there must be the means at hand by which they can be fed.

While it may be stated that in certain areas we can grow tropical fruit, that will not be sufficient to keep the population in good health. In many parts it is impossible to grow vegetables at certain times of the year; and while at other times the growth is prolific, as soon as the hot weather comes there are many areas that find it impossible to carry on the growing of vegetables; otherwise it would not be necessary for us to subsidise the North-West as we do. When speaking to this resolution in another place, the Premier envisaged the possibility of a State-owned air service with the basic idea of supplying vegetables and other produce to these people at low cost. Whilst a population has to be subsidised in its living, we cannot expect to find large congregations of people in the area.

I think the real approach to the Commonwealth might be on the basis of research. Only on Monday last, I listened to Mr. P. G. Law speak in the Winthrop Hall on the research station in the Antarctic. One could easily see from his films, and learn from his address, the enormous amount of money that is being spent in meteorological research in the islands at the Antarctic. While that is important—and certainly important from the point of view of weather to everyone living in Australia—it is just as vital that we should conduct a research on the same broad lines in the North-West.

I have never been happy about what are called research stations, but what are, in fact, experimental stations. When one listens to a man like Professor Fraenkel talking about research of the C.S.I.R.O. into the adaptation of plants and pastures imported into Australia, one realises that there is a tremendous difference between research and experiment. I believe that a truly organised research department in the North-West might be the first necessity; because if it can produce the means whereby populations can live, then those populations will follow in due course.

I have always been impressed by the difficulty of medical services in the North-West. It is some years now since I saw hospitals there; but when I did see them, I could not for one moment applaud them. It is good to know that the Carnarvon Hospital has been erected since, and that certain alterations have taken place. I think that if we were to ask the views of the manager of the Royal Perth Hospital, and those of Dr. Henzel—who has recently returned from the North-West—on a survey of conditions, they might easily tell us that they are appalled because there are very few facilities in the hospitals to deal with ill-health or accidents.

Despite the Flying Doctor service, there is also a great deal of isolation between the staffs of hospitals, so much so that these people must act with isolation in their minds. During the war I endeavoured at one stage to persuade the State Government, and then later with co-operation through the Commonwealth Government, to arrange that every Flying Doctor service linked with the other, so that no medical man would have to work in an emergency on his own: he would always feel that there was a colleague alongside him should it prove necessary. Until this sort of thing is carried out in the North-West right down as far as Meekatharra, I cannot see how the hospital and medical services can be adequate.

One of the other great difficulties that exist in that area is the education of children. Only recently I had a letter from a friend at Derby pleading that extra staff be given to the Derby school. It is good to learn that a high school is to be built at Carnarvon, because that will fill a

great need. I feel that we could entice people to live in those areas were we to subsidise—and possibly heavily subsidise—the transport to high schools down here on a higher grade, and to technical schools of children who showed promise. The return fares for children of families living in the North—to Perth and back—is very heavy indeed.

I wish this committee well. I trust that its members, between them, will be able to put up a scheme—unexaggerated, factual, but with vision—that will impress the Commonwealth Government as to what can be done for the North-West. I would altogether drop the attitude that the Commonwealth Government has contributed nothing of note to the North-West; because, as has already been emphasised by previous speakers, in the grant made to this State the Commonwealth Government has contributed quite large sums. When we look for one moment at the deficit of the State Shipping Service, we realise that we do not pay that as a State; the Commonwealth Government must meet that to a considerable degree.

Personally, I would rather approach the Commonwealth Government with this visualised planning for years ahead on the basis of co-operation between the State and the Commonwealth. We should not have any idea that the Commonwealth has done nothing for the North; rather should we emphasise that as a necessity from a national point of view.

Then, too, I think the committee proposed is a good one. I would have preferred to see another member from this House, in addition to the Minister for the North-West appointed to the committee, because I believe there are men in this Chamber who have knowledge of the North, and whose weight on this committee would be felt. An additional member, raising the numbers of the committee from five to six, would not make it unwieldy. But if the House feels satisfied with the committee as it is I will not oppose it.

I would like to offer the suggestion that this Council might quite well be represented more heavily on the committee which has for its function the considered welfare of the northern part of the State. I would like to have seen the name of, say, Mr. Jones or Mr. Craig—men who are interested in the North-West and who know the North-West—added to this committee. Although this motion does not suggest that the committee should go outside for information or that it should approach men who have already done an enormous task for the North-West, I would like to see an approach made to men such as Mr. W. Leslie, Mr. Frank Thompson, and Mr. Lang Hancock, who have already made several journeys to Canberra, and who know the tone of Canberra as it relates to the North-West.

Those men could give the committee a considerable insight into the Commonwealth's viewpoint on assistance to the North-West. Possibly a man like Mr. Bill McDonald from the Kimberleys, who has made a success of life in that district, would also add his weight to any suggestions made concerning the Kimberleys. As it is, this committee could quite well end in being one which accepted the recommendations of departmental officers; and their views, combined with the views of the men I have mentioned, could help a plan to be drawn up which would have the necessary vision which would be factual and without exaggeration.

I trust that the views of men who have worked so hard for the North-West will be taken into consideration when this committee is formulating its programme. Again I say that I wish the committee well; and I hope that it will be able for the first time, as an organised committee, to do something on a really great scale for the advancement of that part of the State.

**HON. J. MURRAY** (South-West) [7.46]: At the outset, let me say I am a little diffident about joining in this debate, because of lack of personal knowledge of the difficulties of the North-West, or that portion lying above the 26th parallel. But I am rather concerned that, in seeking as much as is desired by this House and another place, the committee may get nothing.

That portion of the State is so important, not only to Western Australia, but to the whole of Australia generally, that I think the question should be tackled more from the point of view of what is the minimum we can expect to get. I feel that we should go for that rather than consider what is the maximum we desire, and then hope for a little bit. It is useless to contend that the Commonwealth has done nothing whatsoever. But what it has done has been achieved mainly through the good work of the Grants Commission, to which Western Australia, as a claimant State, has been able to submit a good case.

From my own reading and study of this question, the main answer that has been given by the Prime Minister and his advisers in respect of this problem has been that he cannot help this State otherwise than through the Grants Commission, in advance of the help he gives to other portions of the Commonwealth. Accepting that view, and believing that the Prime Minister is more or less adamant on the question, and that his advisers are also adamant, I hope that the committee, when it approaches the Commonwealth, will stress the defence angle.

In my view, millions of pounds could be expended by the Commonwealth out of the Defence Vote. Every pound spent from the defence angle means good roads between Darwin and our North-West. The

provision of such roads may be a very expensive job, but the transport of troops and goods in wartime is very vital from a defence point of view; and if railways cannot be established for that purpose, we must have good roads. Once they have been provided, many of the other improvements that are required in the North-West will come in natural sequence.

So, while I add my blessing on the committee to that of others, I plead with the members of that committee to argue before the Prime Minister the defence angle concerning which he has no let-out. That is the main argument to be submitted when we are looking for millions of pounds and not merely for pence. I support the motion.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [7.50]: I am very pleased that a resolution of this kind has been brought to this Chamber from another place and introduced here by a member who has had only a superficial look at the North-West, but who has taken a very intelligent interest in it and concerned himself with its problems. He has described the North-West as it is, and has certainly familiarised himself with that part of the State.

The lack of amenities in the North—such as lack of good housing, power and water supplies, roads, and adequate means of transport—are very apparent. Such things, which are public utilities in one sense or another, cannot be provided by the State Government alone in sufficient number or in sufficient time to enable us to catch up with the development which, despite the disabilities to which I have referred, is taking place in the North. The reason is that our State is far too large for the number of people in it to develop with the funds available to the State for expenditure throughout Western Australia.

Hon. L. Craig: Much of such expenditure would be completely uneconomic.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: It would be completely uneconomic if the money were not spent on the correct projects and in the correct manner. That is quite so. The object of the resolution to which we are asked to agree is, as I see it, to impress upon the Federal Government the fact that the State is absolutely incapable of developing its vast areas with the funds available to it.

It is natural that when Loan Funds are being allocated—no matter what Government is in power—the pull of the more settled areas, where there are more members crying out for assistance, is strong; and that the outer areas, with fewer voices, are left, not exactly wanting, but in the position of not obtaining all they require.

So the object of this deputation to the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer will undoubtedly be to impress that viewpoint upon them, and to stress the urgency of assistance for the North-West and the rehabilitation of public utilities which have decayed, as Mr. Jones said, and the rehabilitation of which will require enormous sums of money, if they are to be put into a condition fit for the traffic for which they must cater. I refer to such utilities as jetties.

There is also a very vital need for good roads, as Mr. Murray pointed out. The North-West is very difficult country in which to build all-weather roads; but they can be built. However, approaches that have been made by previous State Governments to have the main highways in the North declared defence roads have not met with success. Federal Governments have not been prepared to consider as defence roads the North Coastal Highway and the Great Northern Highway beyond Meekatharra. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that that claim will be pursued.

As to the amount of finance that may be required for any particular project in the North, that is something yet to be considered and detailed. But I can assure members who have spoken on the motion that no exaggerated claims will be submitted. There will be no extravagant claims for projects that are not practicable or rational. Plain submissions, supported by facts, will be presented, and those facts will come from departments with a wealth of knowledge on their files. I refer to such departments as those of Public Works and Agriculture, and the Treasury. It is simply amazing how much information on this matter has been accumulated on files over the years.

Mention has been made of the desirability of members of the North-West Development Committee being added to the committee envisaged in the resolution; and also of the desirability of the inclusion of persons who have spent many years in the North. I can assure the House that the views of those people, and the knowledge they have gained, are already reduced to writing and appear on the files in our State departments. There is not the slightest doubt that every possible avenue for development and expansion in the North has been well aired and ventilated and recorded by various commissions and committees, and as a result of departmental inquiries into the problem of doing something for the North.

When I say "doing something," I mean putting more people into the area and getting more production out of it. To put more people into an area such as the North is not so easy. They must have some occupation; and that occupation must be profitable, because nobody is going to remain in an area remote from

the capital, and removed from the good things of life, unless it is made worth while.

To extend the pastoral industries in the North will require the expenditure of an enormous amount of money. Both the Government and private enterprise will need to play their part in this development. I have mentioned before in this House that I am of the opinion that the area from the Murchison River to Broome—or at least to La Grange a few miles this side of Broome—is such that nobody can do any more with it from a pastoral point of view than those who already hold it.

Hon. L. Craig: That is the point.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Nothing more can be done with that huge area, but the Kimberleys are a different proposition altogether. They have possibilities, because they have a regular rainfall; and a tremendous volume of water flows down the rivers. During the last 40 years, the pastoral industries have declined. The deterioration in the North is stressed in the resolution, and it has been pointed out by members.

In 1910, there were 250,000 more sheep in the northern or Kimberley division than there are today. Cattle have also declined by about 180,000. In the North-West—the dry area that I spoke of from the 26th parallel to La Grange Bay or Wallal—there are now about 250,000 sheep less than there were in 1910, and 70,000 less cattle. The main explanation for the deterioration is, in my opinion, not so much that the land has been misused but economic circumstances, which, in my opinion, were beyond the control of the people in the North-Western Division—the lower rainfall area.

It is interesting to note that the highest number of sheep in the Northern Division was reached in 1935; and the same in the Kimberleys. The total of sheep in the two areas in that year was 3,754,000. A depression came along during the years 1929 to 1935, and prices fell; and the pastoralists, of course, could not sell their sheep. A series of fairly good years was experienced until about 1934 or 1935, and pastoralists could not even give their sheep away. I remember those in control of coastal stations driving their sheep over the cliff into the sea.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Killing them first, and then driving them over.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They were driving the sheep into the ocean to get rid of them. I know of other stations which employed men to slaughter and burn the sheep when they were off shears. They had to burn them because of the fly. Other stations gave away sheep. I remember a shearers' cook who took a thousand sheep from one place. The boss said, "You can have them." He took them into Carnarvon and sold them

for 6d. or 1s. a head, or whatever he could get for them; and they were full-grown sheep.

That is how the stations got to the point of being overstocked. They were carrying the sheep all right then; but they were overstocked, and were not prepared for any tragedy by way of drought years that might follow. Of course, drought years did follow, and the country has never recovered from the tragedy. The sheep numbers have declined; but during the 30 odd years I have had knowledge of the sheep industry in the North, although the numbers have dropped, the quantity of wool in many places has doubled.

Some stations have increased the numbers of their flocks, particularly in the Kimberleys. Liveringa always carried good wool sheep and a good flock. There has been some compensation in this respect, perhaps, inasmuch as the cattle numbers are down in the North-Western Division because of a change over to sheep in some instances. Some of the stations are changing back again, although not to any great extent. Stations that have been operating more or less on a fifty-fifty basis, and have been troubled by the drought in one direction, have switched to a few more cattle; and so on.

In the Kimberleys the sheep numbers have remained more or less static. They always appear to be able to hold their own. The cattle stations have declined for the simple reason that the country along the river frontages has been grazed out, and now it is necessary to move the cattle back into the spinifex areas. That is where the Government is providing its water scheme by means of bores. The previous Government introduced the scheme, and it is still being carried on. I think some 50-odd bores have been put down already, and they must be of some benefit. Unless, however, they are fenced, we will have exactly the same problem as we have along the natural waters—namely, they will be grazed out. Unless this country is fenced and rotated, there is not much hope for men in the cattle industry.

If the Federal Government can provide assistance to proceed with the plan that was laid down by the Commonwealth Government in 1945 or 1946, for the construction of a dam across the Ord River, it will be doing something to help develop the East Kimberleys. The Ord River research station has been used for experimenting and research, and cattle have come off there weighing up to 1,600 lb. as a result of rotational grazing.

We have been told by Mr. Jones that sugar cane and rice grow well. The problem with sugar is to get rid of it, but that is not the case with rice, for which there is a ready market. Rice is the staple diet for many millions of people; so there would be a valuable market for any rice that we

grew, and it could play a big part amongst the Asian countries in promoting peace in the world.

The Federal Government could step in and spend some money to develop the irrigated areas along both the Ord and the Fitzroy rivers. The quantity of water that flows down these rivers is almost unbelievable. The Gascoyne was the first river gauged—it was gauged a few years ago; and while the gauging lasted—the gauge was subsequently swept away—it registered for a normal, high river, 1,000,000,000 gallons per hour under the Gascoyne bridge. It was estimated that when the flood reached its peak the flow would have been 5,000,000,000 gallons per hour. The capacity of Canning Dam is 20½ thousand million gallons; therefore, at the maximum flood level, the Gascoyne River would have filled that dam every four hours or, in the case of a normal high river, every 20 hours. This enormous amount of water is just running into the sea. When we consider that the Gascoyne River is about 500 to 600 miles long, we realise that it traverses an enormous area of country; but still the water all has to flow along it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Your difficulty would be to hold the water.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** It cannot be held on the Gascoyne because the country does not lend itself to being dammed. This quantity of water flows as a result of an average rainfall of 10 inches; and the rainfall was probably only 4 inches or 5 inches, or less, to produce the amount of water I have mentioned.

The Ord River, which is also very long, being about 400 or 500 miles in length, with more tributaries than the Gascoyne, had a measured maximum flow rate of 9,000,000,000 gallons per hour. The Ord was gauged the year before last and checked again last year. It would therefore take a little over two hours to fill Canning Dam.

The Margaret River, which Mr. Jones told us about, has not yet been gauged; nor has the Fitzroy. An automatic gauge was rigged on the Fitzroy, but it was swept away. We can safely say that as much goes down the Fitzroy as goes down the Ord, and probably more, because the Fitzroy has the Margaret and other tributaries running into it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Margaret and the Mary.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** Mr. Jones spoke about a dam; and it is estimated that a wall 100ft. high, which is an engineer's dream, would dam 103,000,000,000 gallons—or five times the quantity that is impounded in the Canning Dam—in an average year's flow, so it can be seen that the Kimberley rivers do lend themselves to development.

The survey that is proceeding in West Kimberley is being extended to the Leonard and Barker rivers, and any others that might be useful for development in North Kimberley, where a survey is now being made. All these rivers run through tremendous areas of arable land—fertile soil. This is one of the things that must be impressed upon the Federal Government. I was pleased to see that Senator Spooner paid a short visit to that area during the week-end. I had a short conversation with the senator last year—he is the Minister for National Development—and I convinced him that the expenditure of only a few thousand pounds to send a survey expedition into the North Kimberleys was well warranted. That is the expedition which is now operating in that area. After some facts and literature had been placed before him, he agreed to the proposition.

Contrary to general opinion, the Minister for National Development has the authority—of course, with the concurrence of Federal Cabinet—to finance national projects without having to authorise the payment of similar amounts to other States. That has been done in this case; and in other cases, too.

The Federal Government has spent almost £400,000 in building a road from Wyndham to Nicholson station, a distance of about 290 miles. This road will serve the cattle stations, and will enable road trains to be taken into Wyndham. This scheme was started in 1949, when a special Act was passed through the Federal Parliament to enable funds to be spent on the project. Every penny that has been spent on the road has come from Commonwealth sources, and it is estimated that approximately £750,000 will be required to complete the project. However, it will be a good road when it is finished.

The Commonwealth shares, on a £ for £ basis, in the expenditure on the Ord River experimental station; and a Commonwealth Government established, at a cost of £1,000,000 a whaling station at Carnarvon. It has also assisted, to a large degree, in helping to establish the asbestos town at Wittenoom Gorge. The Commonwealth has also given indirect aid to the iron town of Yampi. It has not made a direct contribution, but ships have been built to shift the ore.

It is true that the Commonwealth Government has spent a large sum of money in the North. A tremendous sum has been spent through the Department of Civil Aviation—aerodromes have been constructed, meteorological and air radio services have been established. But the expenditure which is now required is of a different character altogether. Something special—something extra—must be spent if the North is to keep pace with present development.

As I have said before, despite the disabilities in that area, a private company has spent almost £40,000 in experimenting

in the growing of rice at Liveringa. Little publicity has been given to its efforts but the company has spent that sum over the years; and the latest news is that it is satisfied with its experiments, and that they compare favourably with the initial experiments carried out in the Murrumbidgee irrigation area where rice was successfully grown with a 13-inch rainfall and with only poor soil. In that case an area of about half-a-million acres was resumed and at that time only about 5,000 people lived there. Now there are towns such as Leeton, where there are 20,000 people.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do you mean at Leeton and Griffith?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The population was only a few hundred when I was there as a youngster. Now there are 45,000 people there.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That is so. This is because of irrigation.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I used to chase kangaroos round that country. What are they doing with the rice at Liveringa?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They are experimenting in the growing of rice.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You say they have spent £40,000 so far. Are they receiving any income from their experiments?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: No; and they have not any land tenure, either. A pastoral lease is only a pastoral lease, as the hon. member knows; but that will be attended to.

Hon. L. Craig: The company has had the co-operation of the Liveringa station people.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes; the station people are co-operating with them and the question of land tenure can be attended to. If their experiments this year prove to be successful there is not the slightest doubt that this company will want to expand and obtain some security of tenure. It will certainly get that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The company has spent a large sum of money.

Hon. L. Craig: It has a lot of money behind it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Prior to last year, £30,000 had been spent.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is on irrigation, is it?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes, similar to that used on the banana plantations at Carnarvon. The hon. member knows Snake Creek.

Hon. L. Craig: It is beautiful black soil.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I have seen it, too. It is good soil.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** The hon. member has seen it from the homestead. It is up near the billa-bong—about eight miles from the homestead—towards Mt. Wynne, where they will be boring for oil very shortly.

It has been hinted that we should indicate to members what plans or submissions may be made to Canberra. But at this stage it is not possible to do that; and in any case, I doubt whether it would be advisable for a committee of this nature to divulge propositions that it may place before the Federal Government—at least before they are submitted. Therefore, I would not hold out much hope to members who desire to know the details, and the exact propositions that are to be submitted.

When they are submitted to this committee, as the resolution says, the committee can amend or alter them. When they are finally approved, they will be submitted to the Commonwealth Government. Whatever is planned, and whatever is submitted, will be reasonable and supported by evidence and facts that have been accumulated over many years from investigations and research into the problem. I can remember many years ago when Sir Charles Latham, as Minister for Agriculture—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: As Minister for Lands.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** Yes. I can remember the hon. member making an extensive tour of the North-West under conditions which people today would say were trying and almost impossible to endure. The hon. member toured the North-West under those conditions; and I suppose he thought they were no more difficult than people think the conditions are today.

Hon. L. Craig: He was a tough boy in those days.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** Also, Mr. Desplees toured the area in 1910 or 1912 and made an extensive report on its problems. He went around with a horse and buggy.

Hon. L. Craig: I knew him quite well.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** I have read his report, and there are many other reports, too. We have all the data necessary to put up an excellent case and I commend the originator of this motion and the hon. member who introduced it to this Chamber. I am pleased to note that it has met with the approval of all members who have spoken to it so far.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—INQUIRY AGENTS LICENSING.**

### *Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

## **BILL—DROVING ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [8.27] in moving the second reading said: The principal Act was last amended in 1935 so members can see that it is not frequently amended. The original Act was passed in 1894 as a result of requests from persons in the North-West districts of this State who were supplying fat stock to the more southern areas. For some reason or other the Act was repealed and re-enacted with very little alteration in 1902, since when it has been amended on two occasions only—that is, in 1919 and 1935.

Under the Act any person intending to move stock for more than 15 miles has to complete in triplicate a way-bill. One copy of the way-bill has to be sent to the Chief Inspector of Stock at the Department of Agriculture, and another copy forwarded to the nearest police officer together with details of the route to be taken and of the estimated time of arrival at the destination. Where the journey is solely for the purpose of temporary grazing the way-bill may cover both outward and return trips.

During the movement of stock any justice of the peace, police officer, inspector of brands or his agent, or any manager of any property on which other stock are located, is permitted by the Act to inspect the travelling stock and to compare their brands with those shown on the way-bill. Any person who purchases or receives any stock not described or incorrectly described on the way-bill is guilty of an offence.

Among other things, the Act deals with the minimum distance stock shall be moved each day, the routes they shall take and the entry of stock on to enclosed runs. The Act does not apply to the South-West Land Division except where stock in charge of a drover pass through land held under pastoral lease, and in some other small instances.

In past years the Act has proved of considerable assistance in the prevention and the detection of stock thefts. Its value in this regard has been considerably reduced, however, by modern means of transport.

For many years, as members will be aware, droving was carried out "on the hoof"; but nowadays the availability of

motor transport, and the higher sale prices of cattle and sheep have resulted in the use of motor-vehicles to a great extent. It is not uncommon now for road trains, consisting of semi-trailer motor-trucks, with trailers attached, to carry up to 3,000 sheep. Cattle are being conveyed by road train to Meekatharra, from as far distant as Nullagine, and then railed to the metropolitan area. As a result of a number of complaints of cattle stealing in this area the police are keeping a close watch on this traffic.

In the days when cattle were transported "on the hoof", thefts were easier to detect. Quite a time usually elapsed before stolen stock could be marketed and sent to abattoirs. Each additional day increased the chances of drovers detecting thefts, and was of value to police when investigating thefts. There was recently every indication that certain persons had taken unbranded calves from an adjoining property and had despatched them by road train to Meekatharra, and thence by rail to Midland Junction. The Crown Solicitor has submitted the opinion that stock conveyed by motor transport do not come within the scope of the Act. He states that the present purpose of the Act is to regulate the travelling of stock "on the hoof", and that the primary meaning of the word "driven" which appears in the Act refers to stock travelling "on the hoof."

In view of this and to assist in the campaign against stock thefts, the Commissioner of Police has asked that the Act be amended to ensure that persons in charge of stock conveyed by motor transport complete way-bills and conform with the Act in a similar manner to persons driving stock. The Bill seeks to amend the Act in this manner. It has been found necessary to include a definition of "motor vehicle", and, for the sake of consistency the definition is the same as that of "motor vehicle" appearing in the Traffic Act.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Will they have to give the same notice?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: No. The Bill specifically excludes stock conveyed by motor-vehicle from complying with certain provisions in the Act which are applicable only to stock travelling "on the hoof". These deal with the yarding of stock; the necessity for the drover to give notice of the stock entering any enclosed run or approaching any homestead, the payment of a travelling charge for sheep and cattle returning to the same run from which they started; and the necessity to keep to lawfully reserved stock routes where there are such routes on any run.

I commend the Bill to the House. It merely brings the Act into line with modern methods, and it will assist the police in their efforts to protect stock-owners. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

## BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 18th August.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [8.35]: This is a Bill with which I agree in principle. It is actually an amending Bill. There are a few features which do not appeal to me, in that the scope covered by the Bill is very wide: As members will recall, the Act provides that motor-vehicles of an overall width greater than 8ft. shall not be driven on any road without a permit from the Commissioner of Police. This Bill sets out to provide exemption for machinery or implements used in agricultural or horticultural pursuits outside the metropolitan area.

I commend Mr. Jones for introducing the Bill; but I would point out that it leaves the position wide open to a lot of danger to other traffic on the road, particularly if implements are towed or driven over long distances. The Bill would enable them to be driven over roads for a long period, when they would constitute a danger to the faster-moving traffic. My personal view is that some exemption should be given to producers alone, not to contractors who let out their machinery on hire. The latter are in a different position altogether.

The main object of the Bill is to make it easier for bona fide farmers, particularly those whose properties are divided by a road and who have to transport machinery from one portion of their farm to another. In some instances a farmer may own another property some distance from his homestead property on which the machinery is generally housed.

Under the Traffic Act, the Traffic Department is empowered, through the Governor, under some hundreds of subsections, to make thousands of regulations. Although that is necessary, it is very hard to follow a Bill of this type because of the many provisions relating to regulations. The particular section of the Act with which we are dealing is contained almost wholly in the regulation section of the Act. I would like to read it out to show what may happen if this Bill is passed, because I fear that the Traffic Department can, by regulation, nullify the amendment.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You do not say the Traffic Department has more power than Parliament?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am not saying that; but Parliament has given it the power to make regulations. By prescribing regulations under Section 47K, the Traffic Department can nullify this amending Bill. I shall point out how this can be brought about. Section 47 (1) (i) (k) says—

prohibit or restrict the driving of any specified kinds of vehicles on any roads on which, in the opinion of the Governor, such traffic would be especially dangerous—

The next portion is what I wish to impress on members—

—and regulate, prohibit, or restrict the driving or hauling of agricultural machines (including tractors and ploughs) on roads;

Even if this Bill is passed, the power to make regulations can nullify it, unless we police the regulations when they are tabled in this House. The Traffic Department can make regulations according to the section to which I have just referred and it is a definite negative of what is proposed to be inserted in the Act. I have discussed this point with the mover of the Bill, and we intend to make further inquiries through the Crown Law Department as to the position if this power to make regulations is left in the Act. It may have to be removed.

I feel that this amending Bill is rather wide and I intend to put several amendments on the notice paper, the first of which is rather simple. In the Bill the word "implement" has been used. This is unnecessary, because it is included in the interpretation of "vehicle" under the Act. Then again, I feel that the distance over which an implement may be driven or towed on the road should be limited. If Parliament were to give farmers the right to drive or propel their machinery on the road, then road hauliers and others would have a genuine ground of objection.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: There is no comparison.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I say there is. We are here to legislate for the people on an even basis. I represent the farmers of this State and I want to see them given a fair deal; but we have to remember that justice must be done to all people of Western Australia. The electors have appointed us to our positions, and we must be fair to all. I would like to instance a contractor who undertakes farming contracts. Are we to give him the same right to move farming implements on roads? Perhaps on every day of every week he would be constantly travelling on the roads, and over long distances.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What difference would it make whether they have a permit or not? They still remain on the road.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Under the Act, the Traffic Department is empowered to prescribe regulations. Vehicles that are over-

width have to carry certain signs to indicate the fact to other traffic. The provisions of this Bill will give to a contractor who does farm work and who is almost constantly travelling on the roads the right to drive overwidth vehicles without danger signs attached.

Hon. A. R. Jones: We do not know that for sure.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is according to the Bill before us. Quite a number of these contractors are constantly travelling on the roads. I put it that they are on the road much more often than the bona fide farmer who is moving machinery. This is the point I want to get at: The more of these machines there are on the roads, the greater the danger to other traffic. The overwidth vehicle constitutes a danger; and, because of that, a well-defined sign should be carried. It is all very well to say that we should leave this wide open. If a few people were killed, it would be too late to shut the gate. That is a point we have to consider; when dealing with these matters we must protect the lives of the public.

A limited distance should be prescribed in the Act. There is no reason at all why we should give people the right to transport over-width vehicles and loads for long distances without providing some safeguard. I intend to put an amendment on the notice paper to provide that farm implements, when being towed or propelled along a road, shall carry some sort of danger sign prescribed by regulation. Insistence on this safeguard is only fair to the rest of the public. The Act provides that no vehicle having a greater overall width including the load than eight ft. shall be licensed, driven, used or towed on any road, and for the purpose of this provision "vehicle" includes any implement. The provision for obtaining a permit comes under the regulations. There is nothing in the Bill to require that a permit shall be granted. The danger signs to be carried are also prescribed by regulation.

By the Bill, we shall in effect be giving an exemption not provided for in the regulations, except by (k), which could be used to nullify the amendment. Therefore the safeguard should be inserted in the Act to provide that a sign shall be carried by an over-width vehicle using a road, whether it be a farmer's machine or anything else. To require this would be only fair to the public. I support the second reading, and in Committee shall move amendments with the object of protecting the public and making it as easy as possible for people to carry on their business.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [8.48]: I support the second reading. The intention of the Bill is to give permission to do something that is being done every day, except that people will be put to a lot of

inconvenience in order to obtain a permit from the police. When vehicles are to be transported 200 or 300 miles, it is not likely that they would be towed behind other vehicles. When farm machinery is transported over a long distance, it is conveyed by railway or by transport truck. It would not be towed over a long distance because that would not pay.

The object of the mover of the Bill is to facilitate the transport of machinery from one part of a farm to another, and that is being done today without a permit, but farmers are to be put to the inconvenience of obtaining a permit every time they want to shift an over-width machine from one farm to another. We should help the farmers in every way possible.

I am not opposed to the suggestion that an over-width vehicle should carry a sign to show that it is in excess of the permissible width. I believe that this is already provided for, but a farmer is not a man who would handle a machine on the road to the danger of other people. As I have stated, these machines are being conveyed along the road every day without a permit and the farmers desire that their action be legalised. In that they have my support.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.50 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 25th August, 1954.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Destruction of Telegraph Poles, Kulikup.*

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

(1) With further reference to the question asked last week relative to telegraph poles at Kulikup, does he agree that on the answers supplied there should now be 130 poles left in the yard at Kulikup?

(2) Is he aware that there have been no poles left in the Kulikup yard since the 15th July last?

(3) Is he also aware that lately the telegraph poles for the telegraph line running through Kulikup have been renewed with poles from Dwellingup?

(4) Would he obtain a report, and inform the House of the information in such report, from the forestry officer at Kulikup on the destruction of these telegraph poles?